



### **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? Job 38:1-7

### **Thoughts**

Have people ever made insensitive comments to you about why you’ve experienced a loss or illness, or assaulted you with speeches on the reasons life hasn’t turned out the way you wanted? 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 human being who could reason and exercise his faith. Reading Job is like listening to religious leaders and political figures condemn people for aspects of their identity or immigration status in the name of God. It is like recalling times when we have confused the suffering of others or ourselves with punishment from God. Enough with the skin-crawling 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 flaws, infuriation, and awe in what we don’t completely understand about God’s universe. May we enter the book with grace. Happy Monday!

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Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy