

A Cloud of Witnesses Week 2

Job and his comforters: A voice from the whirlwind

Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.
“Hear, and I will speak;
I will question you, and you declare to me.”
I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear,
but now my eye sees you. Job 42.3-5

Read the book of Job

Perhaps you might be led this week to turn to the Book of Job – not an easy read – and though it ends well, not a feel-good story. It’s a book for those seasons of our experience when not much makes sense and the answers others have given us fail to fit our questions – yet God is there.

As you read the book of Job, how are these words and images in conversation with your own experience?



The fruit of difficult times

God delivers the afflicted by their affliction and opens their ears by adversity.
[Job 36.15]

How has your ear been opened by past experiences of struggle, loss or pain? The events of those times may not have been good in themselves nor directly brought about by God. Nevertheless, unexpected fruit came from them.

A particular time may come into your awareness.

- What was happening for you then?
- What did you come to see differently through this experience?
- How did this experience shape how you saw yourself?
- What new direction did it lead you in.
- What happened within your relationship with God?

A moment of encounter

Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind [Job 38.1]

Paint or draw this moment of encounter in Job's life. Your image may be more abstract than figurative, using colours and shapes freely as your imagination leads you.

Alternatively, write a poem about a moment of encounter with God in your own life.

Living lightly and generously

Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked shall I return there.

The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away.

Blessed be the name of the Lord [Job 1.21]

Perhaps there is more than one way of hearing these words.

On the one hand we might understand that there is no security about anything – we cannot keep anything in our safe possession.

On the other, these words might help us see that everything is gift. We too are part of creation – we have our day and then are gone. We can hoard nothing, but we can live beautifully like the stars, rivers, trees and birds to whom we belong: – by our very being, blessing the name of the Lord.

- Is there anything you have held on to with a tight grip that you now sense God is inviting you to release?
- Is there any way, today, you experience God's inviting you to live more freely, generously or expressively?

Where is wisdom to be found?

Surely there is a place for silver, and a place for gold to be refined...

But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?

[From Job 28]

Job's three friends offer neat explanations for his condition – answers that do not match his experience or match his questions. All of were brought up to understand the world in a particular way. Our formation will have shaped our sense of who we are and how we should live our life. We will also have either been given, or acquired, a particular understanding of God. And then the day comes when these answers prove to be too small. They no longer match our experience. The truth lies elsewhere – though we may not be clear in the moment of what this truth is.

- Is there a particular understanding of self, God or the shape of your life that you now feel it is time to relinquish?
- What glimpses of truth are beginning to emerge for you?
- Does this new perspective invite you to change direction in some way? If so, how will you go with it?

Silence and wonder

Be still and know that I am God

[Psalm 46.10]

When and where are you led to a place of wonder and silence? Spend 5 minutes each day this week in contemplative silence in the presence of whatever causes you to

wonder and where words fail. Spend time looking at the stars...or the greenness of new leaves...listen to the song of a blackbird...gaze at an icon...listen to a piece of music that touches you...



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