



The Second Sunday after The Epiphany.

The Collect.

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, who dost govern all things in heaven and earth; Mercifully hear the supplications of thy people, and grant us thy peace all the days of our life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Though the incorrigibly wicked go about their works of evil and ruin oblivious to the righteous laws of God, they seem to be spared any measure of divine retribution. Why is this the case? God is patient and all-wise in dispensing justice to the wicked. Today's wicked may be tomorrow's righteous in the eyes of God. Who among us would not relegate to Hell a man who goes about destroying the Church of God - murdering men, women and children by stoning who fall into his wicked snares? Perhaps we all, being human, would condemn such a man on the spot. Thankfully, God does not "condemn on the spot." He rather gives every opportunity for repentance of the wicked perchance after the eyes of their heart have been opened to Him. *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.* (2 Peter 3:9) If their remains the spark and promise of salvation in a soul, according to the predestined will of God, He will withhold His hand of Judgment. So David, the King, did not suffer immediate destruction at God's hand at the occasion of his committing adultery and murder. So God spared Saul (Paul) who went about persecuting the Church of God and stoning its people until he had experienced an encounter on the Road to Damascus with the blinding Light of Christ! So God's thoughts are not our thoughts. He knows, not only the instant present, but the eternity past and future. Though we may today ride the express train to Hell, He knows that, at some future point, we may transfer passage to the "Straight and Narrow" Highway of our God. Job responds further today that God's judgment is not `if' but `when'. It is not the certainty of God's judgment that Job questions, but His reluctance to act with sudden dispatch at the transgressions of the wicked.

Today's chapter devotion may be divided into three headings:

1. The wicked often seem to go unpunished during their `visible' existence. (24:1-12)
2. The wicked, as the snail, despise the Light. (24:13-17)
3. The wicked will endure a final and certain judgment. (24:18-25)

Job 24

King James Version (KJV)

24 Why, seeing times are not hidden from the Almighty, do they that know him not see his days?

2 Some remove the landmarks; they violently take away flocks, and feed thereof.

3 They drive away the ass of the fatherless, they take the widow's ox for a pledge.

4 They turn the needy out of the way: the poor of the earth hide themselves together.

5 Behold, as wild asses in the desert, go they forth to their work; rising betimes for a prey: the wilderness yieldeth food for them and for their children.

6 They reap every one his corn in the field: and they gather the vintage of the wicked.

7 They cause the naked to lodge without clothing, that they have no covering in the cold.

8 They are wet with the showers of the mountains, and embrace the rock for want of a shelter.

9 They pluck the fatherless from the breast, and take a pledge of the poor.

10 They cause him to go naked without clothing, and they take away the sheaf from the hungry;

11 Which make oil within their walls, and tread their winepresses, and suffer thirst.

12 Men groan from out of the city, and the soul of the wounded crieth out: yet God layeth not folly to them.

13 They are of those that rebel against the light; they know not the ways thereof, nor abide in the paths thereof.

14 The murderer rising with the light killeth the poor and needy, and in the night is as a thief.

15 The eye also of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight, saying, No eye shall see me: and disguiseth his face.

16 In the dark they dig through houses, which they had marked for themselves in the daytime: they know not the light.

17 For the morning is to them even as the shadow of death: if one know them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death.

18 He is swift as the waters; their portion is cursed in the earth: he

beholdeth not the way of the vineyards.

19 Drought and heat consume the snow waters: so doth the grave those which have sinned.

20 The womb shall forget him; the worm shall feed sweetly on him; he shall be no more remembered; and wickedness shall be broken as a tree.

21 He evil entreateth the barren that beareth not: and doeth not good to the widow.

22 He draweth also the mighty with his power: he riseth up, and no man is sure of life.

23 Though it be given him to be in safety, whereon he resteth; yet his eyes are upon their ways.

24 They are exalted for a little while, but are gone and brought low; they are taken out of the way as all other, and cut off as the tops of the ears of corn.

25 And if it be not so now, who will make me a liar, and make my speech nothing worth?

Job first of all wonders at the mindless logic of the wicked. If they know history, why do they believe a disregard for God's Laws to be a better way? When a nation has known the joys and securities of the Godly Way, why do they ultimately turn to the meaner and lesser gods - power, money, bondage, promiscuous sex, poisons of body and soul - of old time? Are they blind? Yes, certainly, they are more blind than blind Bartemeus on the Jericho Road: **1 Why, seeing times are not hidden from the Almighty, do they that know him not see his days?** Man cannot create himself. He cannot bring new life into being - even of a lowly flea! Neither can he cause himself to be able to see absent the Holy Ghost working in his heart to create a new man. The new birth, just like the old, must come from the Creative nature of God. Yet men consciously oppose the works of God at every turn. Even men who function under the pretense of the ministry are often the greatest enemies of truth and Gospel promise. They do attempt great damage to righteousness because they pose as its adherents. They are traitors to the cause in every sense. The principle laid down by that great proponent of republican government describes the rule that applies to governments in this way: **A nation can survive its fools... ..and even the ambitious. But it cannot survive treason from within. An enemy at the gates is less formidable, for he is known and he carries his banners openly. But the traitor moves amongst those within the gate freely, his sly whispers rustling through all the galleys, heard in the very halls of government itself. For the traitor appears not a traitor; he speaks in the accents familiar to his victims, and wears their face and their garment, and he appeals to the baseness that lies deep in the hearts of all men. He rots the soul of a nation, he works secretly and unknown in the night to undermine the pillars of a city, he infects the body politic so that it can no longer resist. A murderer is less to fear.** *Marcus Tullius Cicero* Circa 42 B.C. The same principle holds true to the deceit of compromising and ungodly ministers.

The traitors to the Gospel are far more plentiful than those without who oppose it without knowledge. In what ways do they do damage?

1) **2 Some remove the landmarks; they violently take away flocks, and feed thereof.**

What is a landmark? It is a true starting point from which all property lines are drawn. Move the landmark and all property lines will be in question. What is the Landmark of the believing Christian? It is the sure Word that has been preserved incorruptible from ancient time until now. Men claiming to be more enlightened and knowledgeable than the men who copied the ancient manuscripts; who profess a greater devotion than those reformers who laid down their lives at the stake for truth; who insist on a greater knowledge of ancient language though far removed from the source – these are those who corrupt the truth and attempt to remove the Landmark of truth. *Thou shalt not remove thy neighbour's landmark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance, which thou shalt inherit in the land that the Lord thy God giveth thee to possess it.* (Deut 19:14) Moses refers to landmarks in general here. This they attempt to move by theft of their neighbor. But the greater and enduring Landmark is that Landmark of truth mentioned earlier: *Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.* (Prov 22:28) This is the Landmark of our Fathers set in the Rock of our Salvation from time immemorial. As men tamper with question of the Canon of Scripture, and even the very words and content of Scripture itself, they are attempting to move the Ancient Landmark of Truth.

2) They do damage by making the Temple of God a house of commerce and not a House of Prayer: *3 They drive away the ass of the fatherless, they take the widow's ox for a pledge. 4 They turn the needy out of the way: the poor of the earth hide themselves together.* The birds nesting in the branches of the Mustard Tree have come, as demons, to corrupt the Word and to steal from the people. One of the Bible verses that the modern revisers are adamant to remove is Matthew 23:14 which reads: *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.* Do you wonder why this particular verse would offend the greedy sellers in the House of God (Church)?

3) They are tireless, more so than the righteous, in doing their works of robbery and deceit: *5 Behold, as wild asses in the desert, go they forth to their work; rising betimes for a prey: the wilderness yieldeth food for them and for their children. 6 They reap every one his corn in the field: and they gather the vintage of the wicked. 7 They cause the naked to lodge without clothing, that they have no covering in the cold. 8 They are wet with the showers of the mountains, and embrace the rock for want of a shelter. 9 They pluck the fatherless from the breast, and take a pledge of the poor. 10 They cause him to go naked without clothing, and they take away the sheaf from the hungry; 11 Which make oil within their walls, and tread their winepresses, and suffer thirst. 12 Men groan from out of the city, and the soul of the wounded crieth out: yet God layeth not folly to them.* Contrary to the popular little ditty, the "lion does NOT sleep tonight." The hours of darkness are his choice time of seeking out victims to devour them. It is a well-known fact that, unlike ministers, "the devil never takes a holiday."

4) Just as the lion hates the Light for his hunting, so does the sinner, as a snail, hate the Light for exposure. *13 They are of those that rebel against the light; they know not the ways thereof, nor abide in the paths thereof. 14 The murderer rising with the light killeth the poor and needy, and in the night is as a thief.* The wicked sinner LOVES darkness. He cannot abide the Light for his evil deeds. He hides the rocks and caverns in the day, and rises at night to offend the innocent. He is as the snail: *As a snail which melteth, let every one of them pass away: like the untimely birth of a woman, that they may not see the sun.* (Psalms 58:8) When the Sun of Righteousness arises, the snail will scurry for the shelter of darkness beneath the nearest stone. So do the wicked hide their

guilt and run from the Light of Truth. 15 The eye also of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight, saying, No eye shall see me: and disguiseth his face. 16 In the dark they dig through houses, which they had marked for themselves in the daytime: they know not the light. 17 For the morning is to them even as the shadow of death: if one know them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death.

But do the wicked, at last, escape any judgment for their deeds? Certainly, they do NOT! The Prodigal Son had a gay old time as long as his ill-gotten wealth remain (more ill-spent than ill-gotten), but when his treasure was gone, he at last came to be a tender in the pig sty. 18 He is swift as the waters; their portion is cursed in the earth: he beholdeth not the way of the vineyards. 19 Drought and heat consume the snow waters: so doth the grave those which have sinned. 20 The womb shall forget him; the worm shall feed sweetly on him; he shall be no more remembered; and wickedness shall be broken as a tree. 21 He evil entreateth the barren that beareth not: and doeth not good to the widow. 22 He draweth also the mighty with his power: he riseth up, and no man is sure of life. 23 Though it be given him to be in safety, whereon he resteth; yet his eyes are upon their ways. 24 They are exalted for a little while, but are gone and brought low; they are taken out of the way as all other, and cut off as the tops of the ears of corn. 25 And if it be not so now, who will make me a liar, and make my speech nothing worth? The ultimate judgment against the wicked is a sorrowful and final judgment. Hope being past for salvation, they are left only a barren estate of nakedness in the fires of Hell. Having led a life of compromising appeasement and ingratiation to the political powers of society and government, he no longer has ability to bribe and influence. His co-conspirators share the bed of flames with him. There is no one to bribe or to seduce in Hell, and the Father will no longer hear their prayers. They are "in outer darkness". Verse 19 makes the summary complete: 19 Drought and heat consume the snow waters: so doth the grave those which have sinned. The languishing in the grave without power even to resist the relentless worm that devours the greatest worth of the sinner – his physical heritage, is his demise. There is no escort of his soul to the "bosom of Abraham" as poor Lazarus enjoyed. The snows of Kilimanjaro cannot resist the heat of the African sun no more than the darkness can abide the power of light, but must disperse a far distance from it. Let me ask a personal question, friend: Do you love light greater than darkness?