

Job 14

Vss. 1-6

- It may be that on the day that Job spoke what we know as Chapter 14, it was a Monday and it was cold and it was raining, for he is surely in the depths of despair.
- In these opening verses, Job sounds a bit like Shakespeare's character Macbeth. "The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle! Life is but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and is then heard no more. It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." Compare that to verses 1 and 2: "Man, who is born of woman, is short-lived and full of turmoil. Like a flower he comes forth and withers. He also flees like a shadow and does not remain."
- In verse 3, Job is incredulous that God should ever even look on something as insignificant as a human being and when He does, it is for nothing other than to bring undeserving judgement down on the person.
- Verse 4 speaks to ritual. Leviticus 11-15 stipulates what qualifies as "clean" or "unclean" and offers lists of such things. Recall that Peter in Acts 10 struggled with the issue. A snake is unclean and to Job's mind there is nothing that can ever make a snake clean. The Bible commentator Horst suggests that it has to do with the nature of the thing, not an external act in and of itself: "Is there anyone who is 'pure' who is not actually 'impure'? No not one."
- In Chapter 13:20-22, Job is extremely optimistic. He has demanded an audience before the throne of God to present his case and he is certain of winning. But God was silent and in that silence, as hour after hour dragged by with no word from Heaven, Job slid further and further into despair, saying in verses 5 and 6 that he really just wants to be left alone until he punches out at the time clock for the last time.

Vss. 7-17

- In these verses the idea of the finality of death, as Job best understands death, consumes him. He does not have the hope found in Ezekiel's dry bones (Ezekiel 37). He looks at a tree stump and see hope for the tree. It has been cut down, but "though its roots grow old in the ground and its stump dies in the dry soil, at the scent of water it will flourish and put forth sprigs like a plant."
- But for humanity Job sees no such sprig of hope. Death is like a dry riverbed in the desert that will never see water/life again.
- The only real explanation Joel can see is that he is living in a time of God's wrath toward humanity as those before Noah did. He would prefer that God let him die and hide him in Sheol than allow him to continue to live in such horrible times. In Sheol, the place of the dead, there is no life, only a shadowy spiritual existence. Perhaps, he thinks to himself, once the season of God's wrath is over, then God would look around and miss him and call for him and God would offer forgiveness and reconciliation. "My transgression is sealed up in a bag and You wrap up my iniquity" so that whatever offense Job has caused would be out of sight and out of mind.

Vss. 18-22

- But then Job thinks that he's just dreaming if he truly believes God will ever reconcile with him. As God makes mountains fall and great rocks tumble and floods destroy good farmland, so too does God destroy the hopes of humanity. The greatest, most valuable thing that Job has lost in all of this is not his wealth, it's not even his children. What Job has lost most of all is hope. See verse 19: "Water wears away stones, its torrents wash away the dust of the earth. So You destroy man's hope." To him, death is inevitable and comes with absolute finality. Life is (vs. 1-2), "short-lived and full of turmoil. Like a flower (a person) comes forth and withers." There is no place for hope in such an existence.
- At this point, all Job can see is that humanity is a life-or-death battle with God and it is a battle in which humanity has no chance. In such a battle it is

every man for himself. One is unconcerned about the pain of others or the attempted comfort others may bring. One is even cut off and emotionally detached from his children. "But his body pains him and he mourns only for *himself.*"

- The difference Jesus brings is that He is the restorer of Hope. Hear the voice of the Nazi concentration camp poet:

"I believe in the sun even when it is not shining
And I believe in love, even when there's no one there.
And I believe in God, even when He is silent.
I believe through any trial, there is always a way
But sometimes in this suffering and hopeless despair
My heart cries for shelter, to know someone's there
But a voice rises within me, saying hold on my child, I'll give you strength,
I'll give you hope. Just stay a little while. I believe in the sun
even when it is not shining. And I believe in love
even when there's no one there
But I believe in God even when he is silent
I believe through any trial there is always a way.
May there someday be sunshine
May there someday be happiness
May there someday be love
May there someday be peace...."