

THE BIBLICAL WILD

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WEEK XXVIII: Job 28-Proverbs 3/ Psalms 5-10

From Psalm 6. Let us pray.

Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am languishing; O Lord, heal me, for my bones are shaking with terror. My soul also is struck with terror, while you O Lord – how long? Amen.

I'm Todd Ousley, bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Michigan and this is the Biblical Wild, pioneers in the Christian

wilderness. We continue this week in Midland's Dow Gardens with our consideration of the book of Job. We last heard from Job, he had just heard from his three friends who were quietly, silently in fact, consoling and comforting him. And now after seven long days of silent suffering, Job is going to burst forth with words and opinions about what is happening. Billy Joel has a song "Only the Good Die Young," and we hear explanations in moments when there has been a tragic death, perhaps of a child, that God must have needed another angel. Or when there's a sudden and unexpected recovery from an illness that looked as if it would take a loved one. We will hear people saying "God wasn't ready for him yet." These attempts to explain and understand that which is unexplainable, attempts to do something to soften the suffering and to put it into a context so that it can have meaning for us, or actually rather well intention, but lame attempts to explain how God interacts with us in our lives and the place of suffering in it. Job is a book that helps us to wrestle with questions of suffering and meaning and ultimately to help us understand that there really are no answers to our questions, but rather continued faithfulness and trust in God. Let's go to Job, and see what Job has to say about it. The first thing that happens is Job emerges from his silent suffering and he begins to complain to rail against God and in fact, actually does a very creative and imaginative thing. He uses the very words of Genesis 1 and the creation account to actually turn that creation narrative upside down to turn it on its head, and to actually use it as a part of his argument to complain about the lack of assistance from God and the undeserved character of the suffering that this pious, upright man, has experienced. One by one his friends begin to offer a counter response, and there's a poetic exchange that goes back and forth for 37, 38 chapters. Then, appearing on the scene is a fourth character Allahu, offering yet another possibility for Job to understand what is happening to him, but in fact, this particular explanation fails as well. And it's only been as we move toward the end of the book of Job that God actually appears on the scene, and begins to challenge Job to offer a different perspective, yet again a different one on what it is that is going on with Job, and a way for Job to understand it. There is a transformation that we see taking place right before our eyes. Job, as it were, falls to his knees, and confesses that he understands what God has said and in fact what he must do is remain faithful, steadfast in his faith, trusting in God's promises and recommit himself for Job to recommit himself to his understanding and his relationship with God. So in the end, we know that Job's life has been transformed by the journey that he has been on. A journey that leads him into deeper faith, deeper understanding, and deeper acceptance of the promises and the love of a God who will not abandon him, but will be walking by his side, even in the midst of all of his suffering. As you read and study Job this week, I invite you to consider two questions:

- 1 - What enables you to focus on God rather than on the suffering or challenges you face?
- 2 - How might you increase your focus on God?

May God bless you, and I will see you next week on the Biblical Wild.