

Sunday, July 27, 2014
Rev. Diane Monti-Catania

Sermon - I Know that my Redeemer Lives

Sometimes, when you watch a movie or read a book you can guess what is going to happen.

The storyline is so cleche that you know the guy will get the girl or the downtrodden little sports team will win the championship.

You watch, or keep reading because the story is well told – or perhaps you are hoping that the ending will surprise you.

Today's selections from Job are sort of like watching reruns on tv.

The pattern of back and forth between Job and his friends has been well established in the first 9 chapters of the book.

Now in chapters 10-19 we hear what has begun to sound like a refrain. The friends are calling for repentance and Job continues to proclaim his innocence.

In *Job: The Wisdom of the Cross* Christopher Ash points out that

“One of the most frightening things about Job’s comforters is how beautiful their speeches are (at times) and how very close they are to the kinds of things we often say to one another in our churches.”

The interesting twist however, midway through today's selection is that Job abandons his effort to convince his friends of anything and turns his attention to God.

He is certain that given an audience with God he could clear up any uncertainties and restore his good standing.

I am intrigued with his final cry of “I know that my redeemer lives.”

These are *new testament* words being cried out in an *old testament* setting.

Redeemer is one of the names most often used for Jesus.

I remembered having heard a hymn by this name, “I know that my redeemer lives.”

Perhaps a throwback to my Catholic upbringing because when I checked in our Pilgrim Hymnal, it wasn't there.

However, a look through my other hymnals and a subsequent internet search uncovered multiple hymns by this name.

The earliest one I found was written by Charles Wesley in 1742 set to music by George Handel.

This 9-verse hymn was unfamiliar to me and I didn't find it in any hymnals.

The Charles Wesley website (everyone has a website) had the scripture citation Job: 19:25 going across the screen but the fourth verse reads,

“Jesus, I hang upon Thy Word;

I steadfastly believe

Thou wilt return and claim me, Lord

And to Thyself receive.

I next discovered a version written in 1775 by Reverend Samuel Medley, a British Baptist minister.

This one was a bit shorter and more familiar.

It appears in the Lutheran Hymnal, and is also used by the Church of the Latter Day Saints.

The lyrics of this hymn are also all about Jesus and his promised post-resurrection return.

This version has found its way onto YouTube in an adapted production by Micahel Hicks and Linda Rowberry, posted in 2008.

Finally, I discovered a completely new version (with half of the 1775 Medley lyrics) on a CD entitled Music for Funerals – sung by Scott Soper, published in 2014.

The point of all of this is that Job's message, “I know that my Redeemer lives” is foundational to our faith.

Job's faith in the midst of hardship and turmoil – his steadfast belief that he will be redeemed by God – is the promise, the hope that sustains our faith to this day.

God's promise, that allowed Job to hope, is the same promise made manifest in Jesus Christ.

God answered the pleas of a generation with the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

Today, we have adopted that promise from our ancestors.

When you ask, “Why do we read the Old Testament stories when we are New Testament Christians?” the answer is because they are our stories too.

The Old Testament including the psalms was the religion of Jesus.

Jesus was a Jew – this was his scripture.

These hymns, whether sung by Job, Charles Wesley or contemporary artists remind us that this message of hope, this message of promise has not faded.

North African theologian Tertullian, writing in the late second century sorted out the Trinitarian relationship to the world in this way:

“If God the Father can be likened to the sun, source of light and heat, the Christ is the ray of sunlight streaming to earth (Christ-of the same nature as God) and the Spirit is the spot of warmth where the sun actually arrives and has an effect.”

Our Redeemer lives, just as Job’s redeemer lives.

No matter how dark our lives become, no matter how much despair there is in the world, no matter how hard we fall – Nothing, nothing, can separate us from the love of God, made known to us in Christ.

Paul’s words to the Romans offer us a blessed assurance:

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Let’s talk for a few minutes about the things that undermine our confidence in the promise that “Our redeemer lives.”