



### The First Sunday after Christmas Day.

*The Collect.*

**A**LMIGHTY God, who hast given us thy only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and as at this time to be born of a pure virgin; Grant that we being regenerate, and made thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit; through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the same Spirit ever, one God, world without end. Amen.

*1 My soul is weary of my life; I will leave my complaint upon myself; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. 2 I will say unto God, Do not condemn me; shew me wherefore thou contendest with me. 3 Is it good unto thee that thou shouldest oppress, that thou shouldest despise the work of thine hands, and shine upon the counsel of the wicked? 4 Hast thou eyes of flesh? or seest thou as man seeth? 5 Are thy days as the days of man? are thy years as man's days, 6 That thou enquirest after mine iniquity, and searchest after my sin? 7 Thou knowest that I am not wicked; and there is none that can deliver out of thine hand. 8 Thine hands have made me and fashioned me together round about; yet thou dost destroy me. 9 Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me as the clay; and wilt thou bring me into dust again? 10 Hast thou not poured me out as milk, and curdled me like cheese? 11 Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and hast fenced me with bones and sinews. 12 Thou hast granted me life and favour, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit. 13 And these things hast thou hid in thine heart: I know that this is with thee. 14 If I sin, then thou markest me, and thou wilt not acquit me from mine iniquity. 15 If I be wicked, woe unto me; and if I be righteous, yet will I not lift up my head. I am full of confusion; therefore see thou mine affliction; 16 For it increaseth. Thou huntest me as a fierce lion: and again thou shewest thyself marvellous upon me. 17 Thou renewest thy witnesses against me, and increasest thine indignation upon me; changes and war are against me. 18 Wherefore then hast thou brought me forth out of the womb? Oh that I had given up the ghost, and no eye had seen me! 19 I should have been as though I had not been; I should have been carried from the womb to the grave. 20 Are not my days few? cease then, and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little, 21 Before I go*

*whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death; 22 A land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness. (Job 10:1-22)*

It is a common desire of human nature to understand the cause of arrest, imprisonment, or punishment. In many countries, the right of citizens to know cause for arrest or punishment is not honored. Thanks to the Godly wisdom of our Founding Fathers, protections of our God-given rights are included in the Bill of Rights of the governing document of our country – The US Constitution. It is not at all unreasonable, or unjust, for Job to petition the Highest Power to determine why he has been singled out for suffering. All too often, faithful Christians live protected lives. But when difficult times come, rather than seek the meaning of the trouble in prayer to God, they blame God, or even the devil, for their predicament in ignorance. These Christians should follow the example of Job in seeking the cause of his discomfort from God Himself. It is altogether meet to inquire of God when troubles rush in like a flood. Remember, all things are known by God, your Maker, and He can turn every misadventure into a blessing to those who love Him and are the called according to His purpose. *My soul is weary of my life; I will leave my complaint upon myself; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. I will say unto God, Do not condemn me; shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.* Job, after desperate wonder, decides to reveal all of his innermost thoughts and inquiries to the only One who knows the answers. He petitions for a reason why God has allowed his hardship.

Job's problem in understanding is evident in his inquiry to God found in verses three thru six: *Is it good unto thee that thou shouldest oppress, that thou shouldest despise the work of thine hands, and shine upon the counsel of the wicked? Hast thou eyes of flesh? or seest thou as man seeth? Are thy days as the days of man? are thy years as man's days, That thou enquirest after mine iniquity, and searchest after my sin?* Can you determine Job's misunderstanding when you read his words above? He, like thousands of other God-fearing people, blames God for his misfortune when God is not the author of his trouble. When we question our predicament in life, we must not question the motive of god (for it is ALWAYS righteous) but our own. *Thou knowest that I am not wicked; and there is none that can deliver out of thine hand. Thine hands have made me and fashioned me together round about; yet thou dost destroy me.* Though Job may be righteous comparatively speaking with all others, there is none righteous but God. If we all received our just deserts, we would suffer far more grievously than Job, and for an eternity! Yet, Job, being mortal, cannot grasp what he considers to be great injustice done to his person for no reason. Of course, we know the reason, but Job does not.

*Thine hands have made me and fashioned me together round about; yet thou dost destroy me. Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me as the clay; and wilt thou bring me into dust again?* The clay itself is never destroyed in the hands of the Potter, but may be marred and reshaped into a vessel more pleasing to the purpose of the Potter. Clay is dampened dust that is receptive to being

molded and fashioned according to the will of the Potter. Job reminds God of this, and that it seems that God is allowing the clay, from which Job is created, to dry up and return to the dust of the ground from whence all men come. Job should remember the loving counsel of Psalms 103:14 - *For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.* As long as the Potter is in business to create, how can His purposes fail even if he knows we are but dust. He loves our souls and not our outward visage.

Next, Job declares the process by which God has Made him in his mother's womb: *Hast thou not poured me out as milk, and curdled me like cheese? Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and hast fenced me with bones and sinews.* This language is figurative of the process of conception and molding that occurs in the womb as God weaves our fabric of being.

*Thou hast granted me life and favour, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit. And these things hast thou hid in thine heart: I know that this is with thee.* Even in torments, Job should realize that he still stands in favor with God. Though we suffer mightily as children of the Most High, we yet stand in His perfect favor and providential protection of soul. Though the body be burned, the soul shall stand with God in Eternity. God has many mysteries, contrary to most professing theologians, that His people do not, and cannot understand with perfection. Hence, the purpose and reason for faith. Faith is not faith when all mystery is revealed.

The lack of full understanding of the nature of God is revealed in Job's next comment: *If I sin, then thou markest me, and thou wilt not acquit me from mine iniquity.* Is the word 'IF' really necessary for the meaning here? It is **not**, for with certainty, we all shall sin even if our sins are not imparted to our record. And Job is also wrong in saying that God will not acquit us our our sins. He has done so in Christ. Again, in Psalm 103, we read: *For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.* (Psalms 103:11-12)

Do not blame Job if he lacks a fuller understanding of the revealed Word of God that we have today. He is speaking before our Redemption was consummated in Christ. *If I be wicked, woe unto me; and if I be righteous, yet will I not lift up my head. I am full of confusion; therefore see thou mine affliction* Job is ascribing a law of works of righteousness falsely to the purpose of God. Job is saying that the dealings of God to sinners is a terror, but even while Job (so he thinks) is righteous, he yet suffers the plight of the wicked. This is no purpose or nature of God. Without the imputed righteousness of Christ, all are accounted miserable sinners. Present suffering is not evidence of being out of the favor of God.

Job continues to indict God: *For it increaseth. Thou huntest me as a fierce lion: and again thou shewest thyself marvellous upon me. Thou renewest thy witnesses against me, and increasest thine indignation upon me; changes and war are against me.* If God had intended to crush Job, Job would now be crushed and would have no mind or mouth with which to utter a weak faith.

*Wherefore then hast thou brought me forth out of the womb? Oh that I had given up the ghost, and no eye had seen me! I should have been as though I had not been; I should have been carried from the womb to the grave.* To reject the gift of life is a terrible sin, but even good men often utter ridiculous and reviling thoughts against God when the fire is near the powder. Haven't many of us uttered the thoughtless exclamation, "Oh, why was I ever born?" Conception is a gift of God in fulfillment of His first command given to men: *Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth* (Gen 1:28)

Job speaks now out of desperation and not out of knowledge: *Are not my days few? cease then, and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little, Before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death; A land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness.* Yes, Mr. Job, your days are few upon this paltry planet upon which God was gracious enough to allow you to set foot; but your days are endless as a soul created for eternity! It is good that we return not from the grave to this dreary life, but proceed to resplendent glory in the Kingdom of our Father. Job allows his imagination to run wild in contemplating the darkness of the grave where there is no darkness to the soul that has received the Light of the World. Yes, true, it is the land of the 'shadow of death' since death is ONLY a shadow not to be feared by those who die in Christ. Do you, friend, fear that shadow? Do you believe that God will leave you and forsake you in the dust of the ground? If you are Christ's, I hope that you do not harbor any such false fears and anxieties!