

**“God is Not Small”
Greater Than
Downtown
March 14, 2021**

Morning, I’m Jake. Good to be with you.

We’re in a new series called Greater Than.

The inspiration for it comes from a quote that I’ve shared with you numerous times in the past from the 20th-century pastor and author **A.W. Tozer**:

“What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. ... Worship is pure or base as the worshiper entertains high or low thoughts of God...*For this reason the gravest question before the Church is always God Himself* [emphasis added]...Always the most revealing thing about the Church is her idea of God...”

Now I don’t know about you but during this pandemic, this hit me because it’s been all too easy for my thoughts to drift off. Like, I’ve found myself at home with my family and I’ll start a sentence and midway through completely forget what I was talking about. That’s become the norm.

And to be completely honest, there’s this natural drift of life that tends to take place that creates this pressure to place God on the back burner of our thoughts. Perhaps not even on purpose. It’s a combination of tiredness, and business, and a year’s worth of pandemic seem to crowd up our minds and whether we know it or not, or thoughts of Jesus have drifted

But, man, do we miss out. A verse that my wife pointed out last week that she was telling me she wants to meditate on for the next year, from Psalm 16 says, **“in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”**

This is what the God of Scripture offers to us when we draw near to know Him. Seeing Him for who He is and being in His presence is where life and joy, peace and prosperity are really going to be found.

And so as we start journeying toward Easter together - the day where we celebrate the most monumental display of His character towards us - we wanted to help us drink deeply from the beauty of who He is.

My prayer going in is that these next 3 weeks are faith would be stirred and that your love for the Lord would grow.

If you have a Bible go ahead and turn to **Job 38-42**.

As you’re turning there a quick disclaimer: This series is inspired largely by a few books we’ve been reading as we’ve prepared. Those are over on our series resource page and would highly recommend you and your LifeGroup check them out.

To give you some background, Job is a bit of an anomaly in the Old Testament. For example, this is how the book starts:

Job 1:1

There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job

Where is that? Scholars don't really know. What time period is this written in? We don't really know that either. Is this poetry, history, or a parable? Again, we don't know. Because of this, scholars argue that that's kinda the point - that the lack of details is supposed to help us see these universal themes about the human experience that Job taps into. And that theme is this:

- What do we do when God doesn't make sense to us?
- What do we do when God's actions or seemingly lack of action do not seem to make sense?
- When we ask ourselves...God, why are things like this?
- Or, God if you say this is how you're like, then why is this happening?

Every one of us, if you haven't already, will likely find ourselves in that position at some point in our lives. I know some of us are living in those sorts of questions now. Where we can't quite make sense of things.

And if you've ever felt like feeling that way or thinking those things made you something of a wallflower or an outsider in God's community, I hope you'll find the experience of Job to be a comfort and encouragement. You're not alone.

And it's with this we are first introduced to Job. Job has lots of wealth, lots of power, lots of kids and he's described as being a "righteous" man, someone who loves the Lord and follows the law as best as he can. But right after that the scene shifts and we see this weird account happening in heaven where Satan raises this point to God and says, "You know, the only reason people like Job love you is that you give him a good life. I bet if you took his stuff away, he wouldn't want to love you anymore."

Job 1:12

And the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your hand."

So God basically says "Ok, then take everything from Job and we'll see how that goes."

WHICH off the bat, raises some major questions, right? Some questions that you and I would have if we were in that situation.

But regardless, Satan does it... and, get this... Job doesn't stop loving or honoring God. He doesn't accuse God of wrongdoing. He says this:

Job 1:21-22

"The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.

And Satan progressively takes more and more away from Job - all of his kids, all of his wealth, even his health, and still Job blesses God.

In fact, throughout the whole narrative, while Job does strongly contend for answers to his questions, He never once accuses God of being wrong or sinning against him.

Which, for what it's worth, I think is an important little nugget for when we consider our own questions. It's very easy for our questions about God to slide into accusations against God. To go from, "God what's going on?" to, "God, you're unjust!" Questions are welcomed. Accusations are dealt with. But, that's not

what Job does.

But, he does have questions. Job has 3 friends come and visit him to be with him in his grief.

When Job starts to speak and question what God is doing, their response is, “Job, you must’ve done something. We know how God works and He wouldn’t have done this to you unless you deserved it.” And Job is just like, “I’m telling you. That’s not true.” And that is the bulk of the remaining 35 chapters of the book - this back and forth between Job and his friends trying to make sense out of what God is doing.

This finally brings us to chapter 38.

Job 38:1-3

Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said: “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?”

God’s funny way of saying, “Excuse me, yall. What are you all even talking about?”

Dress for action like a man;

(the Hebrew is more literally translated: “Gird your loins”)

I will question you [emphasis added], and you make it known to me.

God then rattles off 64 rhetorical questions in all ranging from questions about the vastness of space, and animals on the land and sea creatures.

To pick some out for you, God’s questions go like this:

Job 38:4

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

In other words, “I’m sorry Job. Were you around when I made the earth?”

Job 38:12

“Have you commanded the morning since your days began, and caused the dawn to know its place...”

God’s way of saying, “Wait a minute. Who brings the sun up every morning, me or you?”

Job 38:31-32

“Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades or loose the cords of Orion? Can you lead forth the Mazzaroth in their season, or can you guide the Bear with its children

These are all referring to different constellations. “Job, hold up. Did you set the stars in place?”

Job 39:19,26

19 “Do you give the horse his might? Do you clothe his neck with a mane?”

26 “Is it by your understanding that the hawk soars and spreads his wings toward the south?”

Again, God is saying, “Job, I seem to have forgotten. All the birds and beasts in the world. Did you make

them or me?” And this one is pretty good:

Job 41:1-2, 5

“Can you draw out Leviathan with a fishhook or press down his tongue with a cord? Can you put a rope in his nose or pierce his jaw with a hook?... Will you play with him as with a bird, or will you put him on a leash for your girls?”

This is a reference to some giant sea creature - some scholars think he’s talking about a whale or an alligator or a hippo - and God is basically saying, “I’m sorry Job, can you make that thing your pet? Can you put it on a leash? Do you think you get all cute and cuddly with it?”

And there are some really random ones in there, too. Like in 39:1, “Job, how much do you know about the reproduction habits of goats? Or “why are ostriches so big and proud, but also so ugly and stupid? (Literally 38:13-17)

And all of that might sound a bit over-the-top like, “I understand why He’d say all that big stuff, but why all the little random things, too? Is God just trying to bring the proverbial hammer on Job?”

The answer is no. Rather, God is trying to shift Job’s perception. To help him see, “Job if you can’t fully fathom the mystery of all these natural things, do you really think you can fully understand eternal things?” *Essentially, “Job, I am God and you are not. And that’s a good thing.”*

With all these questions, God is asking, “Who’s the expert here Job, me or you?”

You see, we live in an age that author Tom Nichols calls in his 2017 book, “the death of expertise.” Where we have so much content in front of us, whether it’s Google, or social media, or WebMD, or the 24-hour news cycle where instead of making us more intellectually-advanced, we now think we are the experts on any given topic.

Tom Nichols

These are dangerous times. Never have so many people had so much access to so much knowledge and yet have been so resistant to learning anything...the public constantly searches for the loopholes in expert knowledge that will allow them to disregard all expert advice they don’t like.

We’re just one click away from figuring it out and dismissing the large fields of academia and professionals who have given their lives to rigorously studying.

Now to all our medical professionals out there. We recognize a lot of people in our church family are nurses, and doctors, and everything in between and right now you have had one of the most stressful seasons in your life. You’ve put yourselves on the frontlines day-in and day-out to serve the sick and vulnerable. Especially in those first few months when we didn’t really understand much at all about COVID-19 and we were locked inside our homes, you put yourself in harm’s way.

You had to become experts on all of this. Not only did you have to go to undergraduate for four years, you then had to take more years of schooling at a graduate level. Then you had to go through residency. And now you’ve learned how to navigate this pandemic and take on new information and new responsibilities. It’s incredible and we are so thankful for you.

And I can’t imagine, after seeing this for a year now, how it must make you feel when you see someone

post on social media about how all of this is one massive conspiracy theory. Or when people blast in the Facebook comments of a local hospital in town that masks are useless and that we're all just living in fear. After you've been seeing all of this up-close and they haven't...all because they read an article! "Yea I know you've gone to school for a decade...but this guy on a podcast said this so...."

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We recognize that there's a lot of people in our church family **who are teachers**. Teachers, thank you. May the Lord bless you and keep you and make His face shine upon you. You had to roll with the punches over and over again. You had to become zen-like masters at Zoom and then Microsoft Teams. My kids were doing virtual school for most of this last year and I can't imagine what you all must be going through - having to wrangle 10-20 kids on a zoom call, having them speak one at a time, trying to teach them and listen to them with such limited means to do that.

And I can't imagine how it must make you feel when you get that one angry email from a parent saying they read an article and now they know more about teaching and education and childhood development than you do.

Whatever your profession is. I can't imagine how you must feel, whether you're a medical professional, or a teacher, or an engineer, or you work in government, or you're a LifeGroup Leader, or fill in the blank when someone tells you how to do your job.

Is it any wonder then when this is the age we live in that we would then turn this on to God? An age filled with doubt, skepticism, cynicism questioning, and deconstructing authority.

And what I want us to see is that is what is happening here with Job. This is what God is trying to get him to see. God's saying, "Look Job, you're not the expert here buddy, I am. I know more than you do. I am God and you are not."

But when our questions about God morph into accusations against God, this is what happens. We essentially are putting God on trial, demanding He answer our charges against Him. And if He doesn't own up to them, then we walk away from Him completely.

But, the message of God to Job and subsequently the book of Job to us is: this is God we're talking about. The God who spoke all of creation, millions if not billions of years ago. Who, by His mere words, sent out trillions of stars with their own galaxies out there into space. Who by His divine power and presence created human life on this planet, against insurmountable odds, so that we could live. The God who created every creature in the sky, and on the earth, and in the deepest depth of the ocean. The God who one day, every tribe, tongue, and nation will bow down to.

And not only that. This is the God all-powerful, all-knowing God who out of the overflow of this same cosmic power, created us to live in harmony with Him. Out of the overflow of His grace and mercy created me and you to know Him, to know His beauty and His power. To find our rest and our comfort and our joy in Him alone. And this is the same God who revealed Himself over and over again to His people when they lost in their sin when they had forgotten Him. This is the same God who goes to great lengths to make Himself known to you. This is the God who promises Himself to His people. This is the God who covenanted Himself to His people and said, "no matter what, I'm in this with you for the long haul."

You see, what God is doing in these chapters in the midst of all his questioning is giving Job **right perception**. A perception that says, “I am God and you are not.”

And that is good news for us because that means the **pressure is off**. In a world that demands attention, and information, and explanation about everything, the pressure is off for those who have a right perception of God. We can come to him with our questions and even if, even if they aren’t answered for us, we know that He is God so we don’t have to be. And when you rest in that fact, the anxiety, the pressure, all begin to erode away from you because you know that someone else is in control of it all so you don’t have to be.

I would argue that in the midst of the year we’ve had, we all desperately need a right perception. In a year where for the most part we haven’t gathered together, where we haven’t been regularly surrounded by one another as we sing how beautiful God is, where it seems like we’re running on fumes by what’s going on around us...that’s it become all too difficult to see God rightly. And it’s here where we need to ask ourselves...what do we do with our questions? What do we do with our inaccurate perceptions?

And you may find yourself with all sorts of questions right now. And with your questions and with your doubts, let me ask you: are your questions in a spirit of seeking understanding, or are your questions really just accusations? Are you coming to God and your pastors and your LifeGroup leader with sincere questions about God? Are you getting pointed back to the Scriptures, back to good resources that are saturated with biblical truth? Or are your questions really just accusations in disguise? Where you know what the answer is and you just don’t like it?

Because here’s the beautiful thing, if you open up your mind and your heart before the Lord with your doubts and questions, He is there waiting and willing to listen. Questions are welcomed. We actually see this right here in the book of Job:

Job 38:1
Then the LORD answered

After all of Job’s questions and demands for an explanation, we see those four simple words come breaking through: Then the LORD answered.

Whenever you see the LORD in all caps in the Old Testament, that’s God’s special name that only His people called Him: Yahweh. Yahweh, the covenant-keeping, Messiah-bringing, kingdom-conquering God of the Universe is here to enter into a conversation with Job and all of his questions. He stoops down, like a loving parent consoling their child, as though looking him right in the eyes.

Tim Keller

...we are told that Yahweh answered Job out of the storm. This phrase, as generic as it looks to us in English, is significant. Many readers...have understood God’s speech to Job as a “sneer” and a “jeer”. But in Hebrew idiom, to “speak to” someone indicates a one-way communication of an authority to an inferior, while to “answer” or “reply to” expresses a dialogue between two parties. It is striking, then, that when God shows up, he enters into a dialogue—he does not come to simply denounce. In other words, God is inviting Job into a relationship

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God loves Job enough to give him **right perception** because Job is in **right relationship** with God. Job has questions but it is with a heart of open-minded searching, not closed-off accusations. One of humility, of faith seeking understanding. And God answers Job and He shows him that He is actually greater than

all his questions. And that's enough. Because He is God and you are not.

It's here, with this ancient story that's thousands of years old, God is lifting up our eyes and showing us just how much greater He is than us. Than our questions. Than our doubts. To look beyond ourselves, beyond our circumstances, beyond our screens, to get out of our own echo chamber, and to look up and gaze and stand in awe-struck wonder of the beauty and glory of God.

Where you can sing with the Psalmist:

Psalm 147:5

Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure.

“His understanding is beyond measure.” We're not called to know everything, we're called to know God.

So to conclude our time this morning, let me just say, I don't know what your questions are. And I don't know your confusion, or your doubt, or your struggle, or your pain or what you're personally going through...but here are a couple of things we do know:

1. If we have a God who is big enough to question, we have a God who is big enough to have reasons we don't understand.

When the book of Job ends, he doesn't end up getting his answer. Instead, He gets God. And for Job, that's enough. When you remind yourself that you are in a right relationship with the Creator of the Universe who knows all and sees all, then it stands to reason that of course He is going to do things that are beyond your comprehension. Of course He's going to do things we don't understand, because He's God and we're not.

But at the same time, God is not some tyrant in the sky just trying to confound and confuse us. He's personal, He relational, which brings me to my second point that we know. With all your questions and doubts, know this:

2. God loves you and the Cross is the undeniable proof of that.

The death of Jesus is the most confusing act of God there ever was.

- God, why would you send your son Jesus down to die the death we deserve?
- God, why would you allow that to happen?
- God, why did you go out of your way to save and love people like us?

The Cross shows us that we have a God who decided to step into humanity. To sympathize with you in your weakness and in your doubts and in your pain. A God who endured being separated from the eternal cosmic love of the Father so that He could draw near to you. And as Easter tells us, the tomb is empty, death is defeated, which means one day your doubts will be a thing of the past.

Who, according to Romans 8:28 is working all things together for the good of those who love Him.

Your pain, no matter how much you feel it now, will get swallowed up in resurrection hope - knowing that one day Jesus will wipe every tear from our eye. One day He is going to answer all your questions, and all your doubts but until then we rest in the promise that He is God and we are not.

Pray.