

Wisdom for the Waiting

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 18 June 2023

Preacher: Kevin Murphy

- [0 : 00] So these three men ceased to answer Job because he was righteous in his own eyes. Then Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite of the family of Ram, burned with anger. He burned with anger at Job because he justifies himself rather than God. He burned with anger also at Job's three friends because they had found no answer, although they had declared Job to be in the wrong. Now Elihu had waited to speak to Job because they were older than he. And when Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, he burned with anger. And Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, answered and said, I am young in years, and you are aged. Therefore, I was timid and afraid to declare my opinion to you. But now hear my speech, O Job, and listen to all my words. You say, I am pure without transgression.
- [1 : 14] I am clean, and there is no iniquity in me. Behold, he finds occasions against me. He counts me as his enemy. He puts my feet in the stalks and watches all my paths. Behold, in this you are not right. I will answer you, for God is greater than men. Why do you contend against him, saying, He will answer none of man's words? For God speaks in one way, and in two, though man does not perceive it. Behold, God does all these things, twice, three times with a man, to bring back his soul from the pit, that he may be lighted with the light of life. Therefore, hear me, you men of understanding. Far be it from God that he should do wickedness, and from the Almighty that he should do wrong. For according to the work of a man, he will repay him, and according to his ways, he will make it befall him. Of a truth God will not do wickedly, and the Almighty will not pervert justice.
- [2 : 36] Shall one who hates justice govern? Will you condemn him who is righteous and mighty, who saith to a king, worthless one, and to nobles, wicked men, who shows no partiality to princes, nor regards the rich more than the poor, for they are all the work of his hands? When he is quiet, who can condemn? When he hides his face, who can behold him, whether it be a nation or a man? For has anyone said to God, I have borne punishment, I will not offend anymore. Teach me what I do not see. If I have done iniquity, I will do it no more. Will he then make repayment to suit you because you rejected? And Elihu answered and said, Do you think this to be just? Do you say, It is my right before God that you ask, What advantage have I? How am I better off than if I had sinned?
- [3 : 46] Surely God does not hear an empty cry, nor does the Almighty regard it. How much less when you say that you do not see him, that the case is before him, and you are waiting for him.

And now, because his anger does not punish, and he does not take much note of transgression, Job opens his mouth in empty talk. He multiplies words without knowledge.

God thunders wondrously with his voice. He does great things that we cannot comprehend, whether for correction or for his land, or for love.

He causes it to happen. Hear this, O Job. Stop and consider the wondrous works of God. Out of the north comes golden splendor.

God is clothed with awesome majesty. The Almighty, we cannot find him. He is great in power. Justice and abundant righteousness, he will not violate.

[4 : 55] Therefore, men fear him. He does not regard any who are wise in their own conceit. This is the word of God. Let's try this and see if this works.

Thank you, Anastasia. That was a long and difficult reading, and if you feel like I don't have a clue what is going on, that's okay. A couple of reasons for that.

One, Job is a difficult book to understand and comprehend. The second reason is these chapters are very difficult, and so on Wednesday, when I needed to give the scripture reading to the office to print the bulletins, I was still trying to work out what on earth was going on, and so there's a whole lot there, and subsequently, between Wednesday and Saturday, I found out a whole lot more, and so that was a long, difficult passage.

Anastasia, thanks for reading it for us. Guys, let's see if we can make sense of this, but maybe before we do that, why don't you join me in prayer? Let's pray together, and just ask God to speak to us. So, Heavenly Fathers, we come before you this morning.

We pray that you will speak to us. We pray, God, that we will understand more of who you are. We will see you, behold you, and it will result in us adoring you.

[6 : 25] Jesus, come and have your way, I pray, in your powerful name. Amen. Friends, let me start asking you a question. Have you ever suffered terribly?

Maybe lost a loved one? Been unfairly treated at work? Been the victim of some traumatic experience? And when you went through that, where was God?

How did God speak to you at that time? Was He silent? Did He explain Himself? Did He answer your questions or explain His actions?

Did He help you to see the bigger picture of what He's doing? Friends, have you ever found yourself in a place of desperation, only to feel like, not only has God removed His hand from you, but He's turned His face away and is now silent?

I ask you these questions because that's the place that Job finds himself once again. And if you're new to church or new to Watermark, we're working through this very difficult book of the Old Testament called Job.

[7 : 30] For seven weeks, we're in week five, I think it is, and so we're almost coming to the end. It's an exceedingly different book, a difficult book of the Bible. And in it, this righteous and good man called Job, He's described as God-fearing and righteous man, blameless in all His conduct.

He suffers terribly. In one day, everything that He has is taken from Him. His possessions, His wealth, His status in the community, but most painfully, even His children, in one day, everything is taken away from Him.

And to make matters even worse, He is inflicted with a terrible skin disease, and He is really brought to the end of Himself.

And Job doesn't know why any of this is happening. We know, the Bible tells us, but Job doesn't know. It's because God and Satan have had a conversation. And God has allowed Satan to do this to Him.

And Job then gets these three lousy friends that come to Him. They come to comfort and console Him, but they do the very opposite. They don't comfort Him, they just condemn Him. And they say to Him, Job, this is divine retribution.

[8 : 43] We know that you seem to be an honest, a good man, but there must be some wickedness that you've done. God is punishing you for something that you've done wrong. And Job goes back and says, it's not true.

I haven't done anything. And so for 24 long chapters, there's this back and forth between Job and his friends. They say, you're guilty. He says, I'm not. And they debate Job's goodness versus God's goodness, Job's righteousness versus God's justice.

And Job's friends say, God is just. You must be a wicked sinner. And Job says, I'm innocent of what you say. God is the one who's being unjust. And then finally, in chapters 29 to 30, Job gives his final speech and he pours out his heart to God.

And he says, I haven't done anything wrong. I'm not perfect, but I haven't defrauded anyone. I haven't cheated on my wife. I haven't stolen anything. I haven't treated the poor unfairly.

I haven't worshipped a foreign God. And then ultimately he says, all I want is the friendship of God. He says, oh, that I were as the days of old when the friendship of the Lord was upon my tent.

[9 : 50] Oh, that God would hear me and answer me. And so he pours out his heart and he lifts his eyes to heaven and he says, God, what are you going to say? God, are you going to answer me? Or are you just going to stay silent?

Friends, have you ever felt like that? Well, what happens next in the book of Job is that God doesn't answer him.

Not immediately. He sends a messenger and he sends a rather difficult messenger because he sends a rather brash, self-confident young man called Elihu.

And that's what Anastasia read to us this morning. In many ways, it's disappointing. Job pours out his heart and he says, God, where are you? What are you going to say? And God, rather than answering him, sends him Elihu.

Friends, I wonder if you can relate to that. Have you ever felt desperate for God? Desperate for a sign from above? God, are you hearing my cries? Are you paying attention to me? And all God does is give you a Bible.

[10 : 52] Or maybe an awkward CG member. Or a difficult church member. Or maybe a brash pastor. The kind of person you don't want to speak to at that point of time.

Can you relate to that? Well, that's what Job gets here. And so having called upon God, God instead sends him Elihu. And so look at what happens in chapter 32. If you've got your bulletin, you're going to need to follow on.

And maybe if you've got a Bible, open up. We're going to be jumping around quite a bit. But it says, Elihu, the son of this guy, he burned with anger. He burned with anger at Job because Job justified himself rather than God.

He burned with anger also at Job's three friends because they found no answer, although they declared Job to be in the wrong. Now Elihu waited to speak to Job because they were all older than him.

And so he says, I am young and you are aged. Therefore, I was timid and afraid. You see, he's a good Asian, right? He lets the older people speak first and he knows his place. He says, I was a timid and afraid to declare my opinion, but now hear my speech, oh Job.

[11 : 57] Listen to my words. And so this is Elihu and he comes to speak and he has a message for Job. Now commentators, scholars go back and forth whether Elihu is somebody that we should pay attention to and listen to or whether he's just like the other friends and we should write him off.

And I went back and forth on this this week. At the beginning of the week, I thought, no, Elihu, he's just like the other guys. He's got nothing good to say. But as I studied it, actually, I thought, no, actually, Elihu's got a lot to say and maybe we should listen to him.

And so this is what Elihu says. Essentially, he answers Job by challenging Job's thinking about God and challenging Job's hard attitude towards God.

Okay? So Job says this, God is silent. He doesn't answer me. And Elihu says, no, God's speaking in a thousand ways, but your hard heart is making you deaf to his voice.

Okay? Job says, God is unjust. He allows bad things to happen to good people. And Elihu says, no, God is not unjust, but his justice doesn't operate in the timing or the manner that you want.

[13 : 10] And Job shakes his fist at the heavens and he says, what's the point in being good when God abandons me anyway? And Elihu says, God doesn't answer those who demand an answer from God or try and manipulate him with their good behavior.

He answers those who come to him humbly in humility. And the point of Elihu's speech is this, Job, it's true that maybe your suffering is not a direct result of some sin that you did in your life.

That's what Job's friends are saying. But are you possibly sinning now in the way that you are handling your suffering? That's the point. That's why the narrators left these speeches in here.

Rather than just jumping from Job to 38 where God speaks, Elihu is saying, Job, you may not have sinned in a way that causes your suffering, but are you sinning in the way you're handling your suffering?

So, Huell Jones, the commentator, says, Job's friends said that Job was suffering because he had sinned, they were wrong. Elihu challenges Job whether he has sinned in the way he's handling his suffering. And that's the reason why these chapters are in here.

[14 : 19] In other words, here's the question that these chapters want to ask of us, and this is a profound question. Do you know how to suffer wisely and well?

If you live long enough, friends, you will suffer. Hardship will come to all of us. It's just a matter of a question of timing. But do you know how to suffer well?

Do you know how to suffer wisely? You see, the friends, they come, and ultimately they're rebuked by God, but they have this very simplistic understanding of the world. They say, Job, you're going through a hard time, you must have done something wrong, right?

It's very karmic. Very karmic, not very Christian. And there's this back and forth, and Job says, no, I haven't, and they said, yes, you have, et cetera, et cetera. But Elihu comes along and says, Job, even though you may not have done anything to deserve the suffering in the first place, how are you handling your suffering?

In other words, is your suffering making you hard and angry and bitter and resentful, or is it making you humble, gentle, and wise?

[15 : 23] As Henry said to me earlier, is suffering making you bitter, or is it going to make you a better person? And that's the question that these chapters are asking us.

As a result of our suffering, are we hard and angry and bitter, or are we gentle, wise, and humble? Now, David Paulson and Timothy Lane wrote a book many years ago called How People Change.

And one of the premises of their book is that one of the main ways that God uses, or methods that God uses to grow us and change us as people is to bring hardship and suffering into our life.

What David Paulson calls the heat. Okay? So God turns up the heat in our lives, and it's uncomfortable and it's difficult, and God uses that to grow us and mature us.

But the key question is this, when the heat comes your way, who is God to you in that point of time? Who is God and how do you turn to God?

[16 : 22] In other words, let me give you an example. Let's say your marriage is really difficult. Marriage is hard. And you're feeling the heat at home. Well, who is God to you at that point of time?

Well, one of the things that the Bible says is that God is the one who teaches us how to lovingly and sacrificially lay down our lives for our spouses and to treasure them and cherish them.

Not serve ourselves, but to serve them. We see that example in Christ. Well, let's say maybe money is really tight. And so life is difficult because you've got to watch every cent. Well, who is God?

God is a provider. He's promised to take care of you. In other words, is that hardship going to make you bitter and angry and hard? Or are you going to come and see who God is and relate to God on the basis of that and let that change you and soften your hearts that you become wise and gentle and humble?

Well, friends, in this passage, Elihu wants to show Job who God is and by doing so bring Job back from the brink of bitterness and resentment and hardship and bring him to a place of humility.

[17 : 28] And he wants Job to repent, but more than that, he wants to build faith in Job so that Job trusts God and relies on him. Okay, does that make sense? Do you follow the logic?

What's happening? Yes, okay. Okay, do you follow the logic? Okay, okay, let's see if we can do this. So, who is God?

That's the question that Elihu's asking. Job, you say that God has abandoned you, you say he's unjust, he's silent, he's wrong, he's unfair, who is he? Well, Elihu's going to give us three things about who God is and the first thing he says is this, God is the God who is not silent.

He is not silent. Chapter 33, verse 13, Elihu says, why do you contend against him, Job, saying, he answers none of my words.

Okay, so that's been Job's complaint. All this time, Job has been complaining. God is silent to me. Chapter 13, I would speak to the Almighty. I want to argue my case against him, but he's walked out the room.

[18 : 31] God is nowhere to be found. Or chapter 31, oh, that I had want to hear me, but when I call out to God, he just turns his back on me. God is silent. And Elihu says, that's not true.

Look at what he says, verse 13, why do you contend against him? Saying, he answers none of man's words. For God speaks in one way, in two, though man does not understand it.

Behold, God does all these things, twice, three times with a man, to bring back his soul from the pit, that he may be lighted with the light of life. Elihu says, God is not silent, but just because you don't understand what he's doing, or don't see what he's doing, doesn't mean that God has abandoned you.

friends, throughout scripture, one of the things that God says, one of the things that differentiates the one true God from false gods and idols, is that God is a God who speaks.

So Psalm 115 says, the idols of the nations around us, their gods are the work of human hands. They have eyes, but they do not see, ears, but they do not hear, mouths, but they cannot speak, and they make no sound in their throat.

[19 : 44] The idols that we trust in, they promise so much, but they can't hear our prayers, and ultimately, they cannot promise us anything. But God, the one true God is God who speaks, and Elihu reminds us, he speaks in a thousand ways, but sometimes, we can't perceive his voice.

Sometimes, God speaks through his written word, probably the most comprehensive way that he speaks. God speaks through his spirit in our hearts. God speaks through creation. But here, Elihu says, sometimes God speaks through visions and dreams of the night.

I don't know if you've ever had this. I haven't had it very often, but I have had it from time to time. There have been times when I've had a dream in the night that's been so vivid, so crystal clear, I woke up in the morning and I knew exactly what it meant and what God was trying to say to me.

I'll tell you one such instance. I was 20 years old, a university student in Cape Town, South Africa, studying politics and economics, and I can still picture it absolutely to this day, almost 20 years ago.

I was studying politics and economics in South Africa. I had a dream one night and in my dream, I was in a train railway carriage and the carriage was full of Chinese people that were locked up and imprisoned unfairly and unjustly.

[21 : 04] And in this dream, somehow I had a role to freeing these people and letting them out of this carriageway. And when I woke up, I knew absolutely that one day I was going to be a pastor in Asia to a city full of Chinese people.

I just knew absolutely with clarity that that's what God was saying. That's what Job says. Sometimes God, he speaks in a thousand different ways and sometimes we don't perceive them and understand them. Look at what Elihu says here.

God speaks through our guilty conscience. Verse 16, One of the roles of God's Spirit is to bring conviction of sin, to make us aware of the fact that we're on the wrong path.

One of the ways that God helps us to see our own hearts. Now one of the challenges with this is that we live in a culture that tells us that no one can question your version of truth and that what feels good must be good, right?

And so what that means is we live in a day and age where we suppress our conscience because our conscience often tells us this is not a good path and yet our culture tells us if it feels good it must be good.

[22 : 16] Who's your conscience to tell you not to do it? No, no, what's good for you must be right and true. But here our conscience is one of the ways that God speaks to us. God opens the ears of men.

He warns us by speaking to us. Elihu says sometimes God speaks to us in our pain. Verse 19 Man is rebuked with pain on his bed with continual strife in his bones.

Elihu says sometimes God allows difficulty and hardship to come to us not as punishment but as waking as a warning to wake us up. God speaks in our pain and there's a very famous quote by C.S. Lewis you might know it.

Listen to what he says. He says I hope you can see this The human spirit will not even begin to try to surrender self-will as long as all seems to be well.

Error and sin both have this deceptive property that the deeper they are the less we suspect their existence. They are a masked evil but pain is an unmasked evil unmistakable evil.

[23 : 18] We can rest contentedly in our sins but pain insists on being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures speaks to our consciences but he shouts in our pains.

It is his megaphone to arouse a deaf world. And Job is struggling because not only is he suffering but in his pain he has become deaf to God's voice.

He's unable to hear God speaking to him unable to sense God's leading and so now he feels the double agony of suffering and that God has turned his face away from him. But Elihu's point is God is not silence.

Our God is a God who speaks and he may not speak in the way that you want to hear him or you think he ought to speak but God is speaking.

He has not left you. Friends, the most powerful way that God spoke to us about his commitment and his love is actually through the silence of Jesus.

[24 : 19] As Jesus was silent before Pontius Pilate, as Jesus was silent before Caiaphas, as Jesus was silently led like a lamb to the slaughter, as Jesus silently hung on the cross.

In the silence of Jesus, God was speaking powerfully and profoundly of his commitment and his love. That though you and I are sinners, God has not abandoned us and he has not turned his face away.

Friends, when life is hard and it may be hard for you this week, when suffering comes your way, when you lose your job, when a relationship comes to an end, when a loved one passes away, when a child is diagnosed with a rare disease, when the doctor phones you and says, the report says cancer.

Friends, when you suffer a miscarriage, how are you going to respond? Elihu reminds us that God is not silent even in our pain and sometimes the pain and the anger and the disappointment can crowd out God's voice and yet his voice is the one thing we need.

God is not silent. Secondly, Elihu reminds us that God is not unjust. Now, in chapter 34, Elihu addresses Job's biggest concern and that is that God is simply unjust.

[25 : 39] Job has been a God-fearing and a blameless man. He has loved God and loved people and where has it gotten him? At a ruin. Sorrow. Anguish of the severest kind.

He's lost everything that was precious and valuable to him. It's been taken away and this leaves Job with one conclusion. God is unjust and not trustworthy.

The one thing Job concludes is whoever God is or whatever he's up to, he's certainly not trustworthy, not good. And so look at how Job says this. Earlier on, he says, chapter 27, God has taken away my rights.

The Almighty has made me bitter in soul. Chapter 9, Though I am in the right, I cannot answer him. He crushes me with a tempest. He multiplies my wounds without cause.

To God, it's all the same. He destroys both the blameless and the wicked. He mocks the calamity of the innocent. The earth is given into the hands of the wicked and God, he covers the faces of the judges.

[26 : 40] It's a common feeling, right? I wonder if you felt like this. How can God allow suffering and hardship to come our way? If God is good, if God is powerful, why does he allow evil to happen in our world?

Why does he allow difficulty to come our way? Sometimes it seems that God allows disaster to mock the misfortune of the innocent, that the earth is given into the hands of the wicked.

And Job considers that maybe God is blind to what's really going on. And maybe God just can't see. Or maybe God is influenced by the rich and the powerful and so he's turned a blind eye to the poor and the suffering.

Or maybe, thinks Job, God has struck a deal with the wicked. That he said, listen, if you don't cause too much trouble for me, I won't cause too much trouble for you. But look at what Elihu says.

God will not do wickedly. The Almighty will not pervert justice. And then he gives a profound argument. He says, who gave God charge over the earth?

[27 : 38] Who laid on him the whole world? Now, Elihu's argument is this. He says, the reason you can trust God is because God is God.

Now, that sounds circular. Okay? But listen to his argument here. In other words, Elihu's saying, God's authority of running the world was not delegated to him by some higher deity.

So, it's not that, you know, there's all these deities in the sky and the supreme deity is dishing out job descriptions. And he says, who's going to take planet earth this month or this millennium?

And all the gods come say, no, not me. And he says, okay, Yahweh, it's your turn to take planet earth this millennium. And God says, really? I had planet earth last millennium. Do I have to get them again?

Okay, fine, I'll take planet earth. And he says, if that were the case, we can imagine that God grumbling, selfishly, unjustly, deals with us as we don't deserve, right?

[28 : 40] Kind of like some middle manager in the company that's given a portfolio they don't really care about and all they care about is their career and so they don't care about treating the people underneath them fairly or justly.

All they're thinking about is their own interests. And I says, but that's not God. God is the designer and the architect and the creator of the world. This world is his world.

He is the supreme being. And he's not looking after the world begrudgingly because somebody gave him this portfolio that he doesn't want. This is his delight, his creation.

He loves it. And the fact, Job, that you long for justice is proof that this God has put justice into the heart of creation. The fact that you want justice is because God is just and this is how he has organized the world.

God is the one true God, the supreme architect and governor and owner of the world and his world, he loves it. And so look at what he says. God is just because it's the way he has designed our world.

[29 : 45] Furthermore, he says, Job, you've misunderstood God completely. He shows no partiality. God isn't influenced by the powerful and the rich. Me, immortals, we're persuaded.

We influence some powerful person comes in and we all say, yes, okay, yes, sir, I'll do what you want. But some other person comes in and we turn our back at them. But God is not like that. Look at verse 18. God says to the kings, worthless one, to a noble or a prince, wicked man, he shows no partiality to princes.

He regards the rich no more than the poor for they are all the work of his hands. God is not partial towards the rich and the powerful like you suppose.

Job says, well, maybe God, you know, maybe he doesn't know all that much stuff. Maybe he's busy investigating my case. So he's like a detective in the police force and there's some crime and he takes a year or two years or three years to kind of find out what's going on and Elie says, no, his eyes are on all the ways of man.

He sees everything. There is no gloom or darkness where evil deers may hide. God has no need to consider a man further. God knows everything that's going on.

[30 : 57] You see what Elie is saying? He's saying, God is just. There is no darkness that hides things from God. He is not in the dark wondering about what's going on. Maybe there's a court case and some piece of evidence is buried or hidden or the defense lawyers do a great job of keeping it out of not admissible into court.

But God says, Elie says, everything is before God. He sees it. But his final point here is when bad things happen and the righteous suffer and we cannot tell what God is doing, that's not because God is doing nothing.

In other words, God's apparent inaction does not contradict his justice. God's slowness of act as we would like it does not mean he is unable to act or unwilling to act.

It simply means that his justice doesn't run on our time scale. Friends, have you ever felt that God is doing nothing? Maybe God's justice doesn't run on our time scale.

And so in the final summation, Elihu reminds Job that he is not God. There is a God who is omniscient and sovereign and on the throne and that throne is not occupied by you, Job.

[32 : 09] It's occupied by God. Friends, what about you? How are you going to respond when things go, don't go your way this week? When injustice and unfairness come your way?

Will you throw your hands in the air? Will you shake your fist at God? Will you tell him that he doesn't know how to run the world? Elihu calls Job and indeed calls us to the most counter-cultural and the most counter-intrusive thing in the world.

Rather than pacifying Job and patting him on the back and says, oh shame Job, I'm so sorry for you. I understand how it must feel. Rather than coddling Job in his self-pity, he calls Job to repent and he says, Job, you are not God.

You are not God. There is a God in heaven and it is not you and maybe you should trust him. Now friends, why do we find this so hard? Maybe you're here this morning and you find this offensive.

You find, you say, Kevin, you're just like Elihu. You're this brash young man and you've got no compassion in your heart. Okay, maybe that's true. But still, why do we find this so hard? Why is Elihu's word so hard?

[33 : 15] Well, let me give us a couple of reasons. Firstly, I think self-justification runs really deep in the human heart. Remember his words at the beginning of chapter 32. It says, Elihu burnt with anger at Job because he justified himself.

Self-justification runs very deep. I find it in my own life. Secondly, as I mentioned earlier, we are increasingly told that no one can disagree with your version of the truth, right?

And so, who is Elihu? In fact, who is God for that matter to tell Job that he's wrong? I mean, if Job feels right, it must be right.

And don't we feel the same? Who is God to call me to repentance? But then thirdly, as I said, we live in a time in which what feels to be true is often deemed or given more significance than what may actually be true.

And so, we live in a time that what feels to be your truth must be true. And therefore, if I feel God is unjust or wrong, that I'm right and justified to think like this, then we live in a culture that says that must be the case.

[34 : 27] But friends, you see, that's why we need Elihu. That's why we need the Bible. That's why we need a church community that can sometimes tell us what we feel to be true is not always the whole truth.

That there is a God and we can trust Him. Friends, God is God and He is good. God is God and He is just. God is God and He is trustworthy. And even when we can't see and understand it, He is still good.

Friends, the only time in the history of the world when God really was unjust was when He allowed the perfect, innocent Son of God, Jesus Christ Himself, the innocent man to take upon Himself the sins of the world so that we who really are guilty can go free.

Friends, when life looks unfair and seems unjust, God has not forgotten or abandoned you. Look to Jesus and see what He did and what He went through. And so, Elihu says, God is not silent.

Secondly, He is not just. Thirdly and finally, this will be quick, God is not small. Now, it's a bit hard to summarize the last three chapters very quickly, but I encourage you to read them.

[35 : 34] Chapters 36 and 37, Elihu essentially comes to Job and He says, Job, your view of God is way too small. And look at what He says here.

In verse 35, chapter 35, verse 9, Elihu says this, because of the multitude of the oppressions of people, people cry out. They call out for help because of the arm of the Almighty that is against them.

But none says, where is my God, my Maker? In other words, Elihu says, people often when they come to hardship, they call out to God like superstitious people call out to their charms.

They say, God, I don't know who you are, but you must be good. You must be powerful. Come and deliver me. But they don't call out in faith. They say, they cry out to God, but none says, oh my God, my Maker, the one that I've trusted.

Oh Lord, I need you. They cry out in anguish, they cry out in pain, but they do not cry out in faith. And so what does God think of these empty cries into the heavens?

[36 : 39] Verse 12, they cry out, but he does not answer them because of the pride of evil men. Surely God does not hear an empty or deceitful cry. The Almighty does not regard it.

In the rest of chapter 36 and 37, Elihu reminds Job that God is both great and majestic and all-knowing and all-powerful, but he's also gracious and merciful.

And utterly fair and kind. Look at verse 5. He says, behold, God is mighty, he does not despise any. He is mighty in strength, but also mighty in understanding.

And so Job, beware lest wrath entice you into scoffing. Don't become arrogant and conceited in your pain. Verse 21, take care, Job, not to turn to iniquity.

Job, don't let your suffering lead you into sin. Finally, at the end, Elihu says, behold, God is exalted in power. Who will be his teacher? Who has prescribed his way away for him?

[37 : 38] Or who can say to him, you have done wrong? Elihu says, Job, your view of God is way too small and you don't know who he is. And so Elihu brings imagery after imagery.

He says, Job, consider the weather. How is snow created? How are the weather patterns formed? Do you know? Will you teach God? Will you teach God when it should rain and when it should not?

Job, you are not God. Let God be God. And so friends, have you ever suffered terribly? Have you ever lost a loved one, been unfairly treated, been the victim of some traumatic experience?

And where was God in all of that? Was he silent? Did he allow the unjust to get away with it? Did he explain himself to you or answer your questions?

Friends, if you haven't experienced suffering or a hardship yet, it's unlikely that you won't. There will come a time when you experience it. And when such tragedy comes your way, how will you respond?

[38 : 41] Will you grow bitter and angry and hard? Will you grow resentful towards God? Or will you become withdrawn and isolated, away from community, will you withdraw into yourself?

Will you become conceited and angry to those that are enjoying life and enjoying the blessings of God? Or friends, will you allow, will you open yourself up to God?

Will you cry out to him not in superstition but in faith? Will you trust him? Will you allow the suffering and the sorrow to soften you, to humble you, to make you a wiser, more gentle person, more full of faith?

Friends, you can only do that if you know who God is. He is not silent. He is not unjust. He is not small and he does not respond to manipulation. He is the sovereign God of all, mighty and majestic, but merciful and gracious and kind.

Let's come to him now in prayer. Let's pray together. Father God, this passage is so challenging.

[39 : 54] It's so provocative and God, it's somewhat easy to maybe sit through a sermon, put up with me for 35 minutes, but God, to actually live this in the day-to-day experience of life on a Tuesday afternoon, on a Wednesday morning, on a Thursday night, God, when children are sick, when marriage is hard, when money is tight, when things go wrong at work, God, it's hard.

Won't you help us in those times to turn to you? Won't you help us to trust you? Won't you help us to love you? God, I pray, won't you give us faith to do that this week, I pray, in your good and gracious name.