

## **SCRIPTURE READINGS AND SERMON**

**Tenth Sunday After Pentecost**

**August 9, 2020**

### **Psalm 18:1–6**

- 1 I love you, O Lord, my strength.
- 2 The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer,  
my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge,  
my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.
- 3 I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised,  
and I am saved from my enemies.
- 4 The cords of death encompassed me;  
the torrents of destruction assailed me;
- 5 the cords of Sheol entangled me;  
the snares of death confronted me.
- 6 In my distress I called upon the Lord;  
to my God I cried for help.  
From his temple he heard my voice,  
and my cry to him reached his ears.

### **Old Testament Reading: Job 38:4–18**

- 4 “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?  
Tell me, if you have understanding.
- 5 Who determined its measurements—surely you know!  
Or who stretched the line upon it?
- 6 On what were its bases sunk,  
or who laid its cornerstone,
- 7 when the morning stars sang together  
and all the sons of God shouted for joy?
- 8 “Or who shut in the sea with doors  
when it burst out from the womb,

9 when I made clouds its garment  
and thick darkness its swaddling band,  
10 and prescribed limits for it  
and set bars and doors,  
11 and said, 'Thus far shall you come, and no farther,  
and here shall your proud waves be stayed'?

12 "Have you commanded the morning since your days began,  
and caused the dawn to know its place,  
13 that it might take hold of the skirts of the earth,  
and the wicked be shaken out of it?  
14 It is changed like clay under the seal,  
and its features stand out like a garment.  
15 From the wicked their light is withheld,  
and their uplifted arm is broken.  
16 "Have you entered into the springs of the sea,  
or walked in the recesses of the deep?  
17 Have the gates of death been revealed to you,  
or have you seen the gates of deep darkness?  
18 Have you comprehended the expanse of the earth?

Declare, if you know all this.

### **EPISTLE: Romans 10:5–17**

#### **The Message of Salvation to All**

5 For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. 6 But the righteousness based on faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' " (that is, to bring Christ down) 7 "or 'Who will descend into the abyss?' " (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). 8 But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); 9 because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes

and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. 11 For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. 13 For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

14 How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? 15 And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” 16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?” 17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

## **THE GOSPEL: Matthew 14:22–33**

### **Jesus Walks on the Water**

22 Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. 23 And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, 24 but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. 25 And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. 26 But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, “It is a ghost!” and they cried out in fear. 27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “**Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid.**”

28 And Peter answered him, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.” 29 He said, “Come.” So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus. 30 But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, “Lord, save me.” 31 Jesus immediately reached out his hand and took hold of him, saying to him, “**O you of little faith, why did you doubt?**” 32 And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. 33 And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

## **Sermon 30 – Tenth Sunday after Pentecost**

### **Job 38:4-18**

Dear friends,

What would you give for a face-to-face talk with God? I'd give a great deal. I have questions that I want answered, immediate, concerning things that I could really use a one-on-one to deal with. Separation from God in the immediate, in the physical, is one of the most persistently nagging frustrations of our sinful condition. This becomes even more so when you realize that our explanations for why our relationship with God is like this are inadequate. We like to say, I have said repeatedly, that God must hide

His face from us because we are sinners. God's holiness and sin cannot co-exist, which is why God doesn't reveal Himself in this way. While there is some truth to that, the fact remains that God has revealed Himself personally to people throughout the Scriptures and has decided largely to discontinue that practice for the time being. Sad as that seems, our Old Testament lesson from Job reminds us that when God talks to people, He has much more to say than we might expect.

The context of this reading is enormous because it is an entire book. The book of Job is all about Job riding the most extreme rollercoaster imaginable, going from up to way way down before he goes back up in the end. You're all familiar with the basic premise. Job loses everything, spends tens of chapters yelling at God about this and arguing with his very pious friends about it. I mean it, this debate goes on for a rather large chunk of forever, it is endless. Our Old Testament reading is God's response to this. Job has maintained, throughout this entire book, all these chapters and chapters, that he is innocent. That he didn't deserve any of what God let happen to him. He seems to be demanding God to come down and explain Himself. So God does, and this is what He says.

**4 “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. 5 Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? 6 On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, 7 when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy?”** When I did this book in Bible study I called it God's mic drop. This is God coming at Job to compare resumes with Him, compare track records. A power comparison, but the way God does it is most curious, and what results from it is even more so.

Job's protest is that he is innocent. Now, you and I know from the rest of the Bible that no one is innocent, we are all sinners, we talk about that constantly as we should. But Job keeps protesting that he is innocent. He never backs down from that. Why, I don't know. It could be that Job doesn't know about sin, which is hard to stomach. It could be that Job isn't saying that he's perfect, Job is instead saying that

what happened to him was basically unfair. Job may admit his imperfection or sin if you were to somehow teleport back there and ask him, but what he's saying here is that he didn't deserve such a catastrophe. Job loses everything except his life, that is no exaggeration. Maybe he's not protesting the loss itself, just how extreme it was. Or it could be capturing of an honest human response to such a tragedy. That we're supposed to read this as Job's reaction rather as some kind of overarching truth. Job isn't innocent, he's a sinner, but all Job can see is the injustice of what God has done, so that's what he talks about. All of this is a possibility. Job says, I didn't deserve this.

I know you have said the same. I have said the same. When tragedy strikes deep, we often react this way. Particularly grotesque tragedies have layers of meaning to them, layers that if you're anything like me you will pick at obsessively, analyzing every detail of how this has worked to hurt you. It's always remarkable to figure out how perfectly the situation can be tailored to destroy, it's like putting together the puzzle pieces of your pain to construct just how marvelously it worked. In those moments, it is easy to make Job's protest. You know you're a sinner, you know you deserve nothing but death and hell from God, but you look at how incredibly tuned the bad time was, and you're like, did it have to be that awful? Couldn't you have backed off? Sin and pain force these incredibly honest moments of our own self-centeredness. It shines a harsh light on who we are, showing us our hearts all too clearly. We know we deserve it. We know we have to forgive. We know we have to honor God in sickness and health. But this thing... it was just too much. So we protest. We do what Job did.

God's response is, as I said, incredibly blunt and very confrontational. God basically says to Job, who are you? Who are you? I'm God. I made this world, I continue to maintain this world. I hold back the ocean. I command the dawn. **16 "Have you entered into the springs of the sea, or walked in the recesses of the deep? 17 Have the gates of death been revealed to you, or have you seen the gates of deep darkness? 18 Have you comprehended the expanse of the earth? Declare, if you know all this."** God doesn't reassure Job, but He doesn't outright condemn Job either. He just lifts the curtain on exactly who

He is, and what it means to be God. That is something I don't want you to forget, it is so obvious to us that it verges on the banal. To be God is to be all-powerful, and we are most certainly not that. With all our toys, with all our inventions, many of them marvelous things, we cannot command the sea to stop its roaring. We cannot command the dawn or the dusk. We cannot look into the deeps and see the architecture of the Earth. We think we know what's down there, we probably have a fairly good idea, but to know it like God knows it? The extent of what God knows and can do is incomprehensible to us. God wants Job to remember that, and He wants you to remember that too.

The question worth asking this text, and asking me this day, is why? Again, the lesson of God's power is something we do not need to be reminded of. You all know God is powerful. You all know what God is capable of. So why this chapter-long detailed reminder? The answer to that is simple and wonderful. This is all on your side. This is all for you, for your salvation, for your benefit, for your protection. God is the master of the roaring waters, the one who makes time what it is, He makes the dawn and dusk come and all that. Sure. Great. But remember what God says in other books. He does this for His people and His creation. He does it for you. All this power is on your side, it is there to bring you to faith, keep you to faith, and ensure that you remain His beloved children. Have you ever asked yourself why God spends chapters of the Bible – and He does this in other places in the Bible for sure – talking about how big and awesome He is? God categorically has no ego, so it is not bragging. Why does He do it? He does it to remind you of just what you have in Jesus. This is what you have. The God that holds back oceans, curates time, commands the sun to burn and the winter to freeze. The God that manages ecosystems, star systems, and immune systems alike. That is what Jesus gives you.

It's not just forgiveness, it is an entry into the plan and into the family of this God. This God in all the eye-watering detail of power that He describes here. God isn't thumping His chest or boasting, He's telling you what you have when you believe in Him. He's telling you what Jesus gives you. Is it humbling? You bet it is, and that's part of it too. Sinners always want things to go their way, even when they're

actively destroying things. God has to get this direct sometimes in order to overawe our egos, to strike us with the height and the depth of both His love and His power. A God this big is big enough to take on anything. A God this big is big enough to protect you from everything. A God this big is too big for this world, or even for your life, but that doesn't stop Him from taking care of both. God may be telling Job to sit down and shut up, but He isn't telling that to you. He's telling you He's got you. He's telling you that everything happens by His command, and that Christ is the one giving that command, the Word of forgiveness that He gives to you.

Amen