

“My redeemer lives!” We love those words. We sing those words. But today I want to take a few moments to help unravel what those words mean.

This phrase is a quote from the Old Testament book of Job. They are the words of one who was not a Lutheran, not even a Christian, yet had faith in the God of Abraham who is the Father and Creator of all. What do these words mean?

Job is a beautifully written book. It reads like the transcript of a trial. Job was presented as the most faithful man alive. But his faith was put on trial when he lost his wives, his children, his wealth, and even his health. The dialog concerns the efforts of Satan, the prosecutor, and even Job's friends, to get him to blame or distance himself from God. The arguments are the same that we wrestle with today!

For instance, Job was told he had wasted his time believing in God, as such losses proved that there was no God at all.

Job was told that if there was a God, he must have done something really wrong and terrible as his losses were a sign he was being punished.

Job was told that God has a cynical side and despite Job's faith, God wanted to mess with him and see if he would deny his faith and turn away from God. He was told God wanted to see if he was just a fair-weather believer.

These are the same questions anyone struggles with as personal disaster and tragedy abound. So often in the midst of tragedy a first thought is “what did I do to deserve this?” This is exactly what Job was wrestling with as well. He had to sift through the same reasons we do for pain and heartbreak and loss. He wrestled with the world assumes is at work when bad things happen to good people.

Despite the pain of loss, despite normal human reactions of anger and grief, despite the taunting of the satanic prosecutor who pretended Job was on trial but really wanted to put God on trial. At the climax of the trial Job finally proclaims with all the energy and passion of faith, *“I know that MY Redeemer lives and at the end, after all flesh is destroyed, I shall see God and no one else! I know that my Redeemer lives.*

The word we translate “redeemer” is a Hebrew word for the designated member of the family who had the right and responsibility of vindicating a family members' pain. They were called the redeemer. It was their responsibility to rescue from family misfortune, pay a debt to release from prison, or pay a ransom so a family member could be brought safely home. A redeemer had no choice but to act!

Job's claim was “even if I die, I will be vindicated by God my Redeemer. Although his losses were more than any earthly redeemer could deal with, he

was convinced God would never disappoint and would stand with him, even in death!

Abraham and Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, David and Isaiah, Joseph and Mary were just a few of the many before Jesus' birth who shared that same faith. And at just the right time, the Redeemer of our earthly family came to earth in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. He came for one reason, which was to be the perfect Redeemer who would rescue a world from sin, suffering, pain, and even death!

Today stand boldly with Job and say, *"I know My Redeemer lives! I know that at the last day he will stand with me, and I will live forever with him!"*

There are few who have not personally gone through some or all of the trials of Job. God, our Redeemer, has come into our world to put an end to the confusion of trials, rationalizations for sin, and the emptiness of death, to restore us to his kingdom, and redirect faithful people into a loving and faithful relationship with God and neighbor.

Faith never guarantees perfect peace on earth, but rather a heavenly peace (no matter what each day brings.) In Luke 20, Jesus announced his role as our Redeemer. He promised that is broken will be healed and death will exist no more. He promised we would celebrate eternally a perfect joy, peace, and a never-ending day.

In that text, Jesus recalled promises of Daniel and Isaiah that one day the dead will rise. He reminded God's words to Moses that "I am not a God of the dead but the living." And he entered and exited the tomb to show he could fulfill what he promised.

As we wrestle with the questions of heaven and earth (especially this weekend in which we honor our veterans) we understand how trivial many of the important issues of life really are. As this present life is brightened by the life to come, I am called to live in a new way. I live for God. I live with God. I live for neighbor. I live with neighbor.

One of the toughest arguments my wife Suzie and I had when she was dying were when she told me "I want you to marry again." I couldn't imagine. I couldn't understand. I could never love another. And yet her faith helped her to see beyond what I could. Her love understood the new life to come. Her faith helped set me free and allowed me to live again rather than be swallowed up in her death. It is painful to remember that moment, yet that was her practical way of helping me to understand the heavenly peace that Easter had already given her, and she wanted to pass along to me.

Grace is hard to explain but brings such a new light to all of life!

And so when good things happen to you in this life, rejoice, and thank God for those good things. But remember better things are always coming. And when

bad things happen it is natural to feel disappointed, maybe angry, and even depressed. But understand, God is not doing this you. Believe God is acting as Redeemer as he stands next to you in such moments. Faith allows each of us to respond by boldly proclaiming that no matter what "I know that My Redeemer Lives ... and he will stand with me in this life and in a new and perfect life to come!"

The price of admission has been paid by THE Redeemer. Because he lives, we shall also! Today, and tomorrow, and forevermore, MY Redeemer LIVES!