



**The First Sunday after The Epiphany.**

*The Collect.*

**O** LORD, we beseech thee mercifully to receive the prayers of thy people who call upon thee; and grant that they may both perceive and know what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

*1 Then answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said, 2 How long will it be ere ye make an end of words? mark, and afterwards we will speak. 3 Wherefore are we counted as beasts, and reputed vile in your sight? 4 He teareth himself in his anger: shall the earth be forsaken for thee? and shall the rock be removed out of his place? 5 Yea, the light of the wicked shall be put out, and the spark of his fire shall not shine. 6 The light shall be dark in his tabernacle, and his candle shall be put out with him. 7 The steps of his strength shall be straitened, and his own counsel shall cast him down. 8 For he is cast into a net by his own feet, and he walketh upon a snare. 9 The gin shall take him by the heel, and the robber shall prevail against him. 10 The snare is laid for him in the ground, and a trap for him in the way. 11 Terrors shall make him afraid on every side, and shall drive him to his feet. 12 His strength shall be hungerbitten, and destruction shall be ready at his side. 13 It shall devour the strength of his skin: even the firstborn of death shall devour his strength. 14 His confidence shall be rooted out of his tabernacle, and it shall bring him to the king of terrors. 15 It shall dwell in his tabernacle, because it is none of his: brimstone shall be*

scattered upon his habitation. **16** His roots shall be dried up beneath, and above shall his branch be cut off. **17** His remembrance shall perish from the earth, and he shall have no name in the street. **18** He shall be driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world. **19** He shall neither have son nor nephew among his people, nor any remaining in his dwellings. **20** They that come after him shall be astonished at his day, as they that went before were affrighted. **21** Surely such are the dwellings of the wicked, and this is the place of him that knoweth not God. (Job 18:1-21)

Repetition being the strong arm of recall, we are witnessing the principle if full array throughout the Book of Job. *Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little.* (Isaiah 28:9-10) Trapp explains the necessity of repetition when it is truth: *"Why, the truths a man carries about with him are his tools; and do you think a carpenter is bound to use the same plane but once to smooth a knotty board with, or to hang his hammer after it has driven its first nail? I shall never repeat a conversation, but an idea often. I shall use the same types when I like, but not commonly the same stereotypes. A thought is often original, though you have uttered it a hundred times. It has come to you over a new route, and by a new and express train of associations."* The associations which we discover throughout Job, and indeed all of Scripture help to inform us of the beauty, the cohesiveness, and the Scarlet Thread that runs from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21. We discover therein that Christ is truly the Alpha and Omega - the complete Word. His presence is found in the first of Genesis and the very last of Revelations – and, of course, ALL in between! That Unleavened Bread of which we partake at Holy Communion is symbolic and effectual of that more sensible Bread which we consume in study and meditation upon the Word that is Christ also.

Because most of us hold such a high regard for ourselves, we often believe that God is always on our side, and not on the side of our rivals. During the War Between the States, there were men and women of great faith and Christian devotion of both sides of the conflict. Each felt that God was on their side. It is perhaps possible that God was on neither side, but on His own side. If both warring factions had sought to be on 'God's side' instead of postulating the principle with their lips, as did Lincoln, perhaps war would not have followed and we would not have the divisions we see today across the landscape of America. God does not move. If we are not by His side, He certainly cannot be by ours – and might does not always point the way to the Godly combatant. But there is always one fact of which we can be certain: There is no greater power than God. If a people and nations stand on the side of God, and prove their faith by action, no other power can enslave them!

In former dialogues involving Bildad, he has exercised a greater care to advise and counsel Job. Now, however, his condemnations are more brutal. This is very much the mob mentality. As he sits and hears his colleagues lambast Job, he sees the seemingly helplessness of Job to prevail, and he grows more jealous to drive his cruel nails into the heart of Job. Bildad is perhaps the 'progenitor' of all rednecks. Perhaps the most cruel of approaches is the mixture of immutable truth with treacherous libel. **2 How long will it be ere ye make an end of words? mark, and afterwards we will speak.** Have we not heard the repetition of these same words often from these three unreliable friends? Is there no end of speaking?

**3 Wherefore are we counted as beasts, and reputed vile in your sight? 4 He**

teareth himself in his anger: shall the earth be forsaken for thee? and shall the rock be removed out of his place? Though I do not agree with his fact, I do agree with his interpretation here. Job has indeed lowered his own value, and by implication, that of all men to the level of a worm. Will the world turn on its head for the foolish babblings of Job, or the irresponsible accusations of Bildad? No, the earth is a fixed globe in its orbit and station. It will not waver at the rantings of men; however, perhaps Bildad has forgotten that Job figured highly in the eyes of God long before the earth was fixed in its place.

Bildad's next statements follow, not as an error of fact, but of application to Job: 5 Yea, the light of the wicked shall be put out, and the spark of his fire shall not shine. 6 The light shall be dark in his tabernacle, and his candle shall be put out with him. 7 The steps of his strength shall be straitened, and his own counsel shall cast him down. It is very true that the light (though dim and false) of the wicked shall be extinguished, and his fire will not be a fire of light, but of outer darkness in Hell where the fire burns inwardly in man and not outwardly. The father and patron of wickedness is Satan. Because of his sinfulness, he is also miserable. Misery loves company. If Satan can tempt us into extravagant sins, he can cause us to share his misery and final destruction.

8 For he is cast into a net by his own feet, and he walketh upon a snare. True. Every bird or beast caught in the net has provided its own way there. A Righteous and loving god sends no man to Hell – we earn Hell when we reject the grace of Heaven.

9 The gin shall take him by the heel, and the robber shall prevail against him. Just as swallowed hook in the fish's mouth sets itself more solidly with the ensuing struggle, so does sin, as a hook, grow more solidly seated as we struggle to win against it. Of course, we cannot. We need the Fisherman of Heaven to unseat the hook and set us free. 10 The snare is laid for him in the ground, and a trap for him in the way. The earth is full of snares. Its ground is cursed since Adam. All of our love of the world sets us at greater and greater distances from God. Sin, as we have spoken before, is a DIRECTION that we walk borne out in Psalm 1. 11 Terrors shall make him afraid on every side, and shall drive him to his feet. Just as the notorious criminal flees light sources and the watchful eye of the law, so does the sinner fear the anger of God and the condemning testimony of the righteous. He will flee to others who are likewise under the condemnation of sin. Again, misery loves company.

The cold, steady eye of death, like a tiger in the moonlight, fixes its gaze upon the sinner. There is no escape from his ultimate fate of darkness and eternal anguish. Death does not hurry, but takes its own time – a time set upon the scales of life by the Maker. After death, there is no time. There is only an eternity of shaking and quivering in the fiery darkness of Hell, or of basking in the joy, comfort, and bliss of our Lord. 12 His strength shall be hungerbitten, and destruction shall be ready at his side. 13 It shall devour the strength of his skin: even the firstborn of death shall devour his strength. 14 His confidence shall be rooted out of his tabernacle, and it shall bring him to the king of terrors. 15 It shall dwell in his tabernacle, because it is none of his: brimstone shall be scattered upon his habitation. The pride of power will evaporate in the heart of the sinner as his confidence of old is shaken at his dismal prospects. The first born of his father is usually possessed of his father's strength and vigor – even in the inheritance. The firstborn of death differs from the Firstborn of the Dead in that the former is permanence in the state of death, and the latter is a complete liberation of the soul FROIM death in Christ! It is true that brimstone and fire shall be the pavement of the

life of the sinner who dies in his sins.

**16 His roots shall be dried up beneath, and above shall his branch be cut off.** Just as the scorched earth, left in the wake of a raging prairie fire, burns all plant life above ground, so will it dry and kill the roots of the plants beneath. If our roots are not in God, it matters not about the visible branch. In Christ, we can die a thousand deaths, but our sprouting up to newness of life shall bear hundred-fold fruit. **17 His remembrance shall perish from the earth, and he shall have no name in the street.** Very true of the sinner, but not of Job. Have we forgotten Job? Would we even know who Bildad was were it not for the story of Job? It is true that the names of the wicked shall be no longer remembered among the living. And they shall neither have any name in Hell. In the life eternal, those only whose names are recorded in the Book of Life shall have a name.

**18 He shall be driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world.** True of the wicked, but not of Job. The wicked shall truly be driven into even deeper darkness than that in which their hearts dwell on earth – but they shall not be chased out of the world except in the sense of death. They will make their permanent home in the dust of the earth just as the rich man who refused Lazarus the crumbs from his table. Hell will absorb their graves. **19 He shall neither have son nor nephew among his people, nor any remaining in his dwellings.** So, let us observe the folly of the 'wise' Bildad. He has just stated a perfectly false proposition. How do I know? Because I have read the end of Job's story. The problem with our judging is that we judge the present appearance and not the full spectrum of time and eternity. God judges with far more searching eyes into the future as well as the past. What appears to us to be the end of a man's hope may be just the beginning of an eternal joy in the eyes of the Lord. Job, in the end, regains all of his sons and daughters plus double all of his material possessions. This exposes Bildad as the foolish hypocrite which he is.

**20 They that come after him shall be astonished at his day, as they that went before were affrighted.** True again, but not in the manner that Bildad suggests. We all have been astonished at the depths of misery to which Job sank, but the heights of joy to which he aspired at the end. The latter is of greater astonishment than the former. Yes, as sorrowful as we were at the devil's torment of Job, our joy was just that much more magnified at his restoration to the joys of life (and of heaven).

**21 Surely such are the dwellings of the wicked, and this is the place of him that knoweth not God.** Yes, such they are, Bildad, but the saber falls more surely on your own neck than that of poor Job. Bildad, unlike Job, knows much ABOUT God, but he knows little of God Himself. He is very much like so many hard-core religionists who have studied the Bible with a hard spirit to use in judgment only against their fellow man. Was this not the great shortcoming of the Pharisees of Christ's day?