

Who's to blame?

Job 42:1-6; 10-17; Mark 10:46-52

We've been on a journey through the Book of Job over the last number of weeks, and after 42 long chapters of his friends trying to convince him to blame God, his family disappearing, becoming ill, losing his land...42 long chapters of despair, loneliness, and people begging him to blame somebody. Or, in fact, he has those friends that we all just really wish we had as friends. The ones who say, "You must have done something wrong. Otherwise, why would this happen to you?" Those are the friends we all cherish, right? After all that time, while the reader is building hope that there will be an answer to why there is suffering in the world, we hear Job say, "Bless my soul, O my God. For you have done wondrous things. You have created the universe and all that is in it, and provided all for us." And it occurred to me that far too often, I spend far too long trying to decide who to blame. Who's responsible? Who do I get to shout at? Because surely, someone else out there is responsible for the mess that we are in. Surely I can sort out and put blame where it belongs.

We were driving along a mountain road, it was a shortcut. We learned about it from one of the National Park attendants who said, "If you take the shortcut, it will take at least half an hour off your drive." And as it's often the case, Lynn was snoozing as I was driving. Which is always kind of cool – obviously, she trusts my driving. But partly along this shortcut, I was thinking, "Where the heck am I?" And I couldn't even find the map. And so I kept driving. Ha! You know, if you've got a knot, don't pull on it.

And I kept driving, and I eventually came to a T-intersection, and I was sure she said, "When you get to that, you're supposed to go left. And then at the next corner, you go right" So I took a left. And still I'm driving, and still Lynn is snoozing. And I go over a Texas gate, and I think, "This isn't good." We were towing a trailer too, by the way. Just as a little excitement to all of that. As we went over the Texas gate, Lynn woke up and said, "Where are we?" I said, "I have no idea. But I'm pretty sure that I was supposed to take a left at the T-intersection and follow that a little ways until we take a right. And she looked out and said, "Well, the lake is on our right, so we've got to be in the right place." I thought, "I don't know how we would know that, but okay."

Well, we carried on and we came to a sign that said Call up and I said, "'Call up'? What's that?" Call up to God? Maybe that's the answer in this moment. And I carried on, and we almost got mowed down by a logging truck. I just got over as far as I could just in time before he came

barrelling by. And I looked at Lynn and said, “Well, that was sort of rude.” And I carried on. Well, the next logging truck moved over a bit. But I got this really dirty look from the driver, and I kept on going. And I went over another a Texas gate, and I kept on going. And eventually there was a BOOM! And I thought, “Uh-oh.” By the way we were on gravel the whole time, right?

Gravel, towing a trailer, and logging trucks. Well, we got out and a tire had blown on the trailer, and I hadn't yet realized that when you tow a fifth wheel it's really good to have a jack appropriate to the fifth wheel.

We knew who to blame. We were clear it was each other. Lynn was sleeping, she should have been awake. I haven't made preparations, I should have done that. It takes a minute to cool, you know? Well, fortunately, we had blown the tire at the driveway of one of cottages along the lake and the cottage owner just happened to come by at that moment. And the cottage owner gave us assistance, changed the tire, and we got back on the road. He said, “You can't leave here until after dark. You're on a logging road. If they don't know you're here, you are in danger.” I said, “We'll be in more danger if we wait to leave after dark.” So we turned around and he said he would call and let the station know that we were on the road and that we were on our way out.

Well, the shortcut took us 2 ½ hours out of our way. And we were both clear that somebody other than me was to blame. And in the midst of it, we missed the absolute beauty of the Shuswap lake right there. We missed all of the amazing creation around us. That we could literally open a window on the vehicle and touch. In the stress of that moment, we forgot what Job seemed to be able to remember through 42 long chapters. To hold onto some semblance of peace in the midst of all that is so overwhelming in our lives in this time. That even in the midst of all that we have been through, creation remains and to call upon the Spirit of peace will bring much, much, much more gentleness, and probably wisdom, and maybe new understanding, and maybe even a sense of hope, than playing the blame game ever can. May God be with each of us in the midst of our distress to bring everlasting peace that we might indeed dwell in beauty and bless God, O my soul. Amen.