

Good rainy Sunday morning from a dark hill in Rockport....

I've written about perspective before.... and it's time to be reminded of that helpful concept again. It is a concept that I've been working hard to keep in mind every day since March 15, 2020. That was the day when we gathered for a "normal" Sunday worship service before Covid-19 took over almost every aspect of our lives. Since then this awful virus has taken the lives of over 700,000 Americans, and almost five million people around the world. Sounds like a situation right out of the Book of Job!

Perspective gives us a light to shine on the darkness of the times.... "A particular perspective is a particular way of thinking about something, especially one that is influenced by your beliefs or experiences." (from iPhone Dictionary) Reading the Book of Job can give us a new, or forgotten?, perspective on the reality of what we are facing right now. It seems to me that ignorance, and the lack of concern and compassion from some of us for the rest of us, have swept us into the deadly situation in which we find ourselves now. Masks in many colorful materials have become the new "fashion statement" as well as the protective covering many of us have taken up for the good of all of us. It's all a question of perspective – and we seem to be divided by two different perspectives: one labeled "individual freedom" and the other labeled "concern for one another as well as for ourselves." I don't know how we bridge these two perspectives so we can get beyond the current predicament in which we find ourselves whether we acknowledge that predicament or not. But striving to keep in mind the perspective of *God's* time – that's *kairos* time – rather than *our* time – that's *chronos* time, chronological time – might help.

This morning, I read about an interesting way of grasping the difference between those two perspectives of time. James Quek wrote, "The best way to differentiate between *chronos* and *kairos* is to see time as either a flowing river which carries us away (*chronos*), or a quiet lake which we swim in (*kairos*). We all experience time as both, all the time, in whatever we do. We experience *chronos* when we are impatiently waiting for something to be over and done with. We experience *kairos* when we are so deeply engrossed in an activity that time seems to stand still. In *chronos* we are stressed – in *kairos*, we are refreshed."

Can we find ways to relieve the stress of this moment in time and turn it into a time of refreshment? Refreshment of perspective, renewal of hope, rereading of the Book of Job.... Perhaps we can relieve our human chronological stress in these times with the refreshing relief of *God's* time.... It's all a matter of perspective, don't you think?

Blessings on this rainy morning.... I hope to see many of you in church for worship in a few hours..... I DO hope to record my sermon for viewing on Facebook later today.... Susan

**"Then the Lord answered Job..."**

**A Sermon for the Federated Church of Thomaston**

**Thomaston, Maine**

**Sunday, October 17, 2021**

**Rev. Dr. Susan Stonestreet**

**Scripture: Job 38:1-7 (34-41)**

Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind:

"Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?

Give up your loins like a man, I will question you, and you shall declare to me.

Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding.

Who determined its measurements -- surely you know!

Or who stretched the line upon it?

On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone when the morning stars sang together  
and all the heavenly beings shouted for  
joy? (Job 38:1-7)

Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, so that a flood of waters may cover you?

Can you send forth lightnings, so that they may go and say to you, 'Here we are'?

Who has put wisdom in the inward parts; or given understanding to the mind?

Who has the wisdom to number the clouds? Or who can tilt the waterskins of the heavens, when  
the dust runs into a mass and clods cling together?

Can you hunt the prey for the lion, or satisfy the appetite of the young lions, when they crouch in  
their dens, or lie in wait in their covert?

Who provides for the raven its prey, when its young ones cry to God, and wander about for lack  
of

food?" (Job 38:34-41) (J

Will you pray with me. Powerful God, open our ears, open our eyes, open our hearts that we might be reminded again this day it is *you* who is in charge of the greater scheme of life. Help us take our minds off ourselves that we might think about things beyond our power to control, yet still within our capacity to try to understand. Amen.

Job is one of my favorite books of the Bible! Job is rich and full of the story of human life -- life often lived despairingly *without* God, life sometimes lived hopefully *with* God, life always lived silently *through* God.

The first verse of the Book of Job introduces Job as "a man blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil." (Job 1:1) Yet even though he was a good God-fearing man, Job experienced the worst tragedies of life. Job's life was a dramatic example of the reality that *bad things happen to a good person*. He plunged, or was plunged, into a world of despair and difficulty,

distress and doubt. "In all this Job did not sin with his lips," (Job 2:10) we learn in the second chapter of the book.

Job's story is important for us because Job's troubles are our troubles. Job's endurance, and at times lack of patience, are ours. Job's uprightness is our uprightness. Job's suffering is our suffering. The truth of the matter of getting through life, it seems to me, is that we are all related to one another, and our purpose is to help one another through the greatest difficulties of life.

The book of Job breaks down the common illusion that *if we live good and upright lives and do all the right things, God will protect us from all the evils of the world* -- natural disasters, like death dealing hurricanes; hate-filled tragedies, like 9/11, and too many mean-spirited and deadly attacks on children and oldsters around the world; life threatening and killing diseases of too many kinds, like Covid. In disaster relief, in communities where there has been a tragedy, in cancer filled times, we are called to be in relation with one another that we might be in relation with God. In the book of Job we learn, "In all this," (Job 1:22, 2:10) God is with us.

But we are called to do more than accept all of this with a *blind faith*. Expressing our anger and despair, even aimed at God, is human. Job became angry at God. Later in the book he laments, "God has made my heart faint; the Almighty has terrified me; if only I could vanish in darkness, and thick darkness would cover my face!" (Job 23:17)

In today's reading we learn that God begins to respond to Job's complaints and cries of despair. "Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind: *'Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up your loins like a man, I will question you, and you shall declare to me. Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding.'*" (Job 38:1-4)

The tone of these words comes across like that of an angry parent annoyed at their teenager's self-center whining, don't you think? "Just who do you think you are? What the heck were you thinking? Who died and made you God? Sit down, be quiet, and listen to *me* for a change instead of the sound of your own voice!" In no uncertain terms, God, speaking through the writer of Job's book, has a few things to say and now is the time to get them off the chest!

The reading of this passage from Eugene Peterson's *The Message*, which is an interpretation not a translation of the Bible, begins, "Why do you confuse the issue? Why do you talk without knowing what you are talking about? Pull yourself together, Job! Up on your feet! Stand tall! I have some questions for

you, and I want some straight answers. Where were you when I created the earth? Tell me, since you know so much! Who decided on its size? Certainly you'll know that! Who came up with the blueprints and measurements? How was its foundation poured, and who set the cornerstone, while the morning stars sang in chorus and all the angels shouted praise?" (Job 38:1-7)

Matthew Fox, an Episcopal priest, educator, and writer, says "God's answer to Job's despair, his 'dark night of the soul,' is to *challenge him* with the wonder and amazement of the universe.... Here we learn that cosmology, [that's a fancy theological word] for beholding the awe and terror of the universe, leads to clear thinking, to seeing things in perspective, and therefore to repentance. Job is not merely a suffering individual -- his plight represents the plight of his people.... [and of us].

Healing is restored when Job and his community see their plight in light of the entire creation. Then happiness returns to Job's life. *His healing is not so much a matter of sin or blame as it is of perspective.* He could not find healing in an anthropocentric view of the world or of the human-divine relationship. [Anthropocentrism refers to interpreting or regarding the world in terms of human values and experiences. Considering human beings as the most significant entity of the universe is an anthropocentric understanding of the world.<sup>[1]</sup>]

The healing [for Job] comes with the breakthrough of a cosmic awareness. [Fox asks the question], might a similar story happen for us earth people, almost overcome by the 'dark night of our souls,' as we learn to let go, to repent [which means turn around], to see anew in light of the awesome gifts of the universe?"<sup>[2]</sup>

Perhaps our problem, which the book of Job dramatically helps us consider, *is* one of perspective -- how are we going to understand the pain and despair of life? Do we continue to think of our *individual* lives and our *individual* problems as the center of the universe, or can we broaden our perspective to include those of our human companions, even those we don't know, and other species in the natural world? Can we place ourselves *within God's framework of life and death and growth and renewal in all of creation?*

God speaks to Job of the formation of the world, the weather, the mountains, the sea, the birds and animals of all kinds. God says, "Can you hunt the prey for the lion, or satisfy the appetite of the young lions, when they crouch in their dens,

or lie in wait in their covert? Who provides for the raven its prey, when its young ones cry to God, and wander about for lack of food?" (Job 38:39-41)

I must admit that after doing my reading for preparing for this sermon, I found myself much more aware of things beyond my own immediate and self-oriented thoughts or control --

the *beauty and richness* of Fall in nature in our part of the world,

the *liveliness* of our dogs when we take them for walks,

the *spunk* of the little birds who have flown into our kitchen window, landing on our deck -- looking to be near death to my tear-filled eyes, who often have raised themselves up and flown away after a little while. (We now have decals on our kitchen windows so these near death experiences of the birds don't happen),

the *miracle* that I'm able to get out of bed every morning under my own steam,

the *recognition* of the hard fact that many, many people are enduring challenging medical conditions and treatments,

the *reality* of utter devastation from violent hurricanes and flooding to our south and wild fires to our west.

*Perspective is an amazing tool to help us take in the world so we can make some sense of what happens each day.* God, in the voice of the author of Job, helps Job begin to take a different perspective on his problems. "*Oh poor me*" is not a useful, healthy or productive perspective for much of anything. All it does is make suffering more insufferable and despair more dramatically difficult. And often, it drives away those who might want to be supportive and helpful to us. Unless we can find our place within God's greater realm of being and well being, we will continue to wander, and worry, and be angry, and take from life only for our ourselves rather than be thankful for life for us all.

One writer contemplating the meaning of Job's story says this, "God's line of questioning [to Job] implies Job does not know or see the whole picture. That does not invalidate Job's laments. It does not suggest his cries for justice are not true expressions of his experience. It simply means that we, like Job, live within the limits of human knowledge. We cannot see, nor can we control, all that comes our way. We can only hold on to God and one another in trust, in lament, in hope in the midst of unresolved questions."<sup>[31]</sup>

To be reconciled to pain as a gift, a *gift which teaches compassion and open understanding*, that is the task of healing in the midst of what has been broken.

*Finding God* in the midst of the task of healing is the greatest gift we can receive. Job found that out. In the last chapter of the book, Job says to God, "I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you." (Job 42:5) In New Testament terms, we know the familiar words of the ones healed by Jesus often in his short time of ministry, "*I was blind, but now I see.*"

When we are blind to the wisdom of God, we tend to place too much power in ourselves too often. There's a story about God that seems apropos for this morning. It goes like this....

God was sitting in heaven one day when a scientist said to Him, "God, we don't need you anymore. Science has finally figured out a way to create life out of nothing – in other words, we can now do what you did in the beginning." God replies, "Oh, is that so? Tell Me." "Well," says the scientist, "we can take dirt and form it into the likeness of you and breathe life into it, thus creating man." "Well, that's very interesting," replies God. "Show me." So the scientist bends down to the earth and starts to mold the soil into the shape of a man. "No, no, no," interrupts God. "Get your own dirt."

God answered Job out of the whirlwind. Job heard God's answer and finally saw the light. The questions for us today are these: Do *we* hear God's answer and do we see the light? What do we do with the "dirt" *God* has given us to mold?

Let the people say, "Amen."

**Federated Church in Thomaston  
United Church of Christ    United Methodist Church  
All Are Welcome  
Sunday, October 17, 2021**

Rev. Dr. Susan Stonestreet, Pastor    Alice Billheimer, Organist/ Choir Director  
Lector: Lou Caron

*Please be respectfully silent once our worship service has begun.*

*An asterisk (\*) indicates where you are invited to stand.*

***Bold print*** indicates that the people speak these responses & prayers.

## **GATHERING FOR WORSHIP**

**Welcome and Announcements**

## **Prelude**

### **Call to Worship**

Leader: Patient God, we have so many questions!

**People: We demand things, and often want to know where the path will lead us before we set out.**

**All: Set our hearts to rest, O God, and remind us this day that life is made up of more questions than answers, and that that's okay. Let us worship God this day! Amen.**

**\*Opening Hymn "Take My Life, and Let It Be" 399 Blue Hymnal**

### **A Prayer of Confession & Words of Affirmation**

**God, we feel torn between wanting to praise you, and feeling ashamed of our faith in you. Sometimes we feel torn between trusting you, and raging against you.... especially when we suffer with illness or displacement, or with feeling trapped in circumstances beyond our control.**

**We sometimes find ourselves blaming you, or blaming ourselves for not having a strong enough faith to get the answers we want to our prayers.**

**Sometimes we feel jealous of your good news, God, and want to keep it to ourselves.**

**We can't believe the people you want us to share it with; strangers, and people who don't know you, and even our enemies. Forgive us, God.**

**God has not created us for discord, but has formed us for harmony.**

**God does not sentence us to ignorance, but opens us to understanding.**

**God does not send us into isolation, but welcomes us into community.**

**God, the Creator of every family in heaven and earth, desires peace on earth, and righteousness, joy and love.**

**Blessed be God, who reaches across all divisions.**

**Blessed be God, who forgives us, renews us, and makes us whole. Amen.**

A Moment of Silence

## **SERVICE OF THE WORD**

**Scripture Reading Job 38:1-7**

**\*Gloria Patri No. 70 Glory Be to the Father....**

**Message "Then the Lord answered Job" Rev. Dr. Susan Stonestreet**

**\*Hymn of Meditation "Amazing Grace" 378 Blue Hymnal**

## **RESPONDING IN FAITH**

**Sharing Our Joys and Concerns with God and Each Other**

**Pastoral Prayer & The Lord's Prayer.....**

**Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen.**

**Offertory**

**\*Doxology No. 95 Blue Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow....**

**\*Prayer of Dedication**

**\*Closing Hymn “Trust and Obey” 467 Blue Hymnal**

**Benediction**

**Postlude**

**Revised Common Lectionary Readings for Sunday, October 24, 2021**

**Job 42:1-6, 10-17; Psalm 34:1-8 (19-22); Hebrews 7:23-28; Mark 10:46-52**

**Prayer List --** Hold in your prayers all those affected by the corona virus and the families of those who have died from the virus.... And all those families affected by the use of addictive drugs and alcohol among their members.... And all those dealing with the ravages of cancer near and far..... And add a prayer for Frances Hernandez, recovering from brain surgery, Tammy Whirty, a friend of Margie’s, dealing with cancer challenges, and, from Jackie a request for prayers for Kyle Cloudier, continued prayers for Ursula recovering...and for “Cody,” who doesn’t live locally but needs prayers for guidance; **Kristin Parker O’Neal, Jo Ann Parker’s daughter, who has had brain surgery and is home now!**; Enid, Ann Foster, Carol Moss, Fred Bagnall, Harriet Williams, Julie Pollitt, Zeke Bryant, Sally Harjula Elliot, Helmut Steger, John Flaherty, Doug and BJ Thomson, Heather Van Buskirk, **and continued deep prayers for Lucy as Hank has come to the end of his cancer journey,** and for Tiffany, Lucy’s granddaughter

*Please feel free to contact Susan by phone (207)322-1948 or by email [freerangepastor@gmail.com](mailto:freerangepastor@gmail.com) to add or drop the names from the prayer list AND to let her know if you would like for her to stop by for a visit sometime. She’s always glad to have a chat with you!*

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Sunday-10/17/21.....9:30  
am: Worship Service .....10:30  
am: Coffee Hour – Please Join  
Us .....After Coffee Hour –  
Council Meeting

Suggested Food Pantry Donation..... Rice

Deacon for October: Sandra Caron

Reminders for next Sunday, 10/17/21



Greeter/Usher: Kathleen Anderson  
Dwelley           Lector: Lou  
Caron  
Flowers: Sandra and Lou  
Caron

Coffee Host: Janet

Collection Total for Sunday, October 3, 2021:

Pledges -	\$1748.00
Loose -	\$ 117.00
Deacon's Sunday -	\$ 16.16
Total -	\$1881.16

The 2021 weekly budgeted operating cost for the Church and parsonage is \$1623.00 per week.

**Federated Church of Thomaston**  
**United Church of Christ & United Methodist Church**  
**Together Since 1929**

*Sunday, October 17, 2021*

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<sup>[1]</sup> *Meriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th edition, 1994, p. 49.

<sup>[2]</sup> Matthew Fox, *Creation Spirituality*, HarperSanFrancisco, 1991, p. 147-150, quoted in *Seasons of the Spirit Congregational Life* for Sunday, October 22, 2006, p. 80-81.

<sup>[3]</sup> *Seasons of the Spirit Congregational Life* for Sunday, October 22, 2006, p. 74.