

**Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.**

7 “Does not man have hard service on earth? Are not his days like those of a hired man? <sup>2</sup> Like a slave longing for the evening shadows, or a hired man waiting eagerly for his wages, <sup>3</sup> so I have been allotted months of futility, and nights of misery have been assigned to me. <sup>4</sup> When I lie down I think, ‘How long before I get up?’ The night drags on, and I toss till dawn. <sup>5</sup> My body is clothed with worms and scabs, my skin is broken and festering. <sup>6</sup> “My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle, and they come to an end without hope. <sup>7</sup> Remember, O God, that my life is but a breath; my eyes will never see happiness again. **This is God’s Word.**

**Dear Friends,**

**Why do bad things happen to good people?** That is a question that people sometimes ask and no one can deny that life is hard and we all have difficulties at various times. I can remember when I got laid off from a job – I knew it was coming but when I got called into the office and given the bad news it still hit me pretty hard. Maybe you have had troubles in your life that have hit you pretty hard too. Maybe a diagnosis of cancer or the loss of a loved one. Maybe your bills exceed your income and you have to figure out which ones are going to have to wait. Maybe it’s simpler than that – two of the kids have been sick for a few days and now the third one is getting sick and you aren’t feeling so well yourself and you wonder how much more of this you can take. Maybe the car broke down and then the washer quit working too and you wonder what’s next. We all have had our share of trouble – life is not easy.

Job tells us, **“Does not man have hard service on earth? Are not his days like those of a hired man? <sup>2</sup> Like a slave longing for the evening shadows, or a hired man waiting eagerly for his wages.”** Life isn’t easy. We work hard but sometimes it seems like we are spinning our wheels or we work hard and we look forward to the end of the day or forward to payday but when it comes we don’t have the relief we are seeking. Rest doesn’t come easy or the wages don’t seem to stretch far enough.

We wish life were easier, and at times it is, but when we are suffering – when we are having a hard time for whatever reason – those easier times don’t make any difference. Life isn’t easy, but I have to think that my life, no matter what is going on, isn’t as bad as Job’s.

**II.** He was a wealthy man and had a large family – 10 children in all. He was faithful to God and life couldn’t get any better. But then everything fell apart. His children all died in a tragic accident and he no sooner got the news of their deaths when another messenger came to inform him that his wealth had been stolen and some of it had been destroyed and he was left with nothing.

All he had was gone and then he was afflicted with poor health – every part of his skin was covered in sores and he hurt – some of you have had shingles. Imagine if your whole body was covered in shingles from head to toe – the pain would be almost unbearable. That is what Job was feeling and then Job’s wife, instead of comforting him and trying to help him, did just the opposite. She figured he must have sinned in some great way. That he somehow deserved all

these problems because of something he had done. Her advice to her husband, “Curse God and die.” But in all this, Job did not sin and he did not charge God with wrong doing.

We sometimes talk about the patience of Job, but he was human just like you and I and he wasn't perfect. He wasn't always positive about his situation. Listen to how he describes his afflictions, **“So I have been allotted months of futility, and nights of misery have been assigned to me. <sup>4</sup>When I lie down I think, ‘How long before I get up?’ The night drags on, and I toss till dawn. <sup>5</sup>My body is clothed with worms and scabs, my skin is broken and festering.”** He has no relief. He looks forward to the night when he might sleep and get some rest but sleep never comes and so he can't wait for the dawn to come. His physical condition gets worse and I would guess that he was hard to look at with all the sores and scabs and worms eating at the open wounds.

And then he gives us an indication of how he is losing hope, **“My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and they come to an end without hope. <sup>7</sup>Remember, O God, that my life is but a breath; my eyes will never see happiness again.”** His faith isn't gone but it is reaching a low point and it appears that he will soon die. In the midst of all this, he has three friends that show up, but like his wife they are anything but supportive. They, too, think he must have committed some great sin and God is punishing him. Their advice is to repent and maybe God will have mercy. But Job is at a loss. He knows he has been faithful to God, but he is getting no encouragement from family or friends.

**III.** Have you ever been in that situation? Not that you have been afflicted like Job, but things are just getting so bad that you feel all alone and wonder where is God? And your family and friends are no help – they are reading things all wrong and rather than giving you support, their words have a sharp edge that make things even worse?

Remember how Job described his days as swifter than a weaver's shuttle? If you have ever seen one of these contraptions they have a mess of strings and material on one side and cloth or a rug or whatever you are making on the other side. One side seems to be a mess and yet the outcome is organized and beautiful.

Our lives are like that weaver's shuttle – they are a mess at times but God does help us through those messes and the outcome is greater than we could imagine. Our problem is how do we make it through the mess and get to those better days?

Paul, in the second lesson today, reminds us, **“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”** (Romans 8:28). God will work those problems out for us and we trust God's Word but it isn't so easy to accept these words when we are struggling. There are times when you just want to give up and die – not that you are losing your faith but you wonder how much more you can take.

Job took an awful lot and remained faithful but he even got to a point where he asked God, “If I have not been faithful then punish me as I deserve.” Job's conversation with God continued and God reminded him that he does not have the wisdom or power of God. In the end Job repents and seeks forgiveness from God and he also prayed for his friends. He placed his complete trust

in God and whatever God's will was for his life – well that was okay with Job. God saw Job's faithfulness and heard his prayers and brought him relief and even blessed him abundantly once again.

God allowed Satan to take everything Job had – it was a test of Job's faith. Satan said Job would fail but Job trusted in God and God is more powerful than Satan. As I look back at this past year I often wonder if God is allowing our faith to be tested as he did with Job. Just like Job, things were going pretty well at the beginning of 2020 and then everything fell apart when Covid came. Situations changed drastically, even if you didn't become afflicted with Covid, those issues still continue today in some form.

And we don't always receive the encouragement we are looking for from friends and relatives. Sometimes they come at us with accusations if we leave the house or don't wear a mask or don't always social distance. So how do we respond?

Jesus said, **“<sup>25</sup> Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? <sup>26</sup> Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?”** (Luke 12:25-26). That doesn't mean we shouldn't be concerned about Covid, or take precautions. Wearing a mask, washing our hands, avoiding some situations can be proper precautions but we have to be careful that we don't let fear rule our lives. After all, God is the one who had determined how long we will have on this earth.

We worry because there have been 400,000 Covid deaths in the last year and that is a lot but, according to the American Cancer Society, there were 606,520 deaths in 2020<sup>1</sup> and according to the American Heart Association, there were 840,000 deaths from heart disease in 2016<sup>2</sup> so there are a lot of deadly diseases in our world and one day we will probably succumb to one of them but God will decide when that time comes so we shouldn't worry about these things we can't control rather trust in God. Don't let fear rule your life.

Listen to God as he speaks to us through his Word. Our epistle lesson for today reminds us that he has called us to faith and he has justified us – that means declared us not guilty of our sins because of our faith in Jesus. And one day we will be glorified in heaven. God also promises that we are part of his plans and he will work things out for the good of his people – for our good.

We will have our ups and downs in life but with God at our side we have nothing to worry about. God had redeemed us and brought us into his family by faith. He cares about us and he will help us through any challenge. The Apostle Paul reminds us, **“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”** (Philippians 1:21). Whether we live or die we can't lose because we belong to Christ. We are his in this world and will be with him forever in the life to come.

So, whatever trials and troubles you are enduring remember that God loves you, Remember that Christ died for you, and Remember that heaven is waiting for you. God knows how fragile we are and by his power and his grace we can live in peace and comfort on this earth. Trust in the Lord – he will not let you down. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cancer.org/research/cancer-facts-statistics/all-cancer-facts-figures/cancer-facts-figures-2020.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://professional.heart.org/en/science-news/heart-disease-and-stroke-statistics-2019-update>