

# Job tells his story

Message for Sunday, May 5, 2013  
by Bruce Fraser

**Scripture:** The book of Job.

**Children's Message:** Psalm 19:1-6.

Tell them how rainbows work. In the end, it doesn't help them appreciate their beauty any more. Some things are better left as a wonder, and just accept them and enjoy them. God is like that.

Do you like looking at rainbows? They're so pretty, all those colours; and the way they reach right across the sky, that's wonderful!

But do you know why a rainbow looks that way? I'll explain it to you. First of all, what we see as a bright light is actually made up of many different coloured lights, all blended together. This is a prism. See how it takes normal white light and divides it into different colours? See how the blue comes out at the top, then green, yellow, orange, then red at the bottom?

If you shine light through a drop of water, it will be a prism, producing different colours. If you have a whole bunch of drops of water — like in a rain shower — and the sun is shining through them, then they will all be making coloured light. And that's what makes a rainbow!

So, does what I just said make the rainbow look any more beautiful? Not really. In fact, it gets even more complicated than that, and I don't understand it all.

Sometimes it's better to just enjoy something, rather than figure it all out. That's how it is with God. Some people try to analyze God (*pull out magnifying glass to illustrate*), figure out exactly how God works. I think it's better just to enjoy God, and love and obey God.

**Sermon:** "Job tells his story"

Last week I visited my elderly Aunt Mabel, who still lives in her own home. As I left I said, "I'll see you again in the fall."

"I don't know if I'll still be around by then," she replied.

"You're right," I said. "None of us knows what may happen in the next 24 hours."

That's so true, isn't it? It's just like what happened to me. Let me tell you my story. I was one of the richest men in the world. My estate was so vast, hundreds of employees were needed to look after it all. And it wasn't

just money. A word from my lips was enough to open any door or make the government change its policies.

But I was a good man. As powerful and as rich as I was, it hadn't gone to my head. Let me give you an example. There was the time I was walking down the street and met a blind man who was lost. I immediately changed my plans, and escorted him to the place where he was going. Many times, I bought food or paid the mortgage for people who could not afford it. I saved the lives and homes of dozens of people. I did it without being pompous or proud. I believed that I had been blessed by God; I just wanted to pass the blessing on to others.<sup>1</sup>

Until the day when it all fell apart. First of all, my investments turned sour; the little that was left, my trusted accountant stole, and took with him to South America. All those pieces of paper were just that, paper. That wasn't all. That afternoon, a hurricane tore into the resort on the coast where my children and their families were having a holiday. All were killed.

The final blow came that evening, when the phone rang. It was my doctor. "Remember that little operation you had a few years ago to take out your appendix? We needed to give you a pint of blood afterwards to bring up your strength. It turns out that batch of blood was contaminated. The blood test we did last week confirms it. The reason you've been sick so much lately is that you have hepatitis."

The doctor went on, telling about special precautions I had to make, but I wasn't listening. My mind was in a daze. One word kept coming back, again and again: WHY?

Oh, I'm sorry; please forgive my poor manners and my forgetfulness. I should have introduced myself. My name is Job. My story is in the Bible. I changed a few things so that you modern people could understand it better, but it's still the same story.

Please don't misunderstand me. I don't mean to moan and complain. I know that others suffer, too.

**Job 24:10-12, Today's English Version:**

**The poor must go out with no clothes to protect them;  
they must go hungry while harvesting wheat.  
They press olives for oil, and grapes for wine,  
but they themselves are thirsty.  
In the cities the wounded and dying cry out,  
but God ignores their prayers.**

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<sup>1</sup> See Job 29:11-17.

Repeat: "... but God ignores their prayers." That's exactly how I felt.

Wherever I go, when people hear my story, many of them immediately identify with me. "I know just what you mean," they say. "I'm a good person. I don't cheat on my taxes or my spouse; I go to church and volunteer with the Cancer Society; I don't hurt other people, and indeed try to help wherever I can. But then — whammo! I got hit by a ton of bricks out of nowhere." Maybe disease strikes. A loved one dies. They lose their job. Divorce. Whatever. Together with me, we all ask, "Why?" Maybe things have happened in your life and you've asked that same question.

My three best friends came over to comfort me. They were just as much in shock as I was, and for the first day they didn't know what to say, just sat there with me. That changed the next day, however. Being typical men, they tried to solve the problem, fix what was wrong. "You know that God causes wicked people to suffer. You are suffering. Therefore you are wicked, and you need to repent of your sins. Perhaps if you confess and ask forgiveness, God will have mercy and heal you."<sup>2</sup> They really know how to make someone feel better! But I knew that I had done nothing wrong. So I rejected their advice.

Then another friend came along and tried a different approach: "Suffering is good for you. It makes you realize how much you need God."<sup>3</sup> Yeah, right! I need God alright: I need God to come down here right now and answer for what has happened to me!

Then a storm breaks over us, and out of the whirlwind God speaks. But here's the surprise: God doesn't answer my questions. Instead God turned the tables around, and interrogated me:

**Job 38:2-5, 19-21, Today's English Version:**

**Who are you to question my wisdom with your ignorant, empty words?**

**Now stand up straight and answer the questions I ask you.**

**Were you there when I made the world?**

**If you know so much, tell me about it.**

**Who decided how large it would be?**

**Who stretched the measuring line over it?**

**Do you know all the answers? ...**

**Do you know where the light comes from  
or what the source of darkness is?**

**Can you show them how far to go,  
or send them back again?**

**I am sure you can, because you're so old  
and were there when the world was made!**

I realized that I had no right to judge God. God alone is the judge of all the world. I took back my harsh words.

There was something wonderful in all this. I don't want you to go miss this! When I was complaining, I cursed the day I was born. I cursed my life, wishing I could be dead. But I never cursed God. You see, it wasn't that I was angry at God. It's more that I was hurt; I couldn't understand that God would desert me in my hour of need.

When God spoke, he certainly put me in my place. But as for my friends: God rebuked them!

**Job 42:7, Today's English Version:**

**After the Lord had finished speaking to Job, he said to Eliphaz, "I am angry with you and your two friends, because you did not speak the truth about me, the way my servant Job did."**

But what about the things I dared to speak? God gave me a good tongue lashing, so that I was quivering with fear. But God was not mad at me. Disappointed? Yes. But angry? Not at all. You see, friends, I have learned that God is never offended by a sincere seeker asking honest questions.

So if you have questions and doubts, go ahead. Tell God all about your troubles. But then listen to what God has for you.

Some people look at how God responded to me and conclude that God is harsh, cruel and distant. God is great at asking questions, but not so hot at answering them back. But to say that, you need some scissors. You need to cut out the final chapter of my story.

When it was over, when God had finished grilling me, when I had apologized for judging God – after all that, here is what I said at the conclusion:

**Job 42:3, 5, Today's English Version:**

**I talked about things I did not understand,  
about marvels too great for me to know. ...**

**In the past I knew only what others had told me,  
but now I have seen you with my own eyes.**

<sup>2</sup> For example, Job 11:11-15.

<sup>3</sup> For example, Job 33:29-30.

Repeat: "... but now I have seen you with my own eyes."

All my life, I had been a good man. All my life, I had believed in God. All my life, I had discussed God, had ideas about God, and had prayed to God. But in the depths of my despair, I met God! That was more than I ever dreamed of, when I demanded answers. I had wanted God to give me reasons, something so that I could make sense of it all.

When your world has turned upside down, when it feels like someone has kicked you in the gut, you want more than a scientific explanation of how the cancer cells in your body divide so quickly. You want to know there's someone who is going to be there when you come to the crunch. I found that someone is God. Knowing God made all the difference in my life.

#### **Next Steps:**

- Seek to not just know *about* God; but to know God personally. How? Same as you get to know anyone: spend time together.
- Put your trust in God, rather than in creeds and cliches.
- You learn to trust God by obeying God's commands and discovering that life is far better that way.