

Born to Trouble

In the month of October, the rhythms are well established, small groups are engaged in fellowship and study, mission outreach is connecting with the wider community, the high holy seasons are just about to appear on the horizon but not yet consuming the work of the church, and everything is running smoothly. Well, okay. But even if not, why would anyone want to take a risk on a four-week series on Job, for heaven's sake?

The book of Job is usually placed among the wisdom literature of the Bible, and that is probably where it best fits. Yet, it is not at all like Proverbs with its aphoristic approach to advice and suggestion. It is not like the Psalms or Song of Songs with their poetic praise and petition and passion, though you can find some of the most soaring poetry of the Bible in the pages of this book. So, what is it? Job starts like a fairy tale but reads like a documentary. Did this all really happen? Does it matter? What's going on here in this odd, somewhat tedious, kinda confusing book? And why, we ask again, would anyone want a worship series on this book?

Well, you'll have to look elsewhere for a complete answer to that question. But it is our contention that the book of Job deals with some profoundly difficult questions in the life of faith, and it does so without easy answers or simplistic cliches. In fact, Job takes on those cliches with some painful truths about life in the real world. Let's be honest: Job isn't really for those for whom everything is great, and all their choices come up smelling like roses. It is a book for those who have questions, those who are struggling or suffering, or feeling like there is no one listening, no one out there at all. If this is you, or anyone you know, then the book of Job is the place for you.

The human condition seems rife with difficulty from birth to death. We are, as "Comforter" Eliphaz declares in a rare moment of clarity, born to trouble as the sparks fly upward (Job 5:7). What word can we bring to those who know the depth of this experience? Join us for our worship series "Born to Trouble."

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost – To and Fro on the Earth

October 3, 2021 – [Job 1:1, 2:1-10](#)

Color: Green

INTRODUCTION

Care needs to be taken as we launch into this series. If ever there was a time where the worship team needs to take the congregation by the hand and walk them through the expectations of worship, it is in this series. Some time at the beginning of the service, during announcements if those are done, perhaps, or as part of a call to worship, some outlining of the scope of the series as you see it would be helpful. Invite prayers for the whole church as you wrestle with difficult issues and prayers for those who may be suffering grief or illness, and certainly invite prayers for those who feel abandoned by God.

This need not mean, however, that there is no place for praise or no room for joy in these weeks. Far from it. The call to be the church who gives glory to God's name persists. Let hands be raised; let smiles be seen. Clap and dance and celebrate the gift of salvation every day of our lives, even as we acknowledge that suffering is real; and in many ways, we are a people born to trouble.

Space for responses to this word must be provided from the very beginning. Perhaps assign caring listeners who can spend time after, or even during the worship time for those who are struck by these themes. Here is a role for Stephen Ministers if they are available in your church. We need those who can listen well and not attempt to "fix" everything but merely be a supportive presence in the struggle.

Corporate times of prayer and contemplation, of cleansing and anointing, might be appropriate each week or at the beginning and end of the series. Time at the Communion rail can be given. If you are celebrating the sacrament of Holy Communion on this first Sunday of the month, then attention to the prayers of confession and absolution is always appropriate.

Also give attention to suffering beyond the personal as we worship together. How can we acknowledge the pain of the world in which we live? In our own neighborhoods? In our chosen mission fields? Around the world? What responses can we give to the suffering of the world around us? How can we be a caring presence beyond our own community of faith? How can we stand in solidarity with those who suffer because of their race or religion or ethnicity? What witness can we give to the world that God is a loving presence and not an uninvolved and ineffable entity?

We must also take care to ensure that our message is not that this world is terrible, and our job is to get through it to some heaven someday somewhere. On the contrary, this world is alive with the presence of God; the kin-dom breaks through with surprising glory at times. But there is also suffering and pain, and we must be honest about that. Any of us, all of us, will most likely encounter that truth at some point in our lives, if we haven't already. We are gathering to worship as a people who are in this world and called to love the world as did the one who sent the Christ so that whosoever believes in him might have eternal life.

PREACHING NOTES

Stuff happens. What's your shortest sermon ever? This one could be it. Stuff happens. Amen. Okay, that's hardly satisfactory, I realize. And there is a whole lot of . . . well . . . theology to wade through to get to this realization. Plus, everyone is used to hearing this statement in a little different format. Perhaps the shock value isn't worth trotting it out, however. Yet the bald-faced truth is undeniable: stuff happens. The prologue of the book of Job is simply trying to establish that living-in-this-world reality.

Carol Newsom, in her fascinating introduction to the commentary of the text of Job, argues that the received text is an evolution through what she identifies as four different stages of editorial theologizing about this puzzling book. (See "Reading the Book of Job: Issues of Structure and Unity," *New Interpreters Bible*, Vol. 4, Abingdon, 1996, pp. 320-325.) She argues that the oldest form of the book was the beginning and the end with some missing middle prose section. The long poetic dialogue, which also went through three separate editions, which makes up the bulk of the text we have today, was added later. All were designed to shift understandings of the characters in the story, to elevate or reduce status and to add complexity to the central issue of human suffering.

But what does it really matter? It matters in part because it shows us that this story is designed with a purpose, and that purpose is not just recording some obscure ancient historical event. Are we saying that this Job was made up? An invention of a series of unknown writers? Actually, what we're saying is that to spend time asking the historical question is to miss the point presented in this book. Is there suffering in the world? Are there people who have lost everything? Of course there is and of course there are. That's what makes this book so compelling. It is real life; it asks real questions; it wrestles with the truth in humbling and transforming ways. Redemptive ways.

Our story begins like a fairy tale or a parable; both are narrative events designed to teach us something. The question with Job is, "What is it teaching?" That God plays dice with the universe? Verse one is a set up. And patently unreal. Thomas Edward Frank argues that no one is really like this, "blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil" ("*Pastoral Perspective*" in *Feasting on the Word*, Year B, Volume 4, Bartlett and Taylor, General Editors, W/JK Press, 2009, p.122). Human failings are all too prevalent. And yet there is a striving for uprightness, for being blameless. And the whole point of the book is that even could we achieve such a state, we would not be immune from suffering. Random stuff happens. Even the health conscious can succumb to illness. Even the safety conscious can suffer an unforeseen accident.

There is, however, a mindset that declares faith protects, that faith earns a bubble that ensures nothing bad will happen. That is why often those who are stricken abandon their faith because they believe the promise was not kept. "If God doesn't keep up God's end of the bargain, then why should I anymore?" So goes the thinking. But that has never been the promise. The bargain is not built on health and personal security. We are a security-conscious nation; some would say obsessed. Yet stuff happens.

Wait a minute, you might be thinking, keep reading there, bucko. This isn't random stuff happening. There is purpose; there is interference; there is Satan! That is the explanation for all our ills.

The first thing to note about chapter two is that this isn't an explanation or an excuse. It is a furthering of the drama. Or rather it is a personification of the randomness of existence. The *satan* (pronounced with a short "a" sound – sah-tahn, and with the definite article)—and note it isn't Satan the adversary of

God, but a holder of an office in the heavenly court—raises a question or an opposition to God's boasting on the character of Job. Many scholars interpret this role as a prosecuting attorney, a part of the council of heaven, a partner, co-worker with God.

Then the conversation begins. "Where have you been." "Hanging out." Actually, that's not what is said. "From going to and fro on the earth." To and fro? Just out and about, just here and there, just part of the scenery. This is just a part of life, this invitation, this opportunity toward suffering. It is just there. Random. Sure, you can decide it is all in opposition to God, except it isn't. At least according to the wager, God is a participant. At the very least allowing, complicit in all that befalls this blameless and upright, obedient servant of God.

So now what? It kinda makes you want to go check out the gospel text for this week, doesn't it? Understandable, really. Those pharisaical debates used to seem complicated, until now. But hang in there; this is important. Not just important; this is essential. Why do we believe? What is faith all about? These fundamental questions hover there beneath the obvious ones about suffering – which are also crucial these days.

The truth is, Job doesn't give us easy answers. There is no bumper sticker faith hidden here. Instead, we are invited to examine the depth of our souls and the foundations of what we believe. There is an underlying conviction that having waded through this book, one might be woven more tightly into the hope of the kin-dom. The transformation being offered here is toward a faith that doesn't hang on external circumstances, but on inner convictions that seek to expand into profound and Christ-like relationships and practices. Our mission, to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, needs to go through the experience of wrestling with Job. It is how we learn to cling to faith, even as we live in this random world.

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost – Bitter Complaints

October 10, 2021 – [Job 23:1-9, 16-17](#)

Color: Green

INTRODUCTION

“What shall we pray about today?” Perhaps your congregation is used to hearing such a phrase in worship on a regular basis. Many congregations have a regular time of sharing “joys and concerns” during worship. But for others, it seems like an intrusion on the order of worship; and should the attempt be made, there would be an uncomfortable silence. Yet scripturally, we know we are called to pray for one another. How can we do that without hearing what the needs might be, or where the hurts are?

How can you create space in your worship for a sharing of these concerns? Yes, there is a danger that it might get out of control, as people who finally find an audience monopolize the time over various aches and pains. So, what could be done? Some congregations use prayer cards, where worshipers write out their requests. Sometimes these are brought forward or gathered up and read out loud or by a prayer team.

Job speaks his prayers out loud in our text for this week. He shares his brokenness and mostly his feeling that God is not listening any longer. Worship, while directed toward God, should also provide the gathered with the sense that they are heard, that they matter to God and to the church. It really does not take much to let folks know that they matter. Some way of letting them be heard is a great beginning. Then a way to follow up: “How are you with . . . ?” let’s them know that they were remembered. Here again the compassionate listeners or Stephen Ministers can be a vital part of this worship experience.

Even our hymnody can be a help to the theme of being heard by God. Songs that let them know they are God’s mind and in God’s hands help confirm this idea that even when they have no sense of being heard, our faith says that God is listening. Singing of God’s active participation in the lives of those who love God can be a powerful witness.

There is also scope to extend the invitation to be heard beyond the designated worship time. Provide a space to gather before worship for a more intimate sharing of prayer concerns or invite those who desire to stay after and gather near the rail or in a conference room for more prayer and conversation. It might be an opportunity to enter into pastoral care where needed. In this way, worship flows into the life of the community as a whole. What other ways can you find to make that connection between worship and daily life? What practices can be offered that worshipers can carry with them as they leave the worship time to sustain their awareness of God’s presence in their lives? How do you continually ask, “What shall we pray about today?”

PREACHING NOTES

Years ago, my daughter was sick; she had contracted a fever that settled in part in her brain and gave her some horrendous headaches as well as the general malaise that often accompanies an infection of this kind. We took her to doctors and tried various medications, none of which were helping as immediately as we would have preferred. Or as she would have preferred. We were told to keep her still and in a dark room to help mitigate the head pain. Keeping a young elementary school girl still was almost impossible, except that the fever sapped her strength. So, she lay there on her bed in her dark room while we sat with her. We felt helpless as we watched her suffer. We knew, because we were told, that she would get through this and be all right again, but it was sometimes hard to hold on to that confidence.

I told her that I was praying for her and that God was with her. She looked at me and said, "God doesn't care about me. Cause if he did, he would make me better." I was struck dumb by her despair. I hardly knew what to say next. All my years of theological training and preaching God's goodness was dashed on the rocks of my little girl's pain.

Compounding the experience of suffering is the feeling that one has been abandoned by God. In our text this week, Job gives voice to this pain. "Oh, that I knew where I might find him," he declared in bitterness. Perhaps you have never had this experience of the absence of God, but there are those in your congregation who have.

They called her Gramma; almost everyone did in the congregation. She was as close to someone "blameless and upright" as I had ever known. By a curious act of providence, this woman who was a member my dad's congregation when I was a young child, now found her way to the congregation I served some forty years later. And she was a joy to have as a part of the family.

When I was visiting with her over her kitchen table, not long after we had held the funeral for her husband of many years, she confided in me her long years of doubt and depression. She told of how it felt like there was a sheet of glass above her and all her prayers would bounce off and not be heard or received at all. She began to wonder if anyone was listening at all. Certainly not to her, anyway. She had never felt so alone as when she felt abandoned by God.

You heard of the grand revelation of Mother Teresa, that blessed saint of the church, who wrote about not hearing from God for most of her life and ministry. This is real, these words that Job utters, this desire to converse with God, to plead his case and how unjustly he had been treated after a life of faithfulness. It is an all too human experience that we find ourselves flailing in the void, unable to hear or experience God's presence. Simply allowing these words to be read and contemplated during worship is to stand in solidarity with those who are listening and who are struggling in the silence.

Our tendency is to search for solutions, to proscribe actions that can bring us through this moment to a happier existence. But this text does not provide us any easy or quick solutions. Even if you re-insert the verses skipped, there is no magic formula for countering this thundering absence. All you need to do is to acknowledge this profound reality. For someone in the pew or watching online to hear that someone understands and does not condemn them or point out their own failings that has God to leave them so utterly, can be the greatest blessing. It would be like a cool drink of water to someone dying of thirst in the desert.

And why do we skip over verses 10-15? What was the thinking in that, we might ask? In fact, these words are words of faith. Even in his agony of aloneness, Job declares that God knows him, knows his steps, though he has no visceral proof of that. More than that, in verse 11, Job declares that he has kept the faith, he has followed the path of righteousness. From there, he spirals into fear that God's justice (or lack thereof) is so beyond his human understanding as to make God unapproachable. Perhaps that is why the lectionary compilers chose to skip over these verses.

That would be understandable, except that this too is a common human experience. When we can't approach God, when God is unreachable, we often fear the God we profess to love. I suspect, however, that there might be another reason why these verses are omitted. Preachers can very often resort to adding to the burdens rather than standing in solidarity. These verses could tip the balance into "you should" and "you must" and cause the listeners to feel responsible for their own despair. In that case, we would become like Job's comforters who come to offer support but end up heaping blame on the victim for his own wretchedness.

Avoiding that somewhat heavy-handed approach, these left out verses could be a sign of hope that faith is possible even in the midst of the darkness. They could be a commendation to those who have managed to stagger their way to the pew or to the screen even when the emptiness seems to make such an act pointless.

Again, it seems to me that the best use of this text is one of solidarity. To stand with those who are lost, those who doubt. And to likewise encourage the more secure members of the community to stand with their brothers and sisters who might be struggling. It is not the time to abandon them because of their doubt, but rather to acknowledge that even in the emptiness, they are not alone. Because you, preacher, and you congregation, are with them. Even in the face of their bitter complaints.

Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost – Out of the Whirlwind

October 17, 2021 – [Job 38:1-7, \(34-41\)](#)

Color: Green

INTRODUCTION

Does anyone come to worship expecting to encounter the living God? I mean, not just talk about God or come away with a cozy feeling that one has been loved somehow, but to actually hear the voice of God or catch a glimpse of God's full glory? My favorite Annie Dillard quote is useful here:

Does anyone have the foggiest idea what sort of power we so blithely invoke? Or, as I suspect, does no one believe a word of it? The churches are children playing on the floor with their chemistry sets, mixing up a batch of TNT to kill a Sunday morning. It is madness to wear ladies' straw hats and velvet hats to church; we should all be wearing crash helmets. Ushers should issue life preservers and signal flares; they should lash us to our pews. For the sleeping god may wake someday and take offense, or the waking god may draw us out to where we can never return.

(Annie Dillard, ***Teaching a Stone to Talk: Expeditions and Encounters***, New York: Harper & Row, 1982, pp. 40-41.)

What ought we expect when we come to worship? To ease into some comfortable bubble protected from the difficult world out there? Or to be shaken to the core by the awesome majesty of the God we worship? To be honest, there is nothing wrong with the warm comfort of the presence of God through the caring community that is the church. We don't mean to suggest setting that aside. But once in a while, we do need to be reminded of what it is that we mean when we speak of the awesome God.

How can we convey something of God's majesty to a congregation grown too comfortable with the idea of God as a personal savior? What songs can we sing that stretch us into the wonder that is our God? What confessions can we make that admit our tendency to worship a God too small, too convenient to our own understandings and limited vision? What images can we project, what drama can we observe that reminds us of the vastness of our God?

There's nothing wrong with once in a while leaving the place of worship awestruck. It would become tiring on a weekly basis, but now and then, it is good to tremble at the threshold of the throne of God. What Job encounters in our text this week is a God who overwhelms and transforms him, even in the depth of his pain. What else do we have to offer than that?

PREACHING NOTES

You know what we need here? An audio version of the book of Job. I don't mean one recorded by some actors long after the fact. No, I mean a live recording of this conversation between Job and the Voice of God. I know, I know, I argued earlier in this series that this story is probably more like a parable than a historical event. So, it is likely that this wasn't an actual conversation that took place on some dung heap somewhere in Uz. But still, think of what it would be like to actually hear these words spoken out loud, rather than reading them in a book. I need to know how to shape the voice in my head.

The question behind this rather quixotic musing is, "What is the mood in which these words were spoken?" You know what I mean? Our assumption, or perhaps our fallback understanding, is that God is angry, shouting at Job for daring to question, for daring to challenge, the divine hand at work in the world and in his life in particular. "Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge?" That doesn't sound like a happy dance going on behind those words. Certainly, there is plenty of evidence for this strident, booming divine wind of a voice flattening trees and leveling mountains as it rages from the very mountains the speech discusses. The whole thing comes at Job from a whirlwind, for heaven's sake. You don't get cheerful pats on the back from tornadoes. And then the words themselves speak of a celestial pique at the way honor has been dragged through the mud of Job's suffering. And perhaps the most convincing argument for this as supernatural outrage is how Job responds to the encounter. You have to go another whole chapter and a bit to get to Job's understandably subdued response, and we'll get to that next week. But this rant, if rant it is, goes on for a while. God is in the zone with this one.

In fact, our assigned verses barely do justice to the speech. Read the whole chapter; read two chapters; or even better, read four chapters and maybe you'll come close to approximating the full effect of the visitation. Some of the greatest poetry in literature anywhere can be found in these chapters of the book of Job. Bask in the wonder and the beauty and majesty of these words for a moment. Stand in open-mouthed awe at the scope of creation, presented here as a divine, no, as THE divine work of art since time began. Scan those verses and pull out the phrases and the images that take your breath away and drop them like pearls throughout the sermon and the act of worship this day. This is God in all glory and power and majesty.

That is what makes me wonder. The sheer majesty of these words makes me wonder if it was not anger, not rage that drove this moment, but simply God being God. Think of Moses on the mountain and God passing by enough to so transform the countenance of Moses that when he returns the people shy away in fear at the residue of glory that clung to his face.

Of course, Job would be cowed by that; of course he would bow down; that's what happens when one encounters something approximating the full presence of God. The disciples in the boat, when they get an inkling of who Jesus really is, they fall down. Simon even says, "go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man." Echoing, of course, Isaiah in the temple of the lord, who sees only the hem of the robe spilling into the common space and crumples to the ground, all too aware of his sinfulness.

Risky, I realize, but what if God isn't angry, or isn't angry at Job? What if God is simply (simply in divine terms, you understand) giving the Creator's case the way Job wanted to give his personal case? What if, even more risky, God is wooing Job by talking about the nature of the Creator? Woah, too far, you might think. I know, it seems odd to me too. But at the end of this long speech, God turns to the comforters and condemns them and their words (all of which we must leave for another worship series, since the

lectionary left out all their speeches. Or maybe the supporting Bible study for this worship series could delve into the middle of the book and wrestle with just how much “comfort” these friends provide.) As a part of the condemnation of the friends, God honors Job. “My servant Job,” he is called. God is clearly on Job’s side; God considers Job a companion of sorts.

Sure, God can pivot from anger to love just like any of us. But what is the image of God that we provide our hearers if we present some of the most beautiful words to come from the mouth of God to be words of wrath and rage? Maybe, another risk, this is a moment that prefigures what the theologians call the “condescension” of God, choosing to come down and meet us where we are and meeting us in love and in beauty. Maybe this whirlwind is not the destructive tornado that punishes and destroys, but instead a new wind that blows in a new vision of God and a new way of relating to the one who loves us so completely.

Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost – Now My Eye Sees

October 24, 2021 – [Job 42:1-6, 10-17](#)

Color: Green

INTRODUCTION

Take a breath; you've earned it. If you've come this far through the experience with Job, then you are to be commended. But we're not quite done. There is a sense that we can take it easy with this happy ending kind of text. The problem is that just might undo a lot of the good work that you have done in this series. It would be good to resist the easy answer, the "it'll all work out in the end" kind of theme that might be seen as a denial of the depth of human suffering. Yes, of course, we hope and pray for resolution and restoration. But there are those in your congregation or in your neighborhood who will not have the experience of restoration. We must continue to stand in solidarity with those who are hurting. Even those who have come through a time of trial still bear the scars and ought not be dismissed as a happily ever after ending.

So, what do we do in worship this week? We give thanks, even as we wait for the coming of the kin-dom. This is an Advent-like moment to embrace the now and the not yet in tension or in coexistence. We celebrate new life and new hope, even as we grieve death and loss. We point toward the glimpses of grace at work in our community, even while we confess the times "we have failed to be an obedient church" as the traditional liturgy states. So, we sing the praises of a God who answers prayer, even while we continue to call upon the Spirit to bring justice and an end to hate.

Whenever we worship, we worship in this tension. It is not an end to joy, or the laughter of the redeemed. But it is a reminder that we are pilgrims on the way, disciples making disciples for the transformation – not the transformed, but the ongoing transformation – of the world. We embrace the mission with hope and a glimpse of the kin-dom.

When Job's eyes were opened to the totality of God, he was humbled. We too are humbled by the immensity of the need, but we are also lifted by the power of love of the God we worship. The Spirit works with us and through us; let us offer ourselves as willing vessels of that grace.

PREACHING NOTES

Everyone loves a happy ending. At last, we think, after all this struggle, all this pain, we can stand and with wide smiles proclaim that all's well that ends well. Plus, it's not just a happy ending; it is restoration. All that was lost is now returned and increased. How can we not rejoice in this turn of events?

Tread carefully, preacher. Many commentators warn the resolution hungry proclaimer to be wary of taking the bait offered here on what seems like a silver platter. (See, for example, Gary W. Charles, "Pastoral Perspective" in *Feasting on the Word*, Year B, Volume 4, Bartlett and Taylor, General Editors, W/JK Press, 2009, pp.194-198.) After such a profound wrestling with the deep issues of suffering and faith, to wave it all away with an apparent magic wand might cheapen the good work already done.

Yes, we can preach restoration; yes, we can claim happy endings, because they do happen in this world. Perhaps some recitation of more local happy endings would be appropriate as this word is brought. While we are good at soliciting prayer requests, we are often not as good at reporting on answers to prayer. Surely there are stories in the life of the congregation of answered prayer, of journeys of suffering that have come to an end. We need to hear how the "Lord blessed the latter days" of all the Jobs arrayed before us.

We can even find a hint of grace before the restoration. In the first part of the text, there is a somewhat confusing speech that is really a dialog. Ask yourself, who speaks verse 4? It reads as though it is all Job, his turn in the chapters long concluding scene. But is it really? The NRSV puts verse 4 in quotes, meaning if it is Job, then he is reciting someone else's words. But maybe, in an even deeper act of condescension, God sits beside Job as Job stumbles out with his words of awe and humility and says "talk to me Job. Let me ask you and I'll listen to your words, your heart, your hurt. Tell me, in this face-to-face moment; tell me what I already know, what I already see in you. Speak to me, Job." There is a sign of a restoration of relationship that comes before the restoration of fortune and family, a restoration of the bond that was tested but never broken, but now needs tending in order to heal—In order to lead to this further restoration—to this happy ending.

But . . . True, if this is a story, a parable, a fairy tale, then happy endings have come to be expected. But that isn't the whole story. The restoration doesn't sweep away what was. The children born in the latter days don't erase the memory of the ones lost before. Job died, old and full of days, true. But what were those days full of? Memories, tears, lingering effects of all that he suffered. At least that is how it works in the world where we live.

Maybe Job gazed at his image in the mirror as he shaved each morning, seeing the scars left by the disease that marked his body or were the result of the scraping of the potshard trying to find an ounce of relief on that ash heap of pain. Maybe as he looked into his eyes, eyes that had seen far too much, and saw the ghosts of his first children slipping into the shadows of his memory. He wipes the mirror, and they slide away but never really leave him. "I repent," he said to the powerful voice. "I despise myself," he whispers to his unshaven face. Was his despising because he dared to challenge God at the height of his suffering? Because he dared to question the ineffable justice that didn't feel all that just? Or was that statement, that repentance, a summation of all that had happened, all the pain that he bore and the loss that he suffered?

Why spoil it, you might ask? Why not let happy endings be happy? Because the Christ we proclaim declared himself to be the Truth. I am the way, the truth, and the life. So, how can we be less than truthful when proclaiming this Christ?

What happened to Job and sometimes happens to us is that our eyes are opened. We see the world as it is, even as we glimpse the kin-dom that is not yet. We see deeper, and those who have suffered, or are suffering, see something others haven't yet seen. And that seeing makes us humble. Or it could make us bitter, withdrawn, angry at a world like this. Humble is so much better. It allows for joy in restoration, even while in tune with the world's pain. This is what it means to be like Christ. To suffer the abandonment of the cross, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me" and the sting of death, bearing the wounds of suffering, even as we embrace Resurrection. Now my eyes have seen, and nothing will ever be the same.