

22nd Sunday after Pentecost, November 9, 2025

Job 19:23-27a, Luke 20:27-38, 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5; 13-17

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Grace, mercy, and peace to you in the name of Jesus Christ.

We are suddenly approaching the end of the church year, and I think I'm always surprised how quickly that sneaks up on us. And the older I get, the faster it seems to come. Is that what they mean by being "over the hill", picking up speed on the downward slope? With the end of the church year come readings that turn our attention to the end of all things, the end of time, the end of life as we know it. Now, you can think of "the end" in two ways. The more usual meaning, especially when applied to life, is when it stops. When it's over and "that's all she wrote," as they say. But the more profound and hopeful meaning of the end of something, including life, is its goal, its destination, or even "the point of it all." And that is what all three of our readings today are helping us to think about.

Our first reading from Job comes from the middle of that long and theologically rich book. You know that premise, right? Job is a righteous man whom God brags about to Satan. Satan in this story not a Halloween demon or the ruler of Hell that we get from late medieval and early modern writers like Dante and Milton. Satan in Job is a member of God's court. You might say he's the quality-control guy. When God brags about Job, Satan says, "yeah, but he's never really been tested." And so the testing begins. Job's whole life is turned upside down. He loses almost everything – his children, his home, his health. He experiences nothing but misery. Meanwhile, his friends come and sit with him. At first they say nothing. They are just there with him in his suffering. And that is a good thing. But soon they start telling Job that he must have done something to deserve his torment, because "God is good, all the time," don't you know! They tell Job he needs to repent of whatever it is he's done and plead with God for mercy. But Job knows that he has done nothing to deserve his fate, and we the readers know that too. Job complains that life is not fair, that God allows evil to flourish while the righteous suffer, which scandalizes his friends. But Job does not give up, and in particular he does not give up on God. That is the background for today's reading. In spite of everything he has suffered, Job is convinced that God will vindicate him some day, that God will prove the accusations of his friends and their pious theology to be wrong, and that somehow he will witness his vindication. How does he know? I don't think he does. He is just confident that because God is faithful and just, gracious and merciful, and abounding in steadfast love, God will not allow innocent suffering and death to be the last word for him. Now, I have never suffered like Job, and I know that most of you haven't either. But there are people in the world who *have* suffered like Job, who *are* suffering like Job right now, those in war zones in Ukraine and Gaza whose homes and families have been destroyed, or those closer to home who are not violent criminals who are being mercilessly hunted down and packed into overcrowded detention centers in conditions you never imagined would be allowed in this country. I hope that the world will be moved to collective action to address all of these terrible situations. But for many of those folks the damage has already been done. And for all of those suffering people, Job's declaration is a word of comfort and hope. God is on their side, and not even death can undo God's faithfulness. That is a word for you too, if ever you should find yourself in despair and hopelessness.

Whether or not Job had a fully formed understanding of resurrection from the dead is not clear. Probably he didn't. But his conviction and his trust in God's vindication points in that direction, and finds its fullest expression in Jesus. For months now in our readings from Luke Jesus has been on his way to Jerusalem. Today we've jumped forward and he has arrived. The end is near. He will soon be arrested and executed. But soon after that he will be raised to

life again. That is the “end” towards which he has been pressing. He’s told his disciples that several times by now, and word must have gotten around. So at least it’s clear that Jesus sides with the Pharisees in believing in resurrection. That sets up this morning’s exchange with the Sadducees. They come to him with a far-fetched hypothetical in an attempt to discredit him by proving that resurrection is ridiculous. The law said that if a husband dies without children, his brother is required to marry his widow in order to provide children for him. (Yeah, I don’t get how that works, but that was the law.) So they cook up this scenario where there are six brothers who die without children and pass this poor woman down the line. And they want to know who she will *belong* to in the resurrection. I don’t know about you, but I don’t spend a lot of time thinking about what life after death will be like. Maybe that’s coming as my trip down this side of the hill picks up speed. But what I do expect at minimum is that I will be my real self. Otherwise the whole idea of resurrection is meaningless. But I also expect that things will be different, because how could they not? So Jesus’ response to the Sadducees turns out to be remarkably good news not only for this hypothetical woman, but also for the real you and the real me. Whose will the widowed woman be in the resurrection? She will be whose she really is already, on this side of the grave: she will be God’s. She is God’s child now, and she will be God’s child in the resurrection. And whoever else you imagine has a claim on her, Jesus tells the Sadducees, whoever else you think she belongs to in this life, she will not belong to anyone but God in the life to come. And the same is true for you and me. Whatever claims there are on you in this life – and there are all kinds, parent, spouse, employee, debtor, citizen, taxpayer (you can think of others, I’m sure) – the only ultimate claim on you is God’s. And that is not going to change even when death comes for you, as it comes for us all. Because Jesus by his cross and resurrection has broken even the claims of death and sin and evil on our lives. Because of Jesus, who you really are is God’s beloved child, and that is who you will always be.

That glorious good news changes not only your future, but also your present. And that is what our second reading from Paul’s second letter to the Thessalonians is getting at. The world might be falling apart around you. It might even be ending, who knows? Paul’s description of the Day of the Lord here seems startlingly relevant. I’ll let you make the connections yourself. But who knows? People in every age have thought that the end was upon them. One of these days it’s going to happen. But whether it is or isn’t doesn’t change how we live now. Like Job, we stand firm in our trust that God is faithful to God’s promises. Confident in who we are and whose we are, we are freed to be partners and agents of God faithfulness on behalf of a world in need of every good work and word that God’s Spirit will work in and through us, and to live with sure and certain hope that the end of the world is God’s goal for the world, the point of it all: life, true life, life that really is life.

May it be so. And may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus unto life everlasting. Amen.