

Pastor Jacob Hanson
"God Can Take It"
10/21/2018

Opening Prayer

Good morning, and welcome to Kasson/Pleasant Corners United Methodist Church. I am Pastor Jacob Hanson, and it is a blessing and honor to be here with you today. If you are new, or haven't been around lately, or are visiting from out of town, a special welcome to you. We hope to meet you and converse after the service, we would love to get to know you. We are continuing today with our month long study of the book of Job and the book of Hebrews in tandem. These books are very rich in their understanding of the Lord's omnipotence (meaning all-powerfulness) and if read carefully can shed some light on how the Lord operates in our times of greatest need and stress. Last week we talked about coming freely before the Lord with whatever is ailing us. This week we talk about something similar, that the Lord is capable of handling our greatest fears, weaknesses, and trials. The Lord can take it.

I am the oldest of two kids. My only sibling is a younger sister who, in her younger years, would often exhibit what teenage girls are capable of with my father. Now my Dad, who many of you have met, is a big man. He stands six foot three, weighs about 220, was a firefighter in Eau Claire for 35 years, and back in the day was significantly stronger than your average guy. At forty I watched him bench press three hundred pounds, which was pretty impressive. To this day he is a strong man. But when it came to arguing with my sister in the midst of her teenage flurries, I saw a different strength come out of my Dad that I didn't know he possessed. One time she was yelling at him about how he wasn't fair over something that was completely understandable. She was giving him the business over something that from the outside looking in was very trivial. In the midst of this argument my father looked at her and said "Katie, I have very broad shoulders. I can take it." Indeed my Dad did, and in the midst of watching this dumb argument I learned that my father cared deeply for my sister and was able to bear that struggle that teenagers bring upon their parents. Beloved congregation, know that your heavenly Father too can take it.

Job in our reading for today finally receives the reply from the Lord that he has so desperately sought. If you remember, we learned that Job lost everything at the hand of Satan. He had lost his wealth, his family, and even his own health, and was left sitting in ashes covered in boils and sores. While his wife and his friends from abroad had come to mourn with him, they had offered Job bad advice. They thought Job must be being punished for some secret sin, when in fact the Lord even recognizes Job as being a righteous man. In the midst of this suffering and arguing we come to today's reading where Job finally gets what he has been calling for, an answer from the Lord.

The Lord's answer to Job may sound a bit curious to us. When we think about how the Lord is going to answer Job for the many calamities that have befallen this guy, we expect that the Lord would show a series of hidden blessings that Job wasn't seeing, or that the Lord would explain that in His infinite wisdom He was using Job's suffering for something else. In fact, the Lord doesn't speak like that to Job. He says "Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me." The Lord then proceeds to ask Job a bunch of rhetorical (meaning not actually requiring a response) questions. "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the world? Who determined the world's measurements? To what were its foundations attached?" The Lord reveals something very spectacular here to Job: His omnipotence. He reveals to Job how He is bigger and greater than anything Job can comprehend.

Have you ever felt like the Lord is some old guy sitting up in the clouds who is cranky and a little hard of hearing? Have you ever felt like if you really put the Lord to the test you would find out that you don't really like Him, or that He doesn't actually care, or that He wasn't powerful enough? Here is a reminder for you: God created literally everything. Everything that exists that is good has its roots in the Lord. Every tree, every rock, every person, every drop of water, every star was created by Him. The Lord not only created everything, but He molds everything in ways we don't understand. Ways that we can't possibly comprehend because they are so great. Francis Chan, a prominent Pastor out west, describes trying to understand the Lord in His omnipotence as like trying to force the ocean into a soda can. We just can't do it. As an example, our planet gives us some clues into how amazing our Creator really is.

Did you know that if we were a few million miles closer to the sun we would burn, but a few million further away we would freeze? Not only that, but our planet's rotation is perfectly aligned so that our oceans don't stagnate, so that wind crosses our planet bringing fresh rain from those non-stagnate oceans. Our moon, which we casually look at every night and think of as nothing was placed next to our planet to protect us from asteroids and to stabilize our planet's rotation perfectly for life to flourish. Our seasons which we take for granted and complain about come from an ever so slight wobble in the Earth's rotation around the sun, causing plants and animals to hibernate in the winter and to grow beautifully in the summer. These are just a few of the many things that we take for granted that are astoundingly awe-inspiring... and they are all put into place by our Lord. This is what the Lord is reminding Job about!

Do you think that maybe, just maybe, the Lord who created the sun and the moon and the stars and the trees and the oceans is powerful enough to handle whatever in life befalls you? This is what the Lord is bringing to Job. He is saying to Job, don't you see that I am bigger and greater than these things that ail you? That I am still the master of all, that I am the ruler not only in good times but in bad? Job, to his credit in the midst of his agony and suffering, recognizes that the Lord is in fact bigger and greater than what he understands. We will learn next week that

for Job, this is enough in the midst of his suffering, that knowing that God is greater is enough to give him comfort. For us today, we not only recognize the greatness of the Lord, (the omnipotence) but also the love that the Almighty has for us even though it is undeserved.

In our reading from Hebrews we get a look at the love that our Creator has for us. The book of Hebrews was written, as we have shared in the past, to a group of Jewish Christians who were under the threat of persecution. The writer is reminding them why they followed Christ in the first place throughout this book. Now our reading from here today mentions high priests, which we may not have much connection with today being American Christians, but the people the writer is writing to would have had intimate understanding about what he is getting at. The writer mentions a couple of the qualifications for high priesthood. A high priest would be the guy in charge of making the big sacrifices. According to Mosaic law he would offer up sacrifices on behalf of the whole nation of Israel. He would also, as Hebrews shows, show compassion on the people he lead understanding that he too was a sinner. In Mosaic law we see that before the high priest can offer up sacrifices for others, he would offer up a sacrifice for himself. The purpose for this priest's action was to come before the Lord and call upon the love of the Lord, a love which if you remember is greater than judgement. The writer uses this example of a high priest who has compassion and who leads the nation to talk about how Christ interacts with us.

Hebrews 5:5 says again "So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.'" Furthermore, we read in Hebrews 5:9 "And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him." The point and the purpose for Christ coming into this world? It wasn't to rule over and subjugate us, but rather to lead us with compassion back home to eternal salvation. It is only through Christ that we are able to enter into the kingdom of God, only through Jesus are we able to enter the pearly gates. Don't forget that your almighty, all powerful, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent Creator of everything cares enough about you to bear scars on His own body so that you may know Him. So you can take it to the bank that not only is God able to handle our adversities because He is all powerful, but He also loves us greatly because He came to die for us.

While my Dad, being an earthly man, showed great inner strength and proved his love for my sister by taking on my sister's teenage woes, our heavenly does the same for all of us in a much grander way. Your Lord can bear what you bring to Him. Don't forget that this is the same God who created the heavens, who created the mountains and the seas, who created you. Furthermore this is the same God who loves you so dearly that He was willing to be born as a man, live a sinless life, die on a cross for you, and be raised up again proving who He is. This God of ours who did all this tells you He can bear it. He can take what you can't. Just give it to Him.

So what are the takeaways today from today's message? What should you remember as you head into your regular work weeks? Remember that your Lord is bigger and greater than any problem you possibly could have. Not only is He bigger and greater, but He loves you infinitely more than you can understand. He can bear what ails you. If you notice when we pray up here, often we talk about putting things into the Lord's hands. That is what we are doing. When trouble arises, we put it into the Lord's hands and trust that He will take it. I will give you a sample prayer on how to do this, then we will close the message for today.

Sample Prayer: "Lord, I put into Your hands my worries for today. Lord, I give them to You because You tell me too. Help me through Lord, You are bigger than all of this. Your name be praised, Amen."

Let us pray together as a congregation,

Closing Prayer