

Last week we read from the book of Job. We read the Old Testament story of how Job was considered the most faithful and righteous man in the land. Job did everything right and he prospered. He was successful in business and he was successful in his family life. But then in an unusual exchange, God allows Job to have it all taken away. Job's business is ruined and Job's children are all killed.

Job's friends then show up and tell Job that he must have done something wrong. Even though Job insists he has led a faithful life his friends don't believe him. His friends assume that Job must have done something wrong to deserve this condemnation.

So Job begins to question God about how God could allow all of this calamity to happen to him. And this is God's reply to Job.

Job 38:1-7

God responds to Job by asking Job if Job was there when the world was made. God asks Job if he knows anything about how to make a world and all of its parts. In the words of the Jack Nicholson character in the movie "A Few Good Men," God says to Job, "Do you want to know the truth Job? You can't handle the truth."

So God responds to Job by telling Job that basically he is the creature and he is not the creator. God is the creator and we are the creature.

So after God tells Job that God is the one in charge and has been from the beginning, Job now responds to God.

Job 42:1-6

Job speaks to God that he understands his place that God is God and that he is not. God is God and we are not.

In this very deep and troubling book of the Bible, Job comes to ask some very deep and troubling questions to God and hears a response from God. In asking the questions of God, Job gets revealed to him something that only could be determined by asking the deep and tough questions.

This week I was contacted by a friend of mine who is a member of another church and she was frustrated by something that had occurred in her church. She contacted me because she wanted to know if her feelings of frustration and hurt were valid feelings. She felt that this most recent event in the church had left some people feeling abandoned and manipulated. After she shared with me what she had experienced I encouraged her to make her feelings known to the governing board of her church.

She serves as a member of that governing board but she was feeling intimidated by others on that church governing board. Most of the people on the church board were men and she felt intimidated because she is a woman. Most of the people on the board have more education than she does and that made her feel as though her opinion was not valued by these other more educated people.

But my friend knew that she had an opinion to share that was not being listened to by others on that church board. And so I encouraged her to say what she already knew she had to say. Speaking up in a public setting is not something that my friend is used to doing. She is more of the behind the scenes doer who always makes sure that events at her church run smoothly and that she provides a really good casserole and dessert for church meals.

So my friend prayed a lot about what to say. She prayed a lot. She prayed for God's Holy Spirit to guide her and for God's Holy Spirit to give her the strength to say what she felt like needed to be said. And with great courage my friend wrote out what she wanted to say. She ran it by her husband and her adult daughter. She practiced it over and over.

And when the time came she shared her words with her church governing board. She promised herself that she would not cry but that was a promise that was broken. She shed tears as she challenged that church board to see their actions from a different perspective. To see their actions from the perspective of the losers and not the winners.

My friend reported to me that the people on the board seemed to hear what she had to say. They had not thought about what they were doing from her perspective and from people like her.

My friend showed great courage in speaking up at that church board meeting. There is great power in speaking from your heart. And there is particularly great power when we hear from all voices and not just the most dominant. So that means it is important that we hear from:

The voices of people who are introverted and extroverted.

The voices of women and men.

The voices of whites and people of color.

The voices of immigrants and native born people.

The voices of older people as well as the voices of younger people.

The voices of gay and straight.

The voices of Christian, Muslim, and Jewish.

The voices of conservative viewpoints and the voices of liberal viewpoints.

Making your voice known is very important. And I think that one of the important lessons we learn from the story of Job is that it is important that our voices are heard.

If you feel as though God has dealt harshly with you, let God hear your voice. If you see the pain and suffering around you and in this world, let God hear your voice. God needs to hear from all of us about the pain and sadness found in Paris this day.

If you feel joy or celebration then God needs to hear this from you. God has given you gifts and a perspective that is unique and that needs to be expressed. Do not allow yourself to be silent when it is so important for your voice to be heard.

Next Sunday is our Consecration Sunday. That is the day that you are all invited to affirm the special and unique gifts that God has given to you and to make a financial commitment to God and God's church. And one of those gifts that God has given you is a unique and special perspective on the world. God has given you a voice which needs to be heard by others and by God.

Job was willing to engage very deeply with God and as a result Job entered into a deeper relationship with God where Job was able to affirm trust in God. We too are invited into a deeper conversation with God because as we engage deeply with God then we can learn to trust God more fully as well.

You have an important voice. Let others hear that voice. And allow God to hear that voice. Allow God to speak through you.

You have something important to say. Others need to hear it.

God needs to hear it. And we need to listen for God's voice. AMEN.

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-Given: November 15, 2015 in Allison Creek Presbyterian (York, SC)