

**St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church-WELS  
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz  
Epiphany 5 February 8, 2009 Job 7:1-7**



**“Does not man have hard service on earth? Are not his days like those of a hired man? Like a slave longing for the evening shadows, or a hired man waiting eagerly for his wages, so I have been allowed months of futility, and nights of misery have been assigned to me. When I lie down I think, ‘How long before I get up?’ The night drags on, and I toss till dawn. My body is clothed with worms and scabs; my skin is broken and festering. My days are swifter than a waver’s shuttle, and they come to an end without hope. Remember, O God, that my life is but a breath; my eyes will never see happiness again.”**

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

“Life isn’t fair – get used to it!” I can’t remember how small I was the first time I heard that. “Life isn’t fair!” Did you know that? It’s just a little over a year ago – early in the morning – at a *Lane Bryant* store in Tinley Park – suburban Chicago – a man posing as a delivery man – takes 6 ladies hostage – hustles them into the back room where he ties them up with duct tape and covers their heads. One lady – the manager – gets loose – and calls 911. The enraged robber – yells at her – so the police have a recording of his voice! Then he shoots her dead. Then he shoots all the other hostages dead, too. Well, almost. One of the hostages is only wounded – but she pretends to be dead – until the robber leaves. So – 5 innocent ladies are dead. The one who called the police – loved Jesus very much! She was only 42 years old. She wasn’t even supposed to be at work that day – but came in any way – because it was supposed to be very busy – and she thought they could use her help! This lady loved Jesus so much – she spent all her free time – trying to teach other people law and gospel! It doesn’t seem fair that she should be murdered. One victim was the mom of 2 children – including a 10 year old – with spina bifida. One was the mom of 3 children – all under the age of 8. Now – they will all grow up – without their mom! And the police still have not caught the cold blooded murderer? It isn’t because they haven’t tried. 12 detectives have been working full time on this case. They know exactly what this guy looks like – and they know what he sounds like. They have spent more than 30,000 hours tracking down leads. And more than one year later – they have yet to make an arrest. That’s not fair either. Every morning – a pastor from nearby drags a 10 foot crucifix through the parking lot – to remember what happened there. I don’t really understand that either. Today we want to think about the times when terrible things happen to people who love Jesus. And why it sometimes seems like the wicked go through life without any problems at all. At first it just doesn’t seem fair – until we remember:

**The LORD Remembers Me!**

- 1. He gives meaning to my life and**
- 2. He changes the meaning of my death**

The part of God’s Word we are concentrating on – is one of the five books of poetry in the Old Testament – the book of Job. Again, kind of like Jonah and the whale – even people who know very little about God’s Word know something about the sufferings of patient Job. God’s Word says Job lived in the land of Uz. We don’t know for sure *where* Uz was. Most likely it was a place in Northern Arabia. We don’t know for sure *when* Job lived either. Again – most likely during the time of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. That would be almost 2,000 years before baby

Jesus was born. That's a long time ago! But what happened to Job is a lesson for we who live 2,000 years after Jesus came into this world to redeem us from all our sin and guilt. The story of Job reminds us that the troubles and problems we have in life – are not punishment for our sins and mistakes. If they were – if something terrible happened to us – to balance out all our sins – then we would all be in the forever flames of hell. No – the painful and difficult things that happen to believers all work to the forever glory of God. All the painful and difficult things that happen to us – work for our ultimate spiritual good. All the painful things that God *allows* to happen to us – somehow are because the LORD loves us.

In the beginning – humanly speaking everything was going very well for Job. God's Word says, Job **"was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. He had 7 sons and 3 daughters; and he owned 7,000 sheep and 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen and 500 donkeys, and he had a large number of servants. He was the greatest man among all the people of the East."** Job 1:2,3 It wasn't just that Job had lots and lots of *"things and stuff"*. First and foremost – Job had a wonderful relationship with his Heavenly Father. Blameless and upright does not mean Job didn't do sins. Job was born with the sin he inherited from his birth mom and birth dad. He did sins all the time – just like I do. But Job was blameless and upright – that is *forgiven!* The LORD – the God of grace and mercy forgave all Job's sins – by grace through faith – the very same way our sins are forgiven. Job feared God – that is in fear and love he did everything he could to avoid sin – he **shunned evil!**

The next part is not easy to understand. God's Word says, **One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them. The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it." Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil." "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face." Then the LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger. Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD. Job 1:6-12** It's hard to imagine – the devil allowed to come anywhere near the Holy LORD God – much less to have a conversation with him. And what happens next is horrible to be sure. Sabaeans – people from Yemen attack and steal all Job's oxen and donkeys and kill all the servants taking care of them – except one to come and tell the bad news. While that servant is still talking another comes to say, **"The fire of God fell from the sky and burned up all the sheep and servants – save one to report the bad news. He's still talking when another comes and says the Chaldeans – Babylonians formed 3 raiding parties and stole all your camels – and killed those servants, too. He's still talking when another comes to say, "Your sons and daughters were feasting and drinking wine at the oldest brother's house, when suddenly a mighty wind swept in from the desert and struck the four corners of the house. It collapsed on them and they are all dead, and I am the only one who has escaped to tell you!"** Can you imagine that much heart ache and loss – all at once? While we might think we would literally be overwhelmed and lose our mind – Job spoke words we repeat still today, 4,000 years later – at the grave side of people who have fallen asleep in Christ. We say, **"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised."** In all this Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing. Job 1:21,22

Another day and Satan shows up before the LORD again. **“Have you considered my servant Job? – still he maintains his integrity though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason.”** **“Skin for skin!”** Satan replied. **“A man will give all he has for his own life. But stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face.”** The LORD said to Satan, **“Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life.”** So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head. Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes. His wife said to him, **“Are you still holding on to your integrity? Curse God and die!”** He replied, **“You are talking like a foolish woman. Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?”**

**“Does not man have hard service on earth? Are not his days like those of a hired man? Like a slave longing for the evening shadows, or a hired man waiting eagerly for his wages, so I have been allowed months of futility, and nights of misery have been assigned to me. When I lie down I think, ‘How long before I get up?’ The night drags on, and I toss till dawn.”** It has been called a *rat race* and a *tread mill* – working. You can see it written on a person’s hands. When I was growing up – I had uncles who worked in factories. They were missing fingers from punch presses. I had no idea what a punch press did – except it could smash your fingers clean off. You can see it on the hands of farmers. Their hands are strong. They have calluses – from being rubbed the same place over and over again. Sometimes – in the winter – when they have to do jobs where you can’t wear gloves – they become so cold they literally crack and bleed. Speaking of cracked hands – sometimes mommy hands become dry, too, from washing and scrubbing and cleaning – with harsh detergents and cleansers and disinfectants – literally on your hands and knees scrubbing and cleaning from very early in the morning until late into the night – dishes and laundry and the floor and the carpet. Hard work is written on the hands of people who work on machines and engines – where the oil stains around the fingernails – and in every little crack around your finger prints. You can see it on hands that have been burned again and again where you are by things that are hot. You can see it on hands that have been cut again and again – by things that are sharp. The ultimate hands are the hands of a Carpenter from Nazareth – hands engraved by the wounds of nails. Jesus’ hands are marked with the price he paid to wash away all our sins and failures!

**My body is clothed with worms and scabs; my skin is broken and festering.** When the devil attacked Job’s body – he knew what he was doing. There is seemingly no end to the hurt and harm that can befall the human body. It never ceases to amaze me – how much pain and suffering the human body can endure and not die. There are all kinds of cancers – a disease that can cause unspeakable pain. There is HIV-AIDS that is horrible to watch. There is Parkinsons – a painful disease. And there is Alzheimer’s – just one of many kinds of dementia – where your body remains strong – while your mind fails more and more. Worms and scabs – skin broken and festering is horrible. Mental and emotional diseases can be horrible too – deep inside a person’s heart and mind where you can’t put a bandage! All these painful problems – daily reminders of the wages of sin that we work overtime to earn. Only Jesus can save us. Only Jesus gives us hope.

**My days are swifter than a waver’s shuttle, and they come to an end without hope. Remember, O God, that my life is but a breath; my eyes will never see happiness again.”** How far back can you remember? What is the earliest childhood memory you have? It’s kind of confusing. Some things that happened when you were really little – your parents have told you about it – again and again – and maybe showed you pictures – old photographs--so that you know exactly what happened – but it’s not that you actually remember the event. Before you

know it—you are getting lifted onto the first step of the bus—and you are off to preschool and kindergarten. The next thing you know—you are getting confirmed. You are taking driver's ed—you have to take all those tests—to get into college. You get a degree—you get married—you have 2.8 kids—and before you know it—they are going to school. Before you know it—even though you don't think you look old enough—and certainly don't feel like it—you are a grandpa or a grandma. Your hair gets grey then white then thin. You get aches and pains. You can't eat spicy food if it's late. You can't drink anything the way you used to. Before you know it—you are worried about how you can afford to be retired. Before you know it—you pass away. And the first thing your children do—is order a dumpster to literally throw away about ½ of what used to be your stuff. The other half gets divided into half for the garage sale—and half for the survivors to fight over. And that's the end of that! Where did a lifetime go—reduced in the Watertown Daily Times to a column of print two inches wide and 8 inches long. Your whole life reduced to 16 square inches—minus a picture of your face! Our life is like a breath—so quickly gone! What is the point? Getting ready to go home to heaven. That's all that really matters. That's all that counts—spending 60, 70 or 80 years getting ready to spend eternity by Jesus. 4,000 years ago—Job understood. That's why he could say, **“I know that my Redeemer lives!”**

**“My eyes will never see happiness again.”** Do you know how that feels—to think you will never see happiness again? Do you remember the first time you kissed someone? I mean when you were on a date with someone you really *really* cared about—and you held their hand—then put your arms around them—and you kissed them? And then one day they tell you—you know what—I don't love you that way. Let's just be friends? And you feel like somebody just reached inside and ripped out your heart? Do you know what that feels like? Do you know what it feels like—when the phone rings—and somebody on the other end tells you you need to come to the hospital as fast as you can—because someone you love—I don't know—just had a heart attack—or they were in a car accident—or something—I don't know what—just happened—and you need to come to the Emergency Room. Do you know how that feels? And that doesn't begin to think about babies and little people—that you love more than life itself—little people that are so very *very* breakable! **My eyes will never see happiness again.** If you haven't felt that yet—you will. The powerful good news I can tell you is—because Jesus died and rose again—because all our sins are forgiven—we will see happiness again—in Heaven. Jesus promised. And Jesus always keeps all his promises. Amen!

To God alone all glory!

*Rev. Anthony L. Schultz*