

March 13, 2016
Sermon for the Fifth Sunday in Lent
St Peter Lutheran Church
Bowie, TX
Larry Knobloch, Pastor
Job 41:20–34

J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus

Job 41:20–34 (ESV)

²⁰ Out of his nostrils comes forth smoke, as from a boiling pot and burning rushes. ²¹ His breath kindles coals, and a flame comes forth from his mouth. ²² In his neck abides strength, and terror dances before him. ²³ The folds of his flesh stick together, firmly cast on him and immovable. ²⁴ His heart is hard as a stone, hard as the lower millstone. ²⁵ When he raises himself up the mighty are afraid; at the crashing they are beside themselves. ²⁶ Though the sword reaches him, it does not avail, nor the spear, the dart, or the javelin. ²⁷ He counts iron as straw, and bronze as rotten wood. ²⁸ The arrow cannot make him flee; for him sling stones are turned to stubble. ²⁹ Clubs are counted as stubble; he laughs at the rattle of javelins. ³⁰ His underparts are like sharp potsherds; he spreads himself like a threshing sledge on the mire. ³¹ He makes the deep boil like a pot; he makes the sea like a pot of ointment. ³² Behind him he leaves a shining wake; one would think the deep to be white-haired. ³³ On earth there is not his like, a creature without fear. ³⁴ He sees everything that is high; he is king over all the sons of pride.”

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

On this night we thank God for Christ's gift of His true body and blood in Holy Communion. The Savior's real presence delivers victory over guilt and the grave, over the ancient serpent who is the devil and Satan. Job 41 is also all about victory. God's victory over that same evil foe who still means deadly woe.

I know we aren't celebrating Holy Communion today. But as we Today we continue with the sermon series on Job, called "Blessed Be the Name of the Lord." We're in chapter 41. Let's get started.

He was a professional thief. His name stirred fear as the desert wind stirs tumbleweeds. He terrorized the Wells Fargo stage line, came down on his victims like a tornado in and out of the Sierra Nevadas, spooking the most rugged frontiersmen. During his reign of terror, from 1875 to 1883, he stole money from twenty-nine stagecoaches.

A hood hid his face. No victim ever saw him. No artist ever sketched him. No sheriff could ever track his trail.

His name? You've heard of him, it's Black Bart.

The book of Job introduces us to another thief—one who's still around. You know him, though you've never seen his face.

If you've ever felt shame and disgrace, it was his whisper that crushed your heart.

If you've ever felt alone and abandoned, it was all according to his plan. If you've ever felt useless and no good, it was his accusing finger pointing at you.

He's the Black Bart of the soul. He doesn't want our money. He wants something far more precious.

He wants to kill and steal and destroy our very lives. In Job chapters 1 and 2 he is called Satan, or the accuser, which is what "satan" means.

And he is so full of himself, isn't he? He is full of his own self-importance, his taunting of God, and his denigration of Job's faith.

But after chapters 1 and 2 Satan disappears from view. He drops out of sight. He evaporates into thin air. What's up with that?

Well, in chapter 41 Satan returns, full throttle. Only in this chapter he is a monster called Leviathan. Leviathan?

Who is Leviathan? From Job 3, "May those who curse days curse that day, those who are ready to rouse Leviathan. Why did I not perish at birth, and die as I came from the womb?" **Leviathan is linked with death.**

But there is more. Two times in Isaiah 27:1 Leviathan is called a *nachash*, which is the Hebrew word for "serpent." The same word *nachash* appears in Genesis 3:1 which describes Satan who took the form of a wily serpent.

Leviathan is a deceiving serpent. Satan, the father of lies, has been practicing his art of lying since creation.

But there is still more. Take a look at the features of Leviathan in chapter 41:18–21: "His sneezings flash forth light, and his eyes are like the eyelids of the dawn.¹⁹ Out of his mouth go flaming torches; sparks of fire leap forth.²⁰ Out of

his nostrils comes forth smoke, as from a boiling pot and burning rushes.²¹ His breath kindles coals, and a flame comes forth from his mouth.”

In Revelation 12:9 all these images come together and the full identity of this supernatural creature is revealed. *“The great dragon was hurled down, that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray.”*

Leviathan is a deadly, brutal, and vicious dragon.

Job 41:33 also describes Leviathan with these words, *“On earth there is not his like,”*

This verse inspired Martin Luther to write his battle hymn of the Reformation, Ein Feste Burg ins unser Gott. The reformer writes, “The old evil foe, now means deadly woe. . . . Though devils all the world should fill, all eager to devour us . . . This world’s prince may still, scowl fierce as he will. . . . With dread craft and might he arms himself to fight.”

And then Luther quotes from Job 41:33, “On earth is not his equal!” Leviathan comes to kill and steal and destroy. We see him in the rearview mirror. We feel his hot breath behind us. As tempter he’s chasing after us whispering in our ears, “Whatever it is you want to do, just do it. Have some anger? Act it out. Have some sexual fantasies? Go ahead, full throttle. Have some gossip? Let it fly.” As deceiver he continues with these words, “There are no limits, no consequences, no responsibilities. Ready, set, go!”

We give in to these temptations and deceptions and then, as accuser he plants his foot upon our necks, saying, “Now that you’ve said this, thought this, done this, drank this, smoked this, saw this, God is finished with you!”

But remember! Job 41 is all about victory.

God's victory over the monster. God's victory over Satan. Listen.

“Can you pull in Leviathan with a fishhook or tie down his tongue with a rope? Can you put a cord through his nose or pierce his jaw with a hook? . . . Can you make a pet of him like a bird or put him on a leash for your girls? . . . Can you fill his hide with harpoons or his head with fishing spears?” (Job 41:1–2, 5, 7).

Leviathan is under God's thumb. God exhibits complete mastery over the ferocious creature. In Job 1 Satan was given limits and boundaries. The Lord said to Satan, *“Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand.”* (Job 1:12).

And so Satan is the Colonel Klink of the Bible. Remember Klink?

He was the fall guy for Hogan on the TV series, *Hogan's Heroes*.

Klink supposedly ran a German POW camp during WW II. Those inside the camp, however, knew better. They knew who *really* ran the camp: the prisoners did. They listened to Klink's phone calls and read his mail. They even gave Klink ideas, all the while using him for their own cause. Klink may strut and prance, but Hogan calls the shots.

Just so. Satan may strut and prance and preen, but God calls the shots. Yes there is a devil, but as Martin Luther would often remark: “He is *God's* devil”—that is, he does not have total reign.

In chapter 1, Satan was given *permission* to test Job, and limits were set by God.

But there is more. In the Old Testament satan has free access to God's presence. "One day the angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them" (Job 1:6).

He could come and go when he wanted to accuse God's people. But in our Lord's ministry Satan was cast out of heaven. He no longer has access to God's throne to accuse us. "*I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven*" (Luke 10:18).

But there is still more. "*And the devil was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur*" (Revelation 20:10).

Christ's victory, celebrated on Palm Sunday—secured when He died, sealed when He rose—will be completed when He returns and throws the enemy into the lake of fire. "*The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work*" (1 John 3:8).

When Satan reminds you of your past, remind him of his future! Black Bart finally wasn't anything to be afraid of. When the authorities finally tracked him down, they didn't find a bloodthirsty bandit from Death Valley; they found a mild-tempered business man from Decatur, Illinois.

The man the papers pictured storming through the mountains on horseback was, in reality, so afraid of horses he rode to and from the robberies in a buggy. He was Charles Boles—the bandit who never once fired a shot, because he never once loaded his gun.

In Job 41 we see Satan for who he really is. A deadly monster? You bet. A supernatural creature who can do great harm? No doubt.

The tormentor of our souls? Indeed.

Does Satan hate God and hate us? Count on it.

But because of Jesus he is a defeated enemy who's got no bullets left in his gun. And our response?

We live in joy!

We live in confidence! This is the feast of victory for our God!

And we celebrate our great victory with these words for the ages as we sing.

"This world's price may still, scowl fierce as he will. He can harm us none. He's judged, the deed is done. One little word can fell him!"

And what is that little word that brings us victory today and forever? It's got two syllables and five letters. Any guesses?

The word that fells Satan every time is . . . Jesus.

And it is this Jesus who comes to us now, with real body and real blood, for real victory.

Jesus is God's mighty fortress that He has provided for us.

Take refuge in that Mighty Fortress that is our God in Christ Jesus.

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus!

Amen.