



The Second Sunday in Advent

The Collect.

BLESSED Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; Grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

The First Sunday in Advent

The Collect.

ALMIGHTY God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal, through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever. Amen.

¶ This Collect is to be repeated every day, after the other Collects in Advent, until Christmas Day.

Job 6

King James Version (KJV)

1 But Job answered and said,

2 Oh that my grief were throughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together!

3 For now it would be heavier than the sand of the sea: therefore my words are swallowed up.

4 For the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me.

5 Doth the wild ass bray when he hath grass? or loweth the ox over his fodder?

6 Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt? or is there any taste in the white of an egg?

7 The things that my soul refused to touch are as my sorrowful meat.

8 Oh that I might have my request; and that God would grant me the thing that I long for!

9 Even that it would please God to destroy me; that he would let loose his hand, and cut me off!

10 Then should I yet have comfort; yea, I would harden myself in sorrow: let him not spare; for I have not concealed the words of the Holy One.

11 What is my strength, that I should hope? and what is mine end, that I should prolong my life?

12 Is my strength the strength of stones? or is my flesh of brass?

13 Is not my help in me? and is wisdom driven quite from me?

14 To him that is afflicted pity should be shewed from his friend; but he forsaketh the fear of the Almighty.

15 My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook, and as the stream of brooks they pass away;

16 Which are blackish by reason of the ice, and wherein the snow is hid:

17 What time they wax warm, they vanish: when it is hot, they are consumed out of their place.

18 The paths of their way are turned aside; they go to nothing, and perish.

19 The troops of Tema looked, the companies of Sheba waited for them.

20 They were confounded because they had hoped; they came thither, and were ashamed.

- 21** For now ye are nothing; ye see my casting down, and are afraid.
- 22** Did I say, Bring unto me? or, Give a reward for me of your substance?
- 23** Or, Deliver me from the enemy's hand? or, Redeem me from the hand of the mighty?
- 24** Teach me, and I will hold my tongue: and cause me to understand wherein I have erred.
- 25** How forcible are right words! but what doth your arguing reprove?
- 26** Do ye imagine to reprove words, and the speeches of one that is desperate, which are as wind?
- 27** Yea, ye overwhelm the fatherless, and ye dig a pit for your friend.
- 28** Now therefore be content, look upon me; for it is evident unto you if I lie.
- 29** Return, I pray you, let it not be iniquity; yea, return again, my righteousness is in it.
- 30** Is there iniquity in my tongue? cannot my taste discern perverse things?

It may seem a bit inconsistent to study Job during the Advent Season with Advent and Christmas carols heralding the promise of the coming of Christ in our dens and living rooms, but is it really? Doesn't the Book of Job illustrate the pain and suffering – the darkness and smothering wretchedness – that Christ came to take away from our hearts? Should we not consider Job to epitomize all that we should hope to have satisfied in Christ? Even the Advent color of Purple – symbolizing not only the Kingship of the coming Savior but also His pain and suffering (and ours) – informs of the prayer and fasting that should attend the season. Please look at this profound Advent statement of Job: *For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself.* (Job 19:25-27) This is the Promise of Advent, not only for Job, but for every man, woman and child who hold fast to that grace through faith in Christ! Job spoke of none other than Christ as the One who even lived then, would come to stand physically upon the earth, and, though Job's body would lie moldering in the ground, he would nonetheless see his, and our, Redeemer with his own eyes. That is a truly great expression of faith when account of it is given even before the realization in time.

In the previous chapter, we observed the aloofness toward Job's suffering by his friend, Eliphaz, in finding Job at fault for his suffering. Job now responds with a lament that his friends should consider his suffering more than his supposed shortcomings. We should expect a friend to comfort and not assail, but too often this is not the case. It is almost human nature to more easily find fault for our failures when those failures are not our own. *For the arrows of the*

Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me (Job 6:4) Job mistakenly blames God for that pain which Satan has caused. God's wrath, if leveled against Job, would be far more terrible than any Satan could muster. But Job is actually under God's protection in his suffering, and Job does not know it. When one devastating loss after another comes upon us, we will also have trouble in properly attributing these troubles, and all pain and suffering, to their proper source – that old serpent of the Garden who is the author of death and suffering. When our flesh is in pain, our other senses become subordinated to the point of pain. All that we taste is tasteless as the white of an egg, and there is no seasoning that will suffice to restore flavor. Instead of beauty, the sound of the birds of Spring become a noisome bother. Our eyes can penetrate no further than that pile of ashes that has become our place of suffering.

Beginning at verse 8, Job again blames God for his inordinate suffering. He desires death even though it be not God's will that Job see death at present. Job would be thankful for even the pain were it a precursor of his death. He claims that there is no hope in living for him. So why prolong a life of only suffering and more suffering? In verse 14, Job accuses, rightly, his friend of omitting pity to the favor of blame. In doing so, Eliphaz forsakes a proper fear of God. When a friend denies pity to his hurt friend, he also denies truth for they are related. *Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart:* (Prov 3:3) Truth and mercy are inseparable. There is no commandment of God that is not given for the sake of mercy to the obedient.

His friends are as the sands of the dunes and deserts for their lack of fixed position. Unlike men of substance, they are changeable and inconstant. Seeing the condition of Job, they are fearful of the same fate befalling them. It is true that our small emotions of sympathy are often brooked by the fear of suffering the same.

The following passage is noteworthy of its insight into the heart of man: *Did I say, Bring unto me? or, Give a reward for me of your substance? Or, Deliver me from the enemy's hand? or, Redeem me from the hand of the mighty? Teach me, and I will hold my tongue: and cause me to understand wherein I have erred. How forcible are right words! but what doth your arguing reprove? Do ye imagine to reprove words, and the speeches of one that is desperate, which are as wind? Yea, ye overwhelm the fatherless, and ye dig a pit for your friend.* (Job 6:22-27) When problems overwhelm us, we often run to our friends and close confidantes for the purpose of gaining a sympathetic ear. We may not ask for money or other material help, but ONLY sympathy. If truth is told us, we may not like to hear it, but it is helpful. But Job's friends offer no help in truth. They simply judge with an unequal balance. When a friend has fallen into a deep well and cries for help, do we run to the edge and demand his reason for digging the well?

Job pleads with his friends to look upon his need as well as his righteousness, for he is righteous. He asks, essentially: Does the fact that I have

fallen under this pain and suffering suggest that I have forgotten righteousness and wisdom which I had before? Am I not the same Job you knew before my sorrows. If our friends become disabled and unable to visit, do we account them as something less than when we were all happy and active? The human soul does not diminish at pain and disease. It may even grow more acute. Are we fair weather friends, or are we even greater friends in the very midst of a friend's storm? We, alone can answer that question with our hearts, with our feet, and with our hands.