

28th April 2024 at 9.00 am and 10.30 am services

I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVES, AND THAT AT THE LAST HE WILL STAND UPON THE EARTH

Sermon preached by The Revd Dr Tony Martin delivered at Cromwell
Presbyterian Church



READINGS:

Job 19.23-27a

23 'O that my words were written down!

O that they were inscribed in a book!

24 O that with an iron pen and with lead

they were engraved on a rock for ever!

25 For I know that my Redeemer lives,

and that at the last he will stand upon the earth;

26 and after my skin has been thus destroyed,

then in my flesh I shall see God,

27 whom I shall see on my side,

and my eyes shall behold, and not another.

My heart faints within me!

Psalm 17

1 Hear my just cause, O Lord; consider my complaint; •

listen to my prayer, which comes not from lying lips.

2 Let my vindication come forth from your presence; •

let your eyes behold what is right.

**3 Weigh my heart, examine me by night, •
refine me, and you will find no impurity in
me.**

**4 My mouth does not trespass for earthly
rewards; •**

I have heeded the words of your lips.

**5 My footsteps hold fast in the ways of your
commandments; •**

my feet have not stumbled in your paths.

**6 I call upon you, O God, for you will answer
me; •**

**incline your ear to me, and listen to my
words.**

**7 Show me your marvellous loving-kindness,
O Saviour of those who take refuge at your
right hand**

from those who rise up against them.

8 Keep me as the apple of your eye; •

hide me under the shadow of your wings,

9 From the wicked who assault me, •

from my enemies who surround me to take away my life.

Luke 20.27-38

27 Some Sadducees, those who say there is no resurrection, came to him 28 and asked him a question, 'Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies, leaving a wife but no children, the man shall marry the widow and raise up children for his brother. 29 Now there were seven brothers; the first married, and died childless; 30 then the second 31 and the third married her, and so in the same way all seven died childless. 32 Finally the woman also died. 33 In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had married her.'

34 Jesus said to them, 'Those who belong to this age marry and are given in marriage; 35 but those who are considered worthy of a place in that age and in the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in

marriage. 36 Indeed they cannot die anymore, because they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection. 37 And the fact that the dead are raised Moses himself showed, in the story about the bush, where he speaks of the Lord as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. 38 Now he is God not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all of them are alive.'

INTRODUCTION

It was a cold bleak winter's morning in the middle of a German forest, with snow spindrift wafting around, gloomy, and bitterly cold, and I stood in a cemetery with 5000 dead soldiers to my right and 5000 dead soldiers to my left, with about 500 serving soldiers and senior officers from NATO Headquarters gathered in an uncomfortable 'stand easy' in front of me.

We came to remember our fallen. They were buried close to where they died. And their average age was roughly 1/3 of what I am now.

You know, soldiers look for hope.

In fact, all those who serve in the military ... in the air, on the land, or on the sea ... long for a better day without fire, fury, or fear.

And those at home, of course ... will worry ... many will pray ... that all will be well ... and they look for the day ... when their loved ones return home.

But sadly, as we know, many do not return.

Well, on ANZAC Day last Thursday, we remembered those who served, and those who are currently serving in the armed forces ... at home and abroad.

Operation Market Garden was a World War II military operation fought in the Netherlands from 17 to 25 September 1944 and was subject to a huge commemoration several years ago ... attended by Heads of State and Royalty. It was the brainchild of Field Marshal Sir Bernard Montgomery.

The airborne part of the operation was undertaken by the First Allied Airborne Army with the land operation by XXX Corps of the British Second Army.

The objective was to create a 103 km corridor into German territory, with a bridgehead over the River Rhine, creating an Allied invasion route into northern Germany.

And this was to be achieved by seizing a series of nine bridges by Airborne forces, with land forces swiftly following over the bridges.

The operation succeeded in liberating the Dutch cities of Eindhoven and Nijmegen along with many towns, creating a 97 km corridor into German-held territory limiting V-2 rocket launching sites.

It failed, however, to secure a final bridgehead over the Rhine. And approximately 10,000 British paratroopers dropped onto the Landing Zone at Arnhem – the last bridge - including an Anglican chaplain from Christchurch, New Zealand.

10 days later, approximately 2,000 of the 10,000 escaped alive, dishevelled and traumatized. The remaining were either killed or taken prisoner.

The New Zealand chaplain was killed.

One of his colleagues, however, sat with the wounded and dying ... those who could not escape ... waiting for the Nazis to arrive.

While they waited, it was reported they sang, memorably, the hymn 'Abide with me':

**Abide with me fast falls the eventide
The darkness deepens, Lord with me abide
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee
Help of the helpless, oh, abide with me.**

All soldiers, sailors, and airmen and women long for a better day without fire, fury, or fear.

So, this morning's text from Job deserves our careful attention.

Listen to Job's remarkable desire:

“Oh, that my words were now written! Oh, that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock forever!”

Job was likely unaware ... of the full meaning of the words he was uttering ... yet his mind was

impressed ... with a sense of some weighty revelation ... that was concealed within his words.

He wished to have them etched on a rock ... cut deep into it ... with an iron pen ... and then the lines inlaid with lead.

Well, Job has not had his desire in that respect, but how many of us this morning have etched upon our hearts his words **“I know that my redeemer lives.”** Immortalized, of course, by George Fredrick Handel in the Messiah?

If it had been Job’s desire to foretell the advent of Christ ... and his own sure resurrection ... I cannot see what better words he could have used.

What ... I ask ... does Job mean ... if not that he shall rise again ... when the Redeemer stands upon the earth?

Now no unsophisticated mind can fail to find here, what almost all believers have discovered for themselves.

So, in reflecting upon these words, I ask you to consider several things.

First, let us, with Job and our fallen, descend into the grave and feel the ravages of death.

And you will feel ... there is no good news here ... but bear with me ... and reappraise what remembrance is all about.

Then, secondly, with him, and many of our fallen, look up ... longing for consolation.

And, thirdly, may God graciously open our eyes to see the Redeemer - who has vanquished death – and is reaching out to us, now, to draw us into eternity with him.

FIRST, LET US, WITH JOB AND OUR FALLEN, DESCEND INTO THE GRAVE AND FEEL THE RAVAGES OF DEATH.



The Bible tells us Job was a wealthy man living in a land called Uz with his large family and extensive flocks. He is “blameless” and “upright,” always careful to avoid doing evil (1:1).

But in the course of one day, Job received four messages, each bearing separate news that his livestock, servants, and ten children have all died

... due to marauding invaders ... or natural catastrophes.

Job tears his clothes and shaves his head in mourning, but he still blesses God in his prayers.

Job is then afflicted with horrible skin sores. His wife encourages him to curse God ... and to give up ... and to die.

But Job refuses, struggling to accept his circumstances.

You will recall that later ... Job curses the day he was born ... comparing life and death to light and darkness.

He wishes that his birth had been shrouded in darkness ... and longs to have never been born ... feeling that light ... or life ... only intensifies his misery and loss.

And as we might recall, Job had a number of friends who attempt to console him.

But he calls his friends “worthless physicians” who “whitewash with lies” (13:4).

So, Job finally accepts that God cannot be deceived ... and he admits that he does not even understand himself well enough ... to effectively plead his case to God.

And in anguish ... Job wishes for someone who to mediate between himself and God ... or for God to send him to Sheol ... the deep place of the dead.

Do you now begin to feel the power ... and deep ... trembling conviction ... of his words ... when he said ...

**“I know that my Redeemer lives,
and that at the last he will stand upon the
earth;**

Well, I am afraid that ... perhaps, for some this morning ... I have been somewhat uninteresting ...

spending time on the exposition of the words of Job ...

but I do think it is very much the core of his faith ...

and perhaps sometimes of our experience too.

You see, he had a clear view that the worms would ... after his skin ... destroy his body ... and yet ... that in his flesh ... he should see God.

Now ... [Rudyard Kipling](#) encapsulates in a poem ... the growing fear of the civilian population ... when it is threatened by an adversary ... and the nation looks to the soldier ... to protect it from the ravages of death ...

And sadly, Kipling noted ... the nations indifference ... and at times loathing of the military ... in peacetime.

But then of course, everything changes when danger threatens ... with evil smashing about ... killing and destroying ... all that goes before it.

He wrote:

**Then it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an'
"Tommy, 'ow's yer soul?"**

**But it's "Thin red line of 'eroes" when the
drums begin to roll,**

**The drums [of war] begin to roll, my boys,
the drums begin to roll,**

**O it's "Thin red line of 'eroes" when the drums
begin to roll. (Rudyard Kipling)**

**WELL, SECONDLY, WITH JOB, AND MANY OF
OUR FALLEN, LET US LOOK UP ... LONGING
FOR CONSOLATION.**



And as we do this, stay with me a while ...

and listen to a true story from the Jungles of Asia by Ernest Gordon, an officer in the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders.

Gordon was later ordained a minister of the Church of Scotland ... and became Dean of the Chapel in Princeton University.

Miracle of the river Kwai

From the book E. Gordon. Miracle on the River Kwai (London: HarperCollins, 1990).

Situation (p 65).

Death called to us from every direction. It was in the air we breathed, the food we ate, the things we talked about. The rhythm of death obsessed us with its beat - a beat so regular, so pervasive, so inescapable that it made Chungkai a place of shadows in the dark valley.

It was so easy to die. Those who decided that they had no further reason for living pulled down the shades and quietly expired.

These were the day-to-day cases of death retail. At times we were also brought face to face with death wholesale. On one occasion a whole string of barges came floating down river to our camp. They were the barges of the

dead. Their cargo consisted of corpses - the bodies of men from upcountry who had been starved, overworked, corrupted with disease - no more than skeletons covered with skin.

(p 66)

It was a case of "I look out for myself and to hell with everyone else." This attitude became our norm. We called it "The Ladder Club." Its motto was "I've got the ladder up, Jack. I'm all right." The weak were trampled underfoot, the sick ignored or resented, the dead forgotten. When a man lay dying, we had no word of comfort for him. When he cried we averted our heads. Men cursed the enemy, their neighbours and God..... Everyone was his own keeper. It was free enterprise at its worst, with all the restraints of morality gone.

Not To Be Served But To Serve (pp 106-7).

It was experiences such as these that made our discussions meaningful. We were

developing a keener insight into life and its complexities. We were learning what it means to be alive - to be human. As we became more aware of our responsibility to God the Father, we realised that we were put into this world not to be served but to serve. This truth touched and influenced many of us to some degree - even some of those who shunned any religious quest. Men began to smile - even to laugh - and to sing.

I was hobbling back to my shack after a rather late discussion session. Passing one of the huts I stopped. There was a sound of men singing. As I listened, I recognised "Jerusalem the Golden."

Someone was beating time on a piece of tin with a stick. The words of the old hymn seemed symbolic to me as they rose in the still night. Maybe Jerusalem, the Kingdom of God, is here after all, "with milk and honey blest." Maybe man shall "not live by bread alone."

Worship (pp 161-162).

Lt. Gen. A. Percival in a letter written after the war wrote, "Sunday the Churches were filled, and where there were no churches and no chaplain, services were held in ordinary buildings or in the open air and were conducted by the prisoners themselves. Inspired by faith, the soldiers in these camps displayed some of the finest qualities of their race.

Key Insight (p 164).

We were beginning to understand that as there were no easy ways for God, so there were no easy ways for us. God, we saw, was honouring us by allowing us to share in His labours, aye, in His agony - for the world He loves. God, in finding us, enabled us to find our brother.

And passing now onto our text ... we notice a phrase ... that Job found consolation ... not only in the fact that he had a Redeemer ... but that his Redeemer lives.

You may have noticed that he did not say, “I know that my Redeemer shall live ... but that he lives.”

And ... as Christian women and men ... looking back we do not say ... “I know that he did live, but that he lives to-day.”

Like Job ... and our fallen ... let us look-up from the ravages of failure, suffering, and death ... and long for consolation from God.

SO, NOW, THIRDLY, MAY GOD GRACIOUSLY OPEN OUR EYES TO SEE THE REDEEMER - WHO HAS VANQUISHED DEATH – AND IS REACHING OUT TO US THIS MORNING ... TO DRAW US INTO ETERNITY.



You see Job's journey of faith ... came to a turning point.

Like [Martin Luther King](#), he **“climbed to the top of the mountain and had seen the other side.”**

The vision will never let Job turn back.

From here-on ... the revelation of the Redeemer will be the reference point to which he returns ... when pain and pressure become intolerable.

Now, George Frederick Handel composed the oratorio *Messiah* in twenty-four days.

And it is reported a servant who came in while he was writing the “Hallelujah Chorus” found the composer weeping copious tears. When Handel could speak, he told the servant, “I think I did see all heaven before me and the great God himself.”

Is it any wonder that the resurrection passage that immediately follows the “Hallelujah Chorus” is opened with the unforgettable soprano aria, **“I know that my Redeemer lives”**.

Perhaps not as clearly as Handel, but just as surely, Job saw all heaven before him, and the great God himself.

He, too, must have spoken through a flood of tears when he wept and says, **“How my heart yearns within me!”** (19:27).

And so, friends ... over to you this morning ...

“Do you know that your Redeemer lives, and that
at the last he will stand upon the earth ...

and after your skin has been thus destroyed ...

then, yet, in your flesh ...

you shall see God?”

AMEN

