

## Job Reading Sermon 3 from *The Message*\*

Zophar and Job

*Zophar*

“Do you think you can explain the mystery of God? Do you think you can diagram God Almighty? He sees through vain pretensions, spots evil a long way off—no one pulls the wool over his eyes! Hollow men, hollow women, will wise up about the same time mules learn to talk. Reach out to God. Still, if you set your heart on God and reach out to him, if you scrub your hands of sin and refuse to entertain evil in your home, you’ll be able to face the world unashamed and keep a firm grip on life, guiltless and fearless. Your world will be washed in sunshine, every shadow dispersed by dayspring. [11:7,11-14,17] ”

*Job*

“I’m sure you speak for all the experts, and when you die there’ll be no one left to tell us how to live. But don’t forget that I also have a brain—I don’t intend to play second fiddle to you. It doesn’t take an expert to know these things.

I’m ridiculed by my friends: ‘So that’s the man who had conversations with God!’ Ridiculed without mercy: ‘Look at the man who never did wrong!’

It’s easy for the well-to-do to point their fingers in blame, for the well-fixed to pour scorn on the strugglers. True wisdom and real power belong to God; from him we learn how to live, and also what to live for. If he tears something down, it’s down for good; if he locks people up, they’re locked up for good.

Yes, I’ve seen all this with my own eyes, heard and understood it with my very own ears. Everything you know, I know, so I’m not taking a back seat to any of you.

I’m taking my case straight to God Almighty; I’ve had it with you—I’m going directly to God.

Listen now while I make my case, consider my side of things for a change. Or are you going to keep on lying ‘to do God a service’? to make up stories ‘to get him off the hook’?

Why do you always take his side? Do you think he needs a lawyer to defend himself?

Please, God, I have two requests; grant them so I’ll know I count with you:

First, lay off the afflictions; the terror is too much for me.

Second, address me directly so I can answer you, or let me speak and then you answer me.

How many sins have been charged against me? Show me the list—how bad is it? Why do you stay hidden and silent? Why treat me like I’m your enemy? [12:1-5,13-14; 13:1-2,6-8,20-24] ”

*Zophar*

“I can’t believe what I’m hearing! You’ve put my teeth on edge, my stomach in a knot. How dare you insult my intelligence like this! Well, here’s a piece of my mind! Don’t you even know the basics, how things have been since the earliest days, when Adam and Eve were first placed on earth? The good times of the wicked are short-lived; godless joy is only momentary. The evil might become world famous, strutting at the head of the celebrity parade, but still end up in a pile of dung. Acquaintances look at them with disgust and say, ‘What’s that?’

Such God-denying people are never content with what they have or who they are; their greed drives them relentlessly. They plunder everything but they can’t hold on to any of it. Just when they think they have it all, disaster strikes; they’re served up a plate full of misery. When they’ve filled their bellies with that, God gives them a taste of his anger, and they get to chew on that for a while. Life is a complete wipeout for them, nothing surviving God’s wrath. There! That’s God’s blueprint for the wicked—what they have to look forward to. [20:1-7,20-24,28-29] ”

*Job*

**“ It’s not you I’m complaining to—it’s God. Is it any wonder I’m getting fed up with his silence? Take a good look at me. Aren’t you appalled by what’s happened? No! Don’t say anything. I can do without your comments.**

**Still, how often does it happen that the wicked fail, or disaster strikes, or they get their just desserts? How often are they blown away by bad luck? Not very often.**

**But who are we to tell God how to run his affairs? He’s dealing with matters that are way over our heads. Some people die in the prime of life, with everything going for them—fat and sassy. Others die bitter and bereft, never getting a taste of happiness. They’re laid out side by side in the cemetery, where the worms can’t tell one from the other. [21:4-5,17-18,22-2] ”**

**Hear the word of the Lord.**

**Thanks be to God.**

\*The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language (Navpress Publishing Group, 2002)