

## What Difference Does It Make?

Job 19:21-29

This morning I will interrupt our series of sermons on the book of 1 John in order to focus upon the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, on a day so nearly universally identified as Easter Sunday. The day of resurrection. Of course, our focus every Lord's day is upon that resurrection, for we now worship together on the first day of the week, but with the ability to date the passover relative to the first full moon after the spring equinox in March, Easter is acknowledged as the first Sunday after that passover. Interestingly, and actually to my amusement with regard to the translation of the King James Bible in 1611, in Acts 12:4, the Greek word for passover is translated Easter!

Acts 12:4 "[Herod put Peter in prison] and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people."

So the awareness of Easter was given some legitimacy even in the King James Version of the Bible. This year, I believe, there is even greater reason for this particular emphasis upon this day of resurrection we call Easter because everyone in the whole world has a heightened consciousness of sickness and death. A modern day plague, a pestilence, a novel virus against which human beings have no antibodies, against which modern science has had no chance to develop a cure. And worldwide, now over 100,000 fatalities. Over a thousand a day are dying in our own country, 5-6-7 thousand a day worldwide. Our lives have been unimaginably altered. By executive order, our governor has forbid us to leave our homes except for essential purposes. We aren't allowed to meet for worship in groups larger than 10. We are encouraged to wear masks in public. We can't sit down to eat in a restaurant or workout at a gym. The whole of our economic system is all but shut down. There is no toilet paper on the

shelves and you can't even enter Walmart unrestricted.

So people are now living in the consciousness, and the fear, of sickness and death. No one alive has seen anything like this, unless they are over 100 years old. It seems that no one is exempt from this immediate threat we have labeled COVID-19. So this morning, I want to study a man who knew all too well about sickness and death. And in that context, I want to fix our eyes and our hearts upon the glorious promise of the resurrection, as does Job.

Right in the middle of his trials. Right in the middle of those three counselors who tell Job all sorts of things that have no application to his own experience, that all his suffering was his own fault. You know the overall story, I expect. God allowed Satan to test Job, to take from him everyone he held precious on earth. His family. His wealth. Even his health.

God had taunted Satan with the testimony Job's faith.

Job 1:8 "Then the Lord said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?"

So when the afflictions came,

Job 1:20 "Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. 21 And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

But then those three friends came to give Job their ill-considered advice. Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar. Their message was so simple. And so wrong, so misapplied to Job's life. Job must be guilty of some sin, they said. His afflictions must be all

his own fault. They tell him that he must simply repent, and all will be well. In the words of Bildad,

Job 8:5 “If you will seek God and plead with the Almighty for mercy, 6 if you are pure and upright, surely then he will rouse himself for you and restore your rightful habitation.”

Each of these three men speak three times to Job, and Bildad’s second speech seems becomes even more distressing. His point is simple, that God brings his judgement upon the wicked. Thus, as Job endures that judgement, he must be numbered by God among the unbelieving wicked. This is the conclusion of Bildad’s description of God’s judgment,

Job. 18:5 “Indeed, the light of the wicked is put out, and the flame of his fire does not shine. 6 The light is dark in his tent, and his lamp above him is put out...11 Terrors frighten him on every side, and chase him at his heels. 12 His strength is famished, and calamity is ready for his stumbling. 13 It consumes the parts of his skin; the firstborn of death consumes his limbs. 14 He is torn from the tent in which he trusted and is brought to the king of terrors. 15 In his tent dwells that which is none of his; sulfur is scattered over his habitation. 16 His roots dry up beneath, and his branches wither above. 17 His memory perishes from the earth, and he has no name in the street. 18 He is thrust from light into darkness, and driven out of the world. 19 He has no posterity or progeny among his people, and no survivor where he used to live. 20 They of the west are appalled at his day, and horror seizes them of the east. 21 Surely such are the dwellings of the unrighteous, such is the place of him who knows not God.”

How’s that for the encouragement of a friend! We easily understand Job’s words in response to Bildad,

Job 19:2 “How long will you torment my soul, and break me in pieces with words?”

He doesn’t downplay the extent of his suffering.

Job. 19:20 “My bone clings to my skin and to my flesh, And I have escaped by the skin of my teeth.”

Job understood the whole of this situation much better than Bildad. And he understands our situation as well, the situation of life that is common to mankind. For he understands human mortality. Surely, as extensive as our sufferings may be, none of us can think we know more about the experience of suffering than Job.

And thus, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he writes words that abide with us today, words of wisdom and truth. And words that apply to the pains and trials and sufferings of our lives today. He rises above this terrible situation, and in particular he answers so well these horribly unwise counselors. And he does so in the painful cries of his own mortal affliction. That’s where we begin this morning, en route to a triumphant declaration of the victory of the resurrection. We begin with,

## **I. THE PAINFUL CRIES OF A MORTAL MAN.** v.21-22

Do you get the sense of that last phrase? “Why are you not satisfied with my flesh?” In other words, my flesh is torn. My flesh, my body is wracked with pain and agony. Isn’t that enough? You have to attack my integrity as well? Isn’t it enough that I suffer so intensely, why do you add to my physical suffering by attacking me in this way?

But notice where Job starts. Notice what underlies all that Job has to say. Verse 21, “the hand of God has struck me.” Job knows something very profound and expresses it so very simply.

### **A. Afflictions ultimately come from the hand of God.**

“The hand of God has struck me.” Now, why is that such a helpful expression? Because your only hope for endurance, your only hope for meaning and purpose when you suffer is that God remains in control. Because if he isn’t, that truly, you are hopeless! Fatalism is hopeless. An impersonal determinism is hopeless. In the midst of suffering, if God’s hand is not upon you then you are, indeed, in the most wretched of all circumstances.

So here is where faith begins. “The hand of God has struck me.” It might be a terrible affliction. It might be a tragic circumstance. It might be painful or distressing seemingly beyond measure. But the abiding starting point for your hope and encouragement is in the confidence and certainty of the powerful and superintending actions of God, the God who brings to pass every situation, every circumstance “according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will.”

Job knew it. And as we groan throughout our lives as well, we must know it. “The hand of God has struck me.” Whatever the situation. However grievous it may be. And in that context, Job clearly demonstrates how,

### **B. Afflictions intensify the significance of life.**

One of my burdens for our culture is how superficially we consider matters that are of great importance. But it’s hard to do that these days. There is a sober reality that confronts everyone, of all ages. Normal life has been totally upended, in some ways, probably in a permanent way. No one really knows what the “new normal” will actually look like.

Too often, we are taught by our culture to be casual, flippant, frivolous, irresponsible, irrelevant, even banal. We don’t know how to take anything seriously, and too many people go through

life as though the ability to be goofy and silly was the evidence of something good and healthy. In generations past, we would just call it immature!

It is often easy to identify people who have endured much suffering, because generally speaking, they are not prone to that sort of immaturity. That’s what afflictions do to you. They make you sober, and I mean that in all the best ways. They make you realize what is important. And what isn’t. Just look at Job’s words,

v.23-24

There is obvious irony, isn’t there? Job’s words were written! There were inscribed in a book. And they were written with a much better instrument than an iron pen and lead. They were written by God the Holy Spirit. And Job’s words were engraved on something far better than a rock. They were engraved by God himself in the pages of Holy Scripture.

So here they are. Here is Job’s expression of faith given right in the midst of the depth of the pain of his mortal existence. This book is very old, perhaps the oldest in all of the Bible. And here it is for us today. So let’s learn from this man who endured such unimaginable pain while in the flesh. And it is the message I wish to make as clearly and as powerfully on this sabbath day, this first day of the week which we recognize by the calendar as Easter. It is a message everyone of us needs to hear and to know, and it is the only expression of faith sufficient to sustain your life in the midst of whatever troubles you will most certainly be called upon to endure. Here, is...

## **II. THE SURE FAITH OF A MORTAL MAN.**

Job knows something of absolutely crucial importance. He knows the one thing that will enable him to live out his life in the

flesh, even under the grievous afflictions he so painfully feels. He knows the one thing that can give you hope in this life as well.

### **A. My Redeemer lives.**

v.25

Now, I spent all of that time on the first point as an introduction, to make this point more clear and more climactic. This is the declaration of a mortal man, a man in the midst of his suffering, a man accused of being numbered with the wicked simply because he is suffering! But this he knows in the midst of it all, he knows that his redeemer lives.

The Hebrew word for “Redeemer” is important, and is sometimes translated “kinsman-redeemer.” In Hebrew culture, and law, the responsibilities of the kinsman-redeemer was several, all focused upon preserving the life or heritage of a man. That might mean avenging his death, if he were murdered. It might mean marrying his widow, if he died especially without children. It might mean working to ransom or rescue the man who had been sold into slavery. The kinsman-redeemer would be the faithful brother, the relative who would preserve the honor of a man, no matter what the cost to himself.

This word came to mean, very explicitly, the one who would redeem the nation of Israel, the one who would ransom and rescue the people of God. And that, of course, would be God himself. So this name and title of Redeemer is one of the most comprehensive ways in which we can refer to God. So it is a good name for a church, too, isn't it?

Just consider a few verses,

Psalm 19:14 “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.”

Isaiah 44:6 “Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: “I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god.”

Isaiah 47:4 “Our Redeemer—the Lord of hosts is his name—is the Holy One of Israel.”

So in his flesh, in the corruptible mortal flesh that caused him so much pain, Job knew he had a redeemer. He knew there was one who would rescue him. And, beloved, he knew that his redeemer lives! What a great declaration.

Let me make that same declaration today, for your encouragement. We have a redeemer, his name is Jesus. There is only one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. And in the words of our Shorter Catechism, “The only redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was, and continueth to be, God and man in two distinct natures, and one person, forever.

But more than mere theology, this redeemer lives. He is alive. He died, to be sure. He was buried. But he is risen from the dead. And that is what the gospel of Jesus Christ is all about.

1 Cor. 15:3 “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.”

The importance of all of that is made as clear as clear can be, as Paul continues,

1 Cor. 15:12 “Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. 14 And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. 15 We are

even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. 16 For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. 17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.”

It is an all or nothing proposition. If Christ is not alive, if he has not been raised from the dead, then my “preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.” In fact, you are still in your sins. You are still subject to the eternal wrath of God. But Jesus is alive. I, myself, may live in this mortal body that is doomed to death, but “I know that my Redeemer lives.”

But I know something else, too. With Job. I know something more. I know, and I proclaim to you, that...

### **B. My Redeemer rules the world.**

Isn't that just delightful! In the midst of all the painful sorrows of life in this world, I know that Jesus sits at the right hand of God as the king of all kings and the Lord of all lords. He rules the world.

v.25

When all is said and done, at the last, as Job puts it, when all the other difficult questions of life and death are finally put aside, this is what is left, Jesus stands upon the earth. Jesus stands in power and authority to rule and govern.

In the words of God recorded by David,

Ps. 2:6 “As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.”  
7 I will tell of the decree: The Lord said to me, “You are my Son;

today I have begotten you. 8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. 9 You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.”

That is our faith this morning as well, as we proclaim the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Our redeemer lives, and he rules the world. But let's move on then, with Job. Because there is something more. It is not enough to say that “He” lives. Job declares, on that basis, that I shall live, too.

I might well ask the question, “What difference does it make? What is this important, this doctrine? Here is where it gets personal for us. Jesus lives, and so shall I! Jesus was raised from the dead, and so shall I. All of that is,

### **III. THE CERTAIN HOPE OF A MORTAL MAN.**

Don't forget this context, because it makes the declaration all the more powerful. This is a man who has nothing left except his life. Satan has afflicted his body in the worst way imaginable. His groanings and his sufferings are beyond comparison. And he, in that desperate state, declares,

#### **A. The hope of the resurrection.**

v.26

He knows he will die, in the flesh. He can feel it in his bones, and in his skin. But after that corruption has run its full course, after his very skin has been destroyed, still there is hope. And notice how verse 26 ends, I believe well translated, “In my flesh I shall see God.” It might be more distinctly, “from my flesh I shall see God,” but not in the sense of being without flesh. Rather, from the vantage point of my flesh, hence “in my flesh,” I shall see God.

This isn't a small point. Not in theology, and not in the experiences of our own faith. It is the hope of the physical resurrection. Our physical resurrection. The resurrection of our body, our flesh. The restoration of our life as God created it, body and soul together. That is the hope of the Christian faith, and that is the message of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

1 Cor. 15:42 "So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. 43 It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. 44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. 45 Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. 46 But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. 47 The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. 48 As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. 49 Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven."

So we shall be changed. Our bodies shall be transformed, this we know...

1 Cor. 15:50 "I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 in a moment, 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. 53 For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. 54 When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." 55 "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" 56 The sting of

death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

So, dear friends, this you know. If the hand of God touches you such that you are afflicted and suffer in the flesh, know this for sure, that that same hand shall touch you again and in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, you shall be transformed. Your body shall be transformed. That is the hope of the gospel. For then, in that new body, we have,

### **B. The hope of communion with God.**

v.26 "...yet in my flesh I shall see God."

That's communion. No longer banished from God's presence, as was Adam when he fell. I shall see God! And Job continues, v.27 "...whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!"

Perhaps better translated, "How my heart is consumed with this goal." Consumed with purpose and expectation. How my heart yearns with all its strength to achieve this great objective. That's what it is all about. That's what life is all about. That's what our worship is all about. Nothing less than the all-consuming desire and yearning of the heart to be in the presence of God for all eternity, body and soul joined together without sin and without corruption.

Knowing, even at that, of,

### **C. The hope of a just judgment.**

v.28-29

And so, beloved, there is a judgment. And all that I have said this morning is addressed to those who believe, those who believe in Jesus. So I invite all of you to believe. I invite all of you

to trust in Jesus, that by faith in him, you might have eternal life as well. What difference does this make? All the difference in the world. All the difference between eternal life and eternal death.

If you refuse to believe, if you reject Jesus, if you live for your own glory and your own kingdom, your mortal flesh will continue to decay and you will die. And your body, too, will be raised up at the last day, but raised up for judgment.

John 5:28 “Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice 29 and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.”

Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you shall have life. And you who believe, let these words be your great encouragement as you live now in the flesh. No matter what happens to you, no matter how the hand of God might touch you, no matter how the mortality of your flesh makes itself known, let this truth be your strength and your hope.

v.25 “For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth; 26 And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God, 27 Whom I shall see for myself, And my eyes shall behold, and not another.”

So Paul concludes his great chapter on the resurrection with these words,

1 Cor. 15:50 “Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this

mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” 55 “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?” 56 The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”