

February 7, 2021 – The Fifth Sunday after Epiphany
Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Beaver Dam, Wisconsin

Job 7:1-7 –

Isn't man's time on earth like being compelled to serve in the army? Aren't his days like those of a hired man?

² Like a slave, he longs for shade, or like a day laborer, he waits for his pay.

³ In the same way, I have been allotted months of futility, and nights of agony have been assigned to me.

⁴ When I lie down, I think, "How long before I get up?" But the night drags on, and I am filled with restlessness until dawn.

⁵ My flesh is clothed with maggots and caked with dirt. My skin scabs over and then oozes again.

⁶ My days pass by more swiftly than the shuttle of a weaver's loom. They come to an end without hope.

⁷ Remember that my life is just a breath. My eyes will never see good fortune.

REMEMBER ME, O GOD, MY HOPE HAS NOT CHANGED

In the name of Jesus, our Savior, dear fellow children of our loving God.

Let's begin this morning by quickly reviewing a little bit about the life of Job. Scripture doesn't tell us when Job lived, but it is often suggested that he may have lived during the time of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God has blessed him richly, giving him a large family and great wealth. He was a rancher and farmer. When God spoke with Satan about the faithfulness of Job, Satan challenged God by claiming that Job wouldn't be so faithful, if God hasn't been so good to him. So God allowed Job's children and all of his possessions to be in Satan's hands. In one day Satan destroyed Job's family and wiped out all his crops and cattle. But Job remained faithful to God. Satan again challenged God by claiming that if Job's physical well-being was compromised that then he would curse God. So God permitted Satan to afflict Job with illness and skin disease.

But Job did not curse God, even though his wife encouraged him to do just that. Job's three friends weren't much help either. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zopher came to comfort him, but basically accused him of a great sin and told him to repent. Our text today is part of Job's response after the first speech of Eliphaz. We hear about his miserable condition: He was discontent, sleepless at night and longing for rest during the day, sickened by oozing scabs on his skin and frustrated by what seemed to be his life so very quickly passing away. But in all of this Job never gave up his hope in salvation from God. While he questioned God and pleaded with God to explain why this was happening to him, his trust though attacked never gave up. We hear Job save in these verses,

Remember Me, O God, My Hope Hasn't Changed!

What kind of traumatic experience have you had in your life? Perhaps it was a car accident? Or a fall that caused significant injury? Maybe it was the death of your spouse or some other loved one? How about the loss of a job and the resulting job search? Maybe going to a large high school after attending a small elementary school? How about a move to a foreign country? That was mine. Not the first one. That was relatively easy. Germany is a first world country and there are adjustments, but we did that one pretty well. But the move from Germany to St. Lucia? Well that didn't go so well.

The differences between a first world country and a third world country can be pretty extreme. I very clearly remember getting out of my car and yelling at St. Lucia driver for his dangerous driving. Of course later it was clear that getting past the car in front of you is just normal driving, even if the traffic is backed up a mile and you might save yourself five seconds. It was a really good “Ugly American” move on my part.

No matter what traumas we have been through, I think I am pretty safe in saying that none of us has been through what Job was experiencing as we come to chapter seven.

While his eternal hopes never changed Job certainly had to adjust his earthly hopes. No more could he hope to hold his grandchildren in his arms. Any goals of improving his ranching and farming skills were dashed. Every thought of handing his business off to his children had been dashed.

That sounds pretty familiar doesn't it? What are your hopes now compared to what they were just one year ago? I heard on the news that it was year ago on this past Friday that the first COVID case in Wisconsin was diagnosed and that was only 12th case in all of the United States! So what is your hope now? To get a vaccination? To NOT catch COVID? To be free to hug your grandkids or grandparents? To be able to take down these ropes in the pews and have a potluck fellowship meal? We know all too well that in earthly life events happen and our hopes get changed and they have to be readjusted.

That's what Job had to do. In his suffering Job hoped for change. He wanted understanding of why all those earthly hopes had been ripped away. He wanted relief from his agony, both the physical and emotional suffering. He said he felt like he had been drafted into the army, forced into something he wanted to have nothing to do with. During the day he wanted the light to go away and in the night he couldn't wait for the light to return. He wanted clear skin and freedom from maggots.

In verse six he describes his emotions: *My days pass by more swiftly than the shuttle of a weaver's loom. They come to an end without hope.* A shuttle is the instrument that the weaver used to send the thread in between the thread going in the opposite direction. It is the process of making cloth. He says that it just feels like the shuttle is flying faster and faster and soon as the length of cloth is finished the strings get cut off. He sees that as the end of his life.

Can you identify with Job? His frustration? His uncertainty? Even his wondering about what God's plans are? My guess is that all of us at some time to some extent have felt like Job. Because life in this sinful world doesn't always go as we hope or expect?

That is what is so comforting and reassuring about that fact that Job never gave up on his eternal hope. He knew that God keeps his promises. We see his confidence in God when he prays in verse seven: *“Remember that my life is just a breath.”* His confidence also comes out in his words in chapter nine: *Of course I know that this is true. But how can a man be justified before God? ³ If someone wants to argue with God, he could not refute one charge out of a thousand. ⁴ God has a wise heart and great power, so who can resist God and come out of it unharmed? ⁵ God removes mountains from their position, and they don't even realize it. He overturns mountains in his anger. ⁶ He shakes the earth off its foundation. He causes its pillars to quake. ⁷ He speaks to the sun, and it does not rise, and he seals up the stars. ⁸ He alone stretches out the heavens. He treads on the crests of the sea. ⁹ He made the Bear, Orion, the Pleiades, and the constellations in the southern sky. ¹⁰ He does great things that are beyond investigation. He does miracles that are too many to be counted.*

Centuries later the Psalmist says: “He remembers his covenant forever, the word he commanded for a thousand generations” (Psalm 105:8). There too is our confidence. God doesn’t forget his promises. Our earthly hopes will change through the years and the events of our lives, but our spiritual hopes are set on the solid foundation of God’s unchanging, forgiving love. We know that the troubles we go through in life are not punishment for sin. That’s what Job’s friends tried to convince him to admit. But he wouldn’t. His hope was in the promised Messiah who would forgive his sins and take him to the perfect peace and eternal glory of heaven. Just as all of the believers of the Old Testament Job was focused on the promised suffering servant of God. He knew and believed what Isaiah wrote about some 700 years before the time of Christ: “It was because of our rebellion that he was pierced. He was crushed for the guilt our sins deserved. The punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.” (Isaiah 53:5) Job knew that sin must be punished, but he knew that it would be punished in the promised Messiah. Now we see him with prophecies fulfilled. Soon we will take our annual journey through Lent to observe the sufferings of Jesus. In him and only in him do we find peace and a sure unending hope.

Later in the Book of Job we hear again why Job could pray with confidence and say “Remember me, O God, My Hope Has Not Changed.” Listen to the very familiar words of confidence in the resurrection to eternal life:

Oh how I wish that my words were written down. Oh how I wish that they were inscribed in bronze, ²⁴ that they would be engraved in rock forever with an iron tool and letters filled with lead. ²⁵ As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the end of time^[e] he will stand over the dust. ²⁶ Then, even after my skin has been destroyed, nevertheless, in my own flesh I will see God. ²⁷ I myself will see him. My own eyes will see him, and not as a stranger. My emotions are in turmoil within me.” (Job 19:23-27).

So we can listen and learn from Job. Whatever traumas we might go through in this life; whatever earthly hopes need to be adjusted; however grim our present circumstances our future might look like, we too can pray: **Remember me O God, My Hopes Have Not Changed.** Amen

Joel Jaeger

February 15, 2021

Scripture quotations are from the Evangelical Heritage Version, Northwestern Publishing House, 2019.