

Victory Lutheran Church- Jacksonville, FL
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Worship Series: *Resurrection Reality*

Service Theme: *All Will Be Made Alive*

Sermon Theme: *I Know That My Redeemer Lives. And So Will I!*

March 31, 2024— Job 19:23-27

In 1962, Essie Dunbar, of Blackville, SC passed away at age 77. Ms. Dunbar's obituary in the local newspaper read like every other obituary, listing her family that survived and pre-deceased her. It listed details about her life, like where she worked, and hobbies she enjoyed. But there's one line in Essie's obituary that stands out: "***Ms. Dunbar passed away 47 years after her first funeral.***" The newspaper headline accompanying the obituary read: ***Final Funeral Held for South Carolina Woman.***

You see, 47 years earlier, Essie suffered an epileptic seizure, and perceiving no signs of life, the doctor pronounced Essie dead. Funeral arrangements were made for the next day. It was a very long service, as three ministers took turns leading—and you know how long-winded just one preacher can get! Eventually, the time came to bury Essie, and the graveyard workers lowered Essie's casket into the hole and began to throw on dirt. But right then, Essie's sister, who was late to the funeral, finally arrived. She pleaded with the ministers to open the casket so she could see her beloved sister just one more time. They obliged the grieving woman, digging up, raising, and opening the casket. But when they lifted the lid, Essie opened her eyes, sat up, and smiled at her sister. Unsurprisingly, this sparked mass panic among the mourners who fled in terror, assuming they were seeing Essie's ghost or zombie. A confused Essie got out of the casket and began pursuing her loved ones—which took their terror to a whole new level!

In a sense, Essie was "made alive" again on that day in 1915, living for nearly a half-century afterwards. But we know the real truth. She wasn't made alive after death. Rather, she'd never actually died. And if

not for the timely tardiness of her sister, Essie never would have made it to her second funeral.

But this morning, we celebrate the one who truly was made alive again after he was laid in his grave—our resurrected Savior, Jesus! As we focus on the reality of Jesus' resurrection, it gives us reassurance so much greater than what happened to Essie Dunbar. Together with Job, whose words comprise our sermon text, we can confidently say, **I Know That My Redeemer Lives. And So Will I!**

Job was likely a contemporary of the great patriarch Abraham, meaning he lived likely a couple millennia before Jesus' death and resurrection. The Bible describes Job as "***blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil.***" And along with his spiritual wealth, God had also blessed Job with unparalleled physical wealth.

One day, God especially noted Job's faithfulness to Satan. But Satan claimed that Job's faithfulness was only the result of all the physical blessings God had given him. So he asked God to allow him to strike Job's physical wealth and health, to test whether he'd remain faithful to God. Knowing that Job would remain faithful and that he would bless Job through it, God granted Satan's request.

In one day, Job lost all of his livestock, and all of his servants—basically, his entire livelihood. But even worse, on that same day all 10 of his children were killed. Can you imagine finding out that your life savings have been stolen, your investments have all crashed, your house burned down, your vehicles were stolen, and your whole family died in an accident all on the same day, one after another? And if that wasn't enough, Satan afflicted Job's whole body, head to foot, with painful sores.

Job didn't exactly receive much encouragement from those around him either. His wife urged him to "***Curse God and die!***" Three "friends" came and "comforted" Job by all accusing him of committing some heinous sin for which God must be punishing him. But through it all, Job didn't lose his faith, doggedly defending his innocence. After

multiple discourses with his three friends, Job speaks the words of our sermon text.

He wanted his words to be recorded in the longest-lasting means possible for his day, so that future generations would know his defense of his innocence. But God did him one better. He recorded Job's words not by chiseling them only lead, but in his divinely-inspired Scriptures, so that 4,000 years later, we're also able to find peace in his words; not the defense of his innocence, but in his faith in the resurrection, which allowed him to persevere through his suffering.

Job says, ***“I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!”*** There are multiple beautiful, important confessions of faith in those words!

First, Job confesses that he knows his Redeemer lives. A redeemer is one who pays a price to buy back someone from slavery or servitude; one who pays a price to set someone free. So with his words, Job confesses that he's a sinner. Although he was a righteous, upright man, he wasn't perfect, and therefore, he needed a redeemer—one who could pay the price to set him free from his slavery to sin, death, and Hell!

And we can confess the same. Whether people would call us “blameless and upright,” or “guilty and crooked” we're all in the same boat. ***“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”*** All people are enslaved by sin, death, and Hell. All people are destined to receive the wages for our sin—that is, death. Like Job, we all needed a Redeemer.

And we have one! Jesus' resurrection makes that clear! As the Apostle Paul writes in Romans, ***“[Jesus] was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.”*** Because Jesus suffered Hell and died on the cross, our sins have been paid for in full. And Jesus' resurrection is evidence that the Redeemer paid the price to set us free, and that God has declared us not guilty of sin.

Think of it this way. If someone commits a crime and is sentenced to two years in prison for it, what happens at the end of those two years? He gets to walk out of prison, because the debt has been paid. When Jesus walks out of his grave alive on Easter Sunday, it's God's declaration that Jesus has paid the debt not for any sin of his own—but for ours, and for the sins of the whole world. We have a Redeemer...and our Redeemer LIVES! Easter makes that clear!

So whatever guilt and shame you're bearing this morning; whatever sins of your past or present that are burdening and weighing you down—leave them at the cross, and rejoice in the empty tomb! Because you have a Redeemer, and you know that he lives!

And because we know that our Redeemer Jesus lives...so will we! Because Jesus rose, so will we! That's what Job trusted when in faith he looked into the future and saw his Redeemer standing on the earth. Job felt that this physical ailment he was suffering might bring about the end of his life; and if it didn't, then certainly something would. He knew that someday, his skin would be destroyed by decay when his dead body would be placed into the ground.

It's fitting that in Hebrew, Job says that his Redeemer ***“will stand on the earth,”*** literally on the “dust.” Because when God made man, he formed him out of the dust of the ground, and breathed life into him. After the fall into sin, God warned mankind that the consequence of sin would be death, ***“For dust you are and to dust you will return.”*** That was true for Job, and it's true for us too. We are dust, and one day, our bodies will return to the dust.

But Job trusted that one day, God would again breathe life into the dust and raise his body back to life again! As he said, he would see God in his own flesh and with his own eyes. How could that be after his skin and organs were destroyed by decay and death, unless God would keep his promise and raise Job from the dead?

As Paul writes in our second reading, ***“For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in***

turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.” While death is a reality, so is our resurrection. Because Jesus lives, so will we! In the resurrected Jesus, all will be made alive!

And Job trusted that on that Last Day, he wouldn’t see his Redeemer in frail skin pocked with oozing sores. Nor would he see his Redeemer through weak eyes clouded by tears of pain or grief. Rather, as Paul writes in Philippians, **“Our Lord Jesus Christ...will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.”**

In the midst of unfathomable grief, pain, suffering, and loss, Job’s heart yearned for the fulfillment of God’s promise. He clung tightly to those promises, even as Satan tried to pry his fingers loose. He knew that because his Redeemer lives, so would he! And so will we!

Just think of the implications; the comfort, peace, and perseverance that the reality of the resurrection can give! When you’re feeling the consequences of sin like grief, sadness, guilt, pain, and weakness in your body or mind—“I know that my Redeemer lives, and so will I” -- with a perfect, glorified body, set free from sin, sadness, and suffering. When you’re mourning the death of a Christian loved one, “I know that my Redeemer lives, and so will I,” which means you’ll be together again, and on that Last Day when Jesus gives us glorified bodies, we’ll once more be able to see them with our own eyes, to wrap our arms around them in a warm embrace, to feel their touch on our cheek.

After all, after Job’s suffering and loss, God ultimately restored him. God gave Job a double portion of everything he’d lost. For example, he’d lost 7,000 sheep at first, but afterwards God blessed him with 14,000 sheep, and so on. But what’s interesting is that at first, Job had 10 children. Following the pattern, we’d expect God to give him 20 additional children. But instead, he gives 10 more. Why? Because he hadn’t really lost those first 10 children. He’d be with them in Heaven, and in the resurrection! Because his Redeemer lives, so would they!

And so will we. When you’re facing the ugly, fearful shadow of death, we can persevere and be at peace. Because like Job, we can confidently say, **“After my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I**

will see God...with my own eyes.” I know that my redeemer lives—and so will I! How our hearts yearn within us!

The reality of the resurrection means that on the Last Day, all people will be raised to life, and will see Jesus standing on the earth with their own eyes. Whether you see him in perfect peace and joy, or whether you see him with complete terror depends on whether you were connected to him in faith during your life. So friends, let that resurrection reality yearn within your heart! Don’t fall into the trap of living as if death is the end—either in fear or in apathy. There is eternity to come!

But because of our Redeemer and resurrected Savior Jesus, him we too will live! One day, like Essie Dunbar, we will open our eyes, look upon the face of our brother, our Savior, our Redeemer Jesus, and we will smile! Only, he won’t run from us in fear. He’ll wrap his nail-pierced hands around our resurrected and glorified bodies and never let go. And since Jesus defeated death, **“the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep,”** our bodies will never go in the ground again. Because death has been swallowed up...in Victory! I know that my Redeemer, your Redeemer lives! And so will we! How our hearts yearn within us!