

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the one who brings peace to the chaos of life, Jesus Christ our Lord, amen.

Have any of you ever see a Leviathan? Me neither... If you read chapters 40 and 41 of Job you get a pretty in-depth description of one. It's a fearsome creature that the writer of Psalm 104 says God made for the sport of it or to play with depending on the translation you're reading. That's always been one of my favorite Psalms because it shows us a God who likes to have fun, creating a monster of the deep seas that can't be captured, whose appearance brings tears to grown men's eyes, and whose mouth is more deadly than the biggest great white shark that ever lived. Leviathan, a sea monster that even the mighty Jordan river when gorged from the melting snows in the spring can't fill its mouth. In ancient times the seas were places of chaos and the king of chaos was the Leviathan who ruled the sea and therefore also ruled the chaos. Taking all of this into consideration, God says in chapter 40 of the book of Job that God created Job like the Leviathan. Does God mean to say we were created for the sport of it or for God to play with or was God referring to the properties and characteristics such as an insatiable appetite or a lust for ruling over the chaos of this world? It's a lot to take in, being compared to the great sea monster Leviathan, who causes so much random destruction.

After God's first speech, Job declared he was speechless and would remain silent. Who wouldn't? I mean God ends his first speech asking if a faultfinder or complainer can contend with the Almighty! By his silence, Job shows how awe struck he is by the awesomeness of God. In essence, Job is giving up his complaint against God, not because he has received what he thinks is justice, but because he's been sort of shamed by his own insignificance into realizing that God is in fact the almighty creator, all knowing, all present, and all loving God. Job recognizes, as we remind ourselves once a year on Ash Wednesday, that he is nothing more than dust from which God formed him. But, is that all there is to life—being nothing more than dust and ashes? Do we finally understand our place in God's grand scheme of things when we remember we're nothing more than a handful of mud God picked up along the riverbank back in the Book of Genesis and breathed into that clay body the breath of life? God breathed life into the lifeless and God can extinguish that life without so much as a moment's notice. That *is* how precarious our lives are... But that's not the whole story...

Job's silence in God's presence prompted God's second speech. God tells Job and by extension all of us, to gird up our loins. In other words, cheer up! Yes, you are made from dust and ashes, but you are so much more than that! To make His point, God launches into this description of the great sea monster Leviathan. God first described the awesome nature of the Leviathan for Job and us to get the

picture of how immense and formidable this sea creature was. Leviathan probably wasn't a real creature, but is present here in the book of Job as well as in the Psalms and in the Book of Isaiah as well as in many other ancient books and legends. Leviathan is most likely a mythical creature much like Babe's Blue Ox from our own American folk lore. God's point here is that as great a creature as this mythical Leviathan is, that's how God thinks of humans. We were also created to be awesome and nearly indestructible. Yes, we are created beings, not gods, but we were created with the same love, care, and creative energy that also created the most awesome sea creature to ever be imagined. To God we are so much more than just a collection of dust and ashes, we are God's children.

After God's second speech Job finally understands he is more to God than mere dust and ashes. We know Job finally gets it because in the climactic verse in the entire book Job says, he repents. A lot of commentary ink has been used to discuss and argue about exactly why and from what Job is repenting. As I was doing my word study on the Hebrew word we have translated as repent, I found it can also mean to comfort. Using that definition changes everything about the ending of this epic story. Job wasn't so much convinced he had sinned and needed to repent of his sin, but rather he was comforted by God, who finally answered Job and became real for him. God comforted Job by letting him know that although he was nothing more than a created being, he was special and of great value, because

God loved him. That's a great lesson for all of us. Our value as people doesn't come from what we have or the color of our skin, but comes from the fact that we were created by the almighty God of the universe who created the Leviathan and who created us too. Our value comes not from who we are, but whose we are...

In the presence of God, Job either is comforted or repents of his earlier words. I believe when there are differences in possible translations of words and phrases in the Bible God wants us to consider all possible variations. That's one way God's Word stays alive for us today. In either case, Job realizes all his friends have spoken hearsay about God. They repeated what they had been taught, but they had never experienced the actual presence of God. That has all changed now for Job. He has experienced and talked directly to God and lived to tell about it. God was finally satisfied nothing the Satan could do was going to shake Job's faith. No matter what, Job never stopped believing in God. He might have had a time where he blamed God for a lot of the bad things that kept happening, but he never gave up on God's ultimate ability to turn bad into good. Job finally realized God's great love for all humans because we are all created out of his great love and in his perfect image.

The end of the Book returns to the same literary genre where it started, as a narrative Folk Tale. Job's fortunes are restored, and he ends up with more children who are even more beautiful than before. There is one really interesting twist.

God must deal with Job's three friends who God says have not spoken rightly about him. Because of their misspoken words about God, God's wrath is great against them. I know I sure wouldn't want to be one moment under God's wrath! The thing is, they can't really do anything about their predicament. God tells them to make a sacrifice, but that won't grant them remission from their sins. Rather God instructs Job to make an intercessory prayer for his friends after they make the appropriate sacrifice.

How important is intercessory prayer in your lifestyle? The ending of this book of Job seems to indicate that when we sin, even our best sacrifices to God, our most earnest praise and worship, don't completely wipe away our sin or quench God's wrath. Only the intercession of a truly righteous person who has undergone great suffering and been found by God to be blameless and completely free from sin can wipe our slate clean. Does that description sound like anyone we know? It occurred to me that our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ is the real-life embodiment of the mythical Job. It turns out, the book of Job foreshadows the ultimate sacrifice God makes through the suffering, death, and resurrection of God's only Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus is the one who intercedes with God on our behalf. Only through Jesus can our slate be wiped clean. That's why we pray in His Holy Name! When the Satan says to God, "Have you considered Mel Musser or Have you considered (Put your name here)... Look at all the ways this human

falls short.” Instead of the guilty verdict you and I deserve, Jesus steps in and offers up prayers of intercession and reminds God that Jesus is the one who paid the price to satisfy the burning wrath God feels because of Sin and we are set free.

May we all come to understand our place in the universe as a teeny tiny part God’s creation, but also as God’s beloved children. May you repent and change your mind about your relationship with God , so God can comfort you in and through whatever suffering you endure. May Jesus always be by your side when the Satan’s accusations come before God’s judgment seat to declare you innocent of all charges. May the peace of Jesus Christ and the knowledge of His sacrifice for you, comfort you every day of your life. Amen.