



Good Shepherd Lutheran Church & School

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A Stephen Ministry Congregation

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EASTER SUNDAY

April 16, 2017

“I Know My Redeemer Lives!”

(Job 19:25)

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“I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God” (Job 19:25).

**Every day, everywhere, by everyone...
sharing the grace of the Good Shepherd.**

Collect: Almighty God the Father, through Your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, You have overcome death and opened the gate of everlasting life to us. Grant that we, who celebrate with joy the day of our Lord's resurrection, may be raised from the death of sin by Your life-giving Spirit; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen**

Remember the story of Job? He is a good and faithful man, and he's living a good life, enjoying his success as a businessman, husband and father. Nothing makes him happier than the health and well-being of his children, their love for him, their love for one another. But then Job's life falls apart. It unravels. His substantial herds, the source of his prosperity, are stolen, his servants put to the sword. Worst of all, his ten children are all killed when the house collapses on them in a terrible storm.

Still, things get worse. Job breaks out with disgusting and embarrassing sores. They ooze and stink. Even his breath turns offensive. Adults detest him. Little boys gawk at him and then mock him. Even his own wife tells him, "Curse God and die." Job is a broken man. He sits outside on a heap of ashes, (a gesture of repentance and humility) scratching his mottled skin with a piece of broken pottery. It's hard to imagine anyone falling further than Job. He's lost everything, but he hasn't lost his faith. He's down but not out.

Three friends come to commiserate. They try to help, but they manage to say all the wrong things. (Some people have that gift.) They insist God is surely punishing Job for some secret sin. Job doesn't give in. Man does not reap what he sows. Good things happen to bad people and bad things happen to good people. God is not a puppet whom we control with strings, whom we manipulate with shallow piety and fickle morality. Job tells his friends, "Miserable comforters are you all" (16:2).

Eventually, we come to the most famous and memorable passage in Job. In spite of what his friends are saying, in spite of what his wife is saying, and even in spite of what God seems to be telling him, Job is unwavering: **“I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God.”** Let’s unpack this famous verse.

In the Old Testament a redeemer was a close relative who would do whatever it took to rescue a family member in trouble. So, for instance, if someone had fallen into debt and had sold himself into slavery to pay off that debt, his redeemer bought him back and set him free. If a piece of property had to be sold, the redeemer made sure the title to the property stayed in the family. If you were being accused and prosecuted, the redeemer came to your defense.

But clearly, Job is not speaking of a run of the mill human redeemer. He’s speaking of a Divine Redeemer, because he’s talking resurrection. Remember, he says, “And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God.” It’s going to take the power of God to do that. But would God do that? Job seems to think so. **“I know my redeemer lives . . . and after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God.”**

Notice Job’s confidence. He doesn’t say, “I hope my Redeemer lives. Or, “Wouldn’t it be nice if . . .” “Here’s knockin’ on wood . . .” No! Job says “I *know* my Redeemer lives.” Job trusted God, and God’s promises more than he trusted his own reason or intellect, or what his friends and wife were telling him. Even in the midst of his personal catastrophe, Job believes God is good and merciful and just and will ultimately rescue him from death. Proverbs 3, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding” (v. 5).

“I know my Redeemer lives.” God wants that

certainty for us all. He doesn't want us to be hobbled or haunted by doubts about his nature or our eternal welfare. There's enough uncertainty in the world as it is: your health, the economy, what the North Koreans will do next, or the Russians, or the Syrians or even our own president. We live in a world of uncertainty. But God does not want us to be uncertain about him and his love for us, his plans for us. He wants us to enjoy the assurance that, come what may, we are safe and secure in his amazing grace. He wants us to enjoy the peace that surpasses all human understanding. He wants us know that because our Redeemer lives, we shall live eternally.

But if you believe that a person is saved by being a good person, you'll never have that peace and security. After all, how good is good enough? Jesus said the bar is very high. "You must be perfect" he said, "even as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Mt. 5:48). But most people dismiss that as unreasonable, and resolve to be as good as they can and hope for the best. As a result they live with a haunting suspicion their best may not be good enough.

Remember in school when your score on a test was just a point or two shy of an A? I hated that! You were so close. If that's what it's like for a high school exam, how much worse would it be if eternal life hung in the balance?! ("Ohh, and I was so close!") Thankfully, God doesn't judge us based on our works, our merits, how many points we've earned verses the demerits working against us. That widespread belief breeds all kinds of bad things, from smug hypocrisy at one extreme to deep despair at the other and lots of haunting uncertainty in between.

But what God wants for us a certainty of resurrection and salvation based on God's merits and not our own. A perfect cloak of innocence given us to wear by him rather than a tattered cloak of innocence we've tried to weave on our own. A resurrection he gives rather than one we try to earn. After all, Job is

talking resurrection here. “And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I **will** see God.”

But it brings up a question. How could Job have known? How did he know his living Redeemer would resurrect him? After all he lived a couple thousand years before Christ.

One of my daughters, when very young, used to think that if she could not see the sun shining in the sky during the day because of the clouds, then the sun must not really be out and shining. For her, the sun had to be visible, uncloaked by clouds. I explained to her that though sometimes hidden by the clouds, the sun is always shining. After all, we can see its light even on a cloudy day.

When it comes to resurrection, the sun shines brightly in the New Testament, without cloud or haze. For example, Jesus promised, “He who believes in me will live, even though he dies, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die” (Jn. 11:25). And Paul wrote, “We shall all be changed, in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.” In the New Testament the resurrection sun shines bright and clear.

But it also shines throughout the Old Testament, though sometimes masked by clouds. For example it’s there in the story of the flood, where just about everything on the earth dies, but then the earth is brought back to life. It’s there in Isaiah’s prophecy, “He will swallow up death forever; and the LORD God will wipe away tears from all faces” (Is. 25:8). And sometimes it shines brighter still, such as in Isaiah 26, “Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy!” (v. 19). It’s there in Ezekiel and the valley of dry bones. It’s there in Daniel 12, “Those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (v. 2). Resurrection light shines steadily throughout the Old Testament, but

often it's not clear how or who would bring this resurrection about. Though Job lived long before Jesus, the ancient promises in Scripture were enough for him. "I *know* my Redeemer lives."

There are a lot of things I don't know—just ask my wife! I don't know the first thing about repairing an engine, or debugging a computer. And I don't know why some of the dearest members of this church have been stricken with cancer or ALS, divorce, financial setbacks, or sudden death. I don't know why these things happen. But I do know when things are going poorly, that is not the time to rack our brains with questions for which we have no sure answers. Rather, that is the time to confess what we know with a certainty, as Job did. That's the time, like Job, to cling to the promises of God. "I **know** my Redeemer lives!"

The name of Job's Redeemer hadn't been revealed yet. He couldn't have known it, but you do. The name is Jesus. It means "God saves." And Jesus is no mystical, vague, abstract presence or idea. No, he is God's flesh and blood son who died on a cross for you.

Remember, he's the divine Redeemer, and as Redeemer Jesus bears whatever needs to be borne, carries whatever needs to be carried, even if it's a cross. If a sentence needs to be served, he serves it. If a fine needs to be paid, he pays it. Jesus does whatever it takes to buy us back and set us free. Whatever it takes.

I know my Redeemer **lives!** Three days later this cry rocked the world: "**He lives!**" The angels ask the women, "Why do you seek the living from among the dead?" John outruns Peter to the tomb, looks in, and believes! Jesus says, "Mary," and Mary Magdalene cries out "Rabboni!" The Emmaus disciples recognize the risen Christ in the breaking of the bread. And Thomas, when he sees the risen Jesus, and holes in his hands and side, confesses, "My Lord and my God!" And he also appeared to more than five hundreds of the brothers at the same time (1 Cor. 15:6).

Remember, whatever goes bad your redeemer

ultimately makes good. What's broken is mended. What's sick is healed. What's lost is found. What is guilty is declared innocent. And what is dead is made alive again!

Your Redeemer lives, and because he lives your sin is forgiven, and your grave will also one day be empty. Jesus promised it, and faith receives it. "And because I live" Jesus said in John, "you too shall live" (Jn. 14:19).

"I know that my Redeemer lives! And that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God." Thanks be to God! Amen.

