



GIVING THANKS FOR THE GIVER  
(MORE THAN FOR THE GIFTS)

JOB 42:1-6

Well, the Christmas season is upon us, and maybe some of you did the Black Friday, early morning shopping. People are now entering the full-swing crazy shopping to ensure everybody will be happy on Christmas day. I know many of us don't miss the irony of Thanksgiving and then Black Friday, right? On Thanksgiving, we are trying to be grateful and express contentment, but the very next day, we're after all those things we feel we need.

Obviously, that's not all of us, and I don't want to make people feel bad for wanting to buy gifts for people. I love giving (and honestly, I love receiving) gifts, too. It's fun, and there's nothing inherently wrong with that. Having said that, as people who follow Christ, there is a danger that lurks in this season, and in all seasons of life. We can be more focused on gifts than we are on the Giver, and that's the greatest travesty of all.

Think about one of the songs we sang earlier this morning: You give and take away. My heart will choose to say, "Lord, blessed be your name." Those are beautiful words to sing, but when we experience God taking away, what is our response? I still remember being at the funeral of a 9-month old stillborn child, watching the father carrying an infant-sized casket, and then singing this song. How is God still glorious when he allows a child to be taken away?

I have personally struggled with God's goodness throughout the years. Many of you know this. With my chronic physical pain, I've had ups and downs of praising God, being content, and then literally weeping and wondering if this is going to be the rest of my life – and if so, is God really good? How is God satisfying if he allows consistent pain and takes away your ability to wrestle with your kids and go on bike rides as a family? To add to this, as many of you know, I have other physical ailments. I've gone to all sorts of specialists. I've tried (and continue to try) alternative methods as well. And, over the years, God has continued to settle my heart in him: You give and take away. My heart will choose to say, "Blessed be your name!"

But then something happened this past summer. Many of you are aware that my family went to Florida for a family vacation. My children had never seen the ocean. We were excited. We don't do things like this. While there was a lot of driving, we were looking forward to it. Then, we arrive at our hotel, and the moment I step my foot down on the pavement in front of our hotel, my big toe was in pain. It got worse that night. It settled some the next day, but I had to limp. My limping continued and had a difficult time walking. Eventually, it escalated so bad one day, I was literally yelling into my pillow in our hotel room because of the pain. I went to Urgent Care. The pain continued the remainder of our trip and through the rest of our two-week vacation. What was the problem? Gout.

In all transparency, I was mad. I was angry with God. It felt like the straw on the camel's back had broken for me. Does God really care about me? He knew about this vacation. He knew, and yet he allowed all of this to happen. I knew that others have it so much worse in other places, but honestly, I

was so self-focused and was struggling immensely. I felt like not talking to God, but I couldn't help but talk to God. But I told him I was mad. I told him I was basically ready to give up. And so, there was a standstill for a few days. Then we went to South Carolina to visit with friends (Janet Ewing, Mel Harrington and her kids). That Sunday, we were going to go to their church. Ugh. I knew I was being fake. I knew I needed to trust the Lord even though nothing made sense. Then we arrived at the church and there was communion that day. Really?! Yes. God worked in me enough for me to admit that I don't know what I don't know and there's nowhere else to turn but to him. My heart was softened some.

But I was still struggling. At some point later, I met with my friend, Thad Barnum, who is a spiritual director to me. I told him where I was at, and he encouraged me to get in the habit of singing praise to God – no matter how I feel, to fill my mind with praise and train myself to lean into God in the midst of pain because God has good intentions even in the difficult and painful. More softening and comfort took place.

Then, at another point, I was reading a devotional on Job, and I think that's when a final softening took place and I was comforted. I saw how Job never received any of the answers to his questions. Instead, Job got "more of" God. Meaning, Job was comforted in the who God is. Somehow knowing God quenched Job's questions and God himself satisfied Job. What I saw through Job's story was that **when humbled, God is more satisfying than knowing the answers.**

So, because of my own personal journey of God working through me, I want to take some time to talk about Job in the hopes that you, too, will find God more satisfying than knowing the answers. I hope you will be able to say, "You give and take away. My heart will choose to say, 'Lord, blessed be your name.'"

With this, let's get some backdrop to the story of Job. Many or most of you may know the story, but just in case, let's make sure we are all on the same page.

**Background.** The first chapter of Job explains to us something that happens in the unseen realm. Satan asks God for permission to test Job. God gives the permission, and in one day, Job loses most of his resources, and all of his children die. Can you imagine the devastation he felt? Can you imagine the utter shock when person after person after person comes to him to tell him another child has died – and another, and another? We're told that Job then still turns to the Lord and affirms he's worthy: he gives and takes away (see Job. 1:21). Then we're given a glimpse in the unseen realm again, and Satan asks for permission to actually torment Job personally. Job undergoes savage health issues. Boils all over his body. He's scraping them off his tormented skin, and yet he still expresses trust in the Lord. But that doesn't mean he was all happy with a big smile on his face. One theme throughout the entire book of Job is the idea of comfort. Job is longing for some kind of comfort in the midst of his confusion.

Then comes Job's friends. For an entire week, they sit silently with him. To sit silently with a friend who's in pain is a very wise thing to do. But, as the proverb says, "Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent" (Prov. 17:28). But then, his friends speak. Have you ever been hurt by the words of a friend? Yes, it's true that faithful are the wounds of a friend. But, there's also a reality that sometimes friends can unwisely use their words, and pain enters. This is what happens to Job. He's lost his children. His wife has told him to curse God. His body is in constant turmoil. Now his friends are telling him that if he'd just repent of his sins and trust God, things might be better. Either way, their counsel is essentially that this came upon him because of his own pride. Job responds to his friends by stating there must be more to God than what we can perceive. He responds with hope in the Lord, while at the same time, he despairs – wishing he had been a stillborn. He wavers through his thoughts and emotions. He's filled with lament,

clinging to the Lord while also declaring his confusion and even stating accusations before the Lord. His emotions and mind matches his life. He's broken and in shambles. All the while, he's looking for comfort. He can't find it in his friends. He doesn't seem to find it in God. Where is God in all of this?

Then, God shows up. Did you know that the longest first-person discourse of God is found in the book of Job? A book dedicated to God's children suffering, has the longest discourse of God. I think that's profoundly beautiful and encouraging. God doesn't run from the problem of suffering. He enters into suffering. He enters into our suffering!

God's statements begins in chapter 38 with, **"Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Dress for action like a man; I will question you, and you make it known to me."**<sup>1</sup> I think it's accurate to say that many have found these words of God to be insensitive. Job's been suffering and God says, "Job, who do you think you are?!" But is that what God actually does here? No. I think God is welcoming Job's wrestling. Job has stated some of his heart, but God wants Job's full heart to come out. Everything needs to come to the light so that Job can find healing. So, God is calling Job to come out and really engage with the Lord. To me, this is like the angel of the Lord wrestling with Jacob. And, this is quite loving. To me, this reminds me of a few months ago. I was angry with the Lord. I didn't want to talk to him, but I had to talk to him. And, since out of the abundance of my heart, I speak. I needed to speak all that was in me so that God would address it and cleanse me. That's what God is doing here with Job.

While God reveals his power and Job sees how there are so many things God does even in this visible creation that we don't understand – yet we can trust that there's answers – so it is with our individual lives. Finally, after God's discourse, we get to Job's response in chapter 42. Let's read the first 6 verses together: Then Job answered the Lord and said: "I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. 'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. 'Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you make it known to me.' I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes."<sup>2</sup>

In these words of Job, I think we discover a gem of a truth for us: **When humbled, God is more satisfying than knowing the answers.** Let's take a few more moments together to see this.

When you hear the word **"humbled,"** you might think of that negatively. We don't like being humbled. We can also tend to associate being shamed to being humbled. But the Bible puts humility is the highest possible light. Therefore, to be humbled is to be blessed by God. To be humbled means we will be exalted by the Lord! But where do we see Job humbled in these six verses? Look with me at verse 6: therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes.<sup>3</sup> As you read this translation, you might be confused by its meaning. What does Job mean when he says that he despises himself? Does God call us to absolutely hate ourselves in every possible way? Actually, no. We are created in God's image as human beings, and if you have turned to Jesus for grace and forgiveness, you are also God's masterpiece. So, listen carefully: humility does not mean hating everything about you. I think what Job is getting at is that he despises his previous ignorance. He had taken God to his courtroom, and he realizes that was wrong. Therefore, he says he repents. This is a very intriguing word in the Hebrew, and I hope everyone hears this because it's important to the entire story of Job. This word for "repent" here is

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<sup>1</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Job 38:2–3.

<sup>2</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Job 42:1–6.

<sup>3</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Job 42:6.

actually related to the word “comfort.” A major theme in Job is Job’s comfort. Where and when will he find comfort? He’s finally found it! And, it’s because of this idea of the Hebrew word that I actually think a better translation of this verse is “**I despise my ignorance, and I am comforted in dust and ashes.**” In other words, he found comfort in realizing God is God and he is not. To apply it to us, we can rejoice in knowing the I AM and in knowing that each of us are I am nots! Job is dust. God is all-glorious, working in ways that are utterly mysterious, and always right and good.

Oh Ventura, what a beautiful reality. Job is comforted in knowing and trusting God. No longer is Job fighting to know the answers. He’s at rest. He’s comforted in the confidence that God really is good and does what is right, and Job doesn’t have to figure things out. God will make it all plain in his time. In this humility, Job finds rest.

Job sees that **God is more satisfying than knowing the answers.** Let’s investigate this a little more to see that Job lays down his perceived rights to know the truth. This is important for us because many of us can tend to think in the midst of our lives that if we just knew the answer, or if we just knew *why* something was happening, then we could be content. That’s not true – as we’ve already seen. If we’re searching for these answers, the reality could be that we’re still putting God on trial. The reality could be that you don’t really want to lay yourself at God’s feet. The reality could be that you simply want information, but you don’t want God himself. And, please hear me, God is more concerned that you get God than he is concerned that you get temporal answers to your immediate questions. What good is it if you gain all the answers, but you miss out on God?

Job takes a few statements that either he or God made and reveals how they don’t need to be answered. He also reveals how simply knowing God silences the need for the question to be answered. So, let’s look at verse 2 first: I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.<sup>4</sup> Here’s a theological truth that many of us learned when we were little. God can do *anything*, anything, anything, ANYTHING. God can do anything but fail. This is true, right? Then pain enters our lives. Suffering happens around the globe. A man drives through the streets of Waukesha and kills 5 people and injuring so many more. If God can do anything, if no purpose of his can be thwarted, then why is this happening? Isn’t this the question that comes to our minds? Have you ever thought it?

But Job finally comes to a correct way of thinking. Instead of saying, “God can do anything, so why are you doing this?” Job goes on to affirm other truths that must go along with this. These truths should keep us from sinful pride against God. Look at verse 3 again: ‘Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’ Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.<sup>5</sup>

This was a statement God made to Job in his dialogue with Job earlier. When confronted with the reality of God, do we really think we know what is best? I think many people in our world today actually do believe they know better than God. I’ve known people who judge God and declare him unjust for certain things. I remember many, many years ago struggling intensely with the injustices of this world. I wondered if God was unjust, and then I remember thinking, “Wait. If I have a sense of justice, where did I get it from? God. And, if God is God, do I really think that my sense of justice is greater than his? It can’t be.” God has all knowledge. God has all awareness.

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<sup>4</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Job 42:2.

<sup>5</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Job 42:3.

Think of the situation with Job. Job has no idea what's going on in the unseen realm. He doesn't know about Satan. He doesn't know what the angels see. Does God? Yes. And so it is in our lives as well. There's an unseen and seen realm. There are ramifications of everything that takes place in our lives and God is weaving it all together for his glory and our eternal good. Do we really think we have the mental capacity and power to take care of everything? Do we really think we know enough so that God would say, "You know what? You're right!"

And I know the hesitation with this. You might think, "But what's happening is awful." Or, you could think, "So, God is great with the sin or the results of the Fall that I'm going through?" Oh Christian, don't make that mistake. There is a great mystery in God's eternal decrees, and we can be confident that God is good and that God hates sin. God will judge everything perfectly someday. We can have confidence in God that he is good and he is all-knowing and all-powerful. He is the I AM. We are not. I pray you'd take comfort in him in this and thus be grateful for our God! Be grateful to God even when things might be falling apart!

Job now goes into another statement that the Lord makes in verse 4: 'Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you make it known to me.'<sup>6</sup> This was another scenario with God speaking to Job. Job's asked questions and God states that he'll question Job now. Ventura, we must realize that if we're going to question God, we must have all the facts. When we're questioning God, we're essentially stating that there are things he doesn't know. Or, it seems like he's not aware of certain things. I remember hearing the testimony of the woman, Joni Earekson Tada, a wonderful Christian woman who has been a quadriplegic for over 40 years. She said that after she had dove into the lake and her neck snapped, she genuinely had the belief that God didn't see everything all at once. She said her view was like God was taking care of things in some other part of the world, and while his head was turned, Joni jumped off the dock. When God turned around, the injury had been done.

Maybe you feel the same way. You might not word it that way. You've been taught other things about God. You know he's Sovereign – meaning he's all powerful over all things. But you still feel as though God just turned his head from your situation, thinking it wasn't a big deal. This is somewhat of the underlying mindset of Job. Him questioning God means he doesn't trust that God knows all. So, God lovingly puts the question back to Job. And so, God asks all sorts of questions about the natural world. And, what Job discovers is that there are so many things that he can see that he doesn't know how or why they work the way they do, but he trusts that they all do what they do.

Why have this level of trust in the created world? If you can have that level of trust in things you don't understand, can't you have a greater level of trust in the Creator God? Oh Ventura, can you have a greater level of trust that the good God is always the good God? That's who he is! And, again, if you are a Christian, know this: God is always your loving Father! That's who he is. Therefore, Job says in verse 5: I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; <sup>7</sup> In other words, **knowing God is more satisfying than knowing the answers.** Knowing God is more satisfying!

What's the essential point here? Is Job saying he actually saw God with his eyes? No. The idea is that he knows God more. He knows him more intimately. God has moved from what we'd call a head knowledge to a heart knowledge. When this happens, we can move from discontentment and frustration to comfort. When we are grateful for God, we can be grateful for gifts and not live for gifts.

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<sup>6</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Job 42:4.

<sup>7</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Job 42:5.

Therefore, Job says, "...I despise myself, and [am comforted] in dust and ashes." <sup>8</sup>

He's been humbled. He's in the dust and ashes and he finds that as one who was made from dust, and to dust he shall return, he doesn't need to lift himself up to the place of God and try to figure things out. He doesn't need to take God to court. Instead, he's man, and God is the glorious and good God. God knows what is best and what is beautiful and what is right. He's comforted in his God.

And, Ventura, we can be comforted in him as well. I think God's words in 2 Corinthians 3: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup> who comforts us in all our affliction. . . .<sup>9</sup> And how do we know that our God is the God of all comfort? Because in our greatest affliction, the affliction of sin, God the Son (who is Jesus) came to this earth and took the suffering, sin, and death we deserved on the cross. He has loved and pursued us and all who turn from their sinfulness for forgiveness are given not only forgiveness but eternal life and reconciliation with God! And someday we will be with our God face-to-face. We will see him, and there will be no more sin or sorrow. And while Heaven will be filled with wonderful gifts, the greatest gift of all is God himself. He makes Heaven glorious.

Do you trust him? Are you comforted in him? **When humbled, God is more satisfying than knowing the answers. And even now, as we enter the Christmas season, I pray that rehearsing and reminding yourself that Jesus came to this world will truly bring comfort and joy all of our hearts and we will be filled with gratitude – whether we experience pain or pleasure.**

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<sup>8</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Job 42:6.

<sup>9</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 2 Co 1:3–4.