

Sermon Notes: June 20, 2021

Focus: Father's Day, Book of Job and storms

[Lectionary Readings](#)

Job had a pretty excellent life, until he didn't. He was rich and had a great family, until he didn't. Because of God's capricious test, Job struggled to make sense of unspeakable loss. He pleaded with God for relief. In the lesson today, God responds to Job's unbelievable misery by speaking in the midst of a storm. God says, *who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up your loins like a man, I will question you... Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?* Harsh right? I don't think Job 38 is a particularly great thing for us to emulate on Father's Day. However, we can find a peculiar blessing by quieting the storm inside of us, even if we can't control the storms outside of us.

I suspect many of us still hope that "God the Father (or Parent)" will be a loving character that is different from our earthly father. Maybe you had a great dad, who knew the right word, gesture, and action to take in every situation. That's amazing. That's worthy of gratitude. Or you remember a voice in a storm saying "I brought you into this world and I can take you out..." That's worthy of mercy.

Dads have a unique role to shape their kid's lives for better or worse. Dads can be the trampoline that springs their children to places of achievement that seemed impossible. They can also be a shackle that adult children struggle to be free from for years. What about you? Was your dad more sunshine or storm? More springboard or prison?

If you are a father, ask yourself on this Father's Day "Am I more storm or sunshine?" If you honestly answered that thunder and lightning are your jam, that does not make you a bad person...but ask God to help you do something different. If you don't turn around soon you will, as the Proverb says, "inherit the wind" and your kids will become strangers to you. It's not too late to be courageously kind. You can be more trampoline than shackle, with God's help.

Dad or not, we all fight like hell to make the storms go away, or on the opposite pole we just numbly survive them. Either we are too passive or we are too aggressive in the midst of pain. There are precious few moments where we balance patience and courage perfectly in the midst of the pelting rain. I am praying for you to find the balancing act more often. Let me tell you of one of my bygone storms that really threw me off balance. I am not looking for sympathy. I *do* want you to look honestly at your own family so that you and we can, even now, be more trampoline than prison.

Starting early in middle school, I would spend most of my weekends helping my dad with his business. Many a Saturday morning, I would run a floor stripper that outweighed me. My father taught me how to finish a job and for that I'm grateful; but whenever I smell commercial floor wax, it's a bad trip. My dad would build up a bank account for me as payment for those weekends. However, when things went south for him, he would zero out my account – regularly.

As these stormy years continued, the worst part was not the money. The worst was the end-of-day-life-lessons. Saturday night lectures were delivered in his van. He would park just a few steps away from the freedom of my mom's house. In the driveway, my dad would wax on, pun intended, about manhood for hours. These stare-at-the-glovebox-meditations-while-he-blathered-on went on for years, but the external storm

finally did pass. I am weirdly grateful for these experiences because they forced me to develop skills managing the internal storm that I would not have otherwise needed at 13. I have learned to build a trampoline from handcuffs.

Today, I rarely passively endure emotional garbage. At the same time, I rarely lose it over tiny provocations. I still can be a real jerk, but with each passing storm cloud, I am tuning into the storm going on **inside** of me. I am becoming less concerned with the wind speed or intensity of the storm **outside** of me. The thunder and lightning are of less importance than how I am keeping dry on the inside. It is a lifelong process to cultivate an awareness that equips us to wait and act at the right time.

There is no shortage of storms for each of us to practice in! At times, you are likely too passive and invite people to walk on you. At other times, you try to protect yourself by being an irate blockhead. With God's help, may you stay awake in the next storm: neither numbing nor raging, but seeing God present inside of you while the driving rain soaks you.

Bible

In the book of Job, Job is not much better. He vacillates between patiently enduring and lashing out through each wave of loss. His storms would break most of us: Loss of family, financial ruin and a wrecked body all drive him positively crazy. He numbs out, lashes out, and even curses the day he was born. Only at the very end of the book does he find much peace. It is a weird peace.

God does not answer Job's complaints, but God asks Job if he sees the universe like God. It is almost like God seems more concerned about the storm going on *inside* of Job while being indifferent to Job's external circumstances. **Sidenote:**

The Bible Project has an [excellent video](#) on wisdom literature that includes the Book of Job.

Speaking of storms

One of my favorite stories is a proverb *Maybe so, Maybe not. We'll see*

A farmer and his son had a beloved stallion who helped the family earn a living. One day, the horse ran away and their neighbors exclaimed, "Your horse ran away, what terrible luck!" he replied, "Maybe so, maybe not. We'll see."

A few days later, the horse returned home, leading a few wild mares back to the farm as well. The neighbors shouted out, "Your horse has returned, and brought several horses home with him. What great luck!" The farmer replied, "Maybe so, maybe not. We'll see."

Later that week, the farmer's son was trying to break one of the mares and she threw him to the ground, breaking his leg. The villagers cried, "Your son broke his leg, what terrible luck!" The farmer replied, "Maybe so, maybe not. We'll see."

A few weeks later, soldiers from the national army marched through town, recruiting all the able-bodied boys for the army. They did not take the farmer's son, still recovering from his injury. Friends shouted, "Your boy is spared, what tremendous luck!" To which the farmer replied, "Maybe so, maybe not. We'll see."

I pray you can find grace and a calm heart in every storm big and small. **Todd**