

SEASON AFTER PENTECOST 2018

SERIES 5 (OCTOBER): MYSTERY

SERIES OVERVIEW

Diving into the book of Job is an opportunity that comes around only one month every three years in the Revised Common Lectionary, so we wanted to take advantage of this thread of readings this year. Job is a difficult book to read and interpret, even for the most advanced biblical scholars; but it can be an opportunity to embrace vivid imagery, human emotion, and the mysterious nature of a God who created the entire universe all together in worship.

The themes we have chosen for each week mirror some of the emotions we experienced each week in discernment. In the first week, it seems a bit disorienting that someone as “blameless and upright” as Job would be tested so vehemently. For many people, this probably doesn’t seem to fit the image of God we experience as a loving Creator. Our disoriented feelings likely mirror Job’s as he was probably a bit disoriented himself. It will be imperative to provide enough background about the book—its nature and its composition—in the preaching and preparation for this service, but we would also discourage approaching this passage in a way that deconstructs the mystery contained in the narrative. Be confident in asking questions, but allow the answers to also invite more questions. Yes, the passage can be disorienting, but it can also be the beginning of a dialogue that leads to life.

The second week, Job feels deserted. He begins to express his dismay at not being able to sense God’s presence. What times are we in Job’s shoes? Are there experiences that have left us wounded, broken, and dejected? These questions often leave us with a bitter taste, but it is also a wonderful opportunity to offer a word of hope in the presence of struggle.

Finally, God speaks. Week three presents God asking Job a series of very heated questions that must shake Job to his core. Not only does God question him; God also demands answers. The questions appear to be rhetorical, and still God insists on Job’s response. Have you endured an encounter with someone that has left you speechless and silent? This is what we witness between God and Job. Yes, it is awkward, but it is a reckoning of sorts that is key to Job’s future.

Week four contains Job’s answer. He responds in humility and admits his fault. He “sees” God and knows just how much he must confess. Job’s fortunes are eventually “restored,” and he dies after a long life.

There is plenty of mystery to be found in this story, and many people suggest reading this book as a work of fiction to interpret its meaning. Another sense of mystery in this narrative can be expressed with the word “wonder.” This word presents great possibilities for imagery in worship and can serve as a connection point from the previous worship series on Season of Creation.

Notice God's questions and how much they are connected to God's creative power. The God who created the universe and all things in it is the same God who understands our pain, our brokenness, and our humanity. There is mystery in that.

Week 1: October 7 Disoriented
[Job 1:1, 2:1-10](#)

Week 2: October 14 Deserted
[Job 23:1-9, 16-17](#)

Week 3: October 21 Silenced
[Job 38:1-7 \(34-41\)](#)

Week 4: October 28 Restored
[Job 42:1-6, 10-17](#)

MYSTERY
WEEK 1: DISORIENTED
Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost, Year B
October 7, 2018

PLANNING NOTES
Reading Notes

See full texts, artwork, and *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers* for this Sunday at [Vanderbilt Divinity Library](#).

Leccionario en Español, [Leccionario Común Revisado: Consulta Sobre Textos Comunes](#).
Para obtener más recursos leccionario, [Estudios Exegéticos: Homiléticos](#).

Lectionnaire en français, [Le Lectionnaire Œcuménique Révisé](#)

Calendar Notes

September

September 15-

October 15 [Hispanic Heritage Month \(USA\)](#)

October

October 6 **October Series in Job**
[World Communion Sunday](#)

October 14 [Children's Sabbath](#)

October 21 [Laité Sunday](#)

October 31 [Reformation Day](#)

November

November 1 [All Saints Day](#)

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[Daylight Saving Time Ends \(USA\)](#)
Dwellings (2018 Resources Forthcoming)

November 11 [Organ and Tissue Donor Sunday](#)
[International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church](#)
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November 25 [Christ the King/Reign of Christ Sunday](#)
[United Methodist Student Day \(offering\)](#)

December

December 1 [World Aids Day \(GBCS resources, Discipleship Ministries Resources\)](#)

December 21 [Longest Night/Blue Christmas](#)

December 24 [Christmas Eve](#)

December 25 [Christmas Day](#)

December 31 [Watch Night/ New Year's Eve/ Holy Name of Jesus](#)

Planning for This Series

Today marks the beginning of a new four-week series. We are taking a deep dive in the mysterious and complicated story of Job, which is neatly condensed into four lectionary readings in the month of October. You can do this series in the month of October, as originally planned, or you can place this any time in the year where you may need a four-week worship series. In the *New Interpreter's Bible*, Carol Newsom has this to say about Job:

To the reader who is willing to forgo simplistic answers, however, the book offers challenging exploration of religious issues of fundamental importance: the motivation for piety, the meaning of suffering, the nature of God, the place of justice in the world, and the relationship of order and chaos in God's design of creation. (pg. 19)

Challenge your congregation to go beyond the surface of Job and allow themselves to wrestle with a mysterious piece of Scripture.

Job takes place outside any specific time and place. ("The land of Uz" isn't given a location.) It is a mix of poetry and prose, woven together to tell the story of one man's experience with God, a satan-like character, suffering, and redemption. The Book of Job is essentially a drama. Here are Taylor Burton-Edwards' notes on designing worship from the 2015 Year B cycle:

You may want to offer a more dramatic form of reading, or even design the worship space as the setting for the drama. Offering the reading each week as a drama may help your congregation connect with each week's reading more deeply. Today's "characters" would include God as ruler/judge, the Adversary (the Hebrew word "ha-satan" here does NOT mean "devil," but something more like prosecuting attorney), other members of the heavenly court who watch the interchange (choir or praise team), Job, and his wife. The congregation might take the role of God (in unison). Staging might include an ash heap (for the scene with Job and his wife this week, and many of the scenes in subsequent weeks).

Consider enlisting different members of your congregation to take parts and read them in order to enliven the Scripture readings in this series. Job's narrative is heavy on action, and the four readings pick up further ahead in the story each Sunday. You might consider opening the Scripture reading with a short reminder of what they heard/saw last week, and what has transpired in the story. You could also encourage your congregation to keep up with the story by doing the [daily lectionary readings](#). Remind people via social media channels and weekly church emails.

MUSIC NOTES

The following selections are congregational songs (most of which are chosen from this week's Hymn Suggestions) with notes on key, tempo, and instrumentation, along with some practical and creative considerations in singing.

10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord)

Source: CCLI [6016351](#)
Recommended Key: F
Tempo: 68–74 bpm
Instrumentation: Band, piano, or guitar
Notes: This modern worship song is recommended as a theme song for the “Mystery” series. It contains themes of strength, hope, and blessing in the midst of tribulation; and among many other modern selections, it is widely known. It can be sung as a stand-alone song, as a part of a longer worship set, or the refrain only can be used as a Psalm response.

Blessed Be the Name

Source: *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 63
Recommended Key: G–A
Tempo: 100-106 bpm
Instrumentation: Organ, piano, guitar, a cappella, full band, or bluegrass band
Notes: This camp meeting chorus has lots of possibilities for use in worship, including serving as a stand-alone hymn or as a medley with another song choice (including “Blessed Be Your Name” at the end of this list). Because of its short, cyclic structure, it could easily be used as a congregational response in another part of the liturgy, including a psalm or

other reading. A number of keys would work, but the range I have suggested above would make an easy transition to many other songs.

How Firm a Foundation

Source:	<i>The United Methodist Hymnal</i> , 529
Recommended Key:	Ab
Tempo:	60-70 bpm
Instrumentation:	Organ or piano
Notes:	Though the genesis of this text is largely from Isaiah, it still points toward similar tribulations from the Job passage this week. The assurance and strength of the closing statement, “I’ll never, no, never, no, never forsake,” will give the congregation a “firm foundation” and will likely linger on their lips and in their ears when they suffer or are connected with others who are suffering. The tempo of the song will likely be dictated by a combination of the skill of the accompanist and choir and the acoustics of the space itself.
Resources:	History of Hymns Choral setting (Henry)

I Want Jesus to Walk with Me

Source:	<i>Songs of Zion</i> , 95; <i>Come, Let Us Worship</i> , 104; <i>The United Methodist Hymnal</i> , 521; <i>The Upper Room Worshipbook</i> , 110
Recommended Key:	Bm–Dm
Tempo:	Varies, depending on setting
Instrumentation:	A cappella, organ, piano, rhythm section, or full band
Notes:	The nature and character of this song has been approached a variety of different ways, but it is important to acknowledge that spirituals were originally led by the voice only, with accompanying movement and possible percussion, either with instruments or body-generated (hand claps, stomps, etc.). The tempo could largely be defined in this case as to the character of the “walk” with Jesus. How will it be described and embodied in the service where you are? How can you embrace the original ethos of the spiritual even if using a band? For starters, make sure the song leaders are not being flippant; the song must be sung earnestly, with a yearning quality.

I Will Trust in the Lord

Source:	<i>Songs of Zion</i> , 14; <i>Come, Let Us Worship</i> , 292; <i>The United Methodist Hymnal</i> , 464
Recommended Key:	F–G
Tempo:	Varies, depending on setting
Instrumentation:	A cappella, piano, organ, or rhythm section
Notes:	Again, a cappella singing is the original method of singing spirituals, but other options and settings are available. Singing this spiritual at a tempo of 90–96 bpm is a middle ground of sorts, with possibilities for slower and faster performance practice. The indication in <i>Songs of Zion</i> is to sing slowly, but the tempo indicated above allows for a slight swing. Either approach is acceptable, depending on the desired nature of the song and the flow of worship surrounding it.

Nobody Knows the Trouble I See

Source:	<i>Songs of Zion</i> , 170 (and 171); <i>The United Methodist Hymnal</i> , 520
Recommended Key:	G
Tempo:	48–56 bpm
Instrumentation:	A cappella
Notes:	Three distinct settings of this spiritual exist in <i>Songs of Zion</i> and <i>The United Methodist Hymnal</i> . Textual and musical differences are present in these settings, and it may take some careful selection to choose the right one for worship in your setting. The music is more accessible in the settings in <i>Songs of Zion</i> , but if your choir reads and sings well a cappella, you may choose the setting in <i>The United Methodist Hymnal</i> . The text differences may also influence your decision. Note that any of these would also make effective and dramatic solos for an unaccompanied or lightly accompanied vocalist.

We'll Understand It Better By and By

Source:	<i>Songs of Zion</i> , 55; <i>Mil Voces Para Celebrar</i> , 317; <i>The United Methodist Hymnal</i> , 525
Recommended Key:	F

Tempo: 80–86 bpm
Instrumentation: Organ, piano, or rhythm section
Notes: It is possible to sing this hymn in a variety of tempos (depending on the nature and context of the worship service), but it is best to make sure the tempo is not too fast to support the words. Also, it is often appropriate to sing an alternate rhythm than the one listed in our hymnal collections.
Resources: [History of Hymns](#)

Blessed Be Your Name

Source: *Worship & Song*, 3002; CCLI [3798438](#)
Recommended Key: A–B
Tempo: 112–120 bpm
Instrumentation: Full band, piano, or guitar with percussion
Notes: This modern worship song is one of the most widely sung works in the CCM (Contemporary Christian Music) repertoire, but it is one many people also avoid because of the bridge: “You give and take away.” This statement may not be a part of your theological vocabulary, and you wouldn’t be alone. However, this week it may be appropriate to unpack it a bit when sung with this Scripture passage from Job. In a sermon or small-group resource, you might find a better opportunity to discuss this phrase and its use in Job 1:21. The song can therefore support the discussion effectively.
Resources: [History of Hymns](#)

PREACHING NOTES

One of the most memorable moments of Madison’s childhood could be found on the beach during the summer. She reveled in the joy of splashing in the ocean, kicking up the sand while running on the beach, and soaking up the golden rays of sunlight. Madison enjoyed hours of play before running into the dimly lit kitchen to grab a cool drink. The change in temperature was always shocking. The feeling of the cool air conditioning stunning her damp yet warm skin, the sensation of hairs raising and goose pimples forming down her spine and back. The stars that seemed to glimmer under her eyelids causing a sense of confusion and bewilderment. What an immediate and

unexplainable contradiction she experienced as a child. One second there's laughter and warm sunlight, the next eye rubbing and chilly shivers.

Life, much like Madison's experiences at the beach, are filled with moments of disorientation. Whether it's bumping a toe on the nightstand at night or dealing with the loss of things and people important to us. No person is exempt from being confronted with experiences of having lost one's sense of direction. Despite age, race, class, or gender, all people, at some point in life, will experience a state of mental confusion and difficulty. However, we are never alone. God is always present with us, whether it is in the sunny summers on the beach, or during the long, cold winter nights. God is sovereign, and God's grace is inescapable in our lives. Wherever we go, whatever we experience, we have an assurance that God is right there with us. God's spirit lives within us, and God's grace is always covering us.

Job 1:1, 2:1-10 gives us a front row seat to Job's experience with disorientation. This story, written with detailed descriptions, unfolds the rise and fall, victories and disappointments in Job's life. God tests the faith of one of his most committed servants. The life of Job initially appears to be very much like a fairy tale. He is a fair, just, and honest man with a large family, many possessions, and the "ideal life" from the land of Uz. However, behind the scenes, God and a host of angels meet. One of the unlikely visitors who attends the meeting is "Satan." Some scholars refer to him as "Ha-Satan," which translates to mean "The Accuser." As a member of this routine meeting, "The Accuser" asserts Job must be tested to prove his faithfulness to God. This is an unlikely twist in the plot. Why would God welcome Satan or his comments within the heavenly courts? The article 'The Accuser' with the word Satan appears in Hebrew and in some other translation, indicating that it is an office, similar to that of a CIA agent. The accuser is therefore in the Lord's imperial service. This literary element of an antagonist adds not only suspense to the text; however, the irony of the antagonist being a messenger on the Lord's team adds a level of complexity that speaks to the sovereignty of God (Job 2:1-3). God ultimately is the deity in control, and Satan takes command from God.[i]

God allows Satan to persecute Job, even though Job has been faithful and true. It is only by the approval of God that Satan begins to destroy and take away everything within Job's possession. (Job 2:4-6). Job loses his children, cattle, possessions, and even his health. Job is left covered in sores from the top of his head to the bottom of his feet (Job 2:7). He experiences unimaginable pain and no relief. Job could not stand up or lie down; there was no way to escape the discomfort. Job's only attempt of alleviation came when he began to scrape the sores from his body using broken pieces of pottery.

Can you imagine his sense of confusion? His feelings of isolation and frustration? What words can be used to describe Job's current state of mind?

Job's wife could no longer watch him suffer in silence. In her rage, she tells Job to "curse God and die." Job does not heed her angry speech. He simply asks, "Do we accept the good that comes from God and not the trouble also?" (Job 2:9-10) When we are experiencing hardships, we often feel lonely, but we are never alone. Job remains faithful to God, understanding that God is present in both good and troubling times. Job shows a level of faith and maturity that proves sanctifying grace in action. He is more concerned with being faithful to God than caring for his own needs. Job shows us sanctifying grace, the kind of grace that helps us move toward perfection in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Grace is the mystery of God's love evident in us, through us, and all around us. God is present in the good and the bad. Grace undergirds us during times of difficulty and disorientation, so that we, like Job, can remain faithful to God. The grace of God is the only way theologically we can explain the unexplainable, or biblically understand the mystery of God's Spirit in this text. We are on a journey as people of faith, moving toward the goal of Christian perfection. Sanctifying grace helps us to love God and to love our neighbors as we love ourselves in light of the challenges we may face in life.

By God's grace and the Holy Spirit, we are given the strength to overcome life's most difficult moments. If we are seeking God, we will discover internal strength that bears witness to God's love in the world, even in the midst of external hardships.

When exiting the sunshine of the beach, Madison's eyes eventually adjust to the dimness of light. When entering the air conditioning, the water drops from the sea eventually evaporate from her skin.

Job trusted God in light of present hardships, and his faith did not grow weary. If we trust God, we will overcome what appears to be insurmountable. God is always with us and has equipped us with grace to withstand challenges. May our prayer be to remain faithful and trust that God is present in the good and the trouble.

[1] The Harper Collins Study Bible (New York: Harper One 1989), 694.

GRAPHICS AND RESOURCES

Articles and Resources

- [A Prayer for World Communion Sunday](#)
- [Global Greetings for World Communion Sunday](#)
- [Extend a Hand: A Meditation for World Communion Sunday \(Based on Luke 17:5\)](#)
- [A 21st Century Africana Liturgy for World Communion Sunday](#)
- [The Great Thanksgiving for World Communion Sunday](#)
- [The Great Thanksgiving for World Communion Sunday](#)
- [21st Century Africana Liturgy Resources for the Twentieth Sunday After Pentecost, Year B \(Fleet\)](#)
- [21st Century Worship Resources for Pentecost 19B](#)
- [The Great Thanksgiving for the Season After Pentecost \(Ordinary Time, or Kingdomtide\)](#)
- [Word and Table IV, World Communion Sunday from The United Methodist Book of Worship](#) or this [World Communion Sunday by Nathan Decker](#), this [bilingual Spanish-English](#) (English-Spanish) or [this bilingual Korean-English version](#)
20th Sunday After Pentecost 2015 Worship Planning

Seasonal/Secular

[Hispanic Heritage Month September 15-October 15](#)

Offertory Prayer

Graphics Downloads

MYSTERY
WEEK 2: DESERTED
Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost, Year B
October 14, 2018

PLANNING NOTES
Reading Notes

See full texts, artwork, and *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers* for this Sunday at [Vanderbilt Divinity Library](#).

Leccionario en Español, [Leccionario Común Revisado: Consulta Sobre Textos Comunes](#).
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Planning for This Series

Today is the second week of the “Mystery” series. Job is now deep into the trials that have been set upon him. He is in the company of his friends, who are trying to counsel him, but Job is too far into his own darkness to listen. He is wallowing in his own self-pity, and there aren't many who would blame him for complaining.

Here are Taylor Burton-Edwards' notes on designing worship from the 2015 Year B cycle:

Whatever else you do in worship today, plan to let your congregation pray these words. Perhaps the best “response” after both readings, Job 23 and Psalm 22, is extended silence. If you are focusing on Job in these weeks, be sure your sermon or message or dialog with the congregation about Job's questions takes those questions seriously. At this point in Job, there are no answers to the questions. There is only the acknowledgment that these are the honest questions and feelings he has about what is happening to him. Do not try to “protect” your congregation from these questions and these feelings. The Bible doesn't. Instead, consider today an opportunity for folks to acknowledge similar questions and feelings they may have, or may have had. Offer them before God and one another. And entrust the outcomes to God.

Consider including in your order of worship the Psalm reading: 22:1-15 or *UMH 752*. This psalm of lament will further illumine Job's plight and position.

Job's narrative is heavy on action, and the four readings pick up further ahead in the story each Sunday. You might consider opening the Scripture reading with a short reminder of what they heard/saw last week, and what has transpired in the story. Now that you are further in to the story, encourage your congregation to keep up with the story by doing the [daily lectionary readings](#). Remind people via social media channels and weekly church emails.

MUSIC NOTES

The following selections are congregational songs (most of which are chosen from this week's Hymn Suggestions) with notes on key, tempo, and instrumentation, along with some practical and creative considerations in singing.

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Notes: This modern worship song is recommended as a theme song for the “Mystery” series. It contains themes of strength, hope, and blessing in the midst of tribulation; and among many other modern selections, it is widely known. It can be sung as a stand-alone song, as a part of a longer worship set, or the refrain only can be used as a psalm response.

Dear Lord, for All in Pain

Source: *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 458
Recommended Key: Eb
Tempo: 82–88 bpm
Instrumentation: Organ or piano
Notes: This short, simple song can be quite effective, especially when the SATB texture of a choir is added with the accompaniment. The song is a prayer, and it must be sung slowly and deliberately. It could also be used in conjunction with any of the prayers that surround it (Nos. 457, 459, 460, or 461) in the hymnal as the accompaniment continues quietly under the spoken prayer. Adding a flute or violin would also add to the overall atmosphere of the singing.

How Long, O Lord

Source: *The Faith We Sing*, 2209
Recommended Key: Dm
Tempo: 46–50 bpm
Instrumentation: Piano or jazz ensemble (piano, bass, drums, etc.)
Notes: This lament has many creative possibilities as a

congregational song accompanied in a jazz style. The song is accessible and fairly easy to sing because of the repetitive phrases. Should you have a trumpeter or saxophonist in your congregation, that person might also enjoy the opportunity to improvise on this chord sequence between stanzas.

Out of the Depths I Cry to You

Source: *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 515
Recommended Key: E phrygian (see explanation below)
Tempo: 80–84 bpm
Instrumentation: Organ or a cappella
Notes: I have listed E phrygian as the listed key based upon Luther's original melody. This mode (as opposed to a traditional diatonic–major or minor–scale) is modeled by playing a scale from E to E only on the white keys of the piano. Austin Lovelace's harmonization is written for a keyboard accompaniment, but a low drone on E and B (either sung or played on an organ), along with a unison melody can also be effective. If your congregation is fortunate enough to have a cello player, this melody would be perfectly played and/or led by that instrument.

Resources: [History of Hymns](#)

Precious Lord, Take My Hand

Source: *Songs of Zion*, 179; *Come, Let Us Worship*, 309; *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 474
Recommended Key: G–Ab
Tempo: 52–60 bpm
Instrumentation: Organ or piano
Notes: *Songs of Zion* puts this song in Ab, but the other listed collections place it in the key of G. Either is acceptable, and it may depend on the preferred key of your accompanist. The slow nature of the song may seem to make it more appropriate for a soloist, but congregations know and love this song, which is a prayer for God to hold us in times of grief, weakness, and death.

Resources: [History of Hymns](#)

Rejoice in God's Saints

Source: *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 708
Recommended Key: Ab
Tempo: 108–116 bpm
Instrumentation: Organ or piano
Notes: In the midst of a service with a great amount of heaviness, a bit of hope and good news is most appropriate at the end of worship. Offer this hymn to focus on the ways the saints have modeled bold Christian behavior and continue to inspire our witness and ministry.
Resources: [History of Hymns](#)

Why Stand So Far Away, My God?

Source: *The Faith We Sing*, 2180
Recommended Key: Fm
Tempo: 100–108 bpm
Instrumentation: Organ or piano
Notes: This Ruth Duck hymn is a cry of anguish to God on behalf of those who suffer, particularly the poor. In relation to its inclusion this week, if we are like Job, we might suffer and still live righteously. But we are called to stand against evil and oppression of others, and this hymn lifts up the lament on behalf of those suffering. The pairing with MORNING SONG is perfect for the tone of this text. It would take great discernment to determine where this hymn might fit best in worship in your context, but I would recommend somewhere near the sermon, not the beginning or conclusion.

PREACHING NOTES

When writing “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr penned these words, “There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over and men are no longer willing to be plunged into an abyss of injustice where they experience the bleakness of corroding despair.” The power of his words flow like water spilling from a broken cup. The journey toward reconciliation and justice was marked by bouts of loneliness, criticism, and violence. He records from prison the overwhelming amount of personal sacrifice he was willing to endure for the mere hope of securing a better future for all people. He wrote to his peers—pastors, ministers, community leaders, and public

servants in the Birmingham area, seeking both their support and understanding, because he felt their criticism and rejection.

No one is exempt from feeling isolated or deserted. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are called to transform this dark world with the light of Christ. However, it is human nature to feel forsaken when we lack support and encouragement. Like Dr. King, Jesus was no stranger to feeling deserted. While hanging from the cross, the mixture of blood and tears streamed from Jesus' limp body. The Passion of Christ is evident in the last cry "My God, My God, why have you left me? (Matthew 27:46 CEB) Can you imagine the pain, the agony, the measure of love it takes to sacrifice one's life for another? What does it feel like to be punished for the wrongdoings of others? Why would people risk their lives to make others free? And why must the cause of justice demand such isolation? Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Jesus, and even Job are leaders who have faced feeling deserted. These men of morality show a level a leadership that many are unwilling to embrace. They are willing to risk their lives for the cause of integrity, for righteousness, and in pursuit of remaining committed to God.

The Book of Job presents a theological view of God that is contradictory to the loving, caring, just, and kind God predominantly illustrated in the contemporary Christian church. Job presents a God who instigates suffering in the lives of those who are righteous. Job discusses the problem of suffering and isolation by the hand of God. He explores the ramifications of what is "just" within the parameters of suffering without "cause" or "sin." Job as a character is innocent, just, and moral; yet he suffers, is deserted, and is condemned by friends and family without wrongdoing. Why would God do this to an innocent man?

Job enlists the language of the court to argue his innocence before God as a way to defend his honor. He begins with a bitter complaint against a God who has given him a "heavy hand" (Job 23:1). He struggles internally, regarding if God is listening, present, or even concerned with his "argument" or "case" (Job 23:4-6). Job states, "There those who do the right thing can argue with him; I could escape from my judge forever." (Job 23:7). Job seeks God's relief to uphold justice. However, the text implies that God does not govern the world with justice, because Job—in his innocence— still suffers. Job feels utterly deserted. He seeks to "discover" God in the east and the west; he looks in the north and the south and concludes, "I don't see [Him]" (Job 23:8-9). What is most interesting about the translations of this text is the word usage for "discover" in verse 8 and "see" in verse 9. The Hebrew translation for the word "discover" is "biyn," which means to perceive, discern, understand, or consider. This verb speaks more to the mental capacity to understand and comprehend. Verse 9, on the other hand, means

“ra’ah,” which deals with physical sight, to look at, or inspect. Can it be that we are so mentally occupied with what we are experiencing in life that we find it difficult to see God in our circumstances?

Ultimately, Job’s current circumstances led to his present state of feeling deserted. He assumes God neglects justice because God appears to be indifferent to his case. Job knows God is a lover of Justice, but Job cannot see God. Martin Buber expresses Job’s paradox using these words, “Job’s faith in Justice is not broken down. But he is no longer able to have a single faith in God and Justice.” Although, God and Justice are not mutually aligned in his current situation, “He cannot forego his claim that they will again be united somewhere, sometime, although he has no idea in his mind how this will be achieved.”^[i] Therefore, Job shows us the difficult aspect of what it means to be a faithful Christian, even during isolating times.

Job maintains hope. Even though Job cannot see God, God is mindful of Job. Hope is an assurance in God, even when God’s justice is elusive and God’s presence is a mystery. Hope in this sense is not just a belief or an expectation. Hope is something that we live for, strive for, and long for, not just for ourselves, but for others as well. Job hopes for justice and hopes for God, even when he cannot exclusively see God and justice in his current state.

In the “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” Dr. King states, “I have no fear about the outcome of our struggle in Birmingham, even if our motives are presently misunderstood. We will reach the goal of freedom in Birmingham and all over the nation, because the goal of America is freedom.”

There will be moments when justice seems to be alluded by divine indifference. During the times we feel deserted, let us hold fast to hope. Because though we cannot see, God is present in our hope; and justice will eventually be attained.

[i] Martin Buber cited in *The New Interpreter's Bible*. Vol. 4, (Abingdon Press, 2006), 514.

GRAPHICS AND RESOURCES

Articles and Resources

[21st Century Africana Liturgy Resources for the Twentieth Sunday After Pentecost, Year B \(Fleet\)](#)

[The Great Thanksgiving for the Season After Pentecost \(Ordinary Time, or Kingdomtide\)](#)

Seasonal/Secular

Children's Sabbath (Oct. 14) Music

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/childrens-sabbath-music>

21st Century Africana Liturgy Resources for Children's Sabbath

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/21st-century-africana-liturgy-resources-worship-resources-for-childrens-sabbath>

[Hispanic Heritage Month September 15-October 15](#)

Offertory Prayer

Graphics Downloads

MYSTERY
WEEK 3: SILENCED
Twenty Second Sunday after Pentecost, Year B
October 21, 2018

PLANNING NOTES
Reading Notes

See full texts, artwork, and *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers* for this Sunday at [Vanderbilt Divinity Library](#).

Leccionario en Español, [Leccionario Común Revisado: Consulta Sobre Textos Comunes](#).
Para obtener más recursos leccionario, [Estudios Exegéticos: Homiléticos](#).

Lectionnaire en français, [Le Lectionnaire Œcuménique Révisé](#)

Calendar Notes

September

September 15-

October 15 [Hispanic Heritage Month \(USA\)](#)

October

October 6 **October Series in Job**
[World Communion Sunday](#)

October 14 [Children's Sabbath](#)

October 21 [Laity Sunday](#)

October 31 [Reformation Day](#)

November

November 1 [All Saints Day](#)

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[Daylight Saving Time Ends \(USA\)](#)
Dwellings [\(2018 Resources Forthcoming\)](#)

November 11 [Organ and Tissue Donor Sunday](#)
[International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church](#)
[Veterans Day \(USA\)](#)
[Extended Advent Begins](#)

November 18 [Bible Sunday](#)

November 18-25 [National Bible Week \(USA\)](#)

November 22 [Thanksgiving Day \(USA\)](#)

November 25 [Christ the King/Reign of Christ Sunday](#)
[United Methodist Student Day \(offering\)](#)

December

December 1 [World Aids Day \(GBCS resources, Discipleship Ministries Resources\)](#)
December 21 [Longest Night/Blue Christmas](#)
December 24 [Christmas Eve](#)
December 25 [Christmas Day](#)
December 31 [Watch Night/ New Year's Eve/ Holy Name of Jesus](#)

Planning for This Series

Today is the third week of the “Mystery” series. Job has come nearly face-to-face with God, or at least to God’s very real presence. The reading this week is a small part of God’s response to Job’s accusations. We find Job, and perhaps ourselves, silenced in the reality of God’s almighty power. God reminds Job that God alone created the foundation of the earth and cosmos. God controls all of creation, the animals, the seas, the lightning. It is a remarkable reminder of God’s power, one that should leave us awestruck.

Here are Taylor Burton-Edwards’ notes on designing worship from the 2015 Year B cycle:

Today’s service may rise or fall with the way this week’s text is read and heard. If we understand God is not adding massive insult to the injury already inflicted by the “friends” throughout this drama, but pointing in a radically different way, answering Job’s real questions with more profound ones, it will be important that the reading of this text sound nothing like a rant or a further accusation.

So while this text may seem to cry out for a “booming voice from the thunderclouds” kind of soundscape (à la “The Great and Terrible Oz”), perhaps there is a better way, a way more likely to promote awe than humiliation.

Consider the voice of a child, reading deliberately. Or the voice of a very old adult, or someone with an accent different from the dominant accents in the congregation. Whomever you select for this reading, either rehearse it well if it is to be live or record and edit it well if it functions as voiceover narration, either in a silent, darkened room, or as backdrop to a slide presentation.

Consider silence as the soundscape, or a thunderstorm followed by silence, and then the reading.

[Back to search results](#)

Today is also Laity Sunday. You can find all of our Laity Sunday resources [here](#).

MUSIC NOTES

The following selections are congregational songs (most of which are chosen from this week's Hymn Suggestions) with notes on key, tempo, and instrumentation, along with some practical and creative considerations in singing.

10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord)

Source: CCLI [6016351](#)
Recommended Key: F
Tempo: 68–74 bpm
Instrumentation: Band, piano, or guitar
Notes: This modern worship song is recommended as a theme song for the “Mystery” series. It contains themes of strength, hope, and blessing in the midst of tribulation; and among many other modern selections, it is widely known. It can be sung as a stand-alone song, as a part of a longer worship set, or the refrain only can be used as a psalm response.

God, Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens

Source: *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 150; *Come, Let Us Worship*, 64; *The Upper Room Worshipbook*, 84
Recommended Key: G
Tempo: 112–116 bpm
Instrumentation: Organ, piano, or guitar
Notes: The pentatonic (5-note) nature of the HOLY MANNA tune makes it very accessible for a variety of different accompaniments. The “older” feel of this tune stands in stark contrast to the text, which contains many references to modern images. Take a different approach with each stanza: Sing stanza 1 in unison, stanza 2 in a round, stanza 3 with a rhythmic drone on G and D from basses and tenors, and in parts for stanza 4.
Resources: [History of Hymns](#)

Great Is the Lord

Source: *The Faith We Sing*, 2022
Recommended Key: C
Tempo: 50–54 bpm (dotted quarter)
Instrumentation: Piano, guitar, band, or organ

Notes: This song arose in the early period of Michael W. Smith's career, but it is widely known and sung in many churches. A great choral ending is included in the Singers and Accompaniment Editions of *The Faith We Sing*. If you have a choir who can sing confidently in SATB harmony, add the choral ending for a strong flourish at the end. In this choral setting, there is a two-eighth-note rest that can sometimes surprise choir members. It can be sung either with or without that measure.

How Great Thou Art

Source: *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 77; *Mil Voces Para Celebrar*, 2; *Come, Let Us Worship*, 61

Recommended Key: Bb

Tempo: 56-64 bpm

Instrumentation: Organ, piano, or band

Notes: One of the most widely sung hymns of praise to God around the world, this is a hymn people love or dislike, both with passion. One cannot avoid, however, the fact that this hymn is sung "lustily and with a good courage," as suggested by John Wesley. On a day when God is questioning Job about God's power in creation, singing this hymn in worship is most appropriate.

Resources: [History of Hymns](#)

Many and Great, O God

Source: *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 148; *Mil Voces Para Celebrar*, 50; *Come, Let Us Worship*, 71; *The Upper Room Worshipbook*, 232

Recommended Key: Cm

Tempo: 54-60 bpm

Instrumentation: A cappella or organ with percussion and flute

Notes: This hymn, which is one of the most sung Native American melodies, should be known as a standard in all United Methodist churches as a hymn of praise from first nation peoples. It is our responsibility to make sure our congregations sing it as an affirmation of the presence of first nations in this land and the pursuits of justice and peace. In addition, the singing of this hymn is important as a

way of embodying a spirit of praise and rejoicing in another character. Most congregations do not associate the key of C minor with praise, but this is a solemn statement of awe and wonder with a form similar to that of a traditional collect, embodying a certain stillness and reverence with its praise and petition. Accompanying with the written score in *The United Methodist Hymnal* is one option, but I recommend singing a unison melody with voice alone leading and one or two simple drums (hand drum, djembe, etc.). It is also possible to add a Native American flute or recorder to introduce the melody.

Resources: [History of Hymns](#)

O God Who Shaped Creation

Source: *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 443

Recommended Key: D dorian (see below)

Tempo: 92–96 bpm

Instrumentation: Organ or piano

Notes: I have listed the D dorian mode as the key based upon the melody only (start at D and play a scale only using the white keys on the piano). If your congregation knows this tune or has a teachable spirit, use this TUOLUMNE tune to embody the tension in the text. If another tune is needed; however, I would suggest PASSION CHORALE.

Resources: [History of Hymns](#)

PREACHING NOTES

There's a story about a little boy named Billy. Every day on the walk to school, Billy's grandfather would stop at the neighborhood store for a newspaper and cup of coffee. As Grandpa approached the register, Billy would point to large bins filled with candies, gum, and other treats displayed. Each morning, Grandpa denied Billy's request. After several weeks of watching Billy being denied, the cashier grew a heart of compassion toward Billy. This morning, would be his lucky day. When Grandpa and Billy approached the register, the cashier said, "Good morning Billy, today you can reach in and get the candies you desire with no cost." Billy smiled with joy; his persistence had finally paid off. He went to pull out a candy, but snatched his hand back abruptly. He then grabbed

Grandpa's hand and shoved it into the large bin of confectionaries. Grandpa, in a fright, pulled out a fist filled with assorted sweets.

Billy giggled with glee. As they continued the walk to school, Grandpa asked, "Billy, why didn't you pick out your candies? This was what you asked for every day." Billy looked up to Grandpa with the sun glistening in his eye, "Yes, Grandpa, but your hands are much bigger than mine. My hands are too small to get all the candies I wanted." Grandpa laughed at Billy's wisdom. There are times in life that, as believers, we should embrace Billy's kind of wisdom. God's hands are much bigger, capable, and able to provide everything we need. Our hands, our thoughts, and our understanding are limited in comparison to God's vast knowledge and powerful hands.

God finally responds to Job in a storm (Job 38:1-7; 34-41). God outlines the various ways God's presence is manifest in all of creation. God shares the wisdom of how all things are divinely inspired and influenced, from the earth's foundation (Job 38:4), to the boundaries of the sea and sky (Job 5-6), and through the ordering of the day and night (7). God, in God's infinite wisdom, has structured the heavens and the earth, the water and the land, the day and the night, humanity and heavenly beings, and everything in between.

God responds to Job in a storm, true to biblical tradition, illustrating a divine appearance. This whirlwind, similar to other Old Testament texts, demonstrates God's physical arrival in the midst of the elements. In Ezekiel 1:4, God is present in the windstorm with a flashing light. In Nahum 1:3, God's power is in the storm and clouds. Zechariah experiences God in lightning as loud as a trumpet (9:14); and in 2 Kings 2:11, God appears in a chariot of fire. The term for God's appearance in this matter is "theophany", which is defined as, "a visible manifestation to humankind of God." [i]

Job is now confronted by God; and where Job once had questions, concerns, and complaints, he is now silent. In previous accounts, Job is left with inquiries and thoughts of loneliness; but now God is actively present, face-to-face with Job. God's presence is undeniable, meaningful, and profound. This appearance articulates the knowledge of God, not simply in a rhetorical sense, but in a theological sense. God's knowledge throughout this passage is demonstrated by careful design, intentional plan, and divine activity. It is clear, in light of Job's previous assumptions and misinterpretations, God is a master architect whose wisdom and resourcefulness cannot be matched or understood. We see in each verse that God measures, aligns, stretches, and builds. God lays foundations and constructs footings. We see an image of God that is

meticulous about the details and precise in design for the cosmos, for the heavens, and even for humanity.

God's hands are big enough to carve out creation, yet intimate enough to comfort us when we are weary. We may not be able to intellectually understand everything about God, but like Job, we can embrace silent moments to listen to and hear from God. How are we using silence in our spiritual practice? In what ways are we creating moments to listen and learn from God?

John Wesley defines the Christian practice of silent listening as a means of grace. "The means of grace are ways God works invisibly in disciples, hastening, strengthening; and confirming faith so that God's grace pervades in and through disciples."^[ii]

Means of grace are found in works of piety, found in our "individual practices" of reading/meditating and studying Scripture, prayer and fasting, worship, healthy living, and sharing our faith with others. We also demonstrate works of piety in our corporate practices, such as sharing in the sacraments, Christian conferencing (accountability to one another), and Bible study.

When was the last time you were silenced by the magnitude of God?

It is refreshing to know that in spite of all Job experienced and all the pain he endured, he is not too proud to be silenced. Job is silenced by the images of morning stars and heavenly beings rejoicing in God's glory. Job is silenced by God's grace that is uniquely woven into the tapestry of all God's creation. Job is silenced by God's wisdom, knowledge, and love that is unexplainable and uncontainable. Job is silenced as God reveals the unlimited ability to be present in all things.

[i] "Theophany," *Oxford Dictionary* (Oxford University Press)

[ii] *The Wesleyan Means of Grace*,

<http://www.umc.org/how-we-serve/the-wesleyan-means-of-grace>

GRAPHICS AND RESOURCES

Articles and Resources

21st Century Africana Liturgy Resources

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/21st-century-africana-liturgy-twenty-first-sunday-after-pentecost-B-Kena>

Seasonal/Secular

Laity Sunday Resources, <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship/laity-sunday-2018>

Offertory Prayer

Graphics Downloads

MYSTERY
WEEK 4: RESTORED
Twenty Third Sunday after Pentecost, Year B
October 28, 2018

PLANNING NOTES
Reading Notes

See full texts, artwork, and *Revised Common Lectionary Prayers* for this Sunday at [Vanderbilt Divinity Library](#).

Leccionario en Español, [Leccionario Común Revisado: Consulta Sobre Textos Comunes](#).
Para obtener más recursos leccionario, [Estudios Exegéticos: Homiléticos](#).

Lectionnaire en français, [Le Lectionnaire Œcuménique Révisé](#)

Calendar Notes

October 31 [Reformation Day](#)

November

November 1 [All Saints Day](#)

November 4 [All Saints Sunday](#)

[Daylight Saving Time Ends \(USA\)](#)

[Dwellings](#) (2018 Resources Forthcoming)

November 11 [Organ and Tissue Donor Sunday](#)

[International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church](#)

[Veterans Day \(USA\)](#)

[Extended Advent Begins](#)

November 18 [Bible Sunday](#)

November 18-25 [National Bible Week \(USA\)](#)

November 22 [Thanksgiving Day \(USA\)](#)

November 25 [Christ the King/Reign of Christ Sunday](#)

[United Methodist Student Day](#) (offering)

December

December 1 [World Aids Day](#) (GBCS resources, [Discipleship Ministries Resources](#))

December 21 [Longest Night/Blue Christmas](#)

December 24 [Christmas Eve](#)

December 25 [Christmas Day](#)

December 31 [Watch Night/ New Year's Eve/ Holy Name of Jesus](#)

Planning for This Series

Today is the final week of this series. In this week, we see Job humbled and restored, although he will never be the same as at the beginning of his story. Job's fortune is restored to him twofold; he has more livestock, and even has another ten children. However, his fortune is not the important thing to have been restored: it is his trust in God, his Creator and Redeemer.

When you plan your worship, consider Taylor Burton-Edward's notes:

"When you end a series, it's always important to **give attention to three things**.

1) **Where you have been**. Part of concluding a series is recalling the journey that has brought you to this place. You should do this not only in the sermon, but in other ways as well, including, perhaps, music. Consider using music from throughout the previous three weeks, especially from the opening service of this series, to help reinforce the sense of the journey you have taken during these weeks.

2) **Where you have arrived**. The bulk of the finale of a series needs to focus on this point, both in the sermon and in other ways. Job concludes with God affirming that Job was right to reject any notion that his suffering was deserved because of some sin Job had committed. And he was right to insist that those who promoted such a view were doing more harm than good. Job was wrong wherever he assumed he could begin to understand the mystery of suffering or creation beyond rejecting the false but widely-held understanding that God simply blesses the righteous and punishes the wicked. As we saw last week, God creates and works for the good of the entire creation, not simply for human happiness. The mystery is greater. And those who seek to truncate the mystery into slogan or ideology deceive themselves and others, and are to be pitied, corrected, and prayed for. Then, and only then, when even those who misunderstood are brought into community, does restoration come.

3) **Where you are heading next**. A finale of a worship series is always also an opportunity for a segue and invitation to the next. Consider how you can help today's service function as the pre-launch of your next series, and how All Saints will function as at once culmination of A Season of Saints (if you've observed that during these weeks) and this series in Job and as the launch event for your next series."

If you are following the Discipleship Ministries materials, our next series will be “Dwellings,” which uses the Revelation texts on the first and fourth weeks, and the Hebrews texts on the middle two weeks.

MUSIC NOTES

The following selections are congregational songs (most of which are chosen from this week’s Hymn Suggestions) with notes on key, tempo, and instrumentation, along with some practical and creative considerations in singing.

10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord)

Source: CCLI [6016351](#)
Recommended Key: F
Tempo: 68–74 bpm
Instrumentation: Band, piano, or guitar
Notes: This modern worship song is recommended as a theme song for the “Mystery” series. It contains themes of strength, hope, and blessing in the midst of tribulation; and among many other modern selections, it is widely known. It can be sung as a stand-alone song, as a part of a longer worship set, or the refrain only can be used as a psalm response.

Goodness Is Stronger than Evil

Source: *The Faith We Sing*, 2219; *The Upper Room Worshipbook*, 436
Recommended Key: D
Tempo: 60–64 bpm
Instrumentation: A cappella with percussion (djembes, shakers, etc.), possibly organ or piano if needed
Notes: This short, cyclic song would make a great processional or recessional for worship. Even if your congregation is not familiar with this chorus, they will be after singing a few times. Keep the tempo steady, and even sing the congregation out into the world if used at the conclusion of worship, with the choir processing all the way outside to continue singing.

My Life Flows On (How Can I Keep from Singing)

Source: *The Faith We Sing*, 2212; *The Upper Room Worshipbook*,

170

Recommended Key: G
Tempo: 68–74 bpm
Instrumentation: A cappella, organ, piano, or guitar
Notes: Robert Lowry penned a classic hymn that has been sung for ages, particularly in settings for choirs of children, youth, and adults. The setting in *The Faith We Sing* is very accessible, but the setting in *The Upper Room Worshipbook* is even more so. The rhythm in the latter collection is more consistent than the mixed meter of the former, though the sudden jolt of a different meter could be seen as a good fit for the text, “No storm can shake my inmost calm.” A flute, violin, or other treble wind or string doubling the melody or playing the alto harmony would also be ideal.
Resources: [History of Hymns](#)

O God Beyond All Praising

Source: *The Faith We Sing*, 2009
Recommended Key: Bb–C
Tempo: 68–72 bpm
Instrumentation: Organ, piano, or brass
Notes: Many aficionados of classical music recognize British composer Gustav Holst’s THAXTED tune as the centerpiece of his work “Jupiter, the Bringer of Jollity” from *The Planets*. The pompous and bold nature of the tune is the perfect pairing for this text by Michael Perry. The key of Bb might be more appropriate for your congregation because of the number of high notes toward the end of the second phrase, which also returns at the end of each stanza. Several brass and/or handbell arrangements of this tune can be found online.
Resources: [History of Hymns](#)

O God, Our Help in Ages Past

Source: CCLI [2335500](#)
Recommended Key: G (if using the CCLI setting)
Tempo: 100–108 bpm
Instrumentation: Full band, piano, or guitar
Notes: This modern reworking of an old Isaac Watts hymn and tune

by William Croft leaves most of the widely known hymn intact but adds a chorus that offers different images of God, ending appropriately with the Ancient of Days. The key has been lowered substantially from other settings in hymn collections because of the range of the refrain. This puts the range of the stanzas in a much lower range for congregations than many will be accustomed to. Accompaniment can work with a band, but to accommodate the sound and texture of the band, the chords have been simplified in CCLI's setting of this. A piano and light instrumental ensemble will also work well. To read the two History of Hymns' articles on the original Isaac Watts' text, see C. Michael Hawn's article [here](#) or Rozanna Goocey's article [here](#).

Resources:

How Great Is Our God

Source: *Worship & Song*, 3003; CCLI [4348399](#)
Recommended Key: G–A
Tempo: 72–80 bpm
Instrumentation: Full band, piano, guitar, or rhythm section
Notes: This modern favorite is often paired with “How Great Thou Art” by incorporating the chorus of the hymn at some point after the chorus in this song. This work is widely known outside of the walls of the church because of its incorporation in ministries with homeless and prison communities, as well as other community organizations.

Resources: [Call to Worship](#), based upon this song and Psalm 145

Great Is Thy Faithfulness

Source: *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 140; *Mil Voces Para Celebrar*, 30; *Come, Let Us Worship*, 81
Recommended Key: D
Tempo: 86–94 bpm
Instrumentation: Organ or piano
Notes: The tempo of this well-known congregational hymn is dependent on the size of the congregation and the acoustics of the room. Small churches and those churches with minimal acoustic reverberation will likely find it more

accessible to sing on the quicker end of the scale above, but churches with larger spaces that have more reverberant spaces will need to sing more slowly. Either way, sing joyfully as a witness of God's faithfulness to the world and the church. An accompaniment setting written especially for the piano can be found in *The United Methodist Hymnal Music Supplement II*.

Resources: [History of Hymns](#)

PREACHING NOTES

Two friends, Larry and Kareem, spent many days together on the playground during recess. Larry was the youngest boy in class. He was a little behind the growth curve and was deathly afraid of heights. Every day, while everyone else looked forward to recess, Larry would be scared and anxious. He couldn't run fast, kick a ball accurately, or even gather enough strength to slide down the large slide. Kareem, however, was the kid picked first for dodgeball. He was tall and athletic. He became Larry's greatest cheerleader. He would stand behind Larry on the slide singing, "Go, Larry, go; you can do this." Every day, Kareem sang, "Go, Larry, go; you can do this." And with every day, they played together, Larry grew more fearless and enjoyed recess more and more.

Until one day Kareem became very sick and was out of school for an entire week. Larry stared down the view of the long slide. As he turned to go safely back to solid ground, inside a voice resonated in his head, "Go, Larry, go; you can do this." Larry turned back around and slid down that slide without apprehension. You see, a good friend—even in absence—helps discover things within you that you never knew existed in yourself. Kareem, in many ways, helped to restore Larry's sense of strength, courage, and faith.

God can see things within us that our mortal eyes are too limited to see. God knew Job had the strength, persistence, and faith to withstand the suffering he would endure. Job replies to God, "I know you can do anything; no plan of yours can be opposed successfully" (Job 42:2, CEB). After losing loved ones, suffering declining health, and having many sleepless nights, Job learned much about God's wisdom. Job understands and accepts that his own judgement and understanding is unclear, but God's vision is never blurry and God's plans are never unsuccessful. Job learned an invaluable lesson through this experience with God. He learned to listen, to hear, and to find comfort in God despite his perceived difficulty (2-6).

There are moments in life where our sight is limited because it is gauged by the perception of our experiences. Often, we look not with our eyes, but behind our eyes. We see the world, ourselves, and one another through the sum of our experiences, and we are unable to witness the world with new, subjective eyes. Job could see justice only in terms of what he deemed was right and wrong. He judged God and himself within that small category of “righteousness.” However, the same God that allowed Job to be persecuted is the same God that restored him. “Then the Lord changed Job’s fortune when he prayed for his friends, and the Lord doubled all Job’s earlier possessions” (10). When Job discovered his sight was limited, he shifted his expectations as well. Job, although the recipient of God’s blessings, was never fully in control of his health, his children, his wealth, or even with his relationships. God’s hand is at work in our lives, and it is up to each of us as disciples of Jesus Christ, to be obedient to God’s will. How does it feel to rely on things you cannot see? Why do we feel lost when we cannot secure our own lives? How ironic it is that the moment Job stops trying to figure God out and prays is the moment he is restored by God?

Restoration in this text is not referring to the external or the temporal understanding of material means, but it is translated as the state of being full, abounding, and being content. Ultimately, Job illustrates that in spite of our personal pain and hurt, when we cannot change our situation, we can change our perspective. Although, we may not fully understand the mind of God, the right thing to do is to trust that God is within us and will never fail. Moreover, God is present in that small voice saying “Go my child, go. You can do this!”

God is bigger than any obstacle that we can ever face. God is able to keep us, even when we are afflicted with trouble. God is sovereign and has given us the capacity to overcome life’s challenges. In spite of the reality of pain and loss, God’s creation is supported, sustained, and restored.

GRAPHICS AND RESOURCES

Articles and Resources

21st Century Worship Resources Using Psalm 34 and *Mark 10:46-52*,
<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/21st-century-worship-resources-for-twenty-second-sunday-after-pentecost-B>

Seasonal/Secular

Reformation Day: What, Why, and Resources for Worship,

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/reformation-day-what-why-and-resources-for-worship>

The Great Thanksgiving for All Saints and Memorial Occasions

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/the-great-thanksgiving-for-all-saints-and-memorial-occasions>

A Prayer Meditation for All Saints Day

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/a-prayer-meditation-for-all-saints-day>

Offertory Prayer

Graphics Downloads