

My Redeemer Is Faithful and True

16th April 2023

Reading: Job 19:23-27

“Oh, that my words were recorded, that they were written on a scroll,
24 that they were inscribed with an iron tool on lead, or engraved in rock forever!
25 **I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand on the earth.**”

Sermon

There are some books of the Bible that we return to again and again, finding inspiration and encouragement from them. We like to look at the life of Esther and her courage in saving a nation from death. We enjoy the story of Ruth and God’s beautiful act of redemption; after all, it is a short book and it has a happy ending! We dip into the Psalms and Isaiah to read God’s powerful promises to His people. Job is not one of those books.

The first five verses set the scene of Job’s life for us. Firstly, we find out that he was a man who knew God and desired to live rightly before Him. Job is described as being ‘blameless and upright... one who feared God and shunned evil.’ (Job 1:1) His heart was right before God and it was important to him to prioritise holiness. Secondly, he was prosperous in all areas of his life. He had a large household, along with 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen and 500 female donkeys. This detail is given to explain why he was recognised as ‘the greatest of all the people in the East.’ (1:3)

Five verses to describe Job’s life. Then everything changed. Satan went before God and claimed that Job was only righteous because God had made his life so easy for him. Satan’s thought was that if adversity entered Job’s life, then this righteousness would prove to be superficial and Job’s desire to honour God would collapse.

Satan set out to bring great adversity into Job’s life. His livestock was either stolen or killed. His children died in a hurricane.

We are told at this point that ‘in all this Job did not sin.’ He grieved greatly for all he had lost, but still honoured God, saying:

“The LORD gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.” (1:21)

Then, Satan afflicted Job with painful boils all over his body. After seven days of silence, Job cursed the day of his birth, which we see in chapter 3. What follows is a mixture of Job’s three friends coming up with different theories as to why Job had been so afflicted and Job expressing his emotional pain and sense of betrayal that God would allow these things to happen to him.

The book of Job is 42 chapters long. Chapters 3 to 37 detail this process of trying to figure out why God allowed these terrible things to happen. Whilst we see what happened behind the scenes, Job had no idea why catastrophe had so destroyed his happy life. He had not changed his behaviour, he had not sinned as far as he could see, yet he had lost his family, his wealth, the respect of his community, his health. He had lost his joy, his peace, his contentment.

It is natural to want to know why something has happened, because when we know the reason or cause we can do something to put it right. If we do not know the answer to 'why' we struggle even more. We end up dealing with the circumstances and, on top of that, wrestling with questions of faith: why has God allowed this, why is He not fixing this, what is His purpose in this, where is He whilst I am going through this?

By the time we arrive in chapter 19, Job was at the end of his tether. He accused his friends of tormenting his soul with their arguments and attempts to reason out why these things had happened. Job had just one conclusion at this point: it was God's fault. He said to his friends,

“Know then that God has wronged me... If I cry out concerning wrong, I am not heard. If I cry aloud, there is no justice. He has fenced up my way, so that I cannot pass; and He has set darkness in my paths. He has stripped me of my glory, and taken the crown from my head. He breaks me down on every side, and I am gone; my hope He has uprooted like a tree.” (19:6-10)

Does it feel wrong to read that out? Should we not focus on passages where people have said that God has heard them and responded? God did not need to have this book included in the Bible. So we can conclude that He wanted these 34 chapters of doubt and anguish in His Scriptures for us to engage with.

We are not promised blue skies and easy times throughout our lives. On the contrary, we are told in John that we should expect struggle and be prepared for that. (John 16:32) The more I read the Bible, the more I read it as a tool that prepares us to deal with struggle and adversity. So, I now read Job in that light. This was a man whose trust in God had been profoundly shaken in extreme adversity. There may well be times in life when we know that shaking of our faith; when we question what we know about God. That is part of our being prepared: to know that it is not just us who experiences these things. It shows us that it is right to express what we are going through.

However, it also shows us that during this season of pain and darkness, because of this season of questioning and wrestling with God, Job came to stand on a fundamental truth. This happened whilst he was still in the struggle and whilst he was still without any assurance that there would be a positive outcome. He was so convinced of this truth that he wished that it was written down: in a book or, even better, engraved on a rock with an iron pen so that these words would be there forever as a testimony of this truth.

“I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the Earth.” (NKJV)

By God's grace, Job got what he desired in that moment: his words of faith recorded for all time. They are indeed recorded in a book that will last as long as the Earth does; his words are as powerful now as when he spoke them out. They are part of this manual that God has given us for running our race of faith on Earth.

My Redeemer

Firstly, Job referred to God as Redeemer.

In the Old Testament, we see the act of redemption as a legal process in the book of Ruth. She had been left widowed and impoverished; but had chosen to place her trust in the God of Israel. Her mother-in-law trusted in their kinsman-redeemer to provide for Ruth. This was not to be a cold-blooded process of looking to someone to provide hand-outs of money or food. The kinsman-redeemer married Ruth and brought her into his own home, to love and provide for her his life long.

This personal image is the one that God Himself wants us to remember. In Hosea, He talks of Israel as an unfaithful wife, but one He wishes to redeem and welcome back into His provision and protection. In Isaiah, God promised to bring back all those who had been exiled because He loved them:

But now, thus says the Lord, who created you, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel:

“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called *you* by your name; You *are* Mine.

² When you pass through the waters, I *will be* with you;

And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you.

When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you.

³ For I *am* the Lord **your** God, The Holy One of Israel, **your** Saviour;

Isaiah 43:1-3

These are not the words of someone who is merely going through a legal transaction of redeeming an object. These are the words of our God, who passionately wants us to be in close relationship with Him; who wants us to be dwelling in His presence, in His provision and protection. He describes Himself as **your** God, **your** Saviour. This is personal to each one of us. We are not to fear because we have been redeemed by our God, who knows each one of us by name, who created us and who claims us as His own.

We have been redeemed by someone who loves us more than we can know. And Job claimed that relationship. He said, “I know that **my** Redeemer lives.” Not **our** Redeemer, not **the** Redeemer, but **my** Redeemer. In the middle of all the trauma and catastrophe, Job stood on the truth that his God was in the redemption business.

My Redeemer lives...

This seems such an obvious point to us, because we read it after Jesus came and died and rose again. We use this statement in relation to the resurrection. Job was not in that situation. He spoke this out long before the Messiah came. So what was His purpose in stating, ‘my Redeemer *lives*’.

Job was in a position where God seemed to have left him. Perhaps he was tempted to feel that maybe there was no God after all, that God was just another idol.

Idolatry is one of the threads we see running through the Old Testament. Time and time again, God’s beloved chosen people, Israel, wanted to be like the other nations around and copied their pagan practices. Even in the months after God had miraculously delivered His people from slavery in Egypt, Israel decided it would be better to have an idol. Moses, who was leading them, had gone up the mountain to meet with God and those meetings could last for days and weeks. In this gap, the people complained that Moses had abandoned them and told Aaron, the priest, to “make us gods that shall go before us.” (Ex. 32: 1) Aaron took gold and made them a golden calf.

Then they said, “This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!” (Ex. 32:4)

This ‘god’ was made of gold: melted down, moulded and engraved by human hands. It had not done anything. It had certainly not led them out of Egypt. How could it? It had only just been created... by them. It did not think, speak, act. It was a thing. An object without life. Idols could not compare to the Living God. Idols could not redeem anyone. Idols could not act for good or evil in anyone’s life. Idols could not save anyone from evil.

It is always interesting to see what name God uses for Himself in different situations in the Bible. Redeemer is a name used frequently in the book of Isaiah, along with names such as the Holy One or Mighty One of Israel. At a time when God was repeatedly calling His people to return to Him in repentance, He reminded them that He was their Redeemer. He was (and is) the only living, holy and mighty Redeemer of mankind.

Job wanted to make it abundantly clear that his God was no idol: his God was the one true, *living* God. No one had created Job’s God out of wood or gold. Job’s God could not be packed into a bag and moved from

one place to another. Job's God was living: He heard all things, saw all things, knew all things. Job's God had power, ability and character. Job's God could redeem both people and their circumstances.

This was a statement of truth and a statement of faith, upon which Job *chose* to stand. He believed that putting his trust in God was the best thing he could possibly do in the dark times, because no one else could bring redemption into his life. No one else could bring good out of the situation. Without a living Redeemer, there was nothing on which to base his hope for the future. In the dark times, we need to know that God can take all that Satan means for evil and work it out for good. We need to know that Satan does not have the final say on anything!

In the end He will stand on the earth...

Long before the promised Messiah came. Job spoke out in faith that his Redeemer would stand on the Earth and we know that Job was right to trust in God's promise. But it was far more than standing on Earth for a few minutes and then leaving again. Jesus, the son of God, lived from birth to death and resurrection life amongst mankind in order to redeem us. God surpassed Job's expectation in this.

The Greek word for redemption (*apolutrosis*) is defined as:

A release secured by the payment of a ransom, deliverance, setting free. The word in secular Greek described a conqueror releasing prisoners, a master ransoming a slave... In the NT it designates deliverance through Christ from evil and the penalty of sin. The price paid to purchase that liberation was His shed blood. (apolutrosis)

The penalty for *our* sin, was death. *We* were the sinners; *we* were the offenders. Our God's act of redemption involved allowing Himself to be put to death instead of us. In Romans 5: 6 and 8, Paul put it like this:

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly... But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Col. 2:13-15 says,

When you were dead in your sins ... God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, *having cancelled the charge* of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; He has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

Satan thought that Jesus' death would be the end of any salvation plan. How wrong he was! Jesus triumphed over His enemies, making a public spectacle of them! Death was not the end for Jesus and, because of His death and resurrection, death is not the end for us either.

We have a choice in this. We need to accept Jesus fully into our lives, as our Lord and Saviour because...

We are slaves to sin until we accept the salvation of Christ.

We are imprisoned in darkness until we accept the light of Christ.

We are spiritually destitute until we accept Christ as our kinsman-redeemer and become part of His Bride, welcome at the wedding feast He will one day hold.

In the One Friday display we had before Easter, there was a focus on the things Jesus experienced on His journey to the cross: fear, betrayal, judgement, disloyalty and powerlessness. These were all things that Job also experienced: all the good that he knew had been stripped away and he was left in pain and bewilderment, without any understanding of why this complete reversal of his circumstances had taken place. Job had a choice about his relationship with God here. He could continue to stand in faith or he could decide to walk away.

When we have times of trouble or trauma, we have that same choice. Do we walk away or continue to stand in faith? Job chose to stand firm, trusting in his Redeemer. Later on in the book of Job, we find him trusting that God was working out something in him that was more valuable than gold. Finally, at the end of the book, we find him encountering his Redeemer in a new and powerful way. And, yes, there is a happy ending.

We will know trouble in our lives and we choose to take up our cross, as Jesus did, and follow Him on the pathways that we do not want to take. But, like Him, we walk with resolution.

How? By reminding ourselves that Jesus did not have to walk that path. At any time, He could have called the whole thing off. But He loved us. He loved us in Gethsemane, in the courtroom, on the walk to Golgotha, on the cross. He had chosen to take the punishment for our sin and die for us. Through that suffering, Jesus bought our salvation.

Because Jesus loved His disciples and they loved Him, they took up their crosses and followed Jesus. Because Jesus loved them and they loved Him, the disciples left their homes to preach the Gospel. In so doing, they were beaten, abused, persecuted, exiled and martyred. But through walking those pathways, many people accepted the redemption of Christ. Many people came to know that Jesus loved them and they came to love Him. The disciples lived their lives out of love for Christ, for the salvation of many and for the glory that awaited them in His presence for eternity. We need that attitude: of love for Christ, the desire for many to receive Christ and the knowledge that there is a glory to come that will far outweigh what we go through on Earth.

In the meantime, we remember that God's word to us is true:

Jesus has defeated sin and death.

Rev. 1:18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

Jesus has gone before us to prepare a place for us and will return for us.

John 14:2-3 "My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I *will* come back and take you to be with Me that you also may be where I am.

We will be with Him forever, in a new Heaven and new Earth, where all is made new.

2 Peter 3:13 'But in keeping with His promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.'

Satan has lost.

Rev. 20:10 'And the devil ... was thrown into the lake of burning sulphur ... for ever and ever.'

Faithful and true is a description of God's character. He is not deceitful or unreliable, but faithful to His promises, faithful to His people, true to His word.

But Faithful and True is also His name. When John had his vision of Heaven, he saw,

“heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True.” (Rev. 19:11)

This is how much God wants us to be assured of His commitment to His promises. Jesus is the Living One, who was dead and who is now alive forever and ever. In the end of time, Jesus will return as He promised to do. He will come as the one called Faithful and True, riding out of heaven on a white horse.

He will come back and take us to be with Him so that we can spend eternity with Him in the place He has prepared for us. We, the redeemed, will see Him face to face. We will live in a place where righteousness dwells, rather than evil.

Conclusion:

I mentioned a song that God gave me for this sermon and we will listen to it in a moment. It begins with a verse of 'Great is Thy Faithfulness' and continues with a a song of testimony by Steven Curtis Chapman. He says this:

As I look back on the road I've travelled,
I see so many times He carried me through;
And if there's one thing that I've learned in my life,
My Redeemer is faithful and true.
My Redeemer is faithful and true.

*My Redeemer is faithful and true.
Everything He has said He will do,
And every morning His mercies are new.
My Redeemer is faithful and true.*

My heart rejoices when I read the promise
'There is a place I am preparing for you.'
I know someday I'll see my Lord face to face,
'Cause my Redeemer is faithful and true.
My Redeemer is faithful and true.

And in every situation He has proved His love to me;
When I lack the understanding, He gives more grace to me.

At the end, the speaker says this: “If the slain Christ is your Song, then you and all the redeemed with you, may hope and be sure that the day is coming when suffering will be no more but singing will last forever.”