

PENTECOST: SHARING NEW LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

November 7, 2010

Job 19:23-27a

Psalm 17:1-9

2 Thessalonians 2:1-5, 13-17

Luke 20:27-38

I Will See God

The book of Job begins, “There was a man named Job, living in the land of Uz, who worshiped God and was faithful to him. He was a good man, careful not to do anything evil” (Job 1:1 *GNT*). Job’s life was shattered one day when raiders and lightning consumed all his wealth—they took all Job’s oxen, sheep, and camels; then a great storm killed all his children; and, if that wasn’t enough to ruin his life, he broke out in painful sores all over his body. In despair he cried out, “I was born with nothing, and I will die with nothing” (Job 1:21a *GNT*).

It is remarkable how at the point when the world was crumbling before his eyes, when he felt the helplessness of absolute abandonment, Job praised God. In humility, Job cried out, “The LORD gave, and now he has taken away. May his name be praised!” (Job 1:21b *GNT*). Job didn’t stop with praise. He didn’t retreat into the solitude of resignation. The God Job knew was a God who loved his people and a God who entered into a relationship with his chosen ones. Job praised God, he worshiped God, thanked God, and marveled at his wonder.

Even though Job felt as if God had turned on him, that God had abandoned him, Job still hoped. This hope that defies all hopelessness testifies to the power of the Holy Spirit to sustain us. In the depths of his pain, Job bursts out, “But I know there is someone in heaven who will come at last to my defense. Even after my skin is eaten by disease, while still in this body **I will see God**. I will see him with my own eyes, and he will not be a stranger” (Job 19:25-27 *GNT*).

In the midst of his agony, Job receives a wonderful gift, a glimpse of God. Like Job, we too go through moments of pain, losses and tragedies. We have nowhere else to turn but to God who knows all and, more importantly, promises to liberate us. We must encounter, experience and embrace God in and through the trails and tragedies of life. We must learn to praise God no matter the circumstances of our lives. Like the psalmist, we too must pray, “Reveal your wonderful love and save me; at your side I am safe from my enemies. Protect me as you would your very eyes; hide me in the shadow of your wings from the attacks of the wicked” (Psalm 17:7-9a *GNT*). Our trials must become a window through which we see God.

And whatever tragedies or hurts or losses and misunderstandings we carry with us as part of life, we know that they will be resolved and transformed by joy once and for all, when we see God in Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. Amen!

This week's Reflection was prepared by Tenny Thomas, a Ph.D. candidate at Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary in New York City. He also serves as a consultant for the American Bible Society in the Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship.

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This week we remember to pray for the work of the Bible Societies in: Armenia – with thanks to God for winning new hearts to walk in Christianity, and for the Bible as daily bread in remote regions for soldiers, youth and marginalized people; and with prayers for approval of their new projects, that the Bible stories will penetrate the children's lives, for all Christians to be able to pray and work together, and for God's blessings on the staff and partners; **Georgia** – with thanks to God for the translation and distribution projects; and with prayers for God's guidance as they continue to work on these projects; for change in the general feeling of hopelessness and depression due to the effects of a badly damaged environment and economy, resulting from the Russian-Georgian war of August 2008; and for the ability to bring God's Word to the people in these trying times; **Azerbaijan** – with thanks to God for freedom to spread his Word; and with prayers for continued stability and freedom; for the translation projects in Azeri, Talish and Udi; for the *Faith Comes By Hearing* project and its distributors who travel to places where people have never heard about Jesus; and for the three million migrants in Azerbaijan and the ministry to them, so that all will know about Jesus Christ.

Activity Corner: "Believing is Seeing"

Supplies needed: Bible, white paper, pens/pencils

Reflect on Job 19:25-26. Job believes that he will see God despite his present circumstances. His posture of praise while facing crisis is exemplary of how believers should be. We do not see to believe, we believe to see. Engage the group in a discussion on the differences in these perspectives. Emphasize the fact that the former requires faith and trust while the latter does not. Distribute paper to each member of the group and invite them to list at least three promises found in the Scriptures. Be sure to note that we have to believe these promises in order to experience their fulfillment. Allow time for each person to share one of the promises and also say how it speaks to them. Younger children may be given a short verse of one of God's promises to be memorized and then recited as a group. Lead the group in prayer using Psalm 17:1-9.