

I Know that My Redeemer Lives!
Sermon for the 5th Sunday in Lent
Sermon Text: Job 19:19-27



All my intimate friends abhor me, and those whom I loved have turned against me. ²⁰ My bones stick to my skin and to my flesh, and I have escaped by the skin of my teeth. ²¹ Have mercy on me, have mercy on me, O you my friends, for the hand of God has touched me! ²² Why do you, like God, pursue me? Why are you not satisfied with my flesh? ²³ Oh that my words were written! Oh that they were inscribed in a book! ²⁴ Oh that with an iron pen and lead they were engraved in the rock forever! ²⁵ For I know that

my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will stand upon the earth. ²⁶ And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, ²⁷ whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me!

Anyone who has been hit with a difficult fate needs time to reflect about what has happened. Anyone who meets with a difficult fate needs people who can speak comforting words and show them a path into the future. Perhaps this was the greatest catastrophe of the Corona pandemic, that so many people were left alone in difficult circumstances. They had no relatives to stand by their sides at their last hours, who could pray with them, who they could say goodbye to. They suffered alone and died alone.

In our sermon text today, we get to know Job who also met with difficult circumstances. Job is a God-fearing man. Perhaps that's exactly why these difficulties hit him especially hard. Because through his difficult circumstances, his faith was challenged. He must ask the question: Does God still love me? Is God still there at all? And does God perhaps have something bad planned for me?

The story of Job begins in Heaven. Veiled from all those affected, God talks with Satan. And God talks with Satan about Job. God is really happy about this Job and shows Satan that he has had zero success with Job. Satan didn't want to let God's praise of Job stand. Even Satan knows the human heart. "He praises You only because You have blessed him!" Satan replies. "Job's love is not unconditional. It is based on a deal with God. Take away everything You gave him away and then we will see if he remains godly." This was Satan's challenge. And then something unimaginable happened. God made a deal with Satan. All of this happened in secret. And Job knew nothing of this bet of Satan's with God. Awful things happened. One after another, the bad news arrives. Job loses so much so quickly that one must think, something evil is at play here. And the question that automatically imposes itself is this: "What did I do

wrong?" or "Who caused this?" Job's amazing answer: God gave, and God took it away. Blessed be the name of the Lord. So, Satan lost with Job, but Satan didn't want to give up. He had an audience with God again: "As long as a person has his life, he still has hope. Up to now, harm has only come to his belongings, but wait until something happens to him personally, then he will lose his faith!" Your body is the seat of life. As a matter of fact, when your body is attacked, the whole person suffers. Then it can easily occur that one becomes bitter or doubts arise. So now, the suffering affects Job in his body as well, and he sits in a pile of ashes and scratches his wounds. The only thing that he is left with is his wife... and in this case, she appears to be a tool of Satan's. She just encourages him to deny God and also advises him to take his own life. The godly Job throws this statement away from him. "God gives much good, should we not also receive the bad from Him?" he says.

We'll leave the story for now. At this point, we must pause and question what this story wants to say to us: Job and the Job stories of our time want to say to us that ultimately, we can't control our lives, but God can. Poor and rich, saint and sinner, it can all be ripped away in a few terrible moments. And it can also turn up as with the Corona pandemic. Suddenly the whole world stands still and the foundations of human existence are called into question. When the suffering hits us personally, it hits the entire person. No one willingly chooses these bad times. What's more, we can't look behind the scenes to see what the background is. Suffering and bad circumstances must remain hidden to us. In this way it becomes clear that God is Lord over creation. We can't decide when we live and when we must die. We can only decide to a limited extent which paths we must take so that we have success and things go well for us. Ultimately, God is in heaven and decides our fate. Because in the end, God remains sovereign. God is the judge. And God is right. Even in Job's life. Maybe that's precisely what the story of Job should teach us. We can't tell God what to do or what not to do. And in the end, when the words are spoken over our graves: "Dust to dust, ashes to ashes," then, at the very latest, it will become clear that God has the last word also about us. We can do a lot in our lives. We can be successful. We can become rich or poor; healthy or sick. In the end, these words will apply to us, too: "Dust to dust, ashes to ashes." And then? The wonderful thing in the story of Job is that he lets God be God. In his life, Satan had a lot of arguments against God. Job's whole life was dismantled. Even his health. And his friends cried in his ear that he must have done something wrong. In this situation, the temptation was great to lose faith. In this situation, the temptation was great to believe that God had nothing good planned for his life. In our world, with its many troubles, we often see Satan more clearly than God. Satan speaks loudly with his work. There's hate, there are countless wars. There's injustice and innocent death. And God... yes, we are told to believe in Him even if we don't see Him.

But these words appear harsh and merciless when we must say them to someone who is in the midst of suffering. The book of Job is not for counseling, ready with an encouraging word or an explanation for the suffering, or a helpless attempt to defend God. Sometimes it is best to just stay silent in these situations.

But contrary to reason, Job never gives up hope. And he says these wonderful words, that could also have come from the New Testament. "I know that my Redeemer lives! And I will see my God!" Job never stops believing in God's grace despite his awful situation. And he doesn't only want to continue believing in God. He wants his words to be written down to be proof of God's love. "I know that my Redeemer lives!" That should be shouted throughout the world and applied against the evidence of Satan. His words are similar to Jesus, who cried on the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" and then trustingly prayed: "Into Your hands I commit my spirit." Job couldn't see Jesus yet. He

couldn't see that God was going to stand beside the wretched in such a radical way. And yet he knew this side of God well. He was so convinced of God's love that he didn't allow even the bad things with which Satan had tested him to hold sway. Rather, on good and bad days, he allowed God and His love to hold sway. I know that my Redeemer lives. Job was convinced of this gracious side of God. This gracious side of God became human in Jesus. For generations, people have found comfort again and again in this Jesus. We find comfort in this Jesus because Jesus isn't just anyone, but the One who is God among us. "He didn't come to eliminate suffering, He didn't come to explain it, but He came to fill it with His presence."

Many have tried to look behind the cross or tried to explain it. But we only ever receive the answers that God gives us to know from the Bible. He did that for us. He did it for the sake of our sin. He did it so that we can live. So that the fellowship between us and God can be restored. As we follow the Passion of Jesus in the Lenten season, we are reminded again and again that Jesus' death was not insignificant nor did it happen by chance. Rather, the cross was a path that Jesus endured with many tears and doubt and lastly with a cry of distress. But He intentionally and confidently chose this path Himself. At the cross, is a great paradox. Satan fought with all his strength. All the hatred of hell and the evil of the world as well as the political power of the state came upon Jesus. But the paradox: Satan fights Christ with all the powers available to him. Through Jesus, he celebrates his victory over Jesus. But then something else happens. In the last breath of our Lord Jesus and in His dead body, the final victory over Satan is sealed. God celebrates the victory over Satan through the cross. And confirms it with the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. I know that my Redeemer lives. Amen.