**#57 BCP 6.11.22 SG byr Rev Richard Sandland**

Job 19:23-27a NRSV

**23**“O that my words were written down!
    O that they were inscribed in a book!
**24**O that with an iron pen and with lead
    they were engraved on a rock forever!
**25**For I know that my Redeemer[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Job+19%3A23-27&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-13323a)] lives,
    and that at the last he[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Job+19%3A23-27&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-13323b)] will stand upon the earth;[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Job+19%3A23-27&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-13323c)]
**26**and after my skin has been thus destroyed,
    then in[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Job+19%3A23-27&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-13324d)] my flesh I shall see God,[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Job+19%3A23-27&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-13324e)]
**27**whom I shall see on my side,[[f](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Job+19%3A23-27&version=NRSV#fen-NRSV-13325f)]
    and my eyes shall behold, and not another.

By this time in the book of Job – about half-way through - Job has had a rough time of it.

What’s happened is this –

Job is a wealthy man, “blameless” and “upright,” always careful to avoid doing evil, which, as we know, is a pretty good and Godly plan of life.

But in a bizarre plot twist, Satan appears before God in heaven. God boasts to Satan about Job’s goodness - God himself is often presented as having *human* frailties in Job’s story, which feels slightly odd - but Satan argues that Job is only good *because* God has blessed him abundantly. Without that ‘artificial interference’, as Satan sees it, Job would be bad – like Satan thinks all humanity is.

So Satan says that if God would let him test and then punish Job, if he could lose that which is God-given in his life, then Job will turn and will curse God; he will lose his faith. God takes on the challenge, saying ‘all that he has is in your power,’ and allows Satan to torment Job to test this claim.

Soon, Job receives messages, saying that his livestock, servants, and ten children have all died due to marauding invaders or natural catastrophes. And I won’t go through them all now, but other bad things happen to this poor man.

Scholars call all of this Theodicy. That is the question, why does a loving God allow bad things to happen? God and Satan’s deal seemingly exposes God as a wilful, unloving, and vindictive God. Not a God of Grace.

Far greater theological minds than mine have wrestled with this question for longer that we have together here, but what I take out of this book, and in particular from our reading, is the sheer courage and willpower Job shows, and that it can sometimes take us all, to love our God. And I think that sometimes, in a fractured world where people have trouble living alongside each other, I think God might equally ask humanity, “why do you allow suffering?”

We have all been tested in many ways through our lives – when you all get to my age, you’ll know what I mean – and all we can do is hope that within life events, we have the courage to say, with Job -

*I KNOW that my redeemer lives.*

As I’ve thought about these words through this week, that line in particular has felt like a lovely and courageous statement of faith; with Job, we say I don’t know why, and I don’t know how, but I KNOW that my redeemer lives*.*

It’s a tremendously moving moment in the book, and it asks all sorts of questions of us now about how we might respond, or how we do respond, when things happen in our lives.

*I KNOW that my redeemer lives.*

Later, having questioned God, Job has the tables turned on himself in chapters 38 and 39, with God saying “I will question you, and you shall declare to me.” God reminds Job of his grace, and asks -

 “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth…when the morning stars sang together, and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy?...What is the way to the place where the light is distributed, or where the east wind is scattered upon the earth?...who has begotten the drops of dew?... Can you send forth lightnings, so that they may go and say to you, ‘Here we are’?”… Is it by your wisdom that the hawk soars, and spreads its wings toward the south?

In this landscape of grace and beauty – I love the idea that lightning says ‘hello’ as it passes - Job, ashamed of his doubt despite the provocations, answers “I lay my hand on my mouth.” Whatever doubts he has had, he knows that his redeemer lives*.* This reminder of grace affirms his faith, and renews his sense of his own worth. As Job says, “when he has tested me, I shall come out like gold”.

*I KNOW that my redeemer lives.*

Our passage is a pivot in the book; I think it simply reminds us all that it’s OK to feel vulnerable. We are participants in a long line of people wondering about the mysteries of God; people have had these thoughts before, had their doubts before, and they have known, as we do, that God has caught them even before they fell, as he catches each one of us.

Our friends in the early church, in the generations very soon after Jesus’s life and death, used a translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek that we call The Septuagint – because it’s thought that there were 70 translators. Job’s movement from despair to hope, from death to life, is made explicit in this note they added in: “And Job died, old and full of days. And it is written that he will rise again with those whom the Lord raises up.”

Friends,

*We* know that *our* Redeemer lives,
and that at the last he will stand upon the earth.

Amen