

Job 38:1-41 and Mark 10:35-45

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, went to Jesus and said: *“Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask”*.

Jesus isn't silly – He doesn't say sure I'll do whatever you ask! He says, *“what do you want me to do for you?”*.

They were actually thinking of an earthly kingdom! And: They wanted glory! They wanted honour! They wanted the good life!!

Jesus goes on to tell them that what they'll get on earth is suffering! Suffering for the sake of the gospel! James would be put to death by the sword, John would be exiled and imprisoned on the island of Patmos.

James and John wouldn't get glory and honour and the good life – as servants of the gospel they'd suffer. *“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many”*!

Being great as a follower of Jesus isn't going to mean glory, honour, and the good life here on earth! It's about service and there's going to be some suffering!

Perhaps we can relate to James and John! Maybe we wouldn't mind some recognition and honour! Most of us generally want things to be the way that we want them to be! We want our life to go well! To go **my idea** of well! And I sometimes go to Jesus, and basically my attitude is like James' and John's: *“Lord I want you to do for me whatever I ask”*! Whatever I see as a problem – fixed please, in just the way I suggest!

One thing we must learn in life is that we don't **always** get what we want! Our idea of what we want is often very different to God's knowledge of what we need – it's different to what we get!

Sometimes this can leave us feeling miffed! Feeling disappointed with God. Feeling like God doesn't care about us! Feeling like God isn't giving us the answers or the guidance we need!

And then, sometimes things turn absolutely awful! We're not just faced with not getting what we want, we're faced with getting exactly those things we don't want: A serious

illness, a death in the family, conflict with family, friends, or co-workers! Relationship breakdown! Loneliness and depression on top of grief and financial hardship!

We can find ourselves asking: “Why God?” “What have I done God?” “What are you doing God?”

We can find ourselves asking tough questions of God, and basically telling Him the way it really should be. We know what’s best – we’ve just got to get God to see it too, and agree to line things up the way we know they should be!

In the book of Job, we hear that Job suffered greatly.

And he hadn’t done anything to bring that suffering on himself.

So that’s an important point we need to understand – if some terrible tragedy happens in our life or we’re dealing with some kind of disaster, don’t think God is paying you back for something you did wrong—because Jesus took all the payback for us!

Job was a righteous man, and he suffered a lot. And Job wanted to confront God! He wanted to correct God! Job thought God had been unfair! He questioned God’s wisdom, justice, and ability! And that’s understandable!

God’s reply to Job was this: *“Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me!”*

God doesn’t address Job’s suffering at all! Instead, God lifts Job’s eyes away from it, away from the muck and the mess, to the wonder and majesty of his God!

God makes it clear that His wisdom and power are infinitely beyond that of any human being. God points out that He takes care of the lions and the ravens – so how much more does he care for Job?!

Job wanted to have it out with God but when God answers Job, Job has nothing to say: *“I am unworthy – how can I reply to you? I put my hand over my mouth. I spoke once, but I have no answer – twice, but I will say no more.”*

Job never stopped believing in God, but he messed up when he tried to judge God, and when He called God unfair! Sometimes, in our hearts, we do the same! But God is God!!

May we also do the same as Job in this way: May we also come to realise – despite suffering that isn’t caused by our own sin – that God’s ways are above ours! The Lord’s wisdom is greater than ours! His mercy is infinite and His power limitless!

“The LORD answered Job out of the storm. He said: “Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you will answer me!”

Sometimes we might want God to answer us, but really what we should be more concerned about is what our answer to God is going to be.

How are we going to answer for our lack of love for God, our lack of trust in Him, our taking things into our own hands, our trying to secure our own futures, our lack of thanks to God?

It's no surprise that the last recorded words of Job are words of repentance: *“My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.”*

Words of repentance should be on our lips daily – along with words of thanks to God.

Such words of thanksgiving can be for God giving us a greater answer and display than He gave Job when He answered him out of the storm! God has answered us most amazingly through Jesus Christ! In Christ God has addressed our suffering and given the answers we need! We can find ourselves asking: “Why God?” “What have I done God?” “What are you doing God?”

When we look at the Cross of Jesus Christ, and the empty tomb, we have the answers to more questions than those:

Am I forgiven? Yes!

Does God provide for me? Yes!

Can God work for my good in suffering? Yes!

Does God see the bigger picture and have a plan? Yes!

Is God in control of all things? Yes!

Does God understand my pain? Yes!

Will God deliver me from my pain and suffering? Yes!

Is God with me, does He love me? Yes!

There is a saying: “2 Keys to a happy life – Trust in God, Thanks to God, expressed through prayer”.

Trusting in God and thanking God are so important! There's every reason to! It's good for us!

It's also good for us to realise that we might think we know what's best for us –what the best outcome is, what the best solution is, what the best answer is –but we probably don't!

God is God! We are not! Like James and John, we sometimes ask for things that we shouldn't even be asking for! We don't know what we're actually asking! We don't know the bigger picture!

The one who **does** see the bigger picture, the one who **is** in control – is the God who Himself suffered! The One who Himself offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears...who Himself suffered and died on the Cross!

The One who brought about our greatest blessings – forgiveness of sins and eternal life – through the horrible suffering of the Cross can use the suffering of our lives for our blessing too! In fact, He's promised that!

Maybe He's disciplining us as a parent disciplines a dearly loved child! Maybe He's growing our faith and drawing us closer to Him! But whatever the reason – we can know for sure that we are loved by a God who is almighty and perfect in all His ways! He loves us and is **for** us!

We can ask God for whatever we want –but above all may God give us what we need – hearts that trust Him and are full of thanks for the life forever he has given us in Christ Jesus! Amen.