

St Marc, Grenoble

Sunday 6th November 2022 (3 before Advent)

Job 19: 23 - 27

2 Thessalonians 2: 1 - 5, 13 - 17

Luke 20: 27 - 38

'Living God'

Good Morning, and welcome to you all; those here in Church and those on Zoom.

Let's Pray

As usual, before I get started, I'd really like to hear from you. What did you notice in today's readings? What challenged you? What puzzled you? What excited you? ... Thank you!

I've preached on these two New testament readings before; the lectionary links them with the Old Testament book of Job 19: 23 - 27. (That's why I added it this morning)

What stands out for me is Job's assertion: 'I know that my redeemer lives' he also has themes of being God's children, resurrection, life after death, and the wonderful prospect of meeting God face to face.

Let's 'join the dots' between the readings; and look first at Job, a wealthy and Godly farmer who lived 1800 to 2000 years before Jesus' ministry on earth.

We're told Satan claimed Job only trusted God because of his wealth; so apparently to prove Satan was wrong, God agreed to allow Job to be tested - far beyond the limits that most of us are ever unfortunate enough to experience.

Despite everything Job went through: major illness, pain, the loss of his family, loss of wealth, rejection by his friends and a 'near death experience'; which, he believed was being inflicted by God; Job was still able to proclaim that there's one thing he wanted engraved in rock, recorded for ever: 'I know that my Redeemer lives, that He will stand on the earth, and in my flesh I will see God'.

Living in the times we do, when it's fashionable to undermine the Christian faith, what a wonderful truth that is to assert, and what assurance to claim. Job reminds us, even today, that despite everything going on around us, 'Our redeemer lives; and we will see God face to face'!

So moving on to the Gospel reading, written a couple of thousand years later, let's look at the context: we're told at the start of the chapter, that Jesus was teaching the people in the 'temple courts', which was an area in the temple where people went to hear teaching from the scholars. A lot of people came to hear Jesus, and hear the chief priests and teachers of the law, clerics and the academics debating with Him.

They were all trying to trip Jesus up on His teaching; and to find some good excuse to accuse Him of heresy.

On this occasion it was the turn of the Sadducees – a Jewish sect who only accepted the five books of Moses as valid scripture; and they didn't believe that resurrection was an act of God. This was the sect who had wanted to kill Lazarus after Jesus raised him from the dead – because he was living proof their beliefs were wrong!!

They asked Jesus a ridiculous question about the Jewish rule of 'levirate marriage'; it meant if a husband died without leaving an heir, it was his brother's duty to marry the brother's wife and finish the job.

The Sadducees thought this question would catch Jesus out, and make him give an answer that nobody liked – in the hope it would raise a lot of anger against Him.

Jesus dismissed the question for what it was – a distraction, firmly explaining their mistake. He explained they'd missed the point saying: You won't be interested in mundane things like sex, love and marriage, when you're raised from the dead and face to face with God. You'll be far too busy being blown away in wonder at His power and authority; and wanting to worship Him; to be bothered with anything as basic as that!!

What a wonderful answer! It explained the situation perfectly, and there was simply no contradicting it. As usual, Jesus went straight to the heart of the matter, and even the Pharisee academics could do no more than say 'Good answer!'

Jesus took the opportunity to teach all of them about the promise of resurrection; using an illustration from Moses, referring to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who all appear in the Pentateuch, which the Sadducees accepted as valid scripture.

Jesus' teaching was, and still is, vital for everyone. As God's children we're children of the resurrection and will be blessed with eternal life.

Jesus affirms 'God is not the God of the dead, but of the living' – for to God, because of our redemption by Jesus, we are all alive in Him.

Writing to the Thessalonians, 50+ years later, Paul wrote: Concerning what happens next – Don't worry! 'Don't let anything unsettle you; from the beginning God chose You. He called you, by the Gospel, so you could share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Stand firm, trust God, who will strengthen you as you seek to do His work.'

When He was asked what was necessary to inherit eternal life, Jesus replied 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind and Love your neighbour as yourself.'

Sounds simple, but it's a really difficult task; so we need to seek God's grace to help us reach out to those around us in His love.

And, what Paul wrote to the Christians in Thessalonica 2,000 years ago is just as relevant to us today; when, from government down, it's fashionable to forget what Jesus taught us; or to fudge what our faith stands for.

Paul said: 'Stand firm! Don't let anything unsettle you – Why? Because, from the beginning God chose YOU! So hold on to the teaching you've been given.

That echoed exactly what Job had said hundreds of years earlier too – in the midst of all his difficulties and challenges he said 'I know that my redeemer lives ... and one day, after I'm dead, I myself will see Him face to face – not anyone else, me!

Isn't that a wonderful thing to look forward to – being raised from the dead, and coming face to face with the wonder and power, the awesomeness of God.

Just being able to see Him face to face, and to be able to worship Him. I don't know about you; but for me I think that puts all my present challenges and all my issues into perspective; the thought of spending eternity face to face with God sounds pretty amazing to me, even with our limited understanding of His awesomeness.

As Job said – "How my heart yearns within me for that day." And, he's right – when we see God face to face NOTHING else will matter in the slightest!!

So, as I close, let's pray!! Living God ... **Amen**