



Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN

Tonight we have what seems to be two diametrically opposed readings. Liz's long reading from the book of Job and our gospel reading from John chapter 1. In the book of Job we have the story about a man of excellent character, acknowledged even by God. But God allows Satan to test Job by taking away his wealth, his family and his health. In the chapters read this morning from Job, we hear God's answer to Job's question of WHY. The answer to Job comes in the form of questions, 72 questions, rather than stated conclusions. God presents the facts and Job is left to reason and make the connections. Well as you can imagine, by the time we get to this 38th chapter of Job, Job has just about had it. He has lost everything even though he was a God-fearing man. No possessions, no family or friends and even his health was waning. And he cries out to God.

God does not answer Job directly; instead God takes Job on a verbal tour of the cosmos. It is considered one of the most eloquent exposures in the Old Testament. It describes a wonderful world that God alone created. Job finds himself unable to respond because he obviously had nothing to do with the

majesty of creation. Question after question comes to Job and he listens, I suppose, with impatience.

Job does not necessarily like this approach. He wants answers. He wants to know what charges are against him. He wants to plead his case so he might win justice. But instead God continues with His questions, questions Job cannot answer, but which will contribute nevertheless to his enlightenment. Then in the beginning of Chapter 40 God asks Job a direct question and expects him to respond.

Job concludes by saying that he cannot respond because God is big and he is small. God asks Job to take on some of the attributes of God to defeat the wicked and Job realizes he is only human and cannot accept such a challenge.

Tonight we did not have time to continue to read the rest of Job, but in the next chapter, God continues his divine speech and in the last chapter Job admits to God saying, "I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted." Then Job prays for his friends and voilla, God then restores Job's fortunes twofold.

Job's fortune returns double. He and his wife have more children, and God blessed his long and joyful life. After all the suffering, Job's life ends on a note of joy and hope. Job chooses, even at the risk of more suffering to live again and to love again. His choice bears fruit. The book of Job concludes with the line, "And Job died, old and full of days."

Our other reading for tonight is from the beginning of John's Gospel. In this beginning overture, John tells us that the Word or Jesus was in the beginning, became flesh and walked among us. He stood with God before the creation. Jesus brings light into the darkness as God made flesh. John the Baptist is also introduced as the one who will lead the way. He will introduce Jesus as that real light because the world did not yet know Him. And all will come to see the glory of God in Jesus and He will make God known to us.

And so why on this Thanksgiving eve do we read such a long dissertation about what God can do that Job could not. And why do we have a Gospel reading that tells us that Jesus was present at creation? I think the secret is simply creation. God created. We could go back to Genesis and read the

creation stories, but I know that you all know them well. God created heaven and earth out of nothing. He was before all time and created all things.

This reality is our story too. Not just a story belonging to Job. We live in God's creation and even though there are wild animals that cannot be tamed and catastrophes that happen, as we read in God's response to Job, we have a quite wonderful place to call home.

Lastly, of course we are not as happy with our circumstances as we once were. Covid 19 has dampened our spirits. What is there to be happy about while living in the fear that comes with this pandemic? Where are these things to be thankful and how do I see them as I shelter in my home to keep safe?

Good questions and ones that we all have pondered, I suspect during the last 8 or 9 months. And they are exactly why we are here tonight. We need to hear the promises of God that He will be with us always. We need to hear the promise that God loves us even in the doubt created by a virus that has killed a quarter of million Americans. We need to hear that promise from God that he is still in control, as we watch the weather reports on TV about all the weather extremes across the globe that come in the forms of hurricanes, fires, and blizzards. We need to hear God's word that His will prevails even in extreme polarization of peoples over political parties. Yes, we need to feel loved, protects and safe in this beautiful creation that God has made for us to dwell in.

And I thought that one way to do that is to recount all the things that we are blessed with. As one of my favorite authors, Audrey Macomber, suggested, keep a gratitude journal. Write down all the things you are grateful for, even the little things like a sale on the dog food you went to the store for, or a bright sunny day, or maybe bigger things like relief from pain that has been bothering you for weeks, or that your spouse stands by your side even when you are crabby.

When we go to write down what we are thankful for, we find ourselves taken out of the negative ora that surrounds us way too much these days.

God wants us to lead an abundant life and that means to find joy in our days. He loved us so much that he sent his only Son to die for us so that that gift might be ours, along with forgiveness and the promise of eternal life. And to

live a life abundant we need to trust in the Lord, to repent and also to thank Him for the blessings we do receive each and every day.

God is good all the time. All the time God is good. And so tonight we give thanks for all that our Lord has given us and continues to provide us with. We realize we don't deserve such gracious gifts. And so we are grateful that he continues to bless us, over and over again.

Thanks be to God. AMEN