

## **Northwest Community Evangelical Free Church**

(November 10, 2024)

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Sermon manuscript

### **Sermon Series: The Story of Our Lives...and God**

(Growing through Job's story)

#### **The Liberating Grace of Repentance**

(God speaks, part 2, Job 40:6--42:6)

Study #11

#### **Introduction: Plankism...**

This is a very special morning for us as we turn again to the Old Testament book of Job.

It's week #11 in our look into this saga, and we are finally coming to a point where Job "gets it." At long last, he arrives at the point toward which God has been driving him all along.

And Lord knows it's taken Job long enough to arrive.

It was easy for us to see the failures of Job's three friends. They attacked Job while he was down. You don't do that to a friend.

Identifying the failures of Job was harder. But we looked, we searched, we explored - and we found them.

We saw that he failed by DEMANDING that his friends treat him with kindness and that God grant him relief. Bad on Job. He shouldn't have done that.

So, it's been a successful journey. We have searched the Scriptures to see where Job went wrong. And we have seen.

To use Jesus' terms, we have seen the *[Matthew 7: 3] speck* (or splinter) in his and in their eyes.

The ability to see others' faults and failings is a skill set that can come in handy. Seeing problems in others is a gift. A gift we have honed as we have put Job under the microscope.

But the gift of seeing others' faults was a gift with which Jesus was not impressed.

After His comment about seeing someone else's eye "*speck*," He went on to ask why they didn't *[Matthew 7:3]...see the log that is your own eye?"*

That's the Lord's colorful way of saying that there is a very human tendency to be critical toward others and not toward ourselves; to not be reflective.

One memorable moment of non-reflectiveness for me came years ago when I remarked to Kathy that I was "*a pretty flexible guy. I just rolled with life's punches.*"

My lovely wife's instantaneous and loud laugh led me to wonder if I might need to re-assess my flexibility quotient.

In fact, that laugh prompted an as-yet unfinished effort to grow in spontaneity and the ability to go with the flow, to be personally flexible.

Seeing faults in others is a gift, but it is a cheap gift. The more valuable gift is the ability to see our own faults and failings. That gift always comes in handy, but it is often less well-nurtured.

It is one thing to be able to look out through the window of our own lives and see the problems out there.

It is another thing - and a more important thing - to be willing to turn the window into a mirror and see the problems inside.

Today, Job's story invites us to see the "log" in our own eye and to be reflective. God leads Job to repentance - and invites us to join him.

The purpose of our time together this morning is not academic. It is to so see God and to so see ourselves that we will respond to who He really is in light of who we really are.

*Review...*

Terrible trials came Job's way. He suffered devastating losses. He then immediately turned to God in worship. He then lamented.

Then, his friends failed him and then Job failed them and God.

That's when Elihu showed up and challenged Job to soften, to repent. Elihu pointed Job to the majesty and to the holiness of God.

He did really well, and when this younger man finished his speeches, he passed the torch to God who ran the final two laps of a relay race designed to drive Job to repentance.

The first lap (Job 38:1--39:30) consisted of God reminding Job that he knew nothing about running a universe.

God's world is an unimaginably complex system of systems - and it works flawlessly, from the hydrologic cycle to the food chain, to meteorological patterns, to tides and constellations.

God crafted a masterful speech, telling Job *"You don't know enough to question Me or My ways."*

And yet, even after that first speech, Job still didn't "get it." He didn't argue back, but he wasn't done fighting with God, and God was out for more than a simple "no contest" from Job.

So, God ran one more lap. And in Speech #2, He got even more intense, more sarcastic, and more personal than He had been in Speech #1.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> God's second speech follows the same outline as His first: challenge (40:6-14), substantiation (40:15--41:34) and response (42:1-6).

Beginning this second speech exactly as He did the first, God called on Job to "man up." He sarcastically demanded that Job present proof to back up his claim that He is unjust.

### **Challenged by the Almighty (40:6-14)**

#### **Job's Failure (40:8)**

***[40:6] Then the LORD answered Job from the storm and said, [7] "Now tighten the belt on your waist like a man; I will ask you, and you instruct Me. [40:8] "Will you really nullify My judgment? Will you condemn Me so that you may be justified?"***

The problem was Job's arrogant presumption that he could pass judgment on God. So, the extreme sarcasm continued as God outlined what will have to be in place if He - God! - will repent and admit that Job was right.

#### **Conditions for GOD'S "Repentance" (40:9-14)**

- First, Job will have to be strong and wise enough to run the universe at least as well as God has.  
***[40:9] "Or do you have an arm like God, And can you thunder with a voice like His?"***
- Second, Job will have to manifest equal majesty and eminence and dignity to that which flows from God.  
***[40:10] "Adorn yourself with pride and dignity, And clothe yourself with honor and majesty."***
- Third, Job will have to show himself as righteous as God.  
***[40:11] "Let out your outbursts of anger, And look on everyone who is arrogant, and humble him."  
[12] "Look on everyone who is arrogant, and humble him, And trample down the wicked where they stand."***

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<sup>2</sup> Note God's suggestion that Job *"look down on everyone who is arrogant, and humble him."* Of course he can't, but that is the point of the invitation.

If Job can pull all of that off, well,  
**[40:14] “Then I will also confess to you,  
 That your own right hand can save you.”<sup>3</sup>**

Don’t hold your breath.

God used a very sharp tone here in all that He said to Job. One author described it as a “rhetoric of humiliation.”

There is no reason to be troubled by this. God speaks to Job the way He does - sarcastically - for a very good reason.

At several points in God’s two speeches, He mentions “*pride*.”

Of all the concerns that God had with Job, He was most concerned to deal with Job’s pride, his “*I’ve got this*” mentality.

Pride has to be dealt a death blow, and pride doesn’t die easily. That explains the harshness of God’s words to Job. God is graciously laying Job low so as to destroy his life-sucking pride.

It is only a turn from pride and a return to submission that will restore him to his former posture of being an eager agent on mission for God who brings blessing to his world.

Now, to drive home the point that Job didn’t have a leg to stand on before God, the LORD brought forward two more living creatures for Job’s consideration.

### **Job Takes a Cue from Two Monsters (40:15--41:34)**

#### **Intro: Identifying Behemoth and Leviathan**

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<sup>3</sup> The inference is that Job needs to be “saved.” (40:14) Elihu had hinted at the same thing earlier (33:14-30) when he said that Job’s pride would lead to self-destruction and that Job needed to be rescued by accepting God’s redemption.

God mentioned several animals in His first speech: the lion and the raven, to the mountain goat and the deer, to the wild donkey and the wild bull, the ostrich, the horse, and the hawk.

All these animals bore testimony to the creativity and the wisdom of God’s rule.

God carefully chose the two beasts He will mention today in His second speech to make a different point to Job.

First off, we’re going to take just a minute or two to think about the identification of these beasts. Then, we’ll think carefully about what Job - and we - have to learn from them..

The two creatures are referred to as *Behemoth* and *Leviathan*.

Behemoth has been variously linked to the elephant and the hippopotamus, to a dinosaur (most often to the *Apatosaurus*, formerly known as *Brontosaurus*) and to a primordial, mythical land-monster.

Scholars have identified Leviathan as a crocodile, a whale, a sea serpent, a dragon, and a primordial, mythical sea-monster.<sup>4</sup>

There is a word for “hippopotamus” in Hebrew. That word is not used here. And there is a word for “crocodile” in Hebrew. That word is also not used here.

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<sup>4</sup> Reitman’s view is that seeing Behemoth and Leviathan as hippopotamus and crocodile (so Zuck; K&D; DTS) does not account for the overtones of evil in the descriptions of them. With Donald Carson, Reitman says that both likely represent primordial cosmic powers that break out against God. The argument is that if Job is to charge God with injustice, he must do so from the secure stance of his own superior justice. If he can’t subdue them, let alone the cosmic forces they represent, he displays extraordinary arrogance in calling God’s justice into question. God’s defeat of the sea monster (Psalm 74:14) and Leviathan (Isaiah 27:1) supports the idea that the beasts embody “the chaotic forces of evil.” Excellent reasoning, and perhaps correct. But my opinion is formed by my sense as to what Job would have understood by the terms.

The word “Behemoth” literally means, “beast.” The word “Leviathan” literally means “to twist” (thus, a creature that twists).

There are good students of the Bible who hold to varying positions as to what Behemoth and Leviathan are. For myself, of chief importance is what Job would have been thinking when he heard God use these names.

So, I lean toward thinking that the animals in view are the hippopotamus and the crocodile. Both of these “monsters” lived in the region where Job lived (in the marshes of Egypt and in the rivers of the Ancient Near East).<sup>5</sup>

But, as I don’t want to spend more time on the theme of identifying the creatures, I’ll refer to them as we move through the passages as “Behemoth” and “Leviathan.”

Now (having frustrated some of you by my opinion), let’s listen first to God as He describes Behemoth. God’s first comment is telling.

### **Behemoth (40:15-24)**

#### *Behemoth and Job*

**[40:15] “Behold, Behemoth, which I made as well as you;**

Both Job and Behemoth are creations of God. They both stand before God in a creature/Creator relationship.

But the differences between Job and Behemoth are as huge as Behemoth is huge.

#### *Notable characteristics*

**[15] “Behold, Behemoth, which I made as well as you;  
He eats grass like an ox.**

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<sup>5</sup> They are animals with which Job was actually familiar. And, while the descriptions don’t perfectly align with these animals, I chalk that up to an intentional, literary hyperbole.

**[16] “Behold, his strength in his waist  
And his power in the muscles of his belly.**

**[17] “He hangs his tail like a cedar;  
The tendons of his thighs are knit together.**

**[18] “His bones are tubes of bronze;  
His limbs are like bars of iron...**

**[20] “Indeed the mountains bring him food,  
And all the animals of the field play there.**

**[21] “He lies down under the lotus plants,  
In the hiding place of the reeds and the marsh.**

**[22] “The lotus plants cover him with shade;  
The willows of the brook surround him.**

**[23] “If a river rages, he is not alarmed;  
He is confident, though the Jordan rushes to his mouth.**

**[24] “Can anyone capture him when he is on watch,  
Can anyone pierce his nose with barbs?**

He eats grass like an ox - but he is not an ox. He is stronger than an ox and bigger than an ox.<sup>6</sup>

God says that Behemoth’s limbs are like bronze, they are like iron. Strong. He lives in rivers and fears nothing there, not even when the river reaches flood stage.

Then note that God inserted a striking remark into the middle of His description of Behemoth.

*Behemoth: Untamable - and tamed by God (v. 19)*

**[40:19] “He is the first of the ways of God;  
Let his Maker bring near his sword.”<sup>7</sup>**

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<sup>6</sup> God says that his tail bends like a cedar. That could mean that his tail is enormous like a giant redwood (unlike a hippo). Or it could mean that the tail is short in comparison to the beast itself, like a cedar branch is short in comparison to the height of the tree. So Keil-Delitzsch, who report that “the stunted tail of an animal is a mark of its strength to a Semite.”

<sup>7</sup> This is the literal translation of the Hebrew and may be God, sarcastically inviting Job to bring his own sword to tame Behemoth.

Of all God's creatures, Behemoth is uniquely massive and strong. Nothing tames Behemoth. All creation is subservient to Behemoth. And God created and tamed Behemoth.<sup>8</sup>

Job raised himself up against God while Behemoth knew his place as a submissive creature before his Maker.

Then, without pausing, God moves from a consideration of Behemoth to the other monster, Leviathan,<sup>9</sup> a beast that is even less given to domestication than Behemoth.

### **Leviathan (41:1-34)**

*Strong and unassailable*

**[41:1] "Can you drag out Leviathan with a fishhook?**

**And press down his tongue with a cord?**

**[2] "Can you put a rope in his nose**

**And pierce his jaw with a hook?...**

**[5] "Will you play with him as with a bird,**

**And tie him down for your young girls?**

**[6] "Will the traders bargain for him?**

**Will they divide him among the merchants?**

**[7] "Can you fill his skin with harpoons,**

**Or his head with fishing spears?...**

**[12] "I will not be silent about his limbs,**

**Or his mighty strength, or his graceful frame.**

**[13] "Who can strip off his outer covering?**

**Who can pierce his double armor?**

**[14] "Who can open the doors of his face?**

**Around his teeth there is terror.**

**[15] "His strong scales are his pride,**

**Locked as with a tight seal.**

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<sup>8</sup> Eugene Peterson renders it in The Message,

*Most magnificent of all My creatures*

*But I still lead him around like a lamb!*

<sup>9</sup> More space is given to describing this creature, perhaps implying that Job has more in common with Leviathan than with Behemoth. As one author suggested, "The extended section devoted to Leviathan seems designed to address the stunning intransigence of Job's own pride."

**[16] "One is so close to another**

**That no air can come between them.**

**[17] "They are joined one to another;**

**They clasp each other and cannot be separated...**

**[22] "In his neck dwells strength,**

**And dismay leaps before him.**

**[23] "The folds of his flesh are joined together,**

**Firm and immovable on him.**

Leviathan is really, really strong. He lives in the water, but you don't go fishing for him. He is unassailable there and everywhere else. You don't mess with Leviathan.

God has armed him with elaborate defenses. The scales that cover him are like armor. Like Behemoth, he has enormous strength.

And then, coupled with his impressive physical power, he's got an attitude and a hair-trigger temper.

*Violent, cruel, and proud*

**[41:3] "Will he make many pleas to you,**

**Or will he speak to you gentle words?**

**[4] "Will he make a covenant with you?**

**Will you take him as a servant forever?...**

**[8] "Lay your hand on him;**

**Remember the battle; you will not do it again!**

**[9] "Behold, your expectation is false;**

**Will you be hurled down even at the sight of him?...**

**[18] "His sneezes flash forth light,**

**And his eyes are like the eyes of dawn.**

**[19] "From his mouth go burning torches;**

**Sparks of fire leap forth.**

**[20] "From his nostrils smoke goes out**

**As from a boiling pot and burning reeds.**

**[21] "His breath sets coals aglow,**

***And a flame goes forth from his mouth...<sup>10</sup>***

***[24] "His heart is as firm as a stone,***

***And as firm as a lower millstone.***

***[25] "When he rises up, the mighty are afraid;***

***Because of the crashing they are bewildered.***

***[26] "The sword that reaches him cannot prevail,***

***Nor the spear, the dart, or the javelin.***

***[27] "He regards iron as straw,***

***Bronze as rotten wood.***

***[28] "The arrow cannot make him flee;***

***Slingstones are turned into stubble for him.***

***[29] "Clubs are regarded as stubble;***

***He laughs at the rattling of the javelin.***

***[30] "His underparts are like sharp pieces of pottery;***

***He spreads out like a threshing sledge on the mud.***

***[31] "He makes the depths boil like a pot;***

***He makes the sea like a jar of ointment.***

***[32] "Behind him he illuminates a pathway;***

***One would think the deep to be gray-haired.***

***[33] "Nothing on earth is like him,***

***One made without fear.***

***[34] "He looks on everything that is high;***

***He is king over all the sons of pride."***

You can tame a cow or an ox so that it will serve you. A horse whisperer can tame the most unruly horse. Leviathan won't be tamed.

You can train a dog to serve you, to walk with you, to sit at your feet. A good dog trainer can take most any dog and get that dog to know its place in the pack.

Not Leviathan. He's the leader of the pack and everybody knows it. He'll never submit to you.

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<sup>10</sup> One author notes that the description of Leviathan as a dragon is too reminiscent of Satan to be coincidence. While they are probably hyperbole, they are exaggeration with a point. The dragon/Satan-parallels highlight Leviathan's intransigent rebellion AND draw a line from Leviathan to Satan...to Job. (!)

You can't play with him. You can't buy and sell him. You can't go to war against him. It's best to stay out of his way.

There's nothing gentle about him. In fact, there is about him a malevolent and evil pride. That's behind the description of his red eyes and fiery breath. He's cruel and hostile.

And then listen to these lines, embedded in the middle of the Leviathan passage.

*Leviathan: Rebellious - and subdued by God*

***[41:10] "No one is so reckless that he dares to stir him;***

***Who then is he who opposes Me?***

***[11] "Who has been first to give to Me, that I should repay him?<sup>11</sup>***

***Whatever is under the entire heaven is Mine.***

Just as it was with Behemoth, Leviathan submits to God's rule. He submits to no one else, but even cruel and arrogant Leviathan knows his place before God.

God described these creatures to Job to make a point to Job.

*And the point is...*

And the point is that if such mighty monsters as Behemoth and Leviathan submit to God, so should Job submit to God.

Behemoth and Leviathan show Job that he needs to allow himself to be tamed by God. They call on Job to assume the only proper posture to take before God: submission. There is no place for pride.

For all their wildness and violence, Behemoth and Leviathan are one up on Job in that they know their place before God.

So, what will Job do now that he has been confronted with this embarrassing comparison where he comes in third place in God's eyes behind these two mighty, malevolent beasts?

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<sup>11</sup> Paul quotes this line in Romans 11:35 to highlight God's absolute autonomy.

Listen. The effect of all this on Job is immediate and profound.

### **Job's Liberating Repentance (42:1-6)**

#### **Repentance and Words**

##### ***[1] Then Job answered the LORD and said...***

The first thing I want us to notice here is the presence of words. Job had something to say. Wherever there is genuine repentance (which is what we are seeing here), there will be words.

At the end of God's first speech, you'll remember what Job said.

***[40:4] Behold, I am insignificant; what can I say in response to You? I put my hand on my mouth.***

***[5] I have spoken once, and I will not reply; Or twice, and I will add nothing more."***

He had nothing. No words. That wordlessness was a signal to God that His work was not finished. But now, when Job is thoroughly broken, humbled, repentant, there are words.

We see this in other places in the Bible. People who are repentant before God have words.

When King David was thoroughly convicted of his sins - adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, Uriah - he came before God with words, the words of Psalm 51.

When Hosea called the people of Israel to repentance, he told them,

***[14:1 "Return, Israel, to the Lord your God, For you have stumbled because of your wrongdoing.***

***[2] Take words with you and return to the Lord...***

Here, Job's words express the genuineness of his repentance. So here's a thought for all of us today.

You may have taken some blows recently that have left you reeling. In response, you may have accused God of mismanaging your life. You may have called into question His justice.

As of this morning you're aware that something is wrong with that response. As never before, you're convinced that condemning God is not right.

You now own the idea that bitterness against God, railing against God, accusing God of injustice is not proper. It's ugly and wrong - and it's a good thing to recognize this. But don't stop with recognition.

Follow Hosea's counsel and "***take words with you.***" Follow the lead of King David and Job. Speak.

And what words will you bring? Let's observe Job's words and use them as our template for the time when we come to God, repentant.

I think that it is significant that Job begins with an affirmation of God's worth and by reciting God's words.

#### **A Whole Life "About Face"**

##### *Remembering God's words*

***[42:2] "I know that You can do all things, And that no plan of Yours can be thwarted.***

Job's first words are good reminders of God's power and sovereignty. They make for a great place to start. You can affirm the same thing when you come to God.

And Job's next words quote God's words. When God first started speaking to Job out of the tornado, He asked,

***[3a] (Job 38:20) 'Who is this who darkens the divine plan By words without knowledge?'***

Job repeats those words here, letting God know he had been listening. God's words now fill his mouth and his heart.

It's good to reflect on God's words. It's good to say them back to God. It lets Him know that we are placing ourselves under His word, under His authority.

Next, Job confesses to something that is impossible to understand. Literally. He confesses God's inscrutability.

*Confessing God's inscrutability*

**[3b] "Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know."**

God's ways are inscrutable. That means that they are beyond figuring out. Have you ever said to yourself, "*I just don't get what God's doing?*" Yep. He's God. That's often the way it will be with Him.

Job thought that he could figure out God and His ways. And finally, here at the end, he realizes that God is un-figure-out-able.

These are good words to bring with you when you come to God. Express to Him that you don't understand what He's doing - and tell Him that you are OK with that. You will trust Him even without full understanding.<sup>12</sup>

The end of Job's response to God gives us one more set of words to bring to God. Job commits to an "about face."

*Retracting demandingness*

**[41:4] 'Please listen, and I will speak; I will ask You, and You instruct me.'**

**[5] "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; But now my eye sees You;**

**[6] Therefore I retract,**

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<sup>12</sup> If God had told Job the reason (from chapters 1 and 2) for his sufferings, He would have nullified Elihu's key point that the ways of God are inscrutable (Job 34) and subverted his hopes for Job and the author's hopes for us, the readers: that we would fear the Lord and be "on mission" for God's mission in the world even when His ways are not known (in the midst of inscrutability).

***And I repent sitting on dust and ashes.*"<sup>13</sup>**

Job has been confronted with God's amazing creative power and His sovereignty over nature. He's seen God's orchestration of all the systems that work so harmoniously to make the world "tick."

He's been reminded that even the beastly Behemoth and Leviathan willingly live under God's sovereignty.

So now, he's ready to take his rightful place, again, as a created person living in submission, tamed by Almighty God.

He repents. He turns, makes an "about face."<sup>14</sup>

For the child of God repentance involves a re-orientation of life, a change of mind about where L-I-F-E is to be found.

When Job says that he repents, he means that he has withdrawn his demand that God meet him in court. He will no longer accuse God of injustice.

This is not Job, hoping that his repentance will somehow convince God to re-bless him with material wealth. His repentance comes before any hint of restoration.

Job has simply come to see something of the worthiness of God and realizes the ugliness of stiffening his neck and hardening his heart against the immortal, invisible, God only wise.

When you recognize that you've been wrong and you come to God, words to that effect would be just right.

Affirm that God is God. Affirm that you know that you are not.

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<sup>13</sup> "***I abhor myself***" ("*despise*" "*hate*" as in King James, NIV, New King James, ESV) is misleading. Better is "***withdraw/retract/repent.***" (NASB; The Message)

<sup>14</sup> In the New Testament, the word that we translate "repent" (*metanoia*) literally means "change your mind."



Tell God that you intend to stop demanding that He come through for you in this or that way. Tell Him that you will worship and trust and obey, come what may.

**Conclusion:**

The relationship between the Creator and the created is the most important relationship any of us “created” will ever know.

That relationship doesn’t thrive where there is pride marked by independence and rebellion. We are most ALIVE when we live in submission to God.

The word that describes the shift toward that LIFE is *repentance* - a whole life “about face” - that spells FREEDOM to be “on mission” for God.

Today, let’s join Job in the liberating life of repentance and submission to God.