

**We all know the story of Job. He is the sad sack of the Bible who was seemingly a pawn in a game of chicken between God and Satan. When I was about 10, my parents bought me my first real Bible and in that Bible came a chart for reading the whole Bible chronologically. So because Job lived during the time of Genesis, his was the second book I read. I felt really sorry for Job. He seemed to get the short end the stick in life from God. He was filthy rich, and it was all taken from him. He had a great family and they all died. He was strong and healthy and now he was covered in boils and sitting in the dirt.**

**I always threaten naughty confirmation kids with giving them Job 2:9 as their confirmation verse. "Then his wife said to him, 'Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die.'" As a kid, I was on board with Job's wife as I started reading this book. But then, as I started getting into the meat of the book, I began to get a whole new perspective on Job. I began to see him not as a poor unfortunate soul, but as a great warrior of God, a giant of faith even as great as Abraham or Noah. If you read the book, Job has an amazing faith. There were definitely times when he weakened in the face of Satan's onslaught. At one point he says, "My spirit is broken; my days are extinct; the graveyard is ready for me."**

**Satan just wanted to get Job to reject God. His whole point was that people are only faithful to God when things are going well for them. But Job would not do it. Even at his lowest moments, he refused to reject God or blame God.**

**There are so many people unlike that. As soon as something falls apart in the world they reject and blame God for it. It never seems to occur to them that maybe human beings caused the failure, not God. Just recently someone told me that she used to believe in God, but when God took her mother with cancer, she just could not believe in him any longer. Why would God allow her wonderful mother to die from such an awful disease? Maybe sometimes you are tempted to think that way too. We hear it so often. If God is love why did all those children die in that tsunami? If God is all powerful, why does evil not only happen, but, in fact, seem to prosper? Job was tempted too. In Job's case, God was up front and honest about letting Satan do all manner of evil to him.**

**But in the end, Job was victorious. God lifted him up and kept him powerful through it all, and if you read to the end of the book, Job had everything Satan had taken from him returned, plus, now Job knew the strength of his own faith.**

**We don't like to think about that, but we don't know how strong our faith is. If you lift weights, how do you know how much weight you can lift? You lift until you cannot lift anymore. Weightlifters call it maxing out. Now human beings are lazy and fearful. We don't want to find out how strong our faith is because maxing out is painful. We would just as soon play it safe and never grow. We are perfectly happy to use our 2lb weights while watching Jeopardy and snacking on potato chips. Then we can proudly say that we worked out. No one ever asks if you maxed out. No one ever asks what you were eating while you worked out. We are just as lazy with our faith as we are with our bodies, so, God helps us max out.**

**Being a Christian means following Christ, literally following in Christ's footsteps, and following Christ is hard! Yet, the closer we follow the stronger our faith becomes because not only does he max us out, but he feeds us with his Word and his very body and blood. As Job struggles to keep following God, half way through the book he makes this amazingly powerful proclamation:**

**"Oh that my words were written!**

**Oh that they were inscribed in a book!**

**Oh that with an iron pen and lead**

**they were engraved in the rock forever!**

**For I know that my Redeemer lives,**

**and at the last he will stand upon the earth.**

**And after my skin has been thus destroyed,**

**yet in my flesh I shall see God,**

**whom I shall see for myself,**

**and my eyes shall behold, and not another.**

**My heart faints within me!"**

**I have read those words over the graves of hundreds of saints. "I know that my Redeemer lives and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God." Job wrote these words about 2,000 years before Christ rose from the dead and yet he already knew that he would rise from the dead as well. That is what today is all about. Today is the day we celebrate that though there are trials in this life, and one day our flesh will be destroyed, yet in our flesh we will see God.**

**That is a powerful confession. No matter what happens, no matter what loss we suffer, regardless of any success we might enjoy, what matters is that in the end, "We shall see God in our flesh." Job said it made his heart faint within him. I would agree. It is almost too much to imagine and it is why we don't have to live lives of fear and worry. We know what awaits us. Today is the celebration of having been bound to Christ in our baptisms and because we have been so connected, we are empowered to follow him through everything in this life and into life eternal.**

**Life was a challenge for Job and it is likewise for you and me. Maybe you are here today to celebrate and worship the risen Lord. Maybe you are here because of habit or family or to make your parents happy. I saw one person at an Easter service one time and I welcomed him because I hadn't seen him in a long while. He said to me, "Well Pastor, even heathen go to church on Easter." Whatever the reason is that you are here today, take this with you. Jesus Christ rose from the dead and proved at that moment that his sacrifice for all of our sins was sufficient and that you and I will see God in our flesh. Life is a struggle. Your struggle may be public or it may be very private but none of us gets through life without a battle. Remember Job. Remember how God gave him the strength that he needed to endure and remember how, in the end, everything was returned to him. It is true for us as well. Jesus proved it when he burst forth from that tomb. In the end, we win, because our redeemer lives.**