

August 13, 2017 – Job 38:4-18 & Matthew 14:22-33

Next week there will be an event of shall we say “cosmic” proportions. You all know what I'm talking about. It kinda sounds like the whole country knows what I'm talking about. And they're all coming to Boonville to watch it.

Literally tens of thousands of people will descend upon our tiny city to watch this once in a lifetime solar eclipse. And while I may not enjoy the traffic this event will inflict upon, I am looking forward to watching it myself. Weather permitting, of course.

I, like most everybody, have always been fascinated by these kinds of celestial events. A few years ago, I gathered with a hundred other people at a park to watch the transit of Venus, when Venus crossed in front of the sun as a teensy tiny dot. It was FAR less impressive than this eclipse will be, and even then it drew a sizable crowd.

These kinds of moments fill us awe and fascination. And I think a certain sense of smallness. A good and Godly sense of smallness. Because compared to our creator, we are small. And that's a valuable thing to remember. When we look at nature and we see something big and impressive, it reveals to us the God who is even bigger and more impressive.

And yet, as much as we enjoy watching these cosmic displays of God's power and wisdom, we also need to be reminded at times of that same power and wisdom. Which is what this passage from Job is all about.

I think many of us know the story of Job. He's a righteous and faithful man who has everything taken away from him. His home. His business. His children. His health.

Job starts out as someone we would all like to be. Wealthy and respected and comfortable. And in a matter of days he's left impoverished, grieving, and in terrible physical pain.

And he can't understand why. Why would God do this to him? Why would God let this happen? We, of course, know why this has happened. We know that Job is suffering because God wants to prove Satan wrong.

He wants to show Satan that a righteous man who puts his trust in the Lord cannot be overcome by mere physical suffering. He wants to show Satan – and all of us – a picture of the coming Savior. Who lost everything, including his own life, and remained perfectly faithful to His Father's will.

But Job doesn't know that. Job doesn't know what's going on. And he just keeps asking God, “Why? Why God? Why is this happening?”

Of course, Job's wife and friends have their own theories. You must have committed some really horrible sin, Job. Everybody knows God only punishes the wicked. Just confess what you did and God might have mercy on you. But, no, Job knows he's done nothing to deserve the punishment he's received.

So they say, maybe you didn't know you did it. It was accident. Or you've forgotten about it. Or something like that. Just confess it anyway. But Job says no. Absolutely not. If I've sinned then God should tell me how I've sinned. But he's not saying anything at all.

Finally his wife, who sounds like a lovely person, says to him, “Look Job. If you really haven't sinned, and all this is happening to you, then maybe God has just abandoned you. You should probably just give up your faith and die.” Great advice, right?

But Job refuses to believe that. He hasn't abandoned me. I know he hasn't. He is my redeemer. And I have absolute faith that on the last day, I will stand with him in a new heavens and a new earth. And though my flesh is being destroyed right now, yet on that day I will see God with my own eyes.

I have absolute faith in him. But that's what makes it so much worse. Because I do believe in him. So why is he letting this happen to me?

I think most of us can understand Job's frustration. We've had plenty of "why" moments in our lives too. Why did I lose my job? Why are my children going astray? Why am I in such pain? Why did they have to die?

But the answer that God gives to Job is hard one to swallow. At first glance, it doesn't have a lot of Gospel in it, I'll be honest with you. God's answer is basically, "Why? Because I am God and you are not."

Look around you. Look at all of these huge, impressive, awe inspiring facets of nature. Look at the earth that I have created. Look at the clouds in the sky. Look at the sea and waves. Look at the sun as it rises at dawn. Look, maybe even, at the eclipse as it darkens the sky.

And God says, do you understand these things? I do. Were you there when they were made? I was. Guess what Job... this is my earth. This is my creation. I understand what goes on here. You don't. Don't even try. You keep asking why. Don't bother. I know why. And that's all that matters.

Like I said, he's not very gentle with Job. He's right, of course. There was more going on here than Job understood. And, thankfully, he did restore to Job all that he had lost. His home, his business, his children, his health. All of it was given back to him.

But I don't if you can call that a happy ending. I mean, is that really what God wants us to do next Monday? Look at the eclipse and say, "Wow... God's pretty big. He's way up there. I'm way down here. I better not question anything that ever happens to me or he might get angry."

No, I don't think so. Because when he sent his Son, with power over all creation, he gave to us a very different message.

That's what we see in our Gospel lesson. Jesus, walking on water. God, showing that he didn't just make this world. He came into it in human flesh. And rose above it. With power over wind and waves.

And in the midst of this world that we don't understand. That is bigger and more confusing than our minds can comprehend. That has things going on not just physically, but spiritually, that leave us grieving and hurting.

In the midst of this overwhelming world. Jesus comes to us walking on top of it all and says, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid." And even as we feel like we're drowning, begging him, "Lord, save me." Lord, why is this happening to me?" He reaches down. Takes hold of us. And asks us, "Why did you doubt?"

Why would we ever doubt the God who made the wind and waves? Why would we ever doubt the God who walked above wind and waves? Why would we ever doubt the God who loves us so much that he came to us in flesh and blood and called us to stand on the water beside him?

To stand beside him as he lived. And to stand beside him as he died. God asks Job, "Have the gates of death been revealed to you, or have you seen the gates of deep darkness?"

Well, they've been revealed to Jesus. He's seen those gates of death and darkness. He's walked through them. Not as a captive, but as a victor. As a conquer. As the God who laid the foundation of the earth. With the power to die and rise again.

Jesus calls us to stand beside him on the waves through all the fear and doubt this world can throw at us. Because when we're standing beside him, there is no reason to be afraid. He calls us to stand beside him even when we feel like we're sinking. Because the words, "Lord, save me," are the most powerful prayer the world has ever known.

Job wanted to know why he was suffering. And so do we. God's answer to us now is really not that much different than it was then. But with one key difference.

Instead of answering us from the heights of heaven, God answers us right here on earth. Through His Son. Who stands on the waves. Who suffers right along side us. Who shows us that the God who made this earth with incomprehensible power and wisdom, also loves us with a love that is beyond our understanding.

So that we might look at all the amazing wonders of this creation – earth and sea and clouds and sun – and see not just a God who is bigger than us. But also a God who became one of us. And says to each one of us, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.” Amen.