

Job 4: 1 – 5: 6 – end

'Job and Pastoral Care'

Prayer

Introduction ...

Well, what did you make of some of those words in our first reading, spoken by Eliphaz:

'As for me, I would seek God

and to God I would commit my cause.

He does great things and unsearchable ...

The poor have hope

Injustice shuts its mouth ...

In famine, God will redeem you from death

and in war from the power of the sword.'

Positive words

Strong words

But are they true ... correct?

And are they appropriate?

(Revd Judy told us of a farming family she had known with 2 sons ... the first one died of multiple sclerosis when he was a young adult. Two years later the other son was killed in a road traffic accident. When Revd Judy went to visit the family she could say nothing except perhaps how sorry she was ... she simply sat with them in silence, feeling their sadness with them, but no words seemed appropriate.)

Let's look at each of these questions in turn:

Are those words correct?

We might want them to be ... but if we look around the world, there are plenty of people with deep faith, great integrity who are not saved from famine or protected from death in war.

These words of Eliphaz arise from a flawed understanding of the nature of God's relationship with God's world.

And so towards the end of the book of Job, in chapter 42 and verse 7 we read:

The Lord said to Eliphaz

My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends for you have not spoken of me what is right ...

And we – living after, rather than before, the life and death and resurrection of Jesus can perhaps understand PTO

this more clearly.

Look at Jesus ... his life full of faith and of godly living ... but this didn't give him protection from persecution, struggles and death. It did alter how he reacted to them ... and his resurrection proclaims that they did not have the final say or victory.

So we have much more basis for hope than Job and his friends ... but not the false hope that his friends were peddling. With Jesus' example and his Holy Spirit we can live through the difficult and even tragic times ... but we can't expect never to face them.

And the second question:

Were those words appropriate anyway?

Imagine that you were Job ... everything had gone wrong and he wished he'd never been born. And Eliphaz comes in with what we heard. He doesn't commiserate, he doesn't try and draw Job out more ... he comes in – if you read the whole of Chapter 4 as well as the part we heard earlier, he comes in with his own experience and his own solutions.

That is really poor pastoral care!

No wonder that Job hit back at the beginning of Chapter 6:

***'O that my vexation were weighed
and all my calamity weighed in the balances!'***

Conclusion ...

As we go out from here to love our neighbours and to care pastorally, two important reminders:

Suffering can come to anyone – regardless of their faith or lifestyle ... but turning to Jesus in suffering will enable us to live through it without destruction have the final word.

Care for the suffering is not about 'pat' phrases or coming out with our own views – or even necessarily our own solutions ... **listen, perhaps question gently, pray and point to Jesus.**