

I. My Notes ... WWC message 2/13

II. Series: The Problem with Pain

- Title: The Space We Need
- Text: Job 23:8-10; Romans 5:3-5
- Quote: Joy is not necessarily the absence of suffering, it is the presence of God.
Anonymous

III. Introduction

- Viktor Frankl (*Man's Search for Meaning*) once described a moment in the concentration camp when the cold was so sharp it felt like it was cutting through his bones. The guards had forced the prisoners out before dawn, and as they marched, Frankl said he could barely lift his feet from the frozen ground. He was exhausted, starving, and stripped of everything that once defined him — his profession, his dignity, even his name.
- But then something unexpected happened.
- As he trudged through the snow, Frankl began to think of his wife. He didn't know if she was alive or dead, but he pictured her face — not as a memory, but as a presence. And in that moment, he realized something profound: even in a place designed to crush the human spirit, there was still an inner space no one could touch. A space where he could choose what kind of person he would become. A space where meaning could still be formed.
He later wrote that everything can be taken from a person except one thing — “the last of the human freedoms”: the freedom to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances.
That insight didn't come to him in comfort. It came in the cold. It came in the dark. It came to the place where he felt most abandoned.
- And that's exactly where we find Job in chapter 23.
- Job looks for God in every direction — forward, backward, left, right — and finds nothing. No voice. No comfort. No explanation. Just silence. And yet, in that silence, Job clings to a truth he can't feel but refuses to let go of:
- “He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I will come forth as gold.”
Job is discovering what Mr. Frankl discovered: There is a sacred space in suffering where God is doing His deepest work — even when we cannot sense Him.
- Paul picks up this same thread in Romans 5. He says suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope. In other words, God is forming something in us that pain cannot steal and circumstances cannot undo.
- This message is about that space. The space where God shapes us. The space where faith is refined. The space where hope is born. The space we would never choose — but the space God often uses.

IV. A Thought

- Frankl's discovery in that frozen march wasn't a moment of triumph — it was a moment of awakening. He realized that even when everything external is stripped away, there is still an inner life being shaped. There is still a story being formed. There is still a kind of becoming that suffering cannot stop.
- And that's exactly what we see in Job.
Job isn't standing in a concentration camp, but he is standing in the ruins of his life. He's surrounded by silence, confusion, and loss. And yet, in that silence, something is happening beneath the surface — something he can't fully name, but something he refuses to ignore.
Before Job ever says, "I will come forth as gold," he first must face what suffering reveals. Pain has a way of uncovering things in us — things we `didn't know were there, things we hoped weren't there, things we've been leaning on without realizing it.
- So, before we talk about how God shapes us through pain, we need to start where Job starts: with what pain exposes.

V. Exposure

- Pain has a way of pulling back the curtain on our souls. It reveals what we lean on, what we hope in, and what we believe about God when everything else is stripped away. Before pain ever becomes a place of transformation, it first becomes a place of exposure.
- That's exactly what happens to Job.
- When we meet him in Job 3–7, he is not offering polished prayers or tidy theology. He is unraveling. He curses the day he was born. He questions the meaning of his life. He wonders why God feels so impossibly far away. Job's suffering doesn't just break his heart — it breaks open his assumptions.
- In **Job 23:8–9**, he says: *If I go east, he is not there, and if I go west, I cannot perceive him. When he is at work to the north, I cannot see him; when he turns south, I cannot find him. (CSB).*
- Job is doing what every honest sufferer eventually does: he is searching for God in the places where God used to be. He looks forward — nothing. Backward — nothing. Left, right — nothing. The God he once felt so close now feels painfully silent.
- But here's the truth Scripture keeps teaching us: Pain doesn't just reveal God's silence; it reveals our foundations.
- Paul experienced this same exposure in **2 Corinthians 1:8–9**. He writes that he was "so utterly burdened beyond strength" that he "despaired of life itself." But then he says something that sounds like it could have come straight from Job's lips: *"Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death, so that we would not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead." (vs.9 CSB).*
- Pain exposed Paul's self-reliance. Pain exposed Job's assumptions about how God should act. Pain exposes us too.

- It shows us: where we've placed our security, what we've depended on without realizing it, and what we believe God owes us.
- Pain reveals whether our faith is built on God's presence or God's performance.
- Even David, the psalmist who sang of God's nearness, had moments where he felt abandoned. In Psalm 139:7–12 he asks, “Where shall I go from Your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from Your presence?” — not because he feels God, but because he doesn't. Yet even there, David discovers that darkness is not dark to God.
- This is the first movement of transformation: Pain exposes what we trust so God can rebuild what we need. Before God refines Job, He reveals Job. Before God strengthens Paul, He strips Paul of false strength. Before God forms us, He shows us what we've been leaning on.
- This is not cruelty. It is clarity.
- It is God making space for a deeper, truer faith — a faith that can survive the storm because it no longer depends on circumstances.

VI. Space for Transformation

- If pain exposes what we trust, it also creates the very space where God begins to reshape us. Suffering is never passive in the hands of God. It becomes a furnace, a classroom, a sacred workshop where the Spirit does His deepest work — often beneath the surface, long before we can see any evidence of change.
- This is what Job begins to realize in chapter 23.
- After searching for God in every direction and finding only silence, Job makes one of the most remarkable declarations in all of Scripture: *“But God knows the way that I take, and when he has tested me, I will come out like gold”* [Ps. 139:23–24]. (**Job 23:10 EXB**).
- Job is not saying he understands his suffering. He's not saying he feels God's presence. He's saying something far more courageous:
- God is doing something in me that I cannot yet see.
- Job believes that the silence of God does not mean the absence of God. He believes that the testing he is enduring is not meant to destroy him but to refine him. This is the same imagery God uses in **Isaiah 48:10**: *“Look, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.”* (**CSB**).
- The furnace is not punishment. The furnace is formation.
- And the Apostle Paul makes this exact same point to believers in Rome.
- He writes in **Romans 5:3–5**: *“3 And not only that, but we also boast in our afflictions, because we know that affliction produces endurance, 4 endurance produces proven character, and proven character produces hope. 5 This hope will not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”* (**CSB**).
- Paul is not celebrating pain. He's celebrating what God does with pain. Suffering produces endurance - Endurance produces character - Character produces hope.

- This is the same progression Job sensed long before it was ever written down by Paul. Job believed he would “come forth as gold.” Paul explains how that gold is formed.
- And notice the last line in the passage: “... *because God’s love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.*”
- Even when we feel empty, the Spirit is pouring into us. Even when we feel abandoned, the Spirit is forming us. Even when we feel stuck, the Spirit is strengthening us.
- Jesus did something incredibly similar. In preparing His Disciples to face the world without Him being physically with them, He said – *“I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.”* (John 16:33 NLT).
- Jesus never said that life would be pain free, that there wouldn’t be suffering. He said that in Him we (believers) could find peace. Pay attention ... pain and suffering don’t remove the presence of our Lord in our lives. Jesus said that He overcame so that we could overcome too. Peace in the storm, calm in the turmoil, presence in the despair.
- This is the mystery we don’t want to talk about. It is the path of transformation: The Lord God often does His deepest work in the places we would never choose.
- Job couldn’t see God — but God could see Job. Paul was pressed beyond his strength — but the Spirit was producing hope. You may feel like nothing is happening — but God is shaping you in ways you cannot yet measure.
- Pain becomes the space where God forms endurance, deepens character, and births a hope that suffering cannot steal.

VII. It’s About His Presence

- There comes a moment in every season of suffering when answers stop helping. Explanations lose their power. Logic can’t hold the weight of what we’re carrying. And in that moment, what we need most is not information — it’s presence.
- This is where Job finally arrives.
- After chapter upon chapter of silence, God finally speaks in Job 38. But He doesn’t answer a single one of Job’s questions. He doesn’t explain the suffering. He doesn’t justify His decisions. He doesn’t offer a theological lecture or a philosophical defense.
- Instead, God reveals Himself.
- He takes Job on a tour of creation — the foundations of the earth, the boundaries of the sea, the storehouses of snow, the constellations, the wild animals, the mysteries of life and death. God is not giving Job reasons; He is giving Job revelation.
- And something shifts in Job.
- By the time we reach Job 42, Job says: *“My ears had heard of You before, but now my eyes have seen You.”* (Job 42:5 EXB)
- Job doesn’t say, “Now I understand.” He says, “Now I see.”
- This is the turning point of the entire book of Job: God’s presence becomes enough even when His explanations remain hidden.

- The psalmist Asaph had a similar experience. In Psalm 73, he confesses that his heart was “grieved” and his spirit “embittered.” He couldn’t make sense of the injustice around him. But everything changed “when I entered the sanctuary of God.” He didn’t get answers — he got presence. And from that presence came this confession: “*Who do I have in heaven but you? And I desire nothing on earth but you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart, my portion forever.*” (**Psalm 73:25-26 CSB**).
- In John’s gospel, He records Jesus giving His Disciples (and ultimately us) the same assurance. “*I will not leave you as orphans; I am coming to you.*” (**John 14:18 CSB**). Notice what Jesus is saying ... I will be with you – not I will explain everything. It’s a promise of presence, not of removal of circumstances.
- Brother Lawrence, the 17th-century monk known for Practicing the Presence of God, discovered this same truth in a vastly different kind of suffering. He lived with chronic pain, obscurity, and discouragement — not dramatic trials, but the slow ache of ordinary hardship. And yet, in the middle of peeling potatoes and scrubbing pans, he learned to rest in God’s nearness. He wrote that he was “more united with God” in the noise of the kitchen than in the silence of the chapel. He didn’t receive explanations for his suffering. He didn’t get clarity about why life was hard. But he found something deeper: the steady companionship of God in the middle of it. Brother Lawrence reminds us of what Job discovered and what Paul later affirmed — that God’s presence becomes enough even when His reasons remain hidden.
- Paul learned this in his own suffering. When he begged God to remove the thorn in his flesh, God didn’t give him a reason. He gave him a promise: “*My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.*” — 2 Corinthians 12:9 CSB
- Paul wanted relief. God gave him presence. And that presence became Paul’s strength.
- We are getting to the heart of the matter ... Pain teaches us to rely on who God is, not on what God explains.
- Job never gets the answers he wanted, but he receives the God he needed. Asaph never gets clarity about injustice, but he receives the nearness of God. Paul never gets the thorn removed, but he receives sustaining grace. And you — in your suffering — may not get the explanation you long for. But you will get the presence that carries you, the grace that sustains you, and the God who refuses to leave you.

VIII. Pain Shapes the Story

- When we reach the end of Job’s journey, something remarkable happens. God never explains the suffering. He never rewinds the story to show Job the heavenly courtroom. He never answers the “why.” But He does something far more transformative: He reorients Job’s entire life around a deeper revelation of Himself.
- Job’s story doesn’t end where it began. It doesn’t even end where the suffering left him. It ends in a new place — a place shaped by encounter, humility, and restoration.
- In **Job 42:1–6**, Job responds to God’s presence with a confession that reveals just how much he has changed: “*I had only heard about you before, but now I have seen you*

with my own eyes. I take back everything I said, and I sit in dust and ashes to show my repentance.” (vs. 5-6 NLT).

- Job isn't repenting of sin — he's surrendering his old assumptions. He's letting go of the story he thought God should write. He's embracing the God who is bigger than his understanding.
- And then, in Job 42:10–17, God restores Job — not as a reward for endurance, but as a sign that suffering does not have the final word. Job's restoration is not a return to who he was; it is the beginning of who he is becoming.
- This is a consistent theme in Scripture ... “Those who sow in tears will reap with shouts of joy.” (**Psalm 126:5 CSB**)
- Peter echoes this in his letter – *“The God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish, strengthen, and support you after you have suffered a little while.” (1 Peter 5:10 CSB).*
- Paul reminds us of this fact ... *“We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28 RSV).* Look deeply at what Paul says: God's goal is not to return us to who we were. God's goal is to shape us into who we were meant to become.
- Pain becomes the turning point — not the end of the story, but the place where the story bends toward redemption. This is what Job discovers. This is what the early church discovered. This is what every follower of Jesus eventually discovers: God does not waste what wounds us. He uses it to reorient our lives around His presence, His purpose, and His glory.

IX. Wrapping Up

- Looking at someone's journey, whether it is Job's, Viktor Frankl's, or someone you might know, you can see a person who walked through the full landscape of suffering — confusion, lament, silence, revelation, and finally, restoration. But the greatest gift received was not the solution or the healing or the restoration. The greatest gift was God Himself.
- Job came out of the furnace with a deeper faith, a clearer vision, and a reoriented story. And that is what God is doing in you.
- You may not see it yet. You may not feel it yet. You may not understand it yet.
- But the God who met Job in the whirlwind is the same God who meets you in your pain. The God who shaped Brother Lawrence and Viktor Frankl in the silence is shaping you in the places you cannot see. The God who restored Paul is writing a story for you that suffering cannot steal.
- So, here is the invitation: Bring your pain into the presence of the God who transforms. Bring your questions into the presence of the God who listens. Bring your story into the presence of the God who restores.
- Let's Pray
- Grace First, Grace Always