

**Words of Life: Comfort**  
Job

**Reading Job Following the Psalms**

- The Psalms tell a story:
  - Psalm 1: “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked...He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.” (Ps 1:1, 3)
  - Psalms 42-43: “My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all the day long, ‘Where is your God?’” (Ps 42:3)
  - Psalm 73: “But when I thought how to understand this, it seemed to me a wearisome task, until I went into the sanctuary of God.” (Ps 73:16-17)
  - Psalm 90: “Return, O LORD! How long? Have pity on your servants! ... Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, and for as many years as we have seen evil.” (Ps 90:13-15)
  - Psalm 107: “Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man!” (Ps 107:8)
  - Psalm 150: “Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!” (Ps 150:6)
- Job embodies that story.

**Job’s Suffering**

- Job knows our pain.
- The book of Job is more about “comfort” than “wisdom.”

**How should I respond to God in the midst of suffering?**

- Job initially responds to God with admirable submissive piety (1:21; 2:10)
- Job turns to lament, complaint, and argument with God (e.g., 3:1-26; 10:3; 16:12-14; 19:13-19; 21:17-18)
- God approves of Job’s speech (42:7)
- Job participates in the biblical tradition of defiant faith (e.g., Gen 18:25; 32:26-28; Exod 32:11-13)

*And I had a mighty battle like-a Jacob and de angel,  
Jacob time of old;  
I didn’t ‘tend to lef’ ‘em go  
Till Jesus bless my soul. (“I Saw the Beam in my Sister’s Eye”)*

- Do you have the faith in God's goodness, justice, and power to cry out to him to put things right?

### **How should I respond to others who are suffering?**

- Job's friends came to comfort him (2:11), but they failed (16:2; 21:34; 42:7).
- The friends become enemies (22:5), because they are terrified by Job's suffering (6:21).
- Job breaks down the imaginary walls we build to separate us from the suffering of others.
- Ask yourself, am I being one of Job's friends right now?
- There is some suffering that human wisdom is insufficient to comfort.

### **What does suffering teach us about the nature of God?**

- In the divine speeches (chs. 38-41), God establishes himself as the creator (38:4-38), who cares for (38:39-39:30) and is in sovereign control over (40:1-41:34) his creation.

*Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father... Fear not, therefore; you are worth more than many sparrows. (Matt 10:29, 31).*

*If God is for us, who can be against us? (Rom 8:31)*

- Job responds: "therefore I reject [my mourning], and I am comforted regarding dust and ashes." (42:6, my translation)
- True comfort is found in knowing God through Jesus Christ.

*"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too." (2 Cor 1:3-5)*