

**AFTER THIS::** after all his loss, and in response to his mourning and brokenness Job is silent. He breaks this long silence in Job 2.... not in talking to God or his friends, but in solitary talk to himself in which he is both speaker and first listener. He speaks not to us, rather we overhear his words.

The patient Job of chs. 1-2 gives way to the anguished Job, who curses the day of his birth. His friends, who started out well, offering him their comforting presence in silence for 7 days (Job 2:13), now offer him advice instead. They claim that the innocent don't perish, but Job's experience (and ours) says otherwise. They claim that suffering is the result of sin, that Job must have done something wrong to deserve such suffering.

Job's response is more honest: He laments. He calls a spade a spade. He holds on to his integrity, knowing that he has done nothing to deserve his suffering. He speaks directly to God about his suffering and holds God accountable to God's promises. In this, he echoes the psalmists.

Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth :: this is the first of the many dialogues, going back and forth between Job and others, in the book. Here Job addresses no one but himself (a soliloquy). This only deepens his aloneness. As he proceeds he reaches out from his self-imposed isolation toward life and the world, and God, through a series of questions.

**Let the day perish** :: birth is the day which is celebrated in the experience of life as good, the inherent promise of the goodness of creation and of its creator. But here the words of Job ask for the reversal, the undoing of creation: day to become night. It's the opposite of creation that we see in Genesis 1:3-5. Job wants his life and creation to be forgotten. The opposite of Jeremiah 20:5 and Job 38:7.

**That night I joyful cry** :: this is the night of his conception, which happens with the sexual cry of ecstasy that Job seeks to have go unheard, unremembered, erased.

Night | Day | Night :: this is the patter of the day in the creation cycle of Genesis 1. It ends in rest, eventually in the Sabbath: the 7<sup>th</sup> day blessed by God and the fulfillment of creation. But here, Job has no rest, no renewal, no Sabbath. His life, in his opinion, has become the opposite of creation, the anti-God-desired life: desecration, chaos and destruction.

**the Sea | Leviathan | Dragon** :: the Leviathan is the sea dragon of the chaotic deep which we experience first as the ultimate enemy of God, resisting the divine ordering work of creation, writing in the chaotic sea waters from which creation is drawn in Genesis 1:1-8. If God creates the universe by ordering and shaping the chaos of the primordial seas...then the sea | Leviathan and the Dragon represent chaos par excellence.

Textual Notes :: notes

**Job 3:1-10; 4:1-9; 7:11-21**  
New Revised Standard Version | (NRSV)

<sup>1</sup> **AFTER THIS** Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. <sup>2</sup> Job said:

<sup>3</sup> “**Let the day perish** in which I was born,  
and the night that said,  
‘A man-child is conceived.’

<sup>4</sup> Let that day be darkness!  
May God above not seek it,  
or light shine on it.

<sup>5</sup> Let gloom and deep darkness claim it.  
Let clouds settle upon it;  
let the blackness of the day terrify it.

<sup>6</sup> **That night**—let thick darkness seize it!  
let it not rejoice among the days of the year;  
let it not come into the number of the months.

<sup>7</sup> Yes, let that night be barren;  
let no **joyful cry** be heard in it.

<sup>8</sup> Let those curse it who curse **the Sea**,  
those who are skilled to rouse up **Leviathan**.

<sup>9</sup> Let the stars of its dawn be dark;  
let it hope for light, but have none;  
may it not see the eyelids of the morning—

<sup>10</sup> because it did not shut the doors of my mother's womb,  
and hide trouble from my eyes.

**4** <sup>1</sup>Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered:

<sup>2</sup> “If one ventures a word with you [Job], will you be  
offended?

But who can keep from speaking?

<sup>3</sup> See, you have instructed many;  
you have strengthened the weak hands.

<sup>4</sup> Your words have supported those who were stumbling,  
and you have made firm the feeble knees.

<sup>5</sup> But now it has come to you, and you are impatient;

it touches you, and you are dismayed.

<sup>6</sup> Is not your fear of God your confidence,  
and the integrity of your ways your hope?

<sup>7</sup> "Think now, who that was innocent ever perished?  
Or where were the upright cut off?

<sup>8</sup> As I have seen, those who plow iniquity  
and sow trouble reap the same.

<sup>9</sup> By ~~the breath of God~~ they perish,  
and by the blast of his anger they are consumed.

**7** <sup>11</sup> "Therefore I [Job is speaking] will not restrain my  
mouth;  
I will speak in the anguish of my spirit;  
I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.

<sup>12</sup> Am I ~~the Sea~~, or the ~~Dragon~~,  
that you set a guard over me?

<sup>13</sup> When I say, 'My bed will comfort me,  
my couch will ease my complaint,'

<sup>14</sup> then you scare me with dreams  
and terrify me with visions,

<sup>15</sup> so that I would choose strangling  
and death rather than this body.

<sup>16</sup> I loathe my life; I would not live forever.  
Let me alone, for my days are a breath.

<sup>17</sup> **What are human beings**, that you make so much of them,  
that you set your mind on them,

<sup>18</sup> visit them every morning,  
test them every moment?

<sup>19</sup> Will you not look away from me for a while,  
let me alone until I swallow my spittle?

<sup>20</sup> If I ~~sin~~, what do I do to you, you watcher of humanity?  
Why have you made me your target?  
Why have I become a burden to you?

<sup>21</sup> Why do you not pardon my **transgression**  
and take away my **iniquity**?

For now I shall lie in the earth;  
you will seek me, but I shall not be."

Eliphaz the Temanite answered:: his reply to Job is tentative from the outset, he seems to be offering counsel he has already offered others in similar situations. He is saying that despite appearances and suffering, God doesn't abandon us. He doesn't condemn Job as much as seek to encourage him by reminding him of God's unquestionable providence and insuppressible goodness. The words of Isaiah 54:4 echo his defense of God's faithfulness: "Do not fear, for you will not be ashamed, do not be discouraged, for you will not suffer disgrace;" those who fear God.

In his speech, Eliphaz reminds Job of who he is, blameless and upright (as we've been told in 1:1, 1:8 and 2:3. He offers the hope that eventually the righteous will be done right by God, whereas the evil are always punished.

Chapter 7 – Job replies... Our selection starts in verse 11, where Job complains directly against God. Read from verse 1 to get a wider perspective of Job's lament about the unfairness of the human condition, where evil abides despite God's supposed love and power.

**What are human beings** :: an echo of Psalm 8 which affirms the promise of creation that we are created in the image of God, intended for something God-like, with-God, more than simply becoming dust on the earth as our bodies decay.

What is a happier situation would seem like God's providential blessing and radical love, here seems at best to be a trick and at worse to be a curse by a malevolent distant divinity.

the anguish of my spirit; | the bitterness of my  
SOUL :: this is a dualism (saying the same thing in two different ways). Job complains of the wretchedness of the human condition. He sees humanity as unavoidably separate from God, wretched, miserable, sinful from the womb, screwed (in English slang). What is human is completely divorced from God. Yet the promise of creation in Genesis 1:27 is that we, male and female are created in the image of God. Something God-like is in and among us.

**sin** : In Hebrew the word, חטא or chata, means to miss, to go wrong, to sin. It's a dynamic word, referring to the movement of missing a target, or being so unmindful that you miss what is right before you, all around you. It's the opposite movement of godly or righteous which would mean to not miss, to be present, aware, attentive.

Why have you made me your target? : This theme of being targeted by God is repeated throughout the philosophical wondering in Job. Curiously while Job talks about his missing the target, he asks why God has targeted him. Job 16:11-13 develops it further: "God gives me up to the ungodly,  
and casts me into the hands of the wicked.

<sup>12</sup> I was at ease, and he broke me in two;  
he seized me by the neck and dashed me to pieces;  
he set me up as his target;  
<sup>13</sup> his archers surround me."

## Second Testament Reading

### Mark 4:35-41

New Revised Standard Version | (NRSV)

<sup>35</sup> On that day, **WHEN EVENING HAD COME**, he said to them, “Let us go across to the other side.” <sup>36</sup> And leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. Other boats were with him. <sup>37</sup> A **great windstorm** arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. <sup>38</sup> But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” <sup>39</sup> He woke up and rebuked **the wind**, and said to **the sea**, “Peace! Be still!” Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. <sup>40</sup> He said to them, “Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?” <sup>41</sup> And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, “Who then is this, that even **the wind** and **the sea** obey him?”

### AS YOU READ AND REFLECT ON THESE TEXTS:

1. How do you envision human life as one trapped in a condition of pain and turmoil, or one that is intended for promised good? Why do you think that? Is that how you live your life?
2. What do you hear in the creation story, or Psalm 8, which asserts that we are all created God-like, in the image of God ?
3. Jesus gets into the boat with his disciples, after a full day of teaching, confrontation with the established order and radical inclusion of those out of that order. Imagine the scene. You're on one of the other boats, watching from a distance. Tossed about. Tired. Out of your element. Frightened. What do the words of Jesus “Peace! Be Still!” do to you? How do they move in your body? How do they unleash your imagination? How do you respond to such unanticipated and out of the normal order authority?
4. How are you in need of “seeing” God’s love in Christ for you, our *ekklesia*, or the world today?
5. How might God be calling you to make Christ’s love visible in how you choose to actively love others?

**WHEN EVENING HAD COME::** As we’ve seen in today’s selections from Job, the evening is the end of one day and the beginning of the next. In creation it’s at this moment that God says that things are good, naming the way that God re-orders creation for life. Here it’s at that moment that the forces of chaos (see below) act up.

**the wind and the sea ::** As we’ve seen in our Job reading today, and going back to Genesis 1, the wind, the sea and their power are evoked in the very beginning as the opposing forces of God. Where God brings about order and stability so that life may be, those are the forces of chaotic instability, seeking to undo the will and work of God, to stop the movement of creation begun by God’s word and to turn in backwards.