

Rev. Shaun Arndt  
Sunday, March 31, 2024  
Easter Sunday – Job 19:23-27

*We love, because the Lord first loved us. Amen.*

*Because He Lives...*

*Dear Friends in Christ,*

*This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it!*

*Dear Friends in Christ,*

Isn't it glorious? We see the flowers and the bright colors after the starkness of Lent. The baptismal font is front and center to recall how Romans 6 tells us how by baptism God joined us to Jesus' death and resurrection so that we now live a new life! It *looks* like Easter.

The scent of the flowers, the aroma of coffee brewing, a whiff of Easter breakfast. It *smells* like Easter.

Alleluias ring out again! We sing joyful hymns punctuated by brass and organ. We hear the ancient Easter greeting: He is risen indeed! It *sounds* like Easter.

But what if there were none of these adornments? No flowers, no special music, (gasp!) no coffee. What if there was no roof over our heads. No chairs. And instead, we sat on the ground—in the dust. What if we were miserable and dying? Would it still be Easter then?

Oh yes, yes indeed it would! **Because He Lives.**

Now I must confess that the idea of celebrating Easter joy while sitting in the dust is not my own. It comes from the background of our first Scripture lesson where we hear that **sweet sentence of comfort** we just sang: **I know that my Redeemer lives.**

It was **Job** who first spoke those words, some 4,000 years ago. **Job** wasn't just sitting on the **dusty** ground when he spoke these words, but his whole life had crumbled to **dust**.

All **Job** owned was gone -- stolen by raiders or burned up. His ten, dearly loved children died on the same day, their bodies then turning to **dust** in the grave. Meanwhile, Job's body was racked with oozing sores and worn from sleepless nights of constant pain. Job's wife said he would be better off as **dust**, telling him to just **curse God and die**.

Even his reputation was destroyed. Wicked men made up songs to mock **Job**. They spit in his face. Job's friends didn't comfort him, but accused him of committing some great evil deed for which God must be punishing him.

And yet **Job** knew otherwise. While he was a sinful human being like us all, yet Job was a shining example of godly living. The Holy Spirit describes Job as **upright, a man who revered God and turned away from evil**. So, Job's suffering is the classic example of *bad things happening to good people*.

Beneath all this strain, Job's faith began to sag. His sinful nature started to get the best of him and he went from praising God in the midst of his heartache to question and complaining against the Lord, accusing God of being unfair. Because Job could see no evidence of God's love in what He was experiencing, he started to wonder if God had utterly abandoned him.

Now you and I, we can relate at least a bit with Job, can't we? Oh yes, by God's grace, we know and confess that Bible truth: **Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! His mercy endures forever!**

But then suffering comes. We start to feel one part of our life or another crumbling like dust and the same sinful heart within us starts to sinfully complain and ask the age-old question: how can God be good to me when there is all this bad going on?

Like Job, we can start to judge our standing with God by what's going on around us instead of listening to His Word like He tells us. Like Job, our sinful nature can get the best of us and start to think that maybe God owes us something, when the reality is that if God gave us what we deserved, all we would have is dust and death and hell.

That is after all what we sinners deserve. After the very first sins God's declared: **Dust you are and to dust you shall return**. Death is the wages for every sin – the death of soul ripped out of body to be cast into hell while the body rots away to **dust**.

But wait, do you hear it? It's coming from the **dust**. It's getting louder and louder, more and more bold. From the dust come words that truly *SING* to the sorrowing soul:

**I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the end of time he will stand over the dust. Then, even after my skin has been destroyed, nevertheless, in my own flesh I will see God.**

When every earthly reason for confidence was gone—when friends and spouse despised him—when life seemed to be ending and the grave closing in—then Job’s faith rang out with a Heaven handed confidence. Here is the truth more enduring than **bronze, lead and rock** – a truth more certain than the ground beneath your feet: **My Redeemer Lives!**

Where does this sudden confidence come from Job? You were just questioning God, and now you sing His praise and declare He loves you so much He will raise your body back to life even after your **skin has been destroyed** to mere **dust**?

The Apostle Paul gives us the answer in 1 Corinthians: **No one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.** In short, Job’s Easter chorus of resurrection comfort came from God given faith. Holy Spirit given faith in God’s promise that all who trust in the Savior Jesus will live forever!

Oh yes, **Job** knew Jesus. Yes, **Job** lived some 2,000 years before Jesus was born, but He knew and spoke of Christ: **I know that my Redeemer Lives.** Jesus is the **Redeemer.**

You see, at the dawn of time when our first parents sinned, God didn’t just announce a judgment of death, He also made a promise of life. He would send a Savior to conquer the power of devil, sin and death and restore life with God.

Down through the millennia before Jesus came to keep that promise, God reaffirmed the promise and repeated it with additional pictures and details, such as the title for Christ that Job confessed in our lesson: **My Redeemer.**

The Old Testament Hebrew word for **Redeemer**, sometimes translated **Kinsman Redeemer** was the word for a close family member who came to the rescue when the family was in need.

If you were made a slave, **the Redeemer** set you free by paying the ransom price. If you lost your share of the promised-land, the **Redeemer** stepped in to buy it back and so restore it to you. If someone was murdered, the **Redeemer’s** job was to avenge the death and bring the murderer to justice.

Do you see how beautifully **Redeemer** describes how Jesus kept God's ancient promise?

Though He is God from all eternity, one with the Father and the Spirit, the Son of God also became fully human with body and soul. And that means, Christ born of Mary is indeed our **Kinsman Redeemer**, our close family member, our flesh and brother who comes to our rescue!

As our **Redeemer**, Jesus sets us free from the slavery and punishment of our sin, not by paying gold or silver, but with His holy precious blood – the blood of God shed on the cross. By His innocent suffering and death Jesus has paid in full the hell deserving debt of all sin. Job's sin, your sin, my sin, our sin of questioning God's goodness, all forgiven by the price our **Redeemer** paid with His life given in place of ours.

As **Redeemer** Jesus therefore gives us back a place in the land... that is the true and everlasting promised land of endless life with God in the world to come!

**I know that my Redeemer lives!** Even if Job didn't know all the details, we now do! Jesus **lives**. After His death to save us, He left the grave empty that first Easter morning. His heart that had been stilled for three days began to beat again. His lungs filled with air. His lifeless body lived again. The eyewitness testimony of the women, the Apostles, including skeptical Thomas, and 500 others on one occasion, confirms it. He who died to save us was heard, seen and touched, **because He lives!**

As the living **Redeemer** Jesus doesn't just avenge our death, but He undoes it, He conquers the power of death. Our mighty **Redeemer** went toe to toe with the monster death, kicked it in the teeth and store out **death's** stinger to restore us to life with God forever!

What kind of life? Our souls going to be with God when we die? Yes, that, but also so much more than that. The true Christian faith looks forward to something even greater than dying and going to heaven. Christian faith anticipates what Job did: **I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the end of time he will stand over the dust... in my own flesh I will see God.**

**Dust you are and to dust you shall return**, but Christ who rose from the dead, will stand **over the dust** of your grave on the last day and make your tomb as empty as His own! He will raise our bodies to life just like His! As in your actual body, flesh and blood, your own skin, your own eyes – to be glorified like risen body, to be no longer ravaged by disease and age, to no longer experience pain and sorrow, but to instead experience how good God truly is with every fiber of your resurrected being!

So dear Christian friends, do not entertain the devil's lie that your body is unimportant or is a mistake of any kind and you need to search for some other "authentic self." No! Your body matters just as God created it! He brought you to faith in your body as the Word of God was spoken into the ears of your body and your body was baptized. And Jesus will raise your body at the last day so that with Job you will say: **in my own flesh I will see God.**

**Because He lives...** you know God loves you and care for you just as He did for Job. The cross and empty tomb prove His love for you no matter what else you may see or feel.

**Because He lives...** He will bring all your suffering and sorrows to an end. Perhaps it will be now in this life the way the Lord did for Job (you'll have to read the rest of the book!) Always it will be at the joys of the resurrection.

**Because He lives...** even if there no flowers, no roof over our heads, even if we were in the dust and dying, we would still celebrate Easter on that day when Jesus stands **over the dust** and raises His people to the bliss of the New Creation.

**Because He lives!** Alleluia! Amen.

*I will not die. No, I will live, and I will proclaim the works of the LORD! Amen.*

*We confess our Christian faith and our confidence in the Resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come using the Nicene Creed on page 9 in the worship folder.*