

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

Sermon: "Learning to ride out the storm (Part 4)."

Scripture: Job 31 & 38

Rev. Steve Filyk

July 5, 2026

Opener: Oh worship the King 313

Choruses: He's got the whole world in his hands (339 traditional version) &

Lord From Sorrows Deep I Call (Psalm 42)

Communion hymn: Behold the Lamb (Communion Hymn)

Closer: This is my Father's world 328

Communion

Has anyone ever responded to your question

With another question?

What time is it?

...Why do you ask?

How do you get to such-and-such a place?

...Why would you want to go there?

Questioning our questions can seem

Argumentative and evasive.

But sometimes these questions

Can help us get closer to what we are searching for.

How do you get to St. Andrew's?

Do you mean St. Andrew's Presbyterian or St. Andrew's on the Square?

Do you think there is marriage in heaven?

Interesting question...

Do you think there is marriage in hell?

PAUSE

In today's Bible lesson, Job asks God a question.

And God answers with some questions of his own?

That first lesson, Job chapter 31

Is the last of Job's speeches.

Another interlocutor named Elihu

Will appear on the scene and address Job's troubles,

But Chapter 31 is the closing argument

Of the case that Job is bringing to God.

As I mentioned in earlier sermons,

Job lives in a world where God is expected

To uphold the retribution principle:

"The righteous will prosper and the wicked will suffer,

In proportion to... their respective righteousness and wickedness." (CBSB

823)

Job claims this today at the beginning of Chapter 31:

"For what is our lot from God above,

Our heritage from the Almighty on high?

Is it not ruin for the wicked,

disaster for those who do wrong? (Job 31:2,3)

Of course, Job's complaint is that God

Has failed to uphold such justice in his own life:

"Let God weigh me in honest scales,

and he will know that I am blameless..." Job declares. (Job 31:6)

Job's concern is that when it comes to his own life

He has been denied justice.

In his defense, he offers a litany of situations

Where he claims to have either avoided evil or done good.

"If my heart has been enticed by a woman,

or if I have lurked at my neighbour's door,

then may my wife grind another man's grain,

and may other men sleep with her. (Job 31:9-10)

One scholar notes that “the chapter lists 14 sins from which Job insists he has been free” and argues that “This “double heptad” or “twice-seven” is perhaps an emphatic way Of signalling a complete catalogue.” (Janzen 213)

Job offers this catalogue  
And calls down curses  
To demonstrate his certainty  
Of having kept all of God’s commands.

Job is not asserting perfection.  
In declaring himself free from hypocrisy  
Job notes that he hasn’t concealed his sin or guilt,  
Like many people do...

Job is asserting that he has been obedient to God  
in all areas that matter,  
and that he hasn’t done anything  
that would warrant the extreme suffering he has endured.

Job is affirming his “loyalty to the human community and to God”.  
And it is on this basis  
he “appeal[s] to an answering loyalty from God.” (Janzen 213)

At the end of his litany of faithfulness,  
Job demands: “let the Almighty answer me;  
let my accuser put his indictment in writing.” (Job 31:35)

Job asks God for a formal, written accusation  
That he has committed any serious crime.  
Fundamentally, Job is asking God, “Why?”  
Why have I lost everyone I loved?  
Why have you taken all these good gifts from me?  
We ask the same questions.  
Why did my best friend die?  
Why did my cancer return?  
Why did my daughter walk away from faith?

The story could have ended there.  
The story could have ended with Job and his unanswered questions.

But in Chapter 38 we are told that  
“the Lord spoke to Job out of the storm.”  
Job asks “Why?”

But instead of addressing Job’s losses  
Or referring to that heavenly wager at the beginning of the book  
God describes the world around Job,  
It’s origin and its operation.  
God probes Job with questions of his own:  
Were you there?  
Have you ever?  
Can you do this?

Now at first read, these questions  
Might seem evasive or combative.  
It may sound as if God is putting Job in his place.

But as the questions continue,  
we can recognize something different.  
God isn’t simply silencing Job.  
God is enlarging Job’s vision.

By asking these questions  
God is inviting Job to consider  
What he really knows about God.  
Job asks: Why?  
God answers: Do you know who I am?

By inviting Job to consider these questions  
God is inviting Job to broaden his focus,  
His understanding of God  
And God’s rule of the world.

To a Job, who complained that God is unjust,  
'destroy[ing] both the blameless and the wicked' (Job 9:22)  
God asks:

Have you ever given orders to the morning,  
or shown the dawn its place,  
that it might take the earth by the edges  
and shake the wicked out of it?...  
The wicked are denied their light,  
and their upraised arm is broken.

God invites Job to consider  
That evil is given room only within divine limits  
And is ultimately curtailed.

To a Job who laments God's cruelty, declaring:

"He has made me his target;  
His archers surround me.  
Without pity, he pierces my kidneys  
and spills my gall on the ground, (Job 16:12-13)

God asks:

"Who provides food for the raven  
when its young cry out to God  
and wander about for lack of food?" (Job 38:40-41)

God invites Job to notice God's providential care  
for even the smallest of creatures.

Starting Job 38 and continuing through to chapter 41

"God asks roughly 60 rhetorical questions,  
leading Job to recognize both God's wisdom  
and his own limited perspective."

[By the end, Job probably isn't waiting for an explanation anymore  
he's just hoping there isn't question number sixty-one.]

What is God doing by asking all these questions?  
God is revealing his character.

He is a God who sets limits on evil and chaos.  
He is a God who cares for the weak.  
He is a God who manages the vast and complex.

God answers Job without trying to explain  
The particularities of Job's suffering.  
This makes sense.  
How could Job really understand it?

But God answers Job.  
God reveals himself to Job  
so can gain a broader perspective  
and believe that God is worthy of trust.

Has God explained all your losses?  
Like Job, we are limited in our ability to comprehend.

The good news is that God doesn't simply respond to us from a whirlwind...  
The God who spoke to Job from the whirlwind  
did something even more astonishing.  
He came among us in Jesus...

While Jesus doesn't explain our suffering  
He answers it by entering into it  
So that we can know we aren't alone in our pain.

At the Lord's Table we don't learn why tragedy happens,  
we aren't given insight to understand every loss,  
but we receive again the assurance that God has not abandoned us,  
God is with us.  
God is here in bread and wine.

At the end of his story, Job deepest comfort  
was not that all his questions were answered,  
but that he encountered the living God.

Our comfort is even greater.  
We have seen God in Jesus Christ.  
We meet him again at this Table.  
He may not answer every "why," but he has not abandoned us.  
And because he is with us, we can keep trusting him  
Even in the middle of a storm.  
Thanks be to God. Amen.