

The young boy's clear voice rang out above the pre service silence. 'Look mum there's God.' Pointing to the saintly bearded figure in white robes walking down the side aisle. The saintly figure was me about to lead the Sunday morning service. The boy's understanding of God somehow linked to beards and white robes. What is your understanding of God? Of his character. Of what makes God, God. How do we discover that? The words of Job reveal a true worshipper who grasps the character of God. Not by instant revelation all neatly packaged and complete. In the journey of success and suffering, prosperity and pain, confidence and confusion, rebuke and resolution. Such a journey leads Job to some wrong conclusions about God's character. Because he does not have the completeness of revelation we have. No Bible to read. Living thousands of years before Jesus came into the world. Apart from any personal revelation we don't know about, Job is only able to discern the character of God from the actions of God. When God speaks directly to Job at the end of this book, his knowledge of God deepens. Job is unable to grasp three principles we know through Jesus, God's final revelation. **First**, God uses evil in his purpose of utterly defeating evil. Glimpsed in the Book of Job. Fully revealed in Satan's defeat through Jesus' death and resurrection. *'This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.'* **Acts 2:23-24** **Second**, most of God's actions reveal his character. Jesus earthly life a prime example. **Third**, his character is hidden when evil happens and God is acting through the agency of evil powers to achieve his purposes. With that background, what does the true worshipper Job discern about the character of God? Job's foundation is the sovereignty of God. Job rightly believes that God is in charge. Free to do anything he chooses. Job believes the suffering he experiences is the action of God. The cosmic disorder and chaos around him God's doing. Job's conclusion: God is unjust. He punishes without consideration of personal righteousness. So Job says, *It is all the same; that is why I say, 'He destroys both the blameless and the wicked.'* **9:22** Job is wrong about God's character. In reading Job's words I sense he is not comfortable with this conclusion. With the revelation he has there seems no other. I want to honour Job in this. He is a true worshipper. So he does not curse this unjust sovereign God. He does not succumb to hopeless despair. He pieces

together what he knows about God. Hoping God will answer his questions to reveal the missing pieces. A reminder that inadequate understandings of God's character don't disqualify people of living faith from the kingdom of heaven. Through Job's words we see the pieces of the jigsaw he is confident of. In **ch 26** Job powerfully articulates his belief in God as the Creator and sustainer of the universe. *'He spreads out the northern skies over empty space; he suspends the earth over nothing. He wraps up the waters in his clouds, yet the clouds do not burst under their weight. He covers the face of the full moon, spreading his clouds over it. He marks out the horizon on the face of the waters for a boundary between light and darkness.'* **v7-10** Sisters and brothers, Job is right. In **Colossians 1** Paul describes Jesus, the image of the invisible God, as the creator and sustainer of the universe. Job acknowledges the Creator also disturbs the created order when he chooses. *'The pillars of the heavens quake, aghast at his rebuke. By his power he churned up the sea;'* **v11-12a** His power as Creator includes the power to subdue evil. *'his hand pierced the gliding serpent.'* **v13a** With spiritual insight Job knows there is yet more to understand about the Creator God he worships. *'And these are but the outer fringe of his works; how faint the whisper we hear of him! Who then can understand the thunder of his power?'* **v14** Please don't think you know all there is to know about God. **Ch 28** is a beautiful poem about wisdom. Revealing Job's understanding of God as the source of true wisdom. He contrasts the fervent search for the riches of mineral wealth with the search for something more precious: true wisdom. *'But where can wisdom be found? Where does understanding dwell? No mortal comprehends its worth; it cannot be found in the land of the living.'* **v12-13** Beyond human understanding and reach. The source of true wisdom not our intellect but the mind of God. *'God understands the way to it and he alone knows where it dwells, for he views the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens.'* **v23-24** Job's searching uncovers life changing truth. There is One alone who knows where true wisdom is found. True wisdom will provide answers for Job's agonizing questions. But God does not directly lead him to that place. Instead the true God speaks to human beings for the first time in the book. *And he said to the human race, 'The fear of the Lord—that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding.'* **v28** A crucial verse in Job's journey of understanding. God directs Job away from his questions towards himself. Brothers and sisters, God directs us likewise, As Christopher Ash says, *'He does not take us by the*

hand and lead us to the answers; rather he beckons us to bow before the Lord himself, who knows the answers but chooses not to tell us....So do not seek wisdom; seek the Lord.' How humbling. No advance in human technology or insights of human thinking provides all the answers. How reassuring for Job. Confirmation that his life shaped by fear of God and turning away from evil is the way of true wisdom. As true worshippers we are to model Job in this. Ask the big questions. Recognize true wisdom is priceless. Understand the search for wisdom as an object in itself is a dead end street. Seeking true wisdom is seeking after God himself. Jesus is the wisdom of God. **Colossians 2:2-3**, *'My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.'* Sisters and brothers, this world is in a death spiral because we have bought the lie that wisdom begins and ends in the human mind. That we are wiser than God. Failing to recognize what God's word says, *'For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.'* **1 Corinthians 1:25** Whatever the presenting issue, marriage, euthanasia, gender fluidity, world peace, domestic violence. To deny the order and pattern set by the Creator God. To listen to the so called wise instead of listening to Jesus is foolishness. Like Job we ought to fear the Lord; worship him as the Creator; trust in his wild sovereignty, his ways which seem foolish to the world. *'For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.'* **1 Corinthians 1:18** It is time to ask God to renew in us a soul that thirsts for the Lord, like the deer pants for water.