

Job 42:1-7, 10-17
Job's Journey:
Into the Kingdom

We come to this great book of Job looking for some answers, some closure on the question of suffering and God and faith and life.

Some diagrams would be nice, some laws of nature, rules for living.

But no. Instead, we find magnificent poetry. And poetry, by nature, is indirect, fractured, incomplete.

If you want to find answers in this book, you have to read between the lines.

The encounter with God:

Answers? No.

Instead, Job is led into the power and wonder of creation. Not an explanation from God, but an overwhelming experience *of* God.

God is God, and we are not.

Which brings us to our passage, and another difficult thing about this book:
translation.

Translation of 42:6:

NRSV: "I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you;
"therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

Problems with that closing statement.

"I retract. I even take comfort for dust and ashes."

Dust and ashes: idiom for mortality.

Stephen Mitchell: "Therefore I will be quiet, comforted that I am dust."

What does Job find? Have to read between the lines.

Thomas Long: "What is striking here is that Job is *not* reduced to nothing. He has become instead what he truly is, a human being, a creature made of dust, living before God in a real ... And he takes comfort in that."

You have a place in God's creation. You are not nothing. You are loved, noticed, created in the image of God.

And you are not God. You are not the ultimate power and do not possess ultimate knowledge.

We are created with a purpose, and there is joy to be found in this human life.

The sixth graders on Jekyll Island

Read between the lines

The music of laughter and voices

Describe the scene

Oxana and William

Don

From Russia, from Vietnam: In these kids, between the lines, you can read the histories of peoples; you can find their parents' stories and their grandparents'.

Sixth graders live between the lines. Not quite teenagers but no longer the children they once were.

The beginning and the end: this is the beginning of their lives, and this is what life is. We live between the lines. We are all of our history, and we are always becoming.

Job is a story of life and death and life, a story of becoming and discovering and letting go and hanging on.

The friends:

God is angry with them because they were not honest like Job.

You think everything is a matter of reward and punishment? What if we let you live by the picture of God you have drawn?

But no, there is forgiveness even for the loutish friends. Pray for them, Job, that even they might live again.

“And the Lord restored the fortunes of Job when he had prayed for his friends ...”

“and the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.”

A ridiculous amount of stuff. So much, in fact, that it becomes meaningless.

Job's new life

Read between the lines

This is not just restoration; this is rebirth. This is the kingdom of heaven we're talking about.

We want some answers, some description of life in communion with God. And yet, the kingdom for us is somewhere between the lines—with us and not with us.

Even Jesus makes us read between the lines:

The kingdom of heaven is like ...

A field sowed with seed and with weeds.

A mustard seed.

Yeast mixed in with flour.

A treasure hidden in the field.

A pearl of great value.

A net thrown into the sea that catches fish of all kind.

Contrast with chapter one:

Restless control to peaceful freedom

The friends and Job's family and friends

Focus on the sons to ...

The daughters

Their names: Dove, Cinnamon, Eye Shadow

The sons aren't named.

The daughters were the most beautiful in all the land.

Received an inheritance along with the brothers.

Stephen Mitchell: "There is something enormously satisfying about this prominence of the feminine at the end of Job. ... It is as if, once Job has learned to surrender, his world too gives up the male compulsion to control. The daughters almost have the last word ... We can't quite figure out why they are so important, but we know that they are."

A world turned upside down: God's ways are not our ways. We assume the rules of our culture are God's rules. But it ain't necessarily so.

What is important?

Mark Chicoine: We spend all our health making money, then we spend all our money to restore our health.

The picture of Job: What is important?

“Credo”:

Found in a Cologne cellar where Jews had hidden during the Holocaust: “I believe in the sun even when it is not shining. I believe in love even when not feeling it.”

Family and friends (contrast with friends earlier).

And grace even for the loutish, simplistic friends.

Generations are important.

To know one’s purpose and place in God’s order

An image of the Kingdom of Heaven:

You sit on the porch on a cool Fall afternoon. Children play in the yard. There is the music of laughter and conversation. And you are surrounded by those you love.

Simple truths:

Love the Lord your God and your neighbor as yourself.

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Care for one another and do good.

I’m a preacher. I’m supposed to challenge you to something.

How about this? Read between the lines.

Look around you. You will find:

A community of God’s grace, a place of love and care, a family like no other.

A world in which to live and discover the blessings of a day.

A life lived at the intersection of history and possibility.

This moment.

There, there. Could that be the Kingdom we have been seeking?