

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

Sermon: "Learning to ride out the storm (Part 5)."

Scripture: Job 41:1-8, 42:1-17

Rev. Steve Filyk

July 12, 2026

Opener: Immortal, invisible, God only wise 290

Choruses: Open the eyes of my heart, Living Hope

Song after sermon: He will hold me fast (Getty)

Closer: Great is thy faithfulness 324

If you like puzzles

Whether they are crosswords, sudoku, or jigsaws

You will know that there are different levels of difficulty.

An easy jigsaw uses high-contrast images, distinct colours, and fewer pieces.

A difficult jigsaw features monochromatic areas,
subtle gradients, and 1000 pieces or more.

The hardest puzzles are not made of wood or cardboard.

They are the questions we carry through life.

Why did this happen?

Why my child?

Why my marriage?

Why this diagnosis?

Why now?

The book of Job is one of Scripture's

great attempts to wrestle with those questions.

But the book itself is a bit of a puzzle.

From the outside, the book raises questions about origin and genre.

From the inside, It asks the same questions we ask,
but refuses to provide easy answers,
and then seems to contradict its own conclusions.

Let me remind you...

The book begins with a heavenly wager about Job's devotion to God.
It continues with Job facing a series of catastrophes

and trying to understand his loss.

The bulk of the book consists of Job and his friends debating
whether his suffering must be punishment for sin.

Then God shows up and addresses Job,
but questions Job instead of explaining.

And finally, there is a surprise ending.

Job is restored, which almost seems to return us
to the very idea the book has spent forty chapters questioning—
that life operates on a simple system of reward and punishment.

So what are we to learn from his story?

In particular, what are we to learn from today's reading?

I see three lessons:

- God is greater than our understanding.
- Knowing God is more important than finding answers; and
- God is interested in making us his channels of grace.

Let's consider the first lesson:

God is greater than our understanding.

[This is something we addressed last week.]

Today's lesson begins with the end of God's speech.

After taking Job on a tour of God's work in creation,

And God's rule over the cosmos,

God describes some of the creatures he has made.

Today that speech ends with God's description of Leviathan:
 "Can you pull in Leviathan with a fishhook
 or tie down its tongue with a rope?...
 Can you fill its hide with harpoons
 or its head with fishing spears?" (Job 41:1,7)

It is unclear what sort of creature God is describing,
 But it is clearly some sort of sea monster.
 Various legends exist in various cultures,
 Which likely have real-life inspiration in creatures like the giant squid
 which grow up to 40–50 feet long,
 possess dinner-plate-sized eyes,
 and have long tentacles featuring sharp, gripping hooks.

Whatever Leviathan was, it represents everything
 That human beings cannot master.
 It is the embodiment of wildness.
 Chaos. Untameable power.
 God says, "I made that."

At the end of his speech to Job
 God invites Job to consider this frightening creature,
 A work of God's hands.
 God brings Leviathan to show-and-tell
 To remind Job of his limitations.
 It would be insane for Job
 to attempt to contain this creature.
 But if Job cannot rule over this small part of the world,
 How can Job expect to judge God's rule over creation?

God is greater than our understanding.
 That's the first lesson.

But there's more.
 Knowing God is more important than getting answers.

In what follows, Job accepts this invitation to greater humility.

When God's speech ends, Job answers the question God first asked him.
 To the question "Who is this that obscures my plans without knowledge?"
 Job confesses: "Surely I spoke of things I did not understand,
 things too wonderful for me to know." (Job 42:3)

Notice what Job doesn't say
 Job doesn't say he understands why his children died.
 Job doesn't say thank you for the explanation.
 Instead, Job realizes that some mysteries belong to God alone.

Job confesses his overreach.
 Yet at the same time, he rejoices.
 Not because he has been vindicated,
 But because God has heard his cry, his lament,
 And God has shown up to answer him.
 God has not given him any reason
 For his loss or his suffering,
 But God has spoken to him.

There is a difference between knowing about someone and knowing them.
 You can read a biography of someone.
 You can watch interviews.
 You can follow them online.
 But until you've actually met them...
 your knowledge remains second-hand.
 Job says, "My ears had heard of you...
 but now my eyes have seen you." (Job 42:5)
 And for Job this is transformative.

In the end, his suffering and subsequent encounter
 Serve to bring Job into a deeper and richer understanding of God.
 Job does not move from faith to faithlessness to faith again
 but moves from knowing about God to knowing God more deeply.

Job teaches us that God is greater than our understanding,
 And that knowing God is more important than finding answers.

Which brings us to our final lesson
The Book of Job reveals that God is interested in making us
channels of grace.

We might expect that after all that has happened
God would tell Job, "Now go enjoy your restored life."
Instead, the first thing God does is give Job a ministry.
Think about that.
Job's suffering has not disqualified him.
It has prepared him.

God addresses Eliphaz to express his displeasure
With him and his friends—those men who have argued with Job.
God declares twice, "you have not spoken the truth about me,
as my servant Job has" (Job 42:7)

In order to atone for their sin
They are to go to Job, and offer a sacrifice to the Lord,
And have Job pray for them.
"[Their] offering, by itself, will not suffice.
Job must pray; it is his prayer
which will incline God to deal graciously with them. (Janzen *Job* 264)

In an ironic twist, these friends
Who judged Job to be in the wrong
Are to ask Job to intercede with God on their behalf.

Job intercedes. And God accepts Job's prayers.
Job is not only faithful to God
But brings his friends into a right relationship with God.

He then also receives gifts from his family and community,
Who had previously avoided him in his suffering.
The community gathers around him, and there is
Reconciliation and restoration.

At our Bible Studies, it was noted

How Job points us to Christ.
Jesus is the innocent sufferer.
He prays for those who have wronged him.
Through his intercession, sinners are reconciled to God.

Don't be distracted by the doubling of his wealth in the epilogue,
Or how Job begins a new family,
this happily-ever-after that closes the story.

The greatest gift isn't Job's new wealth
But it that fact that Job exits the storm knowing God more deeply
Than when he entered it.

Job never finishes the puzzle.
Many of the pieces remain missing.
He never learns about the heavenly council.
He never learns why his children died.
He never learns why he suffered.
But he discovers something greater than answers.
He discovers God.
A now-wiser Job can more effectively minister to his community.

We all spend time trying to figure out what we have done wrong
To deserve our particular challenges.
Whenever I'm sick, I find myself asking 'what did I do wrong?'.
Usually, I receive no answer.

But if Job teaches us anything, it is this:
The greatest gift God gives us is not always an explanation.
Sometimes the greatest gift is his presence.
The God who met Job in the whirlwind will meet us in Jesus Christ.
And because he is with us, we can keep talking with God and serving others
Both while the storm rages
And when it is finished.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

