

Sermon: Nettleham, 1.3.09

Overall Message: *There is much more to God than meets the eye! Trust Him!*

Job 26:14 Lo, these are parts of his ways: but how little a portion is heard of him but the thunder of his power who can understand?

[If these few things which we see daily with our eyes, declare his great power and providence, how much more would they appear, if we were to comprehend all his ways and works.]

Me:

- An inscription in stone the other side of the world provided an answer to many questions!
- For many years I found difficulty reconciling apparently incompatible truths in the Bible and in the Christian faith. For instance, God's sovereignty and our responsibility i.e. if God is in control of events, how can we be held responsible? (*Luke 17,1; Matthew 18,7*) If God chooses (elects) Christians and always accomplishes His purposes, why do we need evangelism?

You:

- I wonder if you share some of these difficulties. Wondering how God can be sovereign and completely in charge and we have free will. Or perhaps you have been troubled trying to reconcile God's love and the existence of suffering. This certainly is an apparent stumbling block to many non-Christians as well:
 - ? How can a loving, all-powerful God allow suffering?
 - Why on earth would a loving and all-powerful deity permit of a situation in which the choice of evil is even an option? [*Letter to the Times*]**Photo**

God:

- What does the Bible have to say?
- Romans 9,14-23; Job 26 [the last verse was the inscription in stone in New Zealand that helped me to the answer]
- **Photo's** of inscription and the circumstances (tram ride)
- Summary of Job
 - The book begins with a heavenly debate between God and Satan, initiated by God.
 - God drew Satan's attention to a most godly and upright man – Job.
 - Satan accused Job of trusting in God only because God had blessed him so profusely
 - God denied this and allowed Satan to initially destroy all his possessions and family and, subsequently, to inflict terrible suffering on his body, to demonstrate that Job's faith was not dependent on his many blessings and health.
 - The suffering was almost unimaginable yet Job kept his faith in God
 - Three friends came to comfort him and they made the assumption that Job's plight must be due to his unconfessed sin
 - Job protests vehemently and truly that he had done nothing to deserve such suffering.

- Eventually, after much goading by his friends, he concludes that God is not being fair and this implies that his righteousness exceeds God's.
 - A fourth person, Elihu, who apparently had witnessed all the talk, correctly exposed Job's error in concluding that God was unfair and at the same time castigated the three friends for their unwarranted assumption that Job deserved his suffering.
 - God, who until that time had been frustratingly silent, then speaks and concurs with Elihu.
 - Job repents of his rash words and is restored to fellowship with God.
 - During all the discussions and speeches, much truth is revealed about God and his ways.
 - But Job's confession at the end of 26 (the verse I found inscribed in stone in Christchurch) is an important word of correction to his three friends and to Job himself
 - The three friends had rightly observed that God sends suffering as punishment for sin. But they wrongly concluded that all suffering is a punishment for sin and, that since Job was suffering, he must have sinned.
 - Job, for his part, because he couldn't see the reason for his suffering concluded that God was not being fair.
 - But of course, they had all drawn wrong conclusions because they assumed they knew everything about God
 - My text tell us that our knowledge of God is incomplete.
 - These are the mere edges of His ways, and how small a whisper we hear of Him (*or but how little a portion is heard of Him*)
 - Analogy of Cook's accurate map of New Zealand's coastline and the wonders of the interior unknown to Cook *Photo's*
 - What has been revealed in Scripture is true and reliable.
 - We should be careful not to speculate and draw conclusions about God which is not supported by Scripture.
 - We must learn to trust God even when we don't understand.
 - Job had assumed that God had turned against him. How far from the truth! Job was not privy to the prologue! He falsely concluded that God was not being fair and, in effect, was setting his own righteousness against God's. That was God's only complaint against Job.
- Job was not told why he suffered but we can see that the purpose of Job's suffering was at least twofold:
 - To test him and his faith in God - and he succeeded and gained from his experience (*'I have heard of You But now my eyes see You' 42,5*) **and** *'the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning' [42,12]*
 - To demonstrate to the world and those in the heavens (all the angels etc – see *1Cor 4.9*) and to Satan that the relationship between God and man is not dependent upon blessings and rewards. God wanted to display for all created beings the mutual genuineness and mutual integrity of the relationship between God and man. If the faith of even the best of men is insincere and rooted in self-interest, God would be a manipulative and

deceptive deity who bribes man for worship. **This would be both a sham and a scam.** But Job demonstrated that even when he had lost all that was dear to him and was suffering severely he still yearned for God's presence. Tenacious trusting in God in the midst of suffering magnifies God's trustworthiness and magnifies God in the eyes of others. It also delights God's heart. Job's exemplary response is summed up in *'Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I shall return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken. Blessed be the name of the Lord' (1,21)*. Satan would not believe that someone would fear God other than for reward. [1,8-9].

You:

- One of the important messages from Job is that, although Scripture is true and reliable, there is much more to God than is revealed there and He must be trusted even when you don't understand. Text - *photo*

Us:

- Think what a difference there would be if all Christians had this attitude. If when we suffer and can see no reason, we still trust in God and try to maintain a close relationship to Him. If we were humble enough to admit our limited knowledge and understanding rather than draw conclusions that contradict what God has plainly revealed in Scripture. If we were to simply *'Trust and Obey'*.