

A conversation with the first lesson: Job 38:1-11

Who of us has not argued with God?

Who of us has not said in desperation, “Where are you?...You promised!

“I counted on you! You blessed me! You said that I am sealed with the cross of Christ forever.

“You blessed me with a wonderful partner... We did not have enough time...

“You blessed me with wonderful children. I cannot stand to see them in pain...

“You gave me a career. Now it seems you have taken it from me...

“We built this beautiful home... Now we’ve lost it!

“I don’t understand... If only you would answer out of this.... This whirlwind!

“But your answer sounds so offensive... ‘Where was I ?... Where were you?’”

When it feels like God has let you down... left you hanging... say so! To cry out is not the end of faith, it is clinging in faith, trying to remain connected. Trying to find a companion, a shepherd in the chaos.

You are in good company. Moses argued... frequently... Jacob wrestled even!... Jeremiah contested saying, “I did not sign up for this!” And Jonah... and Elijah.... Are they not heroes of our faith? Heroes, not failures. But they were human. Patience wore out. Blood spilled.

If only we had the faith like Job, to insist, “I demand an explanation!”

Then, getting that off our chests, maybe we would hear God’s answer.

God might say, “There is nothing to explain. I can’t explain cancer... or a recession... or a divorce... or a car accident. You don’t *want* an explanation. An explanation only contains words for your head. And your head already hurts with distrust and disappointment and confusion.

“Let me speak instead to your heart.... I love you... I hate to see you in pain... I wish I could take your place!

“I’m here.... I’m not going anywhere. I am not responsible for what went wrong. But I promise I will make it right! It may still hurt. It *will* still hurt. It will feel like everything is lost and you might as well crawl under a rock!

“But it will be alright....I will roll the rock away.”

A conversation with Psalm 107:1-3,23-32

“God’s mercy endures forever!

“ I sang that hymn. I believed it.... I felt it.... I trusted it...

But then came war... and famine... tornadoes...fire... unemployment... a diagnosis from out of nowhere... leaving me nowhere...

“ I remember being told that you redeem your people. Somehow I thought that meant you protected your people... You, know, green pastures and still waters and a rod to beat off the bears and thieves.

“I never really understood that to be *redeemed* meant first to be in slavery to be trapped, to be oppressed, to be helpless, to be no body. I never understood... until now. Now that is, I get the oppression and helplessness part. I’m still looking for the redemption....

“Now I only know rising seas... and being tossed left and right... and up and down...

“I can’t sleep... I can’t eat... I don’t know who to trust. I don’t know what to do...

“I’m just staggering, reeling, like I’m drunk... without the numbness... only the pain and the fog of the morning... and the weeks and years that follow.

“I cried to you... until there were no more tears... I cried to you... until I had no more voice...

“There were only the crows and the buzzards that came and circled... and jeered... and gawked...

“I thought I heard you whispering once. Someone called... Someone visited... They just held me and listened. But they did not judge me. In fact, they said nothing. They just showed up.

“And they said, they actually said, ‘I don’t know what to say.’”

“That’s when I thought I heard you whispering.... Saying something like ‘Peace...Be still.’ Not just to me but to the chaos...

“I can’t say, ‘Thank you’ yet... I can’t say, “I’m sorry... For what? I don’t know what I did wrong, what I did to deserve this...

“I want to shout at *you* and scream, You... *You* apologize to me!

“But I hear nothing.... Just whispering... pssspssspssspsss.... Shhhhshhhshhh.....

“Like you’re saying, ‘It’s OK...It’s OK... I’ll wait... I’m not going anywhere... I’m here.’”

When our fists open and we can no longer defend ourselves. That’s when we hear the whispering... like to Elija and to Jonah... a still small voice.

God keeps saying over and over until we will let it in... until we pay attention to something other than our pain and our resentment and our fear... ‘I’m not going anywhere... You are mine... I am yours... There’s more to come... not more pain... well, maybe... but something else... There is more to be made known. More that will be made well... More that will be at peace...

“Your present is not what you want... It is not what I want either... But the future is mine... And the future will be yours...

“All will be well... all will be well...”

A conversation with the epistle 2 Corinthians 1:1-13

“Is this the acceptable time?”

“I don’t understand time.

“I was taught history in school and Sunday School. I was taught there is beauty in the land and glory in the people. And harmony between nature and humanity. It’s all good. It’s all good.

“But now I learn that what I was taught is incomplete. It is misleading. Sometimes it is an outright, bold-faced lie!

“Those green pastures and lands flowing with milk and honey are really fields with weeds among the wheat. Is that what you were trying to say way back when? There are weeds among the wheat.

“Well, what do we do now with the weeds? Reparations? Rebellion? Revolution? Injustice? Prejudice? Corruption? Arrogance? Greed? How many varieties of weeds do we need?

“Is now an acceptable time? A different time?”

“Your witnesses past wrote about afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless anxiety, hunger...

“I thought it was only on the news... at six and ten... now it’s twenty-four hours a day. I thought it was only “over there”. But it’s getting too close to home! It’s in *my* government. *My* job. *My* neighborhood, *My home*...

“Where do we learn purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit genuine love... not pornographic love... not manipulative love...

“I long for truthful speech...

“What keeps your people going?... Didn’t you ever want to give up? Like that night in the garden? Or in the courtyard with foul, nasty, spitting guards, who were supposedly there to keep the peace and protect the innocent? *I can’t breathe!*

“Didn’t you want to curse from the cross? It must have been so tempting!

“But that would have meant a closed heart... a hard heart... a vindictive heart, even in your holy righteousness to judge others!

“But you persisted with an open heart... a sacred heart... a heart with room for me... and those who cursed you!

“I don’t have that heart... I don’t have that faith... I long for the trust of children... I long for the innocence of children... for the security of children.

“I don’t want to fight the world... I don’t want to fight *You!*

“I don’t want to give up. But *I’m hanging on by my fingernails....*

A conversation with the gospel of Mark, chapter 4, beginning at verse fifteen

“I got this one! The disciples are exhausted. It’s so much work being kind and generous and helpful. A person just needs to escape, get away, take a cruise.

“You get in a boat. But boats keep following you! And then nature herself gets all riled up! High tides. Destructive winds. Important things get blown overboard or tossed away in desperation.

“The disciples are heaving on the ropes and heaving over the gunwales. And they scream at each other when there’s nothing more anyone else can do.

“Where are you?! Asleep in the bow. Asleep! Don’t you care?

“But you turn things around and you say to everyone else, ‘Don’t *you* know how to care? Where’s your faith?’ You say, ‘Shush now’ to the disciples.

“And then you turn to the wind and the waves and you say, ‘Shush now’ ... As if the wind with all its roaring, splashing, creaking, booming, flapping, and screaming can hear you!

“And then everything goes silent.....

“Listen, if you can do that with the winds *then*, you can certainly handle what we’re going through *now*...

“And it’s funny, all this is happening *then*... and it’s only chapter four in the story... We ain’t seen nothin’ yet...

“You cast out the demons... You raise the dead, You comfort those who mourn. You face rejection yourself! You grieve the death of your beloved cousin, John. ...Do you *quit*? No! You feed 5, 000 and heal even more that are sick. You made time for the outsiders, the outcasts, all those who do not belong and did not support you¹.... You fed another 4,000!

It seemed like you were guiding your boat to the favorite shore. But still there were winds and currents that *opposed* you. Until ... they took your life. But even then, that wasn’t the end of the story.

“What’s the end of my story?

“I’m barely hanging on!”

“Listen!” Jesus still whispers...

“Let go... I am here.... You are mine...If you fall, I will raise you up.

“If you are broken, I will heal you...

“If you are alone, I am with you...

“If you are hungry, I will feed you... Here. Take and eat.... This is my *body*... Take and drink... What more can I give you? This is my *body* – This is my *blood*.

“This is my Spirit... this is my breath.

“This is my *future*... *Your* future... The kingdom of heaven beginning today... beginning on Earth.

“Faith is not about how long you hang on. Faith is about letting go... letting me catch you. Letting me bring you Home.”

“But I am afraid. I am afraid to die!”

“I don’t want you to die... I want you to *live*... to *be well*... to *be free*... to be *at peace*.

“When did I promise you a sacred *death*? Always I wanted you to fall into the *fullness of life*!

“Remember when you were a child? You chose to jump out of a tree... off of the step... .. off of a slide... off of a dock. Into the arms. And you squealed. And you laughed.

“But by your landing into another’s arms, I too wanted no more suffering but the experience of laughter and delight.

“Those hands ready to catch you are still here. Life is not all giggles and delight.

“But let go, I will not let you fall to your destruction!

“Please, go back to the book of Job. You are *free to* – you are *expected to* - ask ‘Why?’ and resist. You could not otherwise be a *co-creator* with authority and authenticity... a *co-redeemer* without authority and authenticity. I said, ‘ You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you... And I meant it!.

“Let me be God... Receive the new life I will give... that I *am* giving...

“I need your hands to be free.... Your heart to be free. Open. Receptive.

“Let go... Open... Receive...

“ I am here to catch you... receive *you*. *This is does not mean I want you to quit and die*. It means I will catch you... and you will *live*!

“Let *me* determine your future. Come, *share my future* with me....”

Let it be so among us.... Amen.

[HangingOnByFingernails.png \(960×960\) \(hamiltonanglican.org.au\)](#)

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