



**February 7th**

## ***THE NEW SHOFAR***

*My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle,  
and come to their end without hope;*

*My flesh is clothed with worms and dirt;*

### ***Can mortals ever be sinless before God? (Eliphaz)***

To understand Job's rather depressing outlook on his suffering and misery, we really need to go back to chapter 5 and understand that he is responding to the comments of Eliphaz. According to him, Job's woes are a consequence of his sins. Because he is suffering greatly, his sins must be significant. The things he endures now are the reasonable and just results of sin. The punishments of a just God.

Eliphaz tries to break through Job's unwillingness to place the blame for suffering at the feet of God...*Think now, who that was innocent ever perished? Or where were the upright cut off?* According to his views on God *those who plough iniquity and sow trouble reap the same.* He experiences the feelings all men and women must display before God...*dread came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones shake.* Poor old Job is left with this challenge: *Call now; is there anyone who will answer you?* In other words, God is not listening to sinful Job (or anyone else).

### ***Remember that my life is but a breath***

What Job is doing though is reflecting on the fragile state of human nature. We are made of dust. We are weak, frail and vulnerable creatures. Bad things happen to us. Bad things happen to good people. We get sick. We die. Some die young. Some die as ancients and the smallest of bugs can lay us low (Covid).

Job's question is whether or not it is God who is responsible for our misery and suffering, for the suffering and death endured by millions around the world. Can the God who has revealed Himself as Creator, Saviour, Healer and Reconciler be responsible for all of this pain and horror? If He is not responsible, then why does He not step in and end it all? Surely a truly loving God would act now?

### ***The answer is not much of a comfort for the faithless***

Job is a realist in that he understands we are creatures made from the dust of the earth. From dust. The only thing making us significant and holy is how we are created *in the image and likeness of God.* Every other part of us is going to wither and decay and our one earthly certainty is the grave. Life is short, so short that *The eye that beholds me will see me no more; while your eyes are upon me, I shall be gone.* Bang! Even while you are looking at me, I will pass from your presence!

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That is our nature. It is not something God does to sinners. We were never created to be free of sickness and death. On the other hand, much of the suffering and violence happening around the world today is the result of human vanity, hubris, greed – i.e. sin. By nature we are also created free, free to accept God and the divine ways, or free to reject God and to make a world of our own visioning. However, we have to live in the world we make, or that others make for us.

The enduring reality in all of this is how we are creatures made in God's image. That will not end. That cannot be taken from us – even by the worms eating our flesh (Job's vision). That is the light for which Job is searching, the meaning of the book.

### ***Jesus went throughout Galilee, proclaiming and casting out demons***

One of the important starting points for Mark (and all of the evangelists) is that Jesus came to inaugurate the Reign of God on earth (the Kingdom of God). Of course, God has always been the Ruler over creation, but men and women rejected that divine governance and have gone their own way. They have gone about tarnishing the good God had built into everything He made. And so He sent His Son to draw a line marking off the old ways of sin and opening up a whole new way of being at one with Him. His Divine Son became a human and pitched His tent among us.

This is why it is called ***The Good News***. *God is reigning* in us. *God is reigning* in and through Jesus who is the Christ. Being at one with Christ and through Christ one with the Father and with fellow believers, we know a peace, a joy and have a sense of meaning and purpose for our lives that mere humans cannot provide for us.

In today's story then, what is the Good News? Is it the healing of Peter's mother-in-law? Is the healing of the sick people brought to him from Peter's village? No, it is not. The coming of Jesus does not mean the end of all sickness and death. As Job understands, we remain creatures of clay bound for the grave. Peter's mother-in-law will fall sick again. She will die. But she has been given something far more important than a robust health. She knows Christ remains with her, in her.

The Good News in Jesus is that demons have been cast out. The ability of the Evil One to have control over a person's life has ended and the grave is no longer able to hold us. Our lives are now lived in Christ. We share in His victory and are heirs to His Kingdom. Whatever happens in this life, as long as we live it in Christ – sick or well; free of oppressed; dying or living we have hope for that hope is in Christ. It can never be taken from us and the grave does not end it.

The mission and ministry of Jesus is presented to us in this Gospel as being a ministry of preaching and casting out demons. Yes, He carries out physical healings as well but they are only signs of greater things that are happening in the lives of men and women who like the villages, come to Him... *the whole city was gathered around the door*. As with the people of Babel and Job the prophet, the beginning of wisdom is to understand we are but creatures and not creators, humans in need of God.

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