

Job's Consternation and Confession

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[0 : 00] Good evening. A very warm welcome to you all this evening to this live stream service. Once again we pray that God will bless us through this short service of worship together.

Let's begin this evening with prayer. Let's call upon the Lord in prayer. Gracious and eternal God, once again we do give thanks for the way that you enable us to come before you in worship. For the guidance that you give us for our worship in your word. And for the way that we are brought to confront God in the immensity of your being.

And in the revelation that you have given of yourself in your word. We thank you Lord for that word that speaks to us into our situation and condition today. We thank you that your word and its content is so relevant for our age and for our circumstances.

For every providence that you bring us in your wisdom and purpose. We thank you Lord today that we form part of your own people throughout the world. Who come together like we do here to worship the Lord.

[1 : 13] The God who created us and the Redeemer who saves his people. And we thank you Lord today that we have this day set aside. Even though we know that at this time we are confined to our homes largely.

Yet Lord it is a reminder to us also that this day is a day of rest. A day which you appointed after your work of creation. And which you set apart to be kept by human beings.

So that we may seek God and seek his favour. And come to know his blessing. We pray today oh Lord once again that you would bless us as we turn to your word.

We ask that you would sanctify our mind. We pray that we may be given the ability to apply your word to our own circumstances in life. To our personal lives.

To our church life. To the world in which we live. And especially to what we find so alarming in our world today. In the spread of this COVID-19 virus.

[2 : 11] Lord help us to dwell our thoughts tonight upon your greatness. Help us we pray to see from your greatness how small we are. How needy we are of your own grace.

Of your support and help. And especially of the undergirding strength that you give to your people. Your word tells us that we live and move and have our being in you.

And it is at times at these that we are especially conscious oh Lord. Of our own weakness and our frailty. We pray your blessing tonight for those most keenly affected by this virus.

We think especially again of families who have loved ones ill at this time. We think of those who have already lost loved ones. Through the way in which so many have lost their lives through this virus.

Lord we ask for that throughout the world. We pray for those in our own nation too. Who have already experienced death in their families. We pray that you would comfort them and direct them to you.

[3 : 12] And we ask that you would help them to draw their strength from you. Remember too we pray. Those who work in front line activities. Those Lord who look after those who are ill in hospital.

We pray that you would bless those nurses, medics, doctors. All those who are involved in front line duties. We give thanks for them for their dedication.

Oh Lord we pray that you would protect them and keep them. As they deal with those who are ill. Especially with this virus. We pray too oh Lord for those who have lost their work.

Or at this time at least are not able to go to work. We pray that you would bless those who may not have work to go back to. We think of all our businesses Lord. Both small and large.

And the difficulties and the challenges that they face at this time. We pray that you would help oh Lord those who are somewhat uncertain of the future.

[4 : 17] And who may be even struggling with resources presently. Those who face financial difficulty. And some even perhaps financial ruin. Gracious Lord we look to you.

And ask that in your own intervention. You would bring these matters to a conclusion speedily. That we may Lord be taken out of these conditions at the moment. And find a return to normality as near as we can.

We pray that you would bless oh Lord also. Those who rule over us in government. Who have to take decisions in regard to these circumstances today. We pray that you would bless the Prime Minister, his cabinet.

The First Minister, our government. Those in the medical offices that advise them. We pray that you would give them insight. And ability Lord to think through what needs to be done.

And we ask that you would give us grace to comply. With what we are told are necessary restrictions at this time. Remember we pray all who throughout the world.

[5 : 22] Are struggling at this time Lord. With these conditions. We ask that your grace will be sufficient for them. And we pray especially that your kingdom will advance.

Even through such times as these. Now Lord we ask that you would direct us to your word. And through your word. Please address our hearts. And give us the mind that will be stayed upon yourself.

Receive us now we pray. And forgive our sins. For Jesus' sake. Amen. We are going to read now from the Old Testament. From the book of Job.

Chapter 42 of the book of Job. And verses 1 to 10. Then Job answered the Lord and said. I know that you can do all things.

And that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge? Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand. Things too wonderful for me.

[6 : 21] Which I did not know. Here and I will speak. I will question you. And you make it known to me. I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear. But now my eye sees you.

Therefore I despise myself. And repent in dust and ashes. After the Lord had spoken these words to Job. The Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite.

My anger burns against you. And against your two friends. For you have not spoken of me. What is right. As my servant Job has. Now therefore take seven bulls and seven rams.

And go to my servant Job. And offer up a burnt offering for yourselves. My servant Job shall pray for you. For I will accept his prayer. Not to deal with you according to your folly.

For you have not spoken of me. What is right. As my servant Job has. So Eliphaz the Temanite. And Bildad the Shuhite. And Zophar the Namathite. Went and did what the Lord had told them.

[7 : 19] And the Lord accepted Job's prayer. And the Lord restored the fortunes of Job. When he had prayed for his friends. And the Lord gave Job twice as much.

As he had before. And I would like us to think for a short time. Of the words of verses five and six. Of this passage we have read.

Both deafness and blindness. Are challenging conditions. They impose significant limitations. Even though technological advances.

Have made a huge difference. In alleviating some of those. Most people would agree. Including those who suffer from blindness. And deafness. That if they had to choose between the two.

They would rather deafness. To blindness. Not seeing anything. Is relatively more of a challenge. Than not hearing. Though both of course are difficult.

[8 : 20] Job refers to both. In verse five. I had heard of you. By the hearing of the ear. But now my eye sees you. What did he mean?

He had both sight and hearing. So why did he say this? To understand what he meant. We have to briefly recall. What his experience had been.

And that's taking up most of the book. He had come through immense trials. As you find described. In the first two chapters. He lost everything he had.

His oxen. Sheep. Camels. Servants. And finally. And most tragically of all. His family of seven sons. And three daughters. So our three things.

I'd like us just to consider. Briefly. In regard to this. First of all. Job's consternation. With God. He had come to wrestle.

[9 : 17] With his situation. As is understandable. But what troubles him most. And what is apparent from the book. Is Job's question. Of where God is.

In all of this. He was a holy. Upright man. As we find right at the beginning of the book. So how could God have treated him. In this way. When ungodly people. Had fewer troubles. Than he had. His three friends. Who came to try and help. Only added to his frustration. And his pain. They assumed that Job. Had done something seriously wrong. That he was not prepared to admit. And repent of it. So God had sent these sufferings. In response. Job knew. That their assumption was untrue. But he was still pained. About God's role. In all of this experience. So throughout the book. Job makes comments about God. That he now at the end of the book. [10:15] Here in this passage. Comes to regret. And indeed to repent of. In these verses. In chapter 42. He calls on God. In language.

Very similar. Throughout the book. To what you find. In the prophets. Language. To come and argue. The case with God. Court language. Legal language. Let the Lord stand up for himself. So that Job can put. His understanding of the situation. To God. He wants to argue. His case with God. So God lets him do that. And God answers him. And from chapter 38 onwards. It's mostly God who speaks. And in a series. Of devastating comments. And questions. God. Addresses Job. Job. So our second point is. God's interrogation. Of Job. You've probably all seen.

[11:12] The video. The snowman. Which is shown. Every Christmas time. Which the snowman. Takes the young boy. On a sweeping tour. Of town and country. Well here.

God. Takes Job. On a tour. Of the creation. It's the ultimate. To this route. And only God. Could be the guide. Through this route.

So let's hear clips. Of what God says. To Job. On this journey. Chapter 38. Verses 2 to 7. Who is this.

That darkens counsel. By words. Without knowledge. And. I will question you. And you make it known to me. Says God. And he goes on. Where were you. When I laid the foundation. Of the earth. Tell me. If you have understanding. Who determined. His measurements. Surely you know. Or who stretched the line.

[12:09] Upon it. On what. Where its bases sunk. Or who laid its cornerstone. When the morning stars. Sang together. And all the sons. Of God. Shouted for joy.

And then. As you read through. God takes Job. Into space. And he shows him. Some of the constellations. Of the stars. In what he says to Job.

Chapter 38. Verses 31 to 33. Can you bind. The chains. Of the Pleiades. Or loose. The cords. Of Orion. Can you lead forth.

The Maseroth. In their season. Can you guide. The bear. With its children. Do you know. The ordinances. Of the heavens. Can you establish. Their rule. On the earth.

And then. Back to earth again. He asks Job. If he can control. The workings of nature. As you read through. These chapters. Its animals. Its birds. Its events.

[13:04] And the cycles. Of nature. And then again. He challenges Job. And just think of. How Job must have felt. By now. And especially. In these words.

That follow. In chapter 40. Verses 7 to 9. Dress for action. Like a man. Says God. I will question you. And you make it known to me.

Will you even put me. In the wrong. Will you. Condemn me. So that you. May be in the right. Have you. Have you. An arm. Like God.

Can you thunder. With a voice. Like his. And on. And on. The interrogation goes. Until finally. We come. To this confession. By Job.

In chapter 42. Verses 5 to 6. In other words. God is. Effectively. Through this tour. That he's taken him on. And shown him. And.

[13:58] And. Questioned him. And interrogated him. God is effectively. Really. Saying to Job. Now that you've seen all this. Would you like to take control.

Of the creation. And its events. And its history. Would you prefer. That you are in charge. Of your own life. Rather than. I do it. Through my knowledge.

And my purpose. How does Job react. Well he disintegrates. He goes to pieces. In the presence of God.

That's what we have. In these verses, 5 and 6. Remember. This man. Was a righteous. And holy man. And yet. Here he is broken. Shattered.

Repentant. So let's look at. Thirdly. Job's. Confession. Before God. I had heard of you. By the hearing of the ear. But now my eye sees you.

[14:55] Therefore I despise myself. And repent. In dust. And ashes. The knowledge Job. Previously had of God. Was like hearing.

Compared to seeing. Now he realises. That he hardly knew anything of God. And you can just about see his thoughts. Coming through. In his confession.

As if he were saying. How could I complain. About your arrangement. Of my life. When I know next to nothing. About your divine purpose.

How could I possibly know. The workings of your mind. In all of this. What right do I have. To insist that you God. Tell me.

These things. How can I. Dust. Compete. With you. Deity. And do notice. That Job. Did more than just confess.

[15:52] His smallness. And his lack of knowledge. He also repented. Therefore I abhor myself. And repent. In dust. And ashes. Job.

Is not seeing God now. Not that he did before. But he's certainly not seeing God now. As if God were just a big celebrity. And that you want to approach. To take.

A selfie with him. No job hates now. What he sees in himself. The sinfulness. That he sees more clearly. Than ever before.

And why does he see it. More clearly than ever before. Because God has put him beside. His own divine greatness. And he sees that more.

Than ever before. And when you and I realize. That we are in the presence. Of God's pure holiness. You realize. Just how small.

[16:45] And how dirty we are. So you fall down. And you say. I despise myself. I hate what I see in myself. And so I come to repent. Or maybe.

Something like Peter was. You remember in Luke chapter 5. He was in the boat. There was Christ. Having just glimpsed. The immensity. The greatness. The grandeur of Christ.

When he worked that miracle. Of catching so many fish. When Peter knew. There had been no fish there. All that night. They'd been fishing. When Peter saw that. I realized.

Just exactly. Who was in the boat with him. This is what he said. Depart from me. For I am a sinful man. Oh Lord.

Is that not. One of the main things. That God is teaching us now. Through this dilemma. Of COVID-19. Is he not actually.

[17:41] Giving us. To think about. The greatness of God. God has come near to us. In this frightening providence. We do need to take note.

Friends of that. Do we not feel. Our smallness. Our finiteness. Our vulnerableness. Our sinfulness. Do we not need.

A power greater than ourselves. Or any created power. Must we not. Make this time. A time for seeking God anew. Has this situation.

Not spoken to you. And to me individually. Has it not made you. Assess. What your priority. In life must be. And as a nation.

And indeed all nations. But as a nation. This is our opportunity. To repent of our pride. Our ungodliness. Our rejection of God's law.

[18:39] And gospel. Our human arrogance. And selfishness. God is calling us today. Through this. As surely as he called. Upon the people.

Of Isaiah's day. Where Isaiah wrote. God's call. To repentance. Seek the Lord. While he is to be found. Call upon him.

While he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way. And the unrighteous man. His thoughts. Let him return to the Lord. That he may have compassion. Upon him.

And to our God. For he will abundantly. Pardon. For my thoughts. Are not your thoughts. Neither are my ways.

Your ways. Declares the Lord. But as we finish the study. Let's stop to admire. The wonderful finale. To Job's experience.

[19 : 35] As we read especially. In the likes of verse 10. The Lord restored. The fortunes. Of Job. Job. Or in the AV translation. Which I prefer here.

The Lord turned. The captivity. Of Job. His lockdown. Was over. God now. Confirmed himself. As Job's friend.

Well it was never otherwise. But Job now realises. As never before. That God is his sovereign friend. Now that does not detract.

From the beauty. And the meaningfulness. Of that friendship. In fact. It only adds to it. Not everyone can say. That their best friend.

Is none other than the creator. And ruler. Of the universe. But Job could. And you can. Today. If you have accepted.

[20 : 34] Jesus. As your saviour. Let's pray. Gracious God. Once again. We come before you.

Seeking that your word. Will be made effective. In our hearts. And minds. We ask that you would. Instruct us through. Our dealing with your word. This evening. We thank you.

That though it brings to us. Things from so long ago. Yet they are so relevant. To our situation.

Today. Help us. We pray. And help our people. To be like Job.

Confronted with your greatness. Lord. When we feel. Your smallness. In the light of your greatness. Help us. We pray. Not to turn away from you.

Not to seek. To hide. Like Adam. And Eve. In the trees. Of the garden of Eden. When they knew. They had done wrong. When they heard your voice. Calling them. Rather.

[21 : 29] Lord. Bring us. To the cross. Bring us. To that place. Where your love. Is demonstrated. So abundantly. For God. Commends. His love. Toward us. In that while we.

Were yet sinners. Christ died for us. Show to us. Oh Lord. A new. Your great love. The scope of it. The depth of it. Though we cannot.

But comprehend. Even a tiny fragment. Of it. And when we feel ourselves. Oh Lord. So much like. A tiny pixel. In a huge. Picture.

Lord. Give us. We pray. To hide ourselves. In you. Give us. To realize. Lord. As we come. To confess. Our smallness. That your greatness. Is our advantage.

And help us. We pray. To find. That refuge. And strength. In you. So bless us. Now we pray. And continue with us. For Jesus sake. Amen. We're going to sing.

[22 : 26] Again. In closing. Our service. This evening. And our closing singing. Is Psalm 31. This is from. The Sing Psalms version. We're going to sing. To the tune. Heron Gate.

Now David wrote. This psalm. When. He was in circumstances. That were perplexing. We don't know. The situation. He doesn't tell us. In the title. Or elsewhere. As to the circumstances.

That gave rise. To the psalm. But we can see. From the psalm. That David. Was in distress. He was hemmed in. By enemies. He was surrounded. By terror. He was if you like. In lockdown.

So he prays to God. And confesses God. As his rock. And support. And he finishes. With these verses. That we're going to sing. Which call on God's people. To love the Lord.

To be strong in their hearts. And to take good courage. So from verse 8. The Lord be praised.

Because he showed the wonder of his love to me. When in a city I was trapped.

[23 : 22] Surrounded by the enemy. The Lord be praised. The Lord be praised. Because he showed the wonder of his love to me.

When in a city I was trapped. Surrounded by the enemy.

In my alarm. In my alarm. My rush reset. The bloody was hidden.

From your eyes. But when I call to you for help.

In grace you listen to my cry. O love the Lord.

[24 : 34] All you who have seen. The faithful will be kept by God.

But he will give the proud their truth. Be strong. Take heart.

Hope in the Lord. Thank you again for sharing in this service. Let's conclude now with the benediction.

Now unto him that is able to keep us from falling. To the only wise God our Saviour. Be glory and majesty. Dominion and power.

Both now and evermore. Amen.