

INI
Easter Sunday
Professor Paul Naumann

**A Fitting Epitaph for a Christian:
"I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVES"
Job 19:23-27**

Grace, mercy, and peace be with you from God the Father and from our risen Lord Jesus Christ, Amen. Today's text is taken from the Old Testament book of Job, chapter nineteen, beginning in the 23rd verse, as follows, reading from the New King James Version:

"Oh, that my words were written! Oh, that they were inscribed in a book! that they were engraved on a rock with an iron pen and lead, forever! For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!" Here ends our text.

In the Name of Jesus Christ, our Risen and Ascended Savior, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

If you could write the epitaph on your own tombstone, what would it be? Imagine yourself poised over the granite, hammer and chisel in hand -- what words will you put down? Well, you'll probably want it to reflect something virtuous or admirable about yourself. You might want to flatter yourself a little, though you'll certainly also want to be truthful about yourself. Perhaps you'll write, "Here lies a man who worked hard and was the best at what he did," or, "Rest in Peace, a woman dearly loved by all her family." Maybe the only sure thing about it is that your epitaph will obviously say something about you. Which only makes sense, doesn't it? What kind of person would write about somebody *else* on his own tombstone?

-- A person like Job, that's who! In our text for this Easter Sunday, we meet a man who endured more sorrow and hardship than all of us here put together. In the midst of his affliction, there was one thought that he clung to - one truth so powerful and overwhelming that he wished he could write it down forever in stone. In fact, he felt so close to death that he figured it might as well be his tombstone! But the words Job wanted to be remembered by weren't about himself at all - they were about Jesus Christ! On this anniversary of our Lord's resurrection, we will therefore consider:

**A Fitting Epitaph for a Christian:
"I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVES!"**

- I. I have a REDEEMER.
- II. My Redeemer is ALIVE.
- III. I will live ALSO.

Have you ever had something happen to you in your life that was so painful, and seemed so unfair, that you were angry with God? I've been tempted that way. Perhaps you have, too. The patriarch Job certainly was! In a single day, the devil took away from Job his wealth, his livelihood, his children, and even his health. His wife wasn't a whole lot of help - she urged him to give up. "*Curse God and die!*" she said. Three of Job's friends showed up, supposedly to comfort him, and ended up making things worse. Basically, what they said was: "That's what you get! If you're suffering terribly, then you must have done something terrible to deserve it."

Well, Job knew that wasn't right. He knew he was a sinner, alright, but he also knew that God doesn't punish sins by sending trouble into the lives of His children. But he was terribly perplexed and upset. Job never cursed God, but he did come awfully close. He cursed the day of his own birth. He complained about his lot in life. He questioned God's justice in allowing him to suffer, while wicked unbelievers were living in luxury and comfort. We often speak of "the patience of Job," but the fact is that Job is patient for about two chapters, then for the next 38 or so chapters of the book, Job is very *impatient* indeed. Very depressed, very saddened, and very perplexed about the suffering he's going through. However -- right in the middle of these 38 chapters of questions and complaints, there is a startling statement of hope on the part of Job. It comes in chapter 19, and it makes up our text for today.

Have you ever noticed how brilliant a small shaft of sunlight can be in an otherwise darkened room? One day I was shooting at our local gun range in the small town where we used to live. It was right around noon and I was all by myself. When I went to leave and turned out the lights, the building (which has no windows) was plunged into darkness. But there must have been a small hole in the steel roof of the building, because halfway down the range the darkness was pierced by a single, brilliant shaft of light. It was so bright it looked like a laser beam cutting through the middle of all that empty blackness! Today's text is like that - a shaft of light in the darkness. In the middle of all his black despair and suffering, Job suddenly lights up the darkness with a beautiful statement of hope! He says, "*Oh, that my words were written! Oh, that they were inscribed in a book! that they were engraved on a rock with an iron pen and lead, forever! For I know that my Redeemer lives!*"

At this point, Job has said a lot of things about himself, and about God -- and some of these things he will soon regret. But when it comes to setting down something in stone for his descendants to read - something he'd like to be remembered by - he knows exactly what he wants to say. If Job had to write his own epitaph, he'd say, "Write this on my stone: I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVES!"

What about you? If we look back, you and I have to admit that, like Job, our lives have not been perfect examples of faith and trust. We've done our share of complaining, and murmuring against God, and second-guessing His decisions in our lives. We, too, have been shortsighted -- so wrapped up in the fears and tears of the little world around us that we seldom give a thought to eternity, or to our gracious God. Trivial things get our attention, while eternal things go neglected. We'd never miss our favorite TV show,

but we miss our prayers. We'd never miss a local sporting event, but we miss worship services. We read the sports section of the paper faithfully, but reading the Bible, well -- we just don't seem to get around to it! Then as He often does the Lord sends a bit of suffering into our lives in order to call us back to His side, and all we can do is complain. "Life is terrible!" we cry. "This is all so unfair! Why did it have to be me?!"

Let's face it - I've done that to one degree or another, and so have you. But is that what you want to be remembered for? Is that the epitaph you'd like to have written on your tombstone? "Here Lies So-And-So. Questioned God and Complained About His Life." That's not what Job wanted, and I'm sure it's not what you and I want, either. If we're going to choose a fitting epitaph - for our life and for our death - we couldn't do better than to borrow the words of Job, "I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVES."

I wonder if you realize how many important truths we're confessing when we say those words. In the first place, each of us is confessing, "**I have a REDEEMER**". The word "redeemer" means one who delivers you from some evil by the payment of a certain price. In Old Testament times, for instance, a slave could be "redeemed" out of his slavery if someone (his "redeemer") could come up with enough money to pay off the master.

The Apostle Paul tells us that human beings are, by nature, slaves to sin. "*For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, SOLD UNDER SIN.*" -- Rom 7:14. And the wages of sin is eternal death. Just like Job, however, you too can say, "I have a REDEEMER!" There was One who was willing to stand up on your behalf, and pay the ransom price necessary to deliver you from eternal death. The ransom was a steep one: it couldn't be paid in gold or silver - Jesus had to pay it with His own precious blood, and with His innocent suffering and death. But He DID pay it. Paul says, "*In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.*" -- Eph 1:7.

With Job I confess that Jesus Christ is my Redeemer, the one who paid that price for me. -You notice I keep saying "me" and "my," and I hope you put it in those personal terms, too! Because redemption is a very personal thing. In fact it's not an exaggeration to say that *even if you were the only sinful person in the world*, Jesus would gladly have redeemed you. For you alone, He would have borne the whip and the crown of thorns. Simply to save *you*, Jesus would have let Himself be nailed to the cross and hoisted up to die between two criminals. The agony of soul and body, the mockery of men and the rejection of God -- all this Christ would have endured for you alone, if need be. In the event, He did endure all this, not for you alone or me alone, but to redeem the whole world. The Bible says, "*Jesus Himself is the payment for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.*" -- I Jn 2:2.

Now here's something worth crowing about! Here's something well worth writing down on a stone monument: "I have a Redeemer." But Job says more than that. Look at our text again. "*For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth...*" Job confesses his faith in a **Redeemer who is ALIVE!**

Years ago, there used to be a custom among some of the older Lutheran churches, where an empty church would represent the empty tomb of Christ. At Easter Sunday services, after the first hymn was sung, the pastor would lead the entire congregation out of the church. Everyone would walk around the building, making one complete circuit, and then gather at the front doors again. The pastor would go to look inside the now empty church, come back out again, and loudly announce, "The Lord is risen!" The people would respond with an enthusiastic "He is risen, indeed!" Then everyone would file back in, and the service would continue. It may sound a little over-dramatic to you, but I can see the point. It's an unforgettable way to impress on every member of the congregation that our Redeemer is ALIVE. There was no body in Jesus' tomb on that first Easter Sunday, and there is no body there today. The words the angels spoke to the women there at the Garden Tomb are a fitting epitaph for Jesus' grave: *"He is risen; He is not here: behold the place where they laid him!"* -- Lk 16:6.

Jesus rose from the dead and stood before His disciples. With the eyes of faith, Job pictured the scene many hundreds of years before it ever happened: *"I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth."* Job's prophesy came true, and stands fulfilled as the most important fact in the history of mankind. Jesus is ALIVE - proving to the world that He is who He said He is: the one and only Savior of the mankind. Not just a wonderful example, not just a fine moral teacher, but your Brother, who loved you enough to take on human flesh like yours, and die in your place.

Jesus is ALIVE - proving that His redemptive work has been completed, and all our sins are paid for. Into the darkness of Job's guilt flashed that single piercing ray of joy: no matter what his sins, His living Redeemer would cleanse him from them all!

My fellow believers, I hope you'll let that ray of joy and freedom shine on you and warm you this Easter Sunday. It's so sad the way the devil tortures Christians, using all his cunning to convince them that certain of their sins have not been forgiven. My dear friends, it's not true -- and the resurrection PROVES it's not true! Our God is a just God, and the fact is that if you had a single sin that Jesus had failed to pay for, then *He could never have risen on Easter Sunday.*

But His redemptive work WAS accomplished, and the sins of the world WERE completely paid for. And to put His official "stamp of approval" on the work Jesus did, God the Father raised Him from the dead on the third day. In the Book of Romans we read, *"Christ was delivered for our offenses, and was raised for our justification."* -- Rom 4:25.

Herbert Booth Smith once said, "The biggest fact about the Garden Tomb is that it wasn't a tomb at all - it was a room for a transient. Jesus just stopped there a night or two on his way back to glory." The grave was not Christ's final destination, and neither is it ours. Job may have been afflicted, he may have been weak and perplexed by his circumstances, but this was one thing he was absolutely convinced about. *"And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for*

myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another." Job was convinced that he would rise to meet his Savior face to face on the Day of Judgment. Here is something truly fitting, that any Christian could be proud to have written on his gravestone: "I know that my Redeemer lives -- and that **I WILL LIVE ALSO!**"

This is the most important, and most comforting thing about the resurrection of our Savior. Jesus said, *"Because I live, YOU shall live also!"* -- *Jn 14:19*. Christ's resurrection from the dead is our ironclad guarantee that we will also rise to eternal life one Day. *"He who believes in Me,"* Jesus promises, *"though he may die, he shall live."* If you believe in Jesus as your only Savior from sin, then you *are* going to live forever in heaven. Not "maybe..." Not "there's a pretty good chance that..." It's a sure thing. Rejoice! Revel in the Good News that the Resurrection brings! Your Savior is alive, and your triumph is all but complete. Even now He's getting your place in heaven ready for you, making the final adjustments, and looking forward to your arrival. Christ said, *"In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you."* -- *John 14:2*.

Well, here all this time I've left you holding that hammer and chisel. You're poised over your tombstone, trying to decide what to write. But maybe you've already decided. Perhaps you agree with Job: I have a redeemer, my Redeemer is alive, and I'm going to live also! If that's the way you feel, then maybe you can just copy Job and write, "I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVES." Or on second thought, perhaps we shouldn't write anything at all over our graves -- after all, like Jesus, **we're not going to be there very long, anyway! AMEN.**