

# 10 October 2021

## Job 23.1-9, 23.16-17

<sup>1</sup> Then Job replied: <sup>2</sup> 'Even today my complaint is bitter; his hand is heavy in spite of my groaning.

<sup>3</sup> If only I knew where to find him; if only I could go to his dwelling! <sup>4</sup> I would state my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments. <sup>5</sup> I would find out what he would answer me, and consider what he would say to me.

<sup>6</sup> Would he vigorously oppose me with great power? No, he would not press charges against me. <sup>7</sup> There the upright can establish their innocence before him, and there I would be delivered for ever from my judge.

<sup>8</sup> 'But if I go to the east, he is not there; if I go to the west, I do not find him. <sup>9</sup> When he is at work in the north, I do not see him; when he turns to the south, I catch no glimpse of him.

<sup>16</sup> God has made my heart faint; the Almighty has terrified me. <sup>17</sup> Yet I am not silenced by the darkness, by the thick darkness that covers my face.

## Psalm 22.1-15

<sup>1</sup> My God, my God, why have you forsaken me:

why are you so far from helping me  
and from the words of my groaning?

<sup>2</sup> My God, I cry to you by day, but you do not answer:  
and by night also I take no rest.

<sup>3</sup> But you continue holy:  
you that are the praise of Israel.

<sup>4</sup> In you our forebears trusted:  
they trusted, and you delivered them;

<sup>5</sup> To you they cried and they were saved:  
they put their trust in you and were not confounded.

<sup>6</sup> But as for me, I am a worm and no man:  
the scorn of all and despised by the people.

<sup>7</sup> Those that see me laugh me to scorn:  
they shoot out their lips at me  
and wag their heads, saying,

<sup>8</sup> 'He trusted in the Lord—let him deliver him:  
let him deliver him, if he delights in him.'

<sup>9</sup> But you are he that took me out of the womb:  
that brought me to lie at peace on my mother's breast.

<sup>10</sup> On you have I been cast since my birth:  
you are my God, even from my mother's womb.

<sup>11</sup> O go not from me, for trouble is hard at hand:  
and there is none to help.

<sup>12</sup> Many oxen surround me:  
fat bulls of Bashan close me in on every side.

<sup>13</sup> They gape wide their mouths at me:  
like lions that roar and rend.

<sup>14</sup> I am poured out like water,  
and all my bones are out of joint:  
my heart within my breast is like melting wax.

<sup>15</sup> My mouth is dried up like a potsherd:  
and my tongue clings to my gums.

## Hebrews 4.12-16

<sup>12</sup> For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

<sup>13</sup> Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

<sup>14</sup> Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to feel sympathy for our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet he did not sin.

<sup>16</sup> Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

## Mark 10.17-31

<sup>17</sup> As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. 'Good teacher,' he asked, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?' <sup>18</sup> 'Why do you call me good?' Jesus answered. 'No one is good – except God alone. <sup>19</sup> You know the commandments: "You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honour your father and mother.'"

<sup>20</sup> 'Teacher,' he declared, 'all these I have kept since I was a boy.' <sup>21</sup> Jesus looked at him and loved him. 'One thing you lack,' he said. 'Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.'

<sup>22</sup> At this the man's face fell. He went away sad because he had great wealth.

<sup>23</sup> Jesus looked round and said to his disciples, 'How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!' <sup>24</sup> The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, 'Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! <sup>25</sup> It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.'

<sup>26</sup> The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, 'Who then can be saved?' <sup>27</sup> Jesus looked at them and said, 'With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.'

<sup>28</sup> Then Peter spoke up, 'We have left everything to follow you!'

<sup>29</sup> 'Truly I tell you,' Jesus replied, 'no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel <sup>30</sup> will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields – along with persecutions – and in the age to come eternal life. <sup>31</sup> But many who are first will be last, and the last first.'

### Sentence

There is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for Jesus' sake, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. Mark 10.29–30

### Prayer of the Day

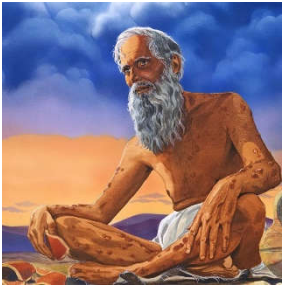
Merciful God, in your Son you call not the righteous but sinners to repentance: draw us away from the easy road that leads to destruction, and guide us into paths that lead to life abundant, that in seeking your truth, and obeying your will, we may know the joy of being a disciple of Jesus our Saviour; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.



If an affluent family moved into Cooma and started attending our Church, we might be a bit pleased, not only to get new people but with the thought that they might be able to contribute liberally to the offering. Colleen and Bernie might dream about doing the things that our budget does not cover now. We might all try to make them comfortable and welcome,

but we would not be asking them personal questions about their faith or personal discipline in following Jesus, and we would certainly not ask them to give up their wealth before they could join us.

We are continuing our exerts from Job, he was a wealthy landowner at the



beginning of the story with all the accompanying status and the assumptions that he was blessed because of his righteousness, but in our passage today he has lost everything and is wondering where God is in all this.

It was not his choice to give up his wealth, he knows God still exists he just wishes that God would come and reason with him. We will read more of the story in the next few weeks, but he does retain his integrity despite everything. He does not think that wealth is his right just because he is righteous. He trusts God.

When, we go through tough times, there are days when we feel like Job and it is good to know that it is Ok to question God and that even when we cannot see him, he is still God.

There has always been a tendency to think that those who have no financial worries, who have power and influence in our society are blessed by God. There are notable exceptions in the media but in our own circles those with a nicer house and car and disposable income are given a certain amount of status.

It has always been like this, despite the prophets preaching against the rich and powerful, it seems to be part of human nature to make these assumptions,



so when the rich young man comes to join Jesus' disciples you can imagine the others being quite interested. Perhaps they were imagining a slightly richer diet and better accommodations on their travels but it was not to be.

When there's been a major event or we are expecting a significant event, we tend to use it as a reference point in our lives, we talk of before and after we had children, before and after we retired, before and after we moved to town or when we retire, or when we move or whatever.

Phil and I are doing a lot of thinking about when we move into this supposed house and in the same way in Biblical times people were expecting the messiah to come and change everything, make a new time, a new age. That is what they were talking about when people of that age referred to 'the present age', and 'the age to come' or 'eternal life'. When they said eternal life, they were not thinking about heaven but the new age on earth.



The question he asks "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" is a standard question to ask a Rabi/teacher of any group at that time. The expected response is a detailed interpretation of the law, according to what that group considers important plus 'join our group'. Jesus works within that framework but gives it a twist that makes it truly unique. Jesus is never standard.

He immediately deflects the focus from himself to God. Jesus does not replace God but represents the coming of God's rule, he does not reinterpret but simply recites the laws as given by God.



Jesus knows this young man, knows that he is indeed honourable but also knows that his wealth and status are too important to him and that without relinquishing it up he will never be able to truly follow Jesus. The young man was not able to give up his wealth, so he went away.

Throughout history there have been a few people who have gone from wealth and status to serving the Lord in poverty like St Francis of Assisi, who was born into a noble silk merchant's family but eventually gave it all up to rebuild God's house, but this is not the call on everyone's life.

Most of us are not born into privilege but compared to people in other countries we are wealthy, we have houses, mod cons, food, cars, and other advantages that others cannot imagine. We don't think of ourselves as rich but there are things which we take for granted that hold us back from wholly following Jesus. Our possessions can start to own us.

Resisting the pressure of a consumer culture, which generates perpetual needs for more and newer possessions, is difficult for many Christians today. Our excess consumption may deprive other of resources they need just to survive. It is a hidden form of structural greed that wastes the world's resources and creates suffering for those we have never met. We need to listen when our Lord points something out and obey his word. For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.



As the young man walks away Jesus remarks to his disciples, 'How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!' and they are surprised because they are still in the mindset that being wealthy is a blessing from God. Jesus knows that the more you own the harder it is to give it all up, so he quotes this proverb about the



Camel passing through the eye of a needle, it's impossible, camels are too big. That's the point of the saying, humanly it can't be done but God is not human, God can do anything: even save a rich man.

Some people have used bits of this passage to preach a prosperity gospel but the hundredfold we receive in return for whatever we give up is not automatically the same as we gave away. If you give up family, you will receive another family: the family of Christ, if you give up possessions you will find that that all you need is provided but not necessarily opulence and persecutions and eternal life ie life in the kingdom of God now and forever. Jesus brought the Age to Come right into the present age by his death and resurrection.

Wait, how did persecutions get into that list of blessings? For Mark's church persecutions were a normal part of life, Christians were martyred, if the gospel is truly preached and lived, life will not be easy, we may not be killed but we may have to kill off some of selfish desires.

Jesus and his disciples are on their way to Jerusalem, Jesus knows that he will be slaughtered there, He is deliberately going to the place where his enemies will kill him. He has given up the ultimate wealth, the whole of heaven and all its glory to come to earth just for this sacrifice, and in return his reward is to have us as brothers and sisters. Now quite the same but he loves us so much that he thinks it worthwhile.

The Psalm today is the one Jesus quoted on the cross, some definite echoes of

Job's sentiments, even during all that distress he knows that God is still God: you are my God, even from my mother's womb.

<sup>14-16</sup> Now that we know what we have—Jesus, this great High Priest with ready access to God—let's not let it slip through our fingers. We don't have a priest who is out of touch with our reality. He's been through weakness and testing, experienced it all—all but the sin.

So, let's walk right up to him and get what he is so ready to give. Take the mercy, accept the help.

