

...*my Redeemer lives*. A sermon preached as part of a series on the book of Job, February 4, 2018 at St. Giles' Presbyterian Church, Prince George, BC by Rev. Herb Hilder.

Lessons: JOB 19:23-27
ROMANS 8:31-39

We met the terrible three last week – Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar
They continue their condemnation of Job and his view that he has done nothing wrong to warrant what is happening to him.

I would like to be fair and think that perhaps Bildad or the others did not sit on the edge of their beds in the morning thinking, “how can I possibly insult Job today?”
For verbal abuse is committed most often by those with huge blind spots.
But then, maybe that was a human weakness in all three of the “friends” – it certainly is in many people today!

That blind spot that allows us to believe that we could never be wrong,
Our opinions are the only valid ones
Our observations unquestionable.

Job continues to respond to their charges and accusations with a firm – I have done nothing wrong enough to deserve such personal suffering!

By the time we get to chapter 19, Job's response to Bildad is an outburst more despairing than anything we have heard from him. This though is not just Job from the land of Uz crying out.

This is every person who has had a pleasant life snatched away from him and replaced with misery and loss

The real life Job has no surviving children and no servants,

But nonetheless in chapter 19 he laments

**15 the guests in my house have forgotten me;
my serving girls count me as a stranger;
I have become an alien in their eyes.**

**16 I call to my servant, but he gives me no answer;
I must myself plead with him.**

**17 My breath is repulsive to my wife;
I am loathsome to my own family.(vs15-17)**

Visualize yourself as Job sees the world around him and how the world sees Job

**Even young children despise me;
when I rise, they talk against me.**

**19 All my intimate friends abhor me,
and those whom I loved have turned against me.
(vs, 18-19)**

Friendless and no family left save a wife who continues distance herself from him

Friends who are in essence useless as friends, and who seem far more geared to destroy what is left of Job – the person.

That is not all that is troubling Job, is it?
Do you remember what is more disorienting for Job?

Right! The distance he feels from God

The seeming silence and disengagement by God

**My bones cling to my skin and to my flesh,
and I have escaped by the skin of my teeth.**

**²¹ Have pity on me, have pity on me, O you my
friends,**

for the hand of God has touched me!

**²² Why do you, like God, pursue me,
never satisfied with my flesh? (vs. 20-22)**

Why indeed?

This is unadulterated, untidy, and messy, right from the soul lament.

If he had energy I can visualize Job either shouting or crying these words.

Long pauses, much sobs and sighs, pained facial features and body movements.

The one wish Job has for his words to be preserved so that his suffering and pain might have meaning in the future, because it certainly has no meaning right now

Then he speaks words of assurance and hope,

That has come through the filters of the rest of Job's story,

The prophets.

The New Testament references to Job

And most certainly George Fredric Handel's

Messiah in which one of the most stirring arias of the whole work begins with Job's powerful affirmation

I know my redeemer liveth....

Yes Handel's aria is based on Job's words

Job – the book from which many shy away – because it seems too gloomy and despairing,

Too sad,

Yet, within this all too real story of suffering, affliction and pain,

Job declares in words of authority and power

**For I know that my Redeemer^[a] lives,
and that at the last he^[b] will stand upon the
earth;^[c]**

**²⁶ and after my skin has been thus destroyed,
then in^[d] my flesh I shall see God,^[e]**

**²⁷ whom I shall see on my side,^[f]
and my eyes shall behold, and not another.
My heart faints within me! (vs.25-27)**

Here is an individual, who is experiencing the worst the world can throw at him,

Plus the nagging sense that God is silent and not with him!

Yet,

At this very low point – Job speaks this affirmation
 It is not an affirmation that immediately changes
 one little bit his suffering
 Or makes his friends suddenly more aware of his
 condition.

But it is an affirmation *that I believe, I like to think
 helped Job push on
 To rise like a mythical phoenix out of the ashes of his life
 And hold to his convictions*

Whether anyone paid attention or listened to
 what he said is immaterial
 In his own voice and conviction he is on record of
 having said it

**For I know that my Redeemer^[a] lives,
 and that at the last he^[b] will stand upon the
 earth;^[c]
²⁶ and after my skin has been thus destroyed,
 then in^[d] my flesh I shall see God,^[e]
²⁷ whom I shall see on my side,^[f]
 and my eyes shall behold, and not another.
 My heart faints within me!**

Well, generations since have heard this affirmation.
 They read his story,
 Hear his laments
 Listen to the friends offer destructive in self
 comments

And then with no fanfare – comes such an affirmation of chapter 19

All is not lost

A Redeemer lives

The end game is not defeat, loss and darkness

NO – the end game is hope, purpose and light

The description of the Redeemer Job gives is one of power, timelessness and personal involvement.

There are those who question whether Redeemer here in Job's declaration is one and the same Jesus Christ – who was known as Redeemer.

Those much more skilled in Hebrew than I – and they are legion – say it is not clear here in vs. 25 whether Job has in mind a human agent go-el or vindicator – one who Jewish law and society was a fixer – a person who sees something that is wrong, Something that is unfair,

And feels obliged to do something about it.

Sort of the Biblical equivalent of the Equalizer -TV show in the late 60's and recently remade into a movie starring Denzel Washington

There was nothing in the go-el' – Redeemer's job description that included forgiveness or saving a people from their sins.

However, what raises Job's use of the term go-el (Redeemer) beyond that of an earthly vindicator to something much, much more are phrases that Job uses to describe his Redeemer.

- **At the last he will stand upon the earth**
- **After my skin has been thus destroyed, then
in my flesh I shall see God**
- **Whom I shall see on my side, and my eyes
shall behold, and not another;**

Job then is not affirming the certainty of some human agent or vindicator.

Rather, he is affirming,

Declaring in words of power and authority

That no matter what he is presently facing, feeling, sensing around him.

Or what may happen tomorrow, **GOD IS WITH HIM.**

That is **NOT** holy triumphalism

Rather it is what anchors Job's faith and hope

God who stands with him

God who will never leave him

God who is not silent.

God who is here.

It is the same source of hope and anchoring faith from which Paul writes what I believe to be among the most hopeful and affirming "God's love come what may" words

Evil is not the way of the future – God's loving care is

That is a central Christian assertion

Paul's words cover all the bases as it were.

No dimension of reality one can imagine has the power to frustrate God's care and love for us
 No creaturely power can affect our lives in any but a temporary way.

The Lord of all creation is a Lord of love
 He is FOR us, NOT against us!

Paul is saying to his first readers and to us — the only ones who have the power to accuse or condemn us — God or His Son — are in fact the very ones who protect us

So — banish from your minds, hearts and souls — once and for all — the temptation to conclude that when things go badly,

It means God has deserted us.

Stop living under the cloud that says ill fortune is evidence of God's rejection of us.

Just stop it says Paul!!!

Both the text from Job 19 and Romans 8 are incredibly powerful declarations of the power of God over ALL other things!

Like generations of believers before us I believe each of us can take much hope, solace, perspective and strength to persevere to walk in the way of God.

How so?

We live in a world in which *major crises happen.*

Crises in personal lives,

Crises in the world around us.

Never as much as now have I found myself thinking or mouthing quietly the Psalmist's sage wisdom as I hear about the latest bit of chaos regarding the leader of the country to the south of us

Or some other political figure who seems to have a heightened sense of his/her own importance

**³ Do not put your trust in princes,
in mortals, in whom there is no help.**

⁴ When their breath departs, they return to the earth;

on that very day their plans perish. (Psalm 146:3-4.)

For the Psalmist reminds us of a *broader perspective than the political one or a military one*

God's people can hold to and in fact must hold to in a world that is becoming more polarized and partisan than in recent memory.

Both Job's and Paul's words also I believe are *most comforting*.

Especially at a time of loss or grief – for any number of things.

There is nothing conditional in either Job's or Paul's words

The verbs are strong and unconditional.

Both texts point to a life beyond this one – Job more directly than Paul.

What is clear is that death itself shall not separate us from God

When we leave this life,

We do not enter some sort of void or emptiness

We shall see and be in the presence of God in a closeness and nearness we can scarcely imagine.

Nearness we had with God that went sideways in the Garden spoken about in the opening chapters of Genesis.

Truly, *best is yet to come!*

Finally, both Job's and Paul's words give to us a *note of confidence to push on, to as the writer of the Hebrews letter calls us to* **run the race that is set before us.**

Though those of us who are not as nimble and flexible as we once were – take heart – to run the race is more a description of determination and perseverance than it is a physical demand.

The voices today of indifference, apathy and just plain hostility to the ways of Jesus are both strident and many.

Soon or later,

We need to hear and hold onto affirmation and convictions like Job's, and like Paul's.

Affirmations and convictions that say, "Yes, I know it is hard

Yes I know much in this life, my life is unfair and just.

But I do take heart.

For I know my Redeemer lives...

I know and live in the assurance that

Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Roms 8:38-39)

That was the anchor of Job's faith – A Redeemer who lives

It was the anchor of Paul's faith...

That ***nothing*** would ever separate us **from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord**

Amen, Let us pray.