



The Sunday called Septuagesima, or the
third Sunday before Lent.

The Collect.

O LORD, we beseech thee favourably to hear the prayers of thy people; that we, who are justly punished for our offences, may be mercifully delivered by thy goodness, for the glory of thy Name; through Jesus Christ our Saviour, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost ever, one God, world without end. Amen.

1 Moreover Job continued his parable, and said, 2 As God liveth, who hath taken away my judgment; and the Almighty, who hath vexed my soul; 3 All the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils; 4 My lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit. 5 God forbid that I should justify you: till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me. 6 My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live. 7 Let mine enemy be as the wicked, and he that riseth up against me as the unrighteous. 8 For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul? 9 Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him? 10 Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God? 11 I will teach you by the hand of God: that which is with the Almighty will I not conceal. 12 Behold, all ye yourselves have seen it; why then are ye thus altogether vain? 13 This is the portion of a wicked man with God, and the heritage of oppressors, which they shall receive of the Almighty. 14 If his children be multiplied, it is for the sword: and his offspring shall not be satisfied with bread. 15 Those that remain of him shall be buried in death: and his widows shall not weep. 16 Though he heap up silver as the dust, and

prepare raiment as the clay; 17 He may prepare it, but the just shall put it on, and the innocent shall divide the silver. 18 He buildeth his house as a moth, and as a booth that the keeper maketh. 19 The rich man shall lie down, but he shall not be gathered: he openeth his eyes, and he is not. 20 Terrors take hold on him as waters, a tempest stealeth him away in the night. 21 The east wind carrieth him away, and he departeth: and as a storm hurleth him out of his place. 22 For God shall cast upon him, and not spare: he would fain flee out of his hand. 23 Men shall clap their hands at him, and shall hiss him out of his place. Job 27:1-23 (KJV)

We observe in Job's continuing monologue a growing understanding and firm belief in God. Persecution and hardship often have the result of strengthening, not weakening, our faith. The hardship of severe military training only results in a stronger soldier on the field of battle. The individual Christian, and the Church, flourishes most vibrantly under the cruel hand of persecution. The bamboo tree of Asia is a strong and vibrant plant, but persistent in its growth and migration from one plant to hundreds over an entire field. The peculiar nature of the bamboo is that, when cut down, it springs up more full of life and in greater quantity than ever before. When our most cherished beliefs are challenged by faithless men, those beliefs become more enduring through the exercise of our faculties in defending them. So with Job. His developing understanding (theology) of God has grown stronger and stronger with each senseless assault by his friends. We note a deepening root of faith in Job as the debate rages. In that respect, Job is like the desert palm tree. It is the tallest of trees, yet we only see the smaller part for its great root plunges twice its height into the depth of the desert soil seeking out moisture even in a dry and lifeless landscape. Job is in a desert of despair with his afflictions – including three friends that only scold and do not comfort or encourage. So Job sinks his roots deeper into the nature of God and finds water for life.

This chapter may be broken down into at least three subsections:

1. Verses 1-6 Job attempts to maintain and defend his Godly integrity.
2. Verses 7- 10 Job invokes a precatory woe upon his three unprofitable friends.
3. Verses 11-23 Job returns to the argument of Divine treatment of the wicked in which he retracts earlier comments with respect to their prosperity, impunity, and similar treatment at death.

In "continuing his parable," here is meant 'his argument.' Job opens his argument here with a strong adjuration by making his appeal through the Living God! **1 Moreover Job continued his parable, and said, 2 As God liveth, who hath taken away my judgment; and the Almighty, who hath vexed my soul.** Our judgment is always based either on our OWN sense of value, or upon the Word of God. It is not taken away arbitrarily. God has not deprived Job of judgment, it is simply that fact that Job's judgment is clouded by present circumstances. I am again disappointed in Job for blaming God on his being vexed. We all know, who have read the evidence, that God is not the prime instrument in vexing Job – it is Satan! Job is bitter as a man offended by his own dear friend. He sounds like the woman, Naomi, who preferred to be called Mara (bitter) instead of her real name "....***for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.***" (Ruth 1:20) We know in that story of Ruth, as well, that God had not in any sense been the cause of Naomi's bitterness. She had left Bethlehem (the House of Bread and Praise) on her own away from the will of God and lived in the cursed land of Moab – simply for the sake of material profit.

3 All the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils;
4 My lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit. Well now, what will Job ever do once his breath is NOT in him? But Job considers that the breath of life is somehow directly related to the Spirit of God who breathed the breath of life into his nostrils...and it is so. **5 God forbid that I should justify you: till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me.** My father once said, "If I were guilty of only 5% of the transgressions your mother has accused me of, I would be the happiest man on earth." He was jokingly comparing his plight with the values of the world. If we are accused too often of a crime, why not go ahead and commit the crime since we are considered guilty anyway? This is the world's wisdom, but Job will have none of it! He refuses to justify the accusations of his friends. Until he closes his eyes in that final Rest, Job will not surrender his honor and integrity. **6 My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.** Only a heart that is ruled by Christ will reproach a man.

7 Let mine enemy be as the wicked, and he that riseth up against me as the unrighteous. Those who accuse the innocent unjustly and persistently do so invariably out of a wicked motivation. **8 For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?** In the NT, the term hypocrite is taken from the Greek for stage-actor, or dissembler, *hupokrinoma*. We may **ACT** as tough as Genghis Khan while in the cushioned palace, but in the day of battle what shall we **BE** like? Through play-acting, we may impress in society and in business, but when we appear naked before God, what shall we have to offer? **9 Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him?** No, despite the harpings of Joel Osteen, God will not hear such a cry or prayer. **If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:** (Psalms 66:18) Truly, if we set high value on delighting in the Lord, He will, indeed, hear us when we pray. But even in calling for help from other men, do we not stand a far better chance of receiving that help if we are well-acquainted with the friend being asked? **10 Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?**

We come now to the concluding portion of the Chapter in which Job returns to the prospects that confront the wicked both in this life, and at its ending. If you refer back to Job 24:2-24, you will see that Job has grown in wisdom and knowledge and retracts the views he expressed in that earlier passage. How does this happen since Job has not learned this from his oppressors. May I suggest that Job has been, not only laboring with his friends, but with God during the course of these debates. The Holy Ghost has lifted his understanding to appreciate truths heretofore unknown to Job. **11 I will teach you by the hand of God: that which is with the Almighty will I not conceal.** Whether to friend or foe, Job will speak the truth that comes only from the Hand of God. Should any Christian EVER conceal the truth from another which comes from God? Certainly, we should not. We should share with the enlightened and unenlightened alike. How else can the unenlightened become enlightened? **12 Behold, all ye yourselves have seen it; why then are ye thus altogether vain?** Job advances an absurdity here that has baffled more than Job. I, too, am baffled by those who know the truth, yet deny its power in the manner in which they live their lives. To hold the truth in unrighteousness is worse than never holding that truth at all. **13 This is the portion of a wicked man with God, and the heritage of oppressors, which they shall receive of the Almighty.** **14 If his children be multiplied, it is for the sword: and his offspring shall not be satisfied with bread.** This is a clear statement of reality. Though the children are not judged for the sins of the fathers, certainly the fathers may influence their children, through sin, to become just as wicked as the parent. Those who learn greed and envy from their parents are more apt to practice the same, and they shall never be satisfied

with the necessities of life (bread) but will desire all that their neighbor possesses. **15 *Those that remain of him shall be buried in death: and his widows shall not weep.*** Just as the Rich Man who had no mercy for the beggar, Lazarus, the children of the wicked who follow their fathers shall have their final estate in a tract of land six feet deep, six feet long, and three feet wide. This is their reward. (read Tolsoy's short story, *How much Land does a Man Need?*) In remote regions of India, the rite of *Sati* is still practiced in which the wife of a dead man is burned alive at his funeral – willing or not. Though outlawed for more than fifty years, there are still occurrences of this dreadfully wicked practice. I am quite sure that the wife does not weep for the man at his death, but for herself.

16 *Though he heap up silver as the dust, and prepare raiment as the clay; 17 He may prepare it, but the just shall put it on, and the innocent shall divide the silver.* Despite all the hoarding of riches by the wicked, they shall not keep it. They go into the grave and are remembered only in the manner expressed by the great English poet, Sir Walter Scott, who wrote in *My Native Land*:

*Boundless his wealth as wish can claim;
Despite those titles, power, and pelf,
The wretch, concentred all in self,
Living, shall forfeit fair renown,
And, doubly dying, shall go down
To the vile dust, from whence he sprung,
Unwept, unhonour'd, and unsung.*

18 *He buildeth his house as a moth, and as a booth that the keeper maketh.* The transition is quite normal from the raiment of verse 16 to the moth's house here. When the raiment of the moth is shaken, it falls apart. The keeper of the vineyard (still true in the Middle- and Far East) builds his booth from boughs of the trees. It falls apart with the desert winds. **19 *The rich man shall lie down, but he shall not be gathered: he openeth his eyes, and he is not.*** This is an awful truth confirmed throughout Scripture, but, again, most beautifully in the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus. *There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried* (Luke 16:19-22) The grave, if that were the end, would be far more preferable than the destination in which the Rich Man later finds himself. The same is true of all wicked. **20 *Terrors take hold on him as waters, a tempest stealeth him away in the night.*** It is true that the wickedly rich never find solace to their souls in either sleep or rest. They are haunted by the memories of others from whom they have stolen wealth

21 *The east wind carrieth him away, and he departeth: and as a storm hurleth him out of his place.* I remember the high desert winds of Iran which arose so suddenly that shelter was seldom available. It raised the dust clouds thousands of feet into the sky. If unprotected, the sand blast would skin a man alive. **22 *For God shall cast upon him, and not spare: he would fain flee out of his hand.*** God will hammer such a man with thunderbolts out of heaven, and there will be no hope of escape. **23 *Men shall clap their hands at him, and shall hiss him out of his place.*** The Iranian common people despise dogs. They resent their even approaching nearby. That clap their hands and hiss at the

wayward dog. I often wondered why this inordinate hate for the poor animals, but the illustration fits perfectly. Honest men will despise the swindler and defrauder of the people. Such a wicked person can find no place to rest – just as the dogs of Iran find no comfort among the people there. Should we not prefer a Godly life to the rigors and depravity of a hated nomad?

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. AMEN