

Easter Sunday
March 31, 2024
Lincoln Heights Lutheran Church
Job 19:23-25

Job 19:23-27 (EHV)

Oh how I wish that my words were written down. Oh how I wish that they were inscribed in bronze, ²⁴that they would be engraved in rock forever with an iron tool and letters filled with lead. ²⁵As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the end of time he will stand over the dust. ²⁶Then, even after my skin has been destroyed, nevertheless, in my own flesh I will see God. ²⁷I myself will see him. My own eyes will see him, and not as a stranger. My emotions are in turmoil within me.

Dear Friends in Christ,

I would like to teach you a new phrase this morning. Maybe it will catch on and maybe not. The women who went to the tomb early in the morning on the third day could have used this phrase. They had believed that Jesus was the Savior promised by God through the prophets. Then they saw him crucified and buried. This phrase would fit their state of being well. It would also fit well when the risen Christ appeared to Mary that morning.

The disciples could have used this phrase as they fled in Gethsemane and as they huddled together in the locked room on the first Easter Sunday for fear of the Jewish leaders. They were scared and confused and did not know what to do. This phrase would fit them well in that state and also when Jesus appeared to them in that same locked room, showing them that he had risen bodily from the dead.

This new phrase is actually a very old one. Job used it in the Scripture before us this morning. He said, “My kidneys are exhausted.” Do you think that will catch on? My kidneys are exhausted. I doubt this is going to catch on with us, but it was understood well by people in Job’s time. Maybe you are more familiar with the translation, “My heart yearns within me” or the EHV translation in the service folder, “My emotions are in turmoil within me.” When Job says that his kidneys are exhausted, he is talking about an intense emotional state that he feels inside. That intense feeling is a negative feeling, caused by some very evil things happening in Job’s life. And that intense feeling inside is also a good feeling, caused by his hope for the future.

Allow me to summarize Job’s life to this point. He grew up, got married, had ten children and became the wealthiest man of his region, all while trusting in the Lord his God. In a very short time, Job loses all of his flocks and herds (his wealth), many of his servants, all of his children and his health. Three friends arrive to console him. They mostly accuse Job of sin because God would only bring such disaster upon a really bad sinner. These friends continue to accuse Job chapter after chapter, each taking his turn to tell Job how Job is in the wrong. By chapter 19, Job has had enough. His kidneys were exhausted. He was emotionally drained. In his words before the wonderful words in verses 23-27, Job has a woe is me moment.

He lashes out at his friends. He wonders why God is not answering him. He feels abandoned by everyone. Listen to his lament:

My relatives stay away. Even my close friends have forgotten me. ¹⁵Even my houseguests and my female servants treat me like a stranger. They look upon me as a foreigner. ¹⁶I summon my servant, but he does not answer, even though I beg him to be gracious to me. ¹⁷My breath keeps my wife away from me, and I am repulsive to my mother's children. ¹⁸Even young boys reject me. When I get up, they speak against me. ¹⁹My closest confidants shun me, and those I love have turned against me. ²⁰I am nothing but skin and bones. I have escaped with the skin of my teeth. (Job 19:14-20)

Job is exhausted. His insides are a mess of emotions and no one in his life seems to care. Job is all alone in his misery. Though no one here is likely to experience all the evils Job did, we will find ourselves in a similar exhausted state. Maybe it is our fault. Maybe we sinned against God and others and are reaping the consequences of our actions. Or maybe we are like Job and are suffering because we live in a world of sin and injustice. Friends and relatives may fail us. Wealth may slip away from us. Health can go in a day. And when all the worries and concerns and burdens of life weigh upon us, our kidneys can be exhausted too. Our emotions are in turmoil within us.

Job beautifully tells us where to turn at these times. Job and his three friends have three rounds of discussions. In chapter 19, Job is speaking in the middle of the middle round of these discussions. The middle is often very important in Hebrew poetry. The middle often has the central point, the most important part. Take the book of Isaiah as an example. Isaiah is divided into two sections. The middle of the second section is Isaiah 53 which we read almost every Good Friday. The suffering, death and resurrection of the Savior is prophesied clearly in the middle of the second section of Isaiah. So also, in the middle of the middle of the discussions in Job, we have a precious message for all people.

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His kidneys are exhausted in a good way! Maybe it is like looking forward to your wedding. You know the date and are eagerly anticipating that day. Job has a certain hope for his future even while his present is miserable. Why? My Redeemer lives! Job trusted in the Lord to send the Redeemer who would pay the price to redeem Job from sin and even from death.

Jesus has done just that for Job and for all. Jesus paid the price to redeem us from sin by his holy, precious blood shed on the cross, by his innocent suffering and death. And today we rejoice because our Redeemer lives. Not even death could hold him. His resurrection means that the payment for sin has been accepted. His resurrection means that all who trust in him will rise to live bodily with him forever.

This is a joyful emotional turmoil within us. When our hearts are weighed down by guilt for our sins, take a look with the women and Peter into the tomb. It is still empty. Jesus is not there. He has risen from the dead. Your sins are not counted against you. Your guilt is taken away. You are completely forgiven because your Redeemer lives.

When friends and family are not there for us, turn to your living Redeemer. Christ was forsaken by his heavenly Father on the cross so that God would not forsake you. And now your Redeemer lives. He is restored to the right hand of the Father, and he will never leave or forsake you either. You are never alone in this life because your Redeemer lives.

Even when our skin has been destroyed, when our health fails and our bodies cease to live, we still have hope. When our body returns to the dust, we rejoice that our Redeemer stands over the dust of this earth. Our Redeemer, who rose bodily from the grave will raise our bodies from the dust of the earth and we will see him. When Jesus rose, his disciples could not only see him, but they could touch him and he ate with them. He was not a dream or a vision. He was the incarnate Jesus, born of Mary, who suffered, died, and was buried and now he lives again.

Job trusts that the Redeemer will give him a similar resurrection from the dust. Job is not talking about seeing Jesus in a dream or vision. Job is not telling us that we will be disembodied souls

floating around for all eternity. Instead, we will be body and soul with our Redeemer forever. We will see him with our own eyes. For our Redeemer lives.

This is what Job yearned for. This is what set Job's emotions in turmoil. He was looking forward to seeing Christ, his Redeemer. What Job looked forward to, we celebrate today. Jesus has redeemed the world from sin and death. He has risen from the dead to give you this new and living hope that you will see him too, with your own eyes. Are your kidneys exhausted from joy yet?

Amen.