

Rev. Dr. Yugo Suzuki's Sermon

2/28/10 **'From Job to Jesus ' 1 Cor. 10: 13**

Job in the Old Testament is an epitome of human tragedy. Once a happy, wealthy, and blessed man, he now is destitute. On top of that, his two sons and three daughters are killed instantly by natural calamities.

As if these were not enough, his entire body is afflicted with sores from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head. Then his wife abandons him, saying, "Curse God and die."

But to Job, what is most unbearable is the silence of God in all this. For the life of him, Job cannot make any sense out of the awful predicament that he is in. Out of the depth, he cries out to God, "I would speak to the Almighty. And I desire to argue my case with him."

To this tormented Jew, come three friends. They are theologians who claim to know the reasons for his suffering. One of them says that God is punishing Job for his past sins. Another insists that God is punishing Job for the sins of his children. The third insists that God is giving Job a golden opportunity for moral training, to toughen up his moral fortitude.

But Job finds no comfort in what they say. His friends equate God's thinking with their own ideas of what God ought to think. Their words become arrogant, lifeless clichés, noisy gongs.

So Job can no longer contain himself. Filled with emotion, he bursts out these words to his theologian friends. "Your words are words of ashes. Your defenses are defenses of clay."

Job's point is clear.

Where is God in my suffering? Does my whole existence have any meaning in divine providence? Does God know that I exist at all? Job cries out to heaven in a voice filled with despair, "Why does God hide his face from me and count me as his enemy?" His words are a ringing challenge to the Almighty God. "Let the Almighty answer me. Let him speak to me."

Then out of the whirlwind, God speaks to Job. God finally breaks his silence. God's answer is this. There are limits to human understanding, limits beyond which human beings are not allowed to go. As for the why of suffering, there are no answers that satisfy the logic of human reason. Do not expect any easy answers.

But that is not the end of God's discourse with Job. Through the whirlwind, God gives Job one thing that is truly earthshaking. It is this: Job does not face his suffering alone. God is with him in his suffering. Therefore, he can ask God for the courage to face what has to be faced.

Does Job's existence have any significance in divine providence? Of course. Does God know that he exists at all? Absolutely. Does God even care? Yes, indeed. A thousand times yes. So Job cries out to God, but this time in joy. "I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee."

This message of Job is fulfilled by Jesus Christ. For God in Jesus Christ did not remain in heaven. No, he left there and came down to us right down to where we live, where we contend with our anxieties and feeling of emptiness and futility, where we sin and suffer guilt, and where we must finally die. For him, our life was so important that he died for us. There on the cross, he died for you and for me.

So we can face our discouraging world with no confidence in the world or in what we mortals can comprehend, but in the crucified Christ, God with us, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

It was in this spirit that Paul wrote to his comrades of faith. "God will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear."

Today we are to make his affirmation our own. For after all, "Whether we live, we live unto the Lord. Whether we die, we die unto the Lord. Therefore, whether we live, or whether we die, we are the Lord's"

Thanks be to God. Amen.