



Sermon Transcription • Abbotsford

God of the Storm - (Job 42:1-6)

Pastor Jeff Bucknam

[Please Note: This transcript has been lightly edited for ease of reading. Also, some headings have been added in square brackets to aid the reader in locating portions of the sermon.]

In his excellent little book called *The Unspeakable*, Os Guinness, who is an apologist, an American apologist (he's from the US now, but he grew up in England), he retells a story, it's a real story, about a real family that faced real suffering. So I'm going to read to you what it is that he wrote there, because he writes it with such heart. Here's what he says,

"Gerald Sittser was a college professor living with his wife and four children in the Northwestern part of the United States. Nothing could have been more normal than the day on which all six of them packed themselves and their grandmother into a minivan and set off for an Indian reservation in Idaho. The Sittsers were homeschooling their children, and since the lesson was on Native American culture, they decided to take a field trip and introduce their children to a powwow at a Native American reservation. With Gerald's mother visiting and eager to join the excursion, their excitement was palpable, and the prospects of a vivid teaching experience were strong. All went well. Dinner that evening provided the opportunity to talk with the tribal leaders about their project and about problems facing the tribe, such as alcoholism. When dinner was over, the family strolled to the gymnasium where the powwow had started and sat next to a tribal leader, who explained the dances the tribe was performing and the dress the dancers were wearing. After a long, full day, the moment came when the Sittser children had had enough, and so they all returned to the minivan and set off for home, tired but happy. Ten minutes later their world changed forever. A drunken local, driving at 140 km/h with his pregnant wife next to him, also drunk, jumped his lane and smashed head-on into the minivan in the darkness. When Gerald, dazed, breathless, and in pain, was able to look back at the rest of his family, he was faced with terror on the faces of his surviving children and horror all around him. Helpless, the father watched his wife, daughter, and mother all die before him—three generations of his family in a few terrible minutes. Those moments are etched in Gerald Sittser's mind forever. Carnage, pandemonium, and panic, with lights flashing, orders barking, emergency vehicles circling, helicopters whirring overhead, and his children crying and groaning. But already there was the choking grip of anguish, the vice-like realization that darkness had descended and life would never be the same. His family as he had known it had been obliterated. Sixty seconds had changed the world."

So why do things like that happen? If we're Christians in the room, we're going to believe a couple things about God. We're going to say them over and over to ourselves through all the ages. We're



going to say, “God is sovereign, he has power over the events of the world, and he is good. He has a special care for his people.” So, how is it that sovereign, powerful God, who is also good, does not stop something like that from happening? Because let’s be honest, it wouldn’t be that hard to stop it, right? I mean, the Sittsers could have lost their keys, I lose my keys all the time. The drunk couple could have fallen over in their drunkenness prior to getting into the car, at least delaying their trip by, what, 10 seconds, so that the Sittsers could get by the other car before it jumped the lane. Why did it jump right at the right moment to hit them? God doesn’t even need to do something that difficult to stop it from happening. The question that plagues us, quite honestly, is, why God, don’t you do it? Why don’t you change this from taking place? Why is it, in your providence, that you’ve allowed these particular things to take place? And how could we say that you’re sovereign and loving in a world where this sort of thing happens? Listen, you’ve had that question, right? I didn’t, probably, need to read you that story in order to provoke your mind toward that question. It’s probably the one that kind of sits underneath the surface in most of your life, and when things don’t go your way, you ask it. Maybe not with a fist clenched to heaven, but at least you’re asking, God, why can’t things go right? Why can’t you, sovereign, good God, care for me better than you do? Why is most of my life Plan B, or C, or Q?

Sometimes we think that if we could just get a moment with God. Because in our questions, in our hearts and fists shaking at heaven, God doesn’t always answer. If we could just get a moment with him where he would respond, and we could have an audience, you know, in a little room, and he sits in his chair and we sit in our chair, and we just quietly, even, explain to him our case. “My life would be better had that not happened, and you have kind of done wrong here by allowing it to take place.” If we could just have that meeting with him, things would go well.

The story of Job is a story about a guy who lost everything, who wanted to have a meeting with God, and God obliged. So what I want to do, it’s a strange passage of Scripture, in the middle of this series called “Stranger Things” where the Bible’s full of all sorts of weird stuff. And in this case, a meeting with the Almighty is one of those strange things. So what we want to do in the next few minutes, is I actually want to focus in on Job 42:1-6, but prior to getting there, I’ve got to tell you the whole story of Job, okay? So we’ll do this in two stages. The whole story of Job first, and then I want to focus in on Job 42:1-6. The second part is shorter than the first part. Just don’t freak out. [Laughter] Because we’re going to do the whole book first. Here we go.

[Job’s Story]

Here’s Job’s story. So he’s a wealthy guy. Like, wealthier than most people around him. But he didn’t get his wealth through cheating and lying to people, he’s a righteous guy too. Loves God, loves his family. His family gets together regularly at one of the kids’ houses, so that they can have a truly enjoyable Thanksgiving dinner. So it’s not your family here. [Laughter] He’s not worried about what Uncle Joe’s going to say, and whether his sister’s going to freak out. They like each other in this family. It even says that Job, after they have these feasts, Job will go and he’ll offer sacrifices on behalf of his children. That’s how much he loves God, and that’s how much he loves his kids. He wants them always to be right before God, and for the most part, they are. In his community, he’s



viewed as a star, wonderful man. Upstanding man, for all the right reasons. People would walk by him on the street and say, “God is with him.” All the evidence pointed that way.

So that’s what’s going on on the earth, but the scene shifts to a heavenly court. And don’t ask me to explain all the nuances of this, but basically God’s sitting on his throne, and Satan is sort of just wandering through the heavenly court. And God says to Satan, “Hey, have you noticed Job? He’s a pretty good guy.” And Satan says, “You know, he’s only a really good guy because you coddle him. You do realize that the only reason that people ever really love you is because you’re really nice to them, right? And if you make their lives cushy, who’s not going to love you? But if you let me have a go at him, if you let me remove all of that stuff that he really likes in his life, if you let me take all that away, he’s going to curse you to your face.” And God’s saying, “Oh, so you actually think that the reason people love me is because I coddle them? Okay, so this is kind of a...okay, this is a test case. Do your worst. You can’t touch his body, but you can touch everything else.” So Satan does. Job 1:13-19,

“One day when Job’s sons and daughters were feasting at the oldest brother’s house, a messenger arrived at Job’s home with this news: ‘Your oxen were plowing, with the donkeys feeding beside them, when the Sabeans [our wicked neighbours over there] raided us. They stole all the animals and killed all the farmhands. I am the only one who escaped to tell you.’ While he was still speaking, another messenger arrived with this news: ‘The fire of God [lightning from heaven] has fallen from heaven and burned up your sheep and all the shepherds. I am the only one who escaped to tell you.’ While he was still speaking, a third messenger arrived with this news: ‘Three bands of Chaldean raiders [you know, your other wicked neighbours,] have stolen your camels and killed your servants. I am the only one who escaped to tell you.’ While he was still speaking, another messenger arrived with this news: ‘Your sons and daughters [Job] were feasting in their oldest brother’s home. Suddenly, a powerful wind swept in from the wilderness and hit the house on all sides. The house collapsed, and [Job] all your children are dead. I am the only one who escaped to tell you.’”

There are 60 seconds that will change the world. Four people standing in front of him in his doorway, and his life has been obliterated. What do you do in that moment? What do you do when you get that phone call? Here’s what he did. Job 1:20-22,

“Job stood up and tore his robe in grief. Then he shaved his head and fell to the ground to worship. [Come on man, are you crazy Job? I get angry when I get the wrong plane seat. And there you are worshiping in this moment?] He said, ‘I came naked from my mother’s womb, and I will be naked when I leave. The LORD gave me what I had, and the LORD has taken it away. Praise the name of the LORD!’ In all of this, Job did not sin by blaming God.”

Now, that’s remarkable faithfulness. So you can understand why it is up in the heavenly court, God’s thinking, uh, bet one. So we shift scenes again. And up in the heavenly court now, Satan comes for a second time, he’s wandering through, and God again says, “Hey, Satan, it didn’t work, did it? He’s been faithful.”



“Well, the only reason he’s been faithful, God, quite honestly, is because you have not let me touch his body. These people, I tell you, if they have a hangnail, or if there’s a problem with their leg or something, they will start cursing you to your face. So yes, everything else went wrong, but if you let me touch his body, if you let me give him illness, then he’ll curse you. I promise.” God says, “Alright, just to prove again. You can’t kill him, but yes, you can touch his body. So Job 2:7-9,

“So Satan left the LORD's presence, and he struck Job with terrible boils from head to foot. [Ginormous, festering pimples. Open wounds.] Job scraped his skin with a piece of broken pottery as he sat among the ashes. [Mighty Job, well respected in his community, righteous man, now sitting on a pile of ashes, had broken a bowl, a pottery bowl, and he’s scraping the puss off of his arms and legs and back.] His wife said to him, ‘Are you still trying to maintain your integrity? Curse God and die.’”

Now I’m going to be honest, I’m kind of with her here at that point. Aren’t you? I mean, here, Job, come on. If the God that you serve is treating you like this, perhaps you should tell him what you really think. If your whole life is boiled down now to this, he’s removed everything from you, and you’re still serving him, you’re crazy. Job 2:10, “No,” says Job,

““You talk like a foolish woman. Should we accept only good things from the hand of God and never anything bad?’ So in all of this, Job said nothing wrong.”

I mean, after these scenes, you’re like, this guy is unbelievably faithful. What a good man! His words are uplifting and positive, right? If the book would only end there. But it doesn’t. His friends show up. And they begin really well. When they show up, they keep their mouths shut, they just sit on the floor with their suffering brother. Job 2:11-13,

“When three of Job's friends heard of the tragedy he had suffered, they got together and traveled from their homes to comfort and console him. [So they take a trip to his house.] Their names were Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. [Different regions these folks are from, different families and tribes, all making a trip now.] When they saw Job from a distance, they scarcely recognized him [sitting on his ashes, scraping his body with his broken pottery]. Wailing loudly, they tore their robes and threw dust into the air over their heads to show their grief. Then they sat on the ground with him for seven days and nights. No one said a word to Job, for they saw that his suffering was too great for words.”

This is easily their best moment. By quite a distance their best moment. You do realize, just as we pause here, you do realize there is a difference between actual answers that should be given to suffering and theoretical answers that are given to suffering, yes? So what I mean by that is, in the moment, when somebody is suffering, what they need to hear when they’re crying, “Why?” to God, instinctively, is different than what we’re going to say in a classroom five years later, when we’re talking about the issues of God and suffering in the world. In that classroom we’re going to go to the Bible, we’re going to look at all the different things the Bible has to say and we’re going to treat it like a medical student treats a cadaver. It doesn’t have any feelings involved. You just dissect it. And there



are legitimate theological answers that can be given to the issues of God and suffering in those moments, that are helpful, good answers to the issue. But if you come along in that moment of suffering, when the person hears that their children are gone, or that they are suffering from cancer, or they're dealing with this obliteration of their life, if you come along and you give those answers, "Well, you know, the reason this is happening is because people have a free will and God is sovereign, and these things have to go..." You are not a good friend. You know when you're a good friend? When you keep your mouth shut in that minute. And you show a kind of solidarity in grief.

One of the worst days of my life was when I found out that my mother had hit her head overnight and was basically in her deathbed, and died only a few days later. She was coming back from the bathroom, she fell, she hit her head on the dresser near their bed. She had bleeding in her head, and then a few days later she died. All very sudden. And it rocked me to my core. It was about seven years ago that this took place. The year after that happened, I had not seen my entire family, my sisters, my father very much, all together anyway. And the year after it happened, we all happened to be in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I was there for a conference, I was staying in a room with Kyle Meeker, our pastor of discipleship, who's been a friend of mine for twenty-something years. And I was supposed to go to my sister's house where we were all--my whole family was going to get together, and basically the one year anniversary of my mother's death. And every part of my being didn't want to be there. I knew I had to go, I knew it was the right thing to do, but physically, I felt like I was going to throw up by the whole thing. I just wasn't in the place to remember it. I remember heading toward the door, I got up off the bed in our hotel room, my bed, and Kyle was over on his, and I just headed toward the door, and I was looking down in a bag, looking for some stuff I had to take with me, and my legs honestly, just gave way, I just had to sit down and crumple on the floor in tears. And I was just, I'm not a cryer, but here I am on the floor, blubbering. I couldn't do it. My friend Kyle is a doctor. Not medically so, thank God. [laughter] He's Dr. Kyle Meeker, he's a smart guy. He's spent an awful lot of time studying theology. He knows lots of theoretical answers to the issues of suffering and why God allows it in the world. But my friend Kyle came over to me, he sat next to me about three, four feet away with his back to the wall, sitting next to me, and in the silence he hung his head together with me and just let me know he was there. He's a good friend.

Job's friends were good friends at the beginning. And then they started talking. And like many of our friends, we wish they wouldn't have. And what they say when they start talking to Job is, their argument here is, "Look Job, the way the world works is that if you do good stuff, God will give you good stuff. If you do bad stuff, God will give you bad stuff. And so if you're facing bad stuff in your life, it is a signal to you that you have done bad stuff. That's the rule, man. So if you're sitting on your ash heap scraping your body with pottery, and your wife is left and your kids are all dead, that's a sign that you've done something wrong. So look back in your life, try to figure out what it is." Listen to the way they talk, Job 22:4-11,

"Is it because you're so pious that he accuses you and brings judgment against you? No, it's because of your wickedness! There's no limit to your sins [Job]. For example, you must have lent money to your friend and demanded clothing as security. Yes, you stripped him to the bone. You must have refused water for the thirsty and food for the hungry. You probably think



the land belongs to the powerful and only the privileged have a right to it! You must have sent widows away empty-handed and crushed the hopes of orphans. That is why you are surrounded by traps and tremble from sudden fears. That is why you cannot see in the darkness, and waves of water cover you.”

“Just look back at your life, man! Surely there’s something in there that you just don’t know you did. You probably passed by somebody on the road and didn’t offer them hospitality, like you should have, and God is now judging you for that act. Look back, man. What do you see?” And Job’s response is, “I’ve been innocent. I know, I know, I know, I’ve looked across my life, and I’ve done nothing wrong. I don’t see any moments of quiet, hidden sin or anything, I’ve been righteous, man, at every turn. I’ve been innocent.” And he starts believing that God is treating him unjustly because of this. “If the rule is that God treats good people in good ways, I’ve been good. If I could just have an audience with the Almighty, if I could just have him in a room, and I explain this to him, he would see that he’s been wrong all along. And I’d be coming out smelling like a rose if I had that moment with God. Job 31:35-37, he says,

“If only someone would listen to me! Look, I will sign my name to my defense. Let the Almighty answer me. Let my accuser write out the charges against me. I would face the accusation proudly. I would wear it like a crown. For I would tell him exactly what I have done. I would come before him like a prince.”

“Man, I would win this debate, if I could only have this meeting with God.” Have you ever seen the movie, in the mid 1990s, *Bruce Almighty*? Jim Carrey’s in it, okay a few of you...this totally dates me. But you know, I think you can watch scenes of it you YouTube. It’s an interesting story about a guy who ends up taking God’s job just to see how hard it is. But at the beginning of the movie, Jim Carrey’s character, Bruce, he loses his job to his rival, a promotion and then he gets fired for the way that he acted toward the guy. He then loses his girlfriend, and then he crashes his car. When he crashes his car, there’s rosary beads, you know Catholic rosary beads, in the car, and he picks them up and he walks out to the side of the car on the middle of a bridge, apparently in Buffalo. And he’s standing there, and he starts to shake his fist at heaven, and he has an argument with God. And I am now going to try to reenact that scene for you. [Laughter] Okay? <Yelling> “Fine!” He says as he shakes his fist at heaven with those rosary beads in his hand.] “Fine! The gloves are off pal! C’mon! Lemme see a little wrath! Smite me, O Mighty Smiter!” [Laughter] <In normal voice> Good, eh? Yeah. [Applause] You’re the one who should be fired!” He says, “The only one around here not doing his job is you! Answer me!” Now, admittedly, Job does not have, probably, the facial contortions that Jim Carrey has, or shaking his fist, but that’s his request. “I need you to answer me, God, I need a meeting with you, and you’ll see that you’ve been wrong.”

Now here’s the crazy part about this. Everybody who suffers in this room has had this impulse in their heart. What’s crazy about this scene is that God says, “Okay. Where do you want to meet? Are you okay doing it right here?” And God comes. And when God comes, he comes in a great wind. Now man, if you’ve been listening to me at all, and if you read this entire story, your mind will go back and you’ll say, what was it that crushed that house that his kids were in? Oh yeah, it was a great wind. And



then God comes and visits Job in a great wind. [Laughter] And here's how that discussion goes, Job 38:1-11,

"Then the LORD answered Job from the whirlwind: 'Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorant words? [I mean, you think you know so much, Job, clearly you want to have an accusation against me, and you're saying, essentially, that your wisdom is greater than mine. So who is this who's questioning my wisdom in his ignorance? So let's establish now whether or not you have the credentials, the wisdom credentials to judge me and the way I do things.] Brace yourself like a man, because I have some questions for you, and you must answer them. Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell me, if you know so much. Who determined its dimensions and stretched out the surveying line? What supports its foundations, and who laid its cornerstone as the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy? Who kept the sea inside its boundaries as it burst from the womb, and as I clothed it with clouds and wrapped it in thick darkness? For I locked it behind barred gates, limiting its shores. I said, 'This far and no farther will you come. Here your proud waves must stop!'"

"Job, where were you when I stopped the ocean? If you presume to have knowledge from which you can instruct me, I need to know first whether or not your knowledge base is like mine. Your power is like mine." He actually starts getting sarcastic here. Job 38:19-21,

"Where does light come from, and where does darkness go? Can you take each to its home? Do you know how to get there? But of course you know all this! For you were born before it was all created, and you are so very experienced [Job]!"

You get his point. Halfway through these questions...he just keeps coming, and question after question after question after question. Halfway through, Job is tapping out. Seriously, he's on the mat going, "I'm done, I give up." Right? And God's like, "Woah woah woah woah woah, what do you mean you're done? You wanted a meeting where we could ask questions, and I have some more." [Laughter] So, the second half, he starts asking Job questions regarding what's called the Leviathan. The Leviathan was considered to be the sea monster of that day, okay? People didn't scuba much in those days, and so what was under the surface of the sea was largely unknown and chaotic, and very dangerous. Right? It was common for people to go out on a sailboat and not come back. They were grabbed by something underneath the surface, and they were drowned. So they had pictures on coins of a seven-headed snake called the Leviathan. Nothing could govern the Leviathan. Nothing could control the Leviathan. It was the top of the food chain, and people were freaked out by it, right? The demogorgon. It was just evil, a horrible thing. So God takes this image of the Leviathan, and he starts to ask him questions about that. Job 41:1-5,

"Can you catch Leviathan with a hook or put a noose around its jaw? Can you tie it with a rope through the nose or pierce its jaw with a spike? Will it beg you for mercy or implore you for pity? Will it agree to work for you, to be your slave for life? [Listen to this one.] Can you make it a pet like a bird, or give it to your little girls to play with?"



Isn't that a great image? "Can you wrap the leash, the choker chain around it's neck, hand it to your daughter, and she can just go walking down the street with it? Can you do this, Job? Because I can." God asks him over 70 questions. I'm convinced that after those questions there is a protracted silence. And then Job responds.

[Three Lessons Regarding God and Our Suffering]

And in Job 42:1-6, I think he gives you three lessons that he learns from this experience. So all of that was introduction. Don't worry, this is not going to last that much longer. Three things that he learns, okay, in Job 42:1-6. Number one, what he learns is that God is sovereign over our suffering. God is sovereign over our suffering. Listen to what he says in Job 42:1. First words out of Job's mouth in response to all these questions:

"I know that you can do anything, and no one can stop you."

"So looking at all that just took place, here's what I conclude: you can do anything and no one can stop you." See, I note that because one of the ways that we frequently try to get God off the hook for suffering is we say, okay, God is sovereign and God is good, and therefore why is there suffering? We end up getting God off the hook by saying, well we know God is good, but maybe he's just not as sovereign as we thought. I mean, maybe human free will and all that sort of stuff, it can trump him. Maybe there's just some stuff God can't do. And so, Rabbi Harold Kushner, back in 1977, his 14 year old son died of a disease that could not be cured at the time. And he was struggling as a Jewish man to understand, how could God let this happen to my son? So he wrote a book a few years later, it was published in 1981, and it was a hugely popular book, still published today. And it was called *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. And in it his argument was basically, look, there are limits to God's power. That's the only way that I can come to a conclusion about all of this, and make sense of God and even love God after this. Here's what he said,

"Some things are too difficult for even God. I can worship a God who hates suffering, but cannot eliminate it, more easily than I can worship a God who chooses to make children suffer and die, for whatever exalted reason."

Like, if I have to choose, I want a God who can't do all that stuff but really likes me, as opposed to the one who really can do it and might have a reason outside of my knowledge for it. So that's the God who is, is the one who is trying really hard, but he can't quite make it. And more recent writers have written about this very popular view. God is like a jockey in the world and you and I are like a thoroughbred. And you know what jockeys are like, get on the back of a thoroughbred and start riding it, and thoroughbreds are horses, so they're kind of dumb So they go this way, you know, and they go that way and they go backwards, they stop. Sometimes we do all that, and so he gets the whip out and moves it and all that, and eventually good jockeys get the horse where they want it to go, but in the middle they lose a few battles along the way. That's like God. God is trying his best. The whole story of *Bruce Almighty* is, man if you had to do his job, you wouldn't do as well.



So here's my question, that is a popular view. Here's my question: when you read the book of Job and you get to chapter 42 after all the questions are raised, is that the view that you have of God? If you could interview Job in this one moment and say to him, "Hey, so what do you think about God?" Is his answer, "Well, you know, I found here that God, there's some stuff he can't do." No, his answer is clear, "I know you can do anything and no one can stop you." Look, it is a dead end, biblically speaking, to say that God is not sovereign. He is in control, completely, utterly, in control. Now that leaves us with a problem. So what else does Job learn? Number one, God is sovereign over our suffering. But second, he has reasons for our suffering. Look at Job 42:3,

"You asked [says Job], 'Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorance?' It is I—and I was talking about things I knew nothing about, things far too wonderful for me."

I realize in this present moment, God, that there is something outside of my realm of knowledge that you understand that I don't understand. And so, even though I accused you before, I'm telling you now, I actually think you're wiser than me."

There was a very horrible event that took place in 1999 in New Jersey. A Mexican family had come across the border from Mexico, and they had come through before there was a wall down there...you can laugh at that. [Laughter] They came through the border and they came all the way up through the United States. At several points along the way, they were at the edge of death. Several different things took place to this family. They made it miraculously to New Jersey where they ended up getting some social help. They lived, actually, still as homeless folks, but largely helped, and were getting settled into their own home. But it was very near a railroad track. They got standing in the US legal standing in the United States, and so the father went back down to Mexico, and he was going to bring all the family's things back up with him legally, and it was going to be this great celebration. You know, rags to riches, basically, story, a story of perseverance and great victory in the end. Well, the father went down to Mexico, and while he was gone, a few days later, the mother and their kids were walking across the railroad tracks to get to a location on the other side, to get some financial help, and they were killed by the train. When the story started to be unearthed by reporters and what this family had gone through, there were lots and lots of op-ed pieces being written in the newspapers in 1999 in New York City. The authors were saying, "Okay so, for all of you people who believe in God out there, I want you to make sense of this for us. How is it that this family is protected all along the way, and you guys are all going to claim, 'Oh, God was with them, God was with them,' and finally, at this point when they finally get their feet on the ground, they're dead. Isn't it true, in fact, that God's *not* in control, isn't it true, in fact, that he's capricious and mean-spirited, isn't it true, in fact, that there is *no reason* for this?" Now, I read those articles, even back in those days, and I remember thinking, man, I feel what you feel here. But here's the problem, okay? We're just going to push back a little bit on that. Is it true that because you cannot see a reason for suffering before you, there is none? Is it true that because *you* can't see a reason for suffering, there is none?

Put it to you this way. My little boy, who's not so little anymore, graduated from high school, but when he was little we were living in New Zealand, Ethan my oldest son, I remember taking him to the doctor to get his immunizations. I remember, when it's your first child and they pull out that needle and it's



like this long <extends arms> and you're like, "Wow, that's going to go right through him." And the doctor's like, <in a sinister voice> "Oh yes, it is." [Laughter] <In a normal voice> A little weird. So, I remember Ethan was sitting on my lap and he was bouncing up and down on my lap, and he was so excited. He was facing me, looking at me. And they gave him a lollipop, you know, and so he was sucking this lollipop thinking, the doctor is the best ever. I think this guy's great, Dad. And he's bouncing with his lollipop. And all of sudden, the doctor pulls out the needle, I can see it, he can't, my son can't. And all of a sudden he stabs my kid in the thigh, and he pulls that weapon out from his thigh, and he's sitting there with it in the air like this <holding up his hand> and I remember the look on my son's face was one of pure betrayal. [Laughter] He looked at me like, what just happened? And he looked over to the doctor, and the doctor's holding the knife in his hand, or you know, the spear in his hand <evil laughter>. And my son looks back at me like, Father, you let this man...who is this guy? What are you doing? Aahhh! And then they freak out like crazy.

So here's the thing. In this moment, I suppose I could have said to my son, "Son, let me instruct you on the finer nuances of pharmaceuticals. And the nature of the immunization is, if you get a small amount of the..." My son doesn't have a realm of knowledge to understand the stabbing. I do. My son's knowledge was this big. <Makes tiny circle with his hand> <Whispering> Still is. [Laughter] <Normal voice> It's tiny. His knowledge was tiny. My knowledge was a little bit bigger than his. And outside of the realm of his knowledge was my knowledge, and the doctor's knowledge, that if you actually are stabbed on this particular occasion, and they inject this stuff inside of you, it will protect you from greater harm in the future. Now I could try to explain it to him in that moment, but these are things that are too wonderful for him to know. So here's my question for you: is it not possible that in the suffering that you and I face, that you and I have this much <makes tiny circle with his hand> knowledge about the world around us, but there is something outside of our knowledge that God has access to? Wisdom that he has access to, that actually makes sense of what is happening right now? And isn't it really the case that what God's ultimately asking us to do, what he's asking Job to do, is to trust his wisdom? Isn't he just saying to Job, "Job, which one of us is wiser here? Can you rest in my wisdom?" If God is big enough to stop suffering, he's big enough to have reasons for it we know nothing about. Because that's got to be the case, isn't it? I mean, if you want to be angry with God, and you say, "You're doing wrong," that you're assuming God is big enough to stop the suffering. So if he's big enough to stop the suffering, he also has to be big enough to have reasons for it that we know nothing about.

Okay, but how do I live in suffering? At the end, how do I do it? I said there are three things that Job learned, here's the third. I said first one, God is sovereign over our suffering, second, God has reasons for our suffering. Finally, God is the answer for our suffering. Listen, these are his last phrases. Job 42:4-6,

"You said, 'Listen and I will speak! I have some questions for you, and you must answer them.' I had only heard about you before, but now I have seen you with my own eyes. I take back everything I said, and I sit in dust and ashes to show my repentance."

What answer does this guy get to his particular suffering? Does God explain it to him? Does God ever



come along to Job? He does to us, we read it. But does God ever come along to Job and say, “Actually, what happened, Job, is that Satan was wandering through and I said, ‘What about Job?’ And here’s the whole history. And in fact, the things that you’ve just faced have cosmic significance that will be a story to be remembered and told for ages to come, that will encourage faithful people regarding suffering. That was the purpose, Job.” Does he ever get that information? No. So what does he get? Well, he gets God. “I had heard about you before, God, but now I see you.”

My little girl, Sophie, when she was really little, we used to take her swimming and I had this habit of kind of tossing her into the water first, and then just leaving her. No, [laughter] I tossed her in and then I would jump in right after her. But there would be this moment where she would come in and she would be freaking out a little bit. I would come in right after her, and I’d grab her. I remember what she was like, though, every time I’d toss her in. She would start to flail and be really worried, and her eyes would dart all over the place. And I would come in right after her, and I would grab her leg, and I’d pull her close to me. And she’d still be darting, eyes darting, and freaking out, and as soon as her eyes met mine, I’d say, “Sophie, Sophie, Sophie, Sophie, I’m here.” And she would look in my eyes, and her whole body would just go limp, like relaxed. She’s still in the water, the circumstances are still a bit of a mess for her, but what she has that she didn’t have before is the grip of her dad. I didn’t give her answers for why I chucked her in, I didn’t give her answers for why is it that she can’t swim in this particular moment in her life. What I gave her was me. What God wants to give you is him. And it is quite possible that most of us have had 60 seconds change our life in one way or another, and deep down inside of our hearts, we’ve kind of held a little bit of a grudge about it. And if we could have a moment with him in a quiet room, we would explain to him our case and we would understand that he is wiser. And God’s saying to you what he said to Job. “One of us is wiser than the other. So I want you to look deeply in my eyes and know that I’m bigger than the questions you’re asking.” Let me pray for us.

Lord, I’m deeply helped by this book and your word in it. Help us to know that the questions we ask aren’t as big as the God we ask them to. And I pray, Father, that you would grant us wisdom to see what it is that you see, Father, but also, to ultimately trust in you, to trust that you are doing all things well even when we can’t see it. You are God and we are not. So Father, help us even in this moment to surrender our hearts to you, surrender our wills to you, surrender our futures to you, deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow you. Trusting that you have eternity in your hands, and you can do all things, and you have made a covenant commitment to those of us who have had faith in you, that you will never leave us or forsake us. You are sovereign over us, and you are working for our good. So Father, we pray that you would reinforce that to us now, and in the days to come. In Jesus’ name. Amen.