

So between my first and second year of seminary I spent several weeks in the Hoosier state, at the Lutheran Hospital of Indiana in Fort Wayne. There were about fifteen of us going through what was called Clinical Pastoral Education, a requirement for many seminaries in order to better shape our pastoral care practice for the future. But a few of the students were going through more in-depth training, perhaps to become a full-time chaplain, or an education supervisor; and so they were required to do some kind of project that involved the rest of us during those summer months. And one of them had the audacity to lead a Bible study on the book of Job. Mind you, among this group are Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Presbyterian, Seventh-Day Adventist, Disciples of Christ, not to mention us crazy ELCA folk. Now if you bring the book of Job into any Bible study of just a few from *one* denomination, you get a debate, for sure. If you bring the book of Job into a group of LCMS, ELCA, amongst others, you're gonna get a show the likes of which will rival any primetime lashing-out on television. Nevertheless, it happened, and we are all still alive to talk about it, after the fact.

It's just Job gets to the utmost depth of our humanity: the most basic questions that have come up ever since the first thought of a human being. Why is there pain? Why is there evil in this world, if it was meant to be for

good? Why do not just bad things happen, why do *catastrophic* things happen; and not just to anybody, but to the best of anybody? If God is all-powerful, all-knowing, all-places all-the-time, why does God allow such things to happen to anybody that God is supposed to care about with a love beyond human comprehension? Job brings all those questions front-and-center and doesn't apologize for it. It's a story that can make *one* person's head spin let alone multiplying that by an infinite amount when you openly discuss it amongst other mere mortals, regardless of denominational affiliation.

Of course, what made this particular Bible study all the more ironic, in this one room in the basement of a hospital, in a room filled with all kinds of different takes on human suffering and God's role or lack thereof through it all; at the same time, we were surrounded by hundreds of other rooms, filled with people with takes on their own suffering and God's role or lack thereof through it all. And part of the training is learning to just shut up and listen: no matter how many books we've read, no matter how many Scripture verses we have memorized, no matter how many Bible studies we have gone through; just sit back and listen to the present-day Job who's sitting right there in front of us.

Now for those several weeks I was assigned to the orthopedic floor of the hospital, which is all well and good, except when I got to the people who seriously believed something must be wrong because the chaplain is coming to see them. They were only supposed to be in there for a relatively minor surgery, and now the chaplain is showing up at the door. The doctor must have forgotten to tell them something else that had gone wrong.

Granted, they may not have been as in dire of circumstances as other patients in the ICU or the oncology wing, but all of us are on the Job life-long continuum. Some days we feel like it could not get any better than the family, home, and the all-around abundant blessings we experience. And then there are days when we seriously wonder if anything else could possibly go wrong, desperately asking God, “Why me?” Ask a single Bible study from one church denomination, and you’ll get as many different takes as there are people there, let alone if you try to ask between LCMS, ELCA, Seventh-Day Adventist, Presbyterian, and on and on.

The only thing I remember being said from that Bible study in the basement of the hospital, is one of my ELCA colleagues saying, “It basically comes down to this: crap happens,” and he didn’t say crap, by the way. But it does happen to all of us Jobs. Not just you. All of us in varying degrees in a

variety of ways. And we end up clinging to the very same God as Job did in Scripture, the same God who had heard enough after all of Job's friends and Job himself tried to reason it all out. Yes, crap happens, or whatever you want to call it: it's part of the natural human cycle of us mortal imperfect mind, imperfect body, imperfect emotional capacity human beings. But when God answers out of a whirlwind, it's not just to put Job in his human place, it's also about letting Job know in no uncertain terms, yes, the crap will come, but I got this. I got you.

Because the ultimate whirlwind does not come with the response in the book of Job. It comes in a cosmic whirlwind of a stoned-enclosed-death-shattering Resurrection that sets the whole foundation for the church universal: to be there for all the Jobs on their life-long journey of up's and down's galore. And the whirlwind will come again, when we think we go down for good, but God has other ideas for eternity. The crap will come, yes, but through it all, God has more than got it, God has more than got all of us Jobs now and forevermore. And for that Gospel whirlwind still as true today as on Easter Sunday, we most certainly give thanks to God indeed! Amen.