

THE DARK SIDE OF CREATION

JOB 38:1-7

MARK 4:35-41

OCTOBER 8, 2017

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DARK MATTER AND DARK ENERGY

For me these terms conjure up images of Darth Vader, turned to the dark side of the force. In days of old dark matter and dark energy were the warp and woof of science fiction. Now however they figure prominently in modern theoretical physics and astrophysics. In order to explain what they are seeing and measuring in the Cosmos, especially the rate of the expansion of the universe, these scientists now posit that over 90% of the Universe has gone over to the dark side.

Even more astonishingly, these same scientists are speculating that without dark matter and dark energy there would be no matter and therefore no visible universe, no sun, moon, and stars, no earth, no you, no me. Trouble is they don't really know what to make of dark matter, and dark energy puzzles even more. One prominent astrophysicist called it "A profound mystery" -sounds more like the utterance of high priest or a theologian than that of a scientist.

I WISH I WERE IN A POSITION TO CHANGE THE NAMES OF DARK MATTER AND DARK ENERGY.

But alas, there has been a long-standing tradition in the scientific community to give that honor to the one who discovered it. For example the famous Higgs Boson is named after the one who postulated its existence, Peter Higgs. Were I given that chance, however, I would propose that we name dark matter and dark energy Jobian Matter and Jobian Energy.

Long, long, ago in a country far, far away, a man called Job shook his puny fist in the face of the Almighty God and charged Him with creating a world of darkness, a world beyond the comprehension of man. It is the supreme irony, Job wailed, that the Living God created light merely to reveal creation's terrible darkness. Job charged God with slapping a thin veneer of order onto the bottomless depths of chaos and then pronouncing everything to be good. He almost sounds like a modern astrophysicist talking about dark matter and energy.

Job cries out that God has deceived man, duping him into thinking that the earth is a good and hospitable place in which to live. He calls on God to meet him face to face and explain Himself!

O Job, be careful what you wish for!

GOD STORMS OUT OF THE WHIRLWIND TO CONFRONT HIS IMPATIENT AND DESPAIRING CREATURE.

Out of the tempest God thunders, "Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge?" *The Jerusalem Bible* catches the meaning of the Hebrew even better by translating the sentence, "Who is this obscuring my intentions with his ignorant words?" But my personal favorite is the revered Moffat Translation which reads, "Who darkens my design with a cloud of thoughtless words?"

God takes offence at Job's contention that the world is darkness and not light, evil and not good, one part order and nine parts chaos. With a series of rhetorical questions God challenges Job's competence to judge the matter. What troubles God even more is the knowledge that Job's tragedies have eroded his faith in God's Providence, and in the resulting despair now prefers death to life.

THE STORMS OF LIFE CAN DO THAT TO US MERE MORTALS.

Mark tells us it even happened to the twelve disciples. They are crossing the Sea of Galilee in an open boat, suddenly a tropical storm threatens to put them at the bottom of the sea. All the while, Jesus is sleeping like a trusting child in the stern of the boat. **The terrified**

disciples awaken him with the words, “Do you not care that we are perishing?” As was the case with Job, their terrible ordeal and the fear which came from it had eroded the disciples’ faith in God’s providence and in Jesus’ loving care for them.

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT STORY, GOD REBUKES JOB.

He first points to the limitations of Job’s knowledge and power, contrasting them with His own infinite wisdom and power. God attempts to draw Job out of his fixation on his own problems and lift his gaze to the wonders of Creation.

- Job can see only the chaos of his life, God points out to him the order of the larger Creation.
- Job’s life has been deeply scarred by ugliness; God demands that he gaze on the beauties of earth and sky.
- Job has lost his ability to trust in God’s goodness, God points to the unparalleled order and goodness in creation which speaks of the goodness of the Creator.

THE LORD IS NOT SIMPLY REBUKING JOB.

God is trying to draw him out of his suffering by lifting his eyes from his own plight to the grandness and goodness of the world around him. Without diminishing the tragedies which have befallen Job, God points out that the world remains good and beautiful. Despite the sorrow and chaos which beset us mortals, there is still joy and order, still things that we can count on. Most importantly, God is asserting that God is good and that He cares about Job despite the terrible things he has endured.

GOD THEN GOES ON TO SAY SOME VERY PUZZLING THINGS.

He speaks of being present when chaos was born. He tells of swaddling chaos with clouds as a parent would wrap swaddling clothes around a new born. God seems to be saying that chaos is not totally evil. God seems to be implying that chaos has some value or purpose, since He does not destroy it.

- Could it be that without chaos there could be no creation?
- That without death there could be no life?
- That without the possibility of disease there could be no health?
- That without darkness there could be no light?

- And that perhaps without dark matter and dark energy there could be no matter and energy?

FAST FORWARD TO JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES CAUGHT IN THE STORM.

Jesus rebukes the wind and the waves thereby “saving” the disciples from peril on the sea. He then rebukes them for charging him with not caring about them or their danger. He chides their lack of faith in him and in God.

Here is where the story in Job and this story touch. Both God and Jesus assert that the storms of life are not a sign that God does not care about us. Both God and Jesus assert that even in the midst of them, we must still believe in God’s loving care.

Yes, there is still the valley of the shadow of death, but God walks with us in the darkness. If Job pictures the storms of life originating with God, the Gospel asserts that God is with us in those storms. Neither God nor Jesus explain the necessity of suffering and evil...these remain dark matters... but both insist we must still believe in God’s love for us. To borrow the words of the philosophical physicist, “This is a profound mystery.”

JUST AS GOD SAID SOME PUZZLING THINGS TO JOB, MARK SAYS A PUZZLING THING ABOUT JESUS.

Mark tells us that Jesus took the disciples in the boat ***just as he was***. Exactly what Mark meant by that no one knows for sure. But I like to think Mark was telling all disciples everywhere that we must take Jesus, just as he is. God tells Job he must take the world just as it is. He must therefore worship and serve the God who created it just as He is.

Perhaps evil and suffering will never be explained adequately this side of the grave. Perhaps the same is true about dark matter and dark energy- and even the Higgs Boson. Be that as it may, Jesus calls us to trust in God and to trust in him also. From the time of Adam and Eve, this trust in God's loving care is the one supreme necessity. The Gospel proclaims that such trust is necessary for true human life in this world and a share in God's life in the next.

May God's gracious power sustain and nurture our faith in Him.