

TEXT: Job 19:23-27 THEME: JESUS—MY LIVING REDEEMER

Dear Fellow Heirs of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ:

“I know that my Redeemer lives!” One of our favorite Easter hymns makes use of this famous verse of the Bible. Handel put it to music in his oratorio, *Messiah*. Walk through a cemetery and chances are you will see the words on at least one gravestone. Nor does it take much guessing that, in our sermon series on *Jesus—Name Above Every Name*, this is the title I would choose for this happy morning: JESUS—MY LIVING REDEEMER.

But where are these words found in the Bible? And who first said them? And under what circumstances? And why? These words which have framed the resurrection of Jesus Christ were first written down in the Old Testament book of *Job*. They were spoken by *Job* himself. This is what he said: **“Oh, that my words were recorded, that they were written on a scroll, that they were inscribed with an iron tool on lead, or engraved in rock forever! I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!”** (Job 19:23-27) *NIV84*

Large truths sweep across the pages of *Job*. His three friends argue that God is just and punishes sin. That is true—and evident from the Flood of Noah’s day, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the destruction of Jerusalem and many other Biblical examples. But that is not the only principle by which God works, and it does not explain Job’s situation—the horrific loss in one day of his family, fortune, and health. Job wants answers just as we do when things go wrong. God himself speaks to Job out of a whirlwind. But strangely, God does not answer Job’s questions. God does not feel obliged to. He is God. In the end, the answer is not one of reason or philosophy at all. What comfort is logic to a man racked with pain? The book of *Job* teaches us that God loves us even when he smites, that God is just and fair even when we cannot understand him. From Job we learn how high and wide and deep is the truth that **“the just shall live by faith,”** not by brains, not by bitterly challenging our Father, but by believing that nothing can touch us that has not first been cleared by the One who loves us more than we love ourselves, who understands what we truly need more than we ourselves do.

In the middle of all his complaints, Job soars to the pinnacle of his faith in the famous verses before us: Job wants what he is about to say written down and preserved for future generations. He wants it engraved on stone. And sure enough, it has been engraved on countless gravestones down through the centuries. And when the writing on these stones has faded, the words of Job will still be there—written in the sacred Scriptures for all times—a word that shall never pass away:

“I know that my Redeemer lives!” There are a lot of things you and I don’t know. There are so many things we cannot be certain of. Our lives are often a riddle with questions unanswered, a puzzle with pieces left out and scrambled. There are all of the “what if” questions. And who can make sense out of the half-finished chapters of a human life—

things we should have done but didn't, things we wanted to do but couldn't, dreams we did not pursue and jobs we could not finish. Who knows?

But this one thing I must know. Of this one thing I must be certain. This I know, says Job, that my Redeemer lives—that death is not the end—that there is One who shall stand upon the very dust of my grave and when my skin has been destroyed, he shall literally surround me with skin again and in my flesh—glorified changed, fit for life with God in heaven—but in my flesh—I shall stand up again—I shall see God with my own resurrected eyes—not as a disembodied spirit floating about—but with my own eyes—how my heart yearns within me—longing for that day to be with Christ!

The word Job uses for “Redeemer” is a very special word on the pages of the Bible—the *goel*—the kinsman-redeemer. This is what Boaz was to Ruth in that book of the Bible—a close relative who takes your side, who comes to your aid and defense, one who is your advocate, one who is your kinsman—one who became your flesh and blood relative—who took on human flesh and blood himself to redeem you—to buy you back to God. There is only One who fits this word “Redeemer”—a living redeemer and not a dead hero—a Redeemer who was dead and is alive again and who says, “**Because I live, you also will live**” (John 14:19)—who says of every believer—“**I will raise him up at the last day**” (John 6:40). Jesus is our Redeemer, our Defender, and our Brother who came to give us back life again.

Like Job, you and I have questions about the “bad” things that happen in our lives. We ask, “Why?” and especially, “Why me?” We waste time day-dreaming about “What if...” and “If only...” But when it comes right down to it, we don't need the answers to those questions in our lives. What you need to know is the same thing that I need to know. I need to know that my Redeemer lives. I need to know that the serpent stuck its head out of the hole on Good Friday, that Christ clobbered its head with his cross and sealed the deal by rolling away the stone in Joseph's garden on Sunday morning. I need to know the glorious good news set down in the Gospels. Here is Easter: **There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. (Matthew 28:2-6).**

Over all that is sad and ugly and broken and wrong, over every sick bed and cemetery plot, over every war and disaster, this I know—that Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! I know that my Redeemer lives—and that over the graves of those I love, and over the dust of my own grave the Son of God shall stand. And the bones of Job long lost in a near eastern cave shall rise—and you and I, too—like spring after winter, like sun on the leaves—shall rise at the voice of him who said, “**I am the resurrection and the life**” (John 11:25). “*In this flesh I then shall see, Jesus Christ eternally!*” “*I know that my Redeemer lives!*” Amen.