



Grain

“Does suffering render a person invisible?”

Reverend Dr. Anna Carter Florence

Field

1 Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind: 2 "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? 3 Gird up your loins like a man, I will question you, and you shall declare to me. 4 "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. 5 Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? 6 On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone 7 when the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy? 8 "Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb?— 9 when I made the clouds its garment, and thick darkness its swaddling band, 10 and prescribed bounds for it, and set bars and doors, 11 and said, "Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stopped"? Job 38:1-11

Have people ever made insensitive comments to you about why you’ve experienced a loss or illness, or assaulted you with speeches about why certain things haven’t worked out for you in life? Maybe they meant well, and yet. We have all searched for words to ease another’s pain while finding anything we say to be lacking. Some efforts are more inadequate than others. Job’s friends made one dreadful statement after another trying to make sense of Job’s suffering for 31 chapters, which could comprise a manual for what not to say to someone in need of compassion. They told him what he should think and how he should feel as though his suffering negated him as a thinking human being and man of faith. Reading a lot of Job is like reading about how people experiencing hunger pangs bring suffering upon themselves, or listening to the US attorney general quote scripture to justify separating children from their families at the border. Enough with the skin-crawling, bad interpretations of how God acts in the world.

Anna Carter Florence talks about how it was the author’s intention to make most of Job unbearable to read. “Instead of inspiring us, the book infuriates us” into action. Job cries out in resistance, knowing that his redeemer lived in the midst of the relentless blaming hurled at him. “When God can’t stand it anymore, God bursts in in a whirlwind.” Finally, Job confessed there were things in the cosmos he didn’t understand and took comfort in God’s mystery, which his friends thought they had a clear grasp of. Job was moved to see alternatives. In the end, Florence points out that Job felt blessed by God again and enters a new order with equity, sharing his inheritance with both sons and daughters.

May we enter the book of Job with our own stories and flaws, infuriation, and awe in what we don’t completely understand about God’s universe. Happy Monday!

Prayer

Highly Recommended

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Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy