

CHRIST THE KING LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost November 9, 2025

Job 19:23-27a; Psalm 17:1-9; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5, 13-17; Saint Luke 20:27-38

In nomine Jesu!

With everyone in today's readings and Gospel, we share one thing; one burning desire: We all want a happy ending; a positive resolution to all of life's challenges and, indeed, to all life itself. Everyone, that is, except the Sadducees. As temple authorities and collaborators with Imperial Roman occupiers, they rejected the happy ending concept of resurrection. They preferred that everyone else live with unresolved guilt, ensuring the continuation of temple sacrifices and their own positions. For their own preservation and benefit, they weaponized religion. Their insincere questioning in the Gospel illustrates their resistance to hope and renewal. By the time Luke's Gospel was written in the 80s C.E., Jerusalem was gone; the temple was gone; its sacrifices were gone; and the Sadducees were gone too, making their perspective obsolete. So, I'm going to ignore them today! Job, the members of the Thessalonian congregation, their anxious times and their challenging concerns are very much like ours. Much like us, they were looking for a happy ending.

Consider Job, whose story exemplifies the search for a happy ending. Once prosperous, faithful, and carefree, Job suddenly and without reason loses everything for reasons he cannot fathom. Job needs friends to stand with him, name the injustice he is experiencing with him, advocate for him, and help him find his happy ending. Instead, Job's friends only manage to prolong Job's pain by trying and failing to defend the indefensible actions of God. It is in this context that we hear today's reading, Job's expectant plea for a *goel*, the Hebrew word translated redeemer, but which actually means friend, sibling, to stand with him; affirm his innocence; and help him find his "happy ending."

We have several Jobs in this congregation and thousands of Jobs, unjustly suffering, in our city, state, and nation today. For these, as for Job, there is no comfort from our silence in the face of their pain or experience of injustice; no comfort in our silence about or defense of a superior authority's indefensible actions. They need us to be their *goel* and to listen to them and stand with them and help them find the truth. Ultimately in his story, Job's trust in God is restored, but not without significant hardship. His experience reminds us that unwavering faith does not guarantee an easy life; that discipleship comes with great cost.

The Thessalonians not only *want* a happy ending, but they also lived as if they already had it; were entitled to it; and were living in it right now in the fullness of "the day of the Lord." They believed that they had it made. This belief led to complacency, indifference toward others, and resulted in harm to their community. Their sense of entitlement inverted the Gospel by turning it into "us the saved" *versus* everyone unlike us who are unsaved; and therefore, inferior to us and expendable from us. This belief enabled their full abdication of responsibility for society's cruel injustices and for the discernible deterioration of their environment. We have plenty aspiring Thessalonians around us, -- "Christians" who in Jesus' name weaponize the Gospel to no longer proclaiming Christ as *for us and for all people* (as we do weekly at the Lord's Table) but rather as for some and against others; applauding and imitating "the lawless ones who exalt themselves, ... declare [themselves] to be gods" and base their own happy endings on the demise of the earth and all that dwell therein.

Jesus comes to us today -- for the Jobs among us, suddenly and without reason losing everything for reasons they cannot understand.

Jesus comes to us today -- not with easy answers, nor facile explanations; nor by defending the indefensible acts of God;

Jesus comes to us today -- and submits himself to those same indefensible actions – to the cross – so he can stand with us as our *goel* - our sibling, our friend, our advocate – the One who lives, loses, suffers, and dies for us as we do.

Jesus comes today -- for the would-be Thessalonians – “the lawless” - around us who proclaim God’s preference for them, God’s desire for their happy endings, and God’s dismissal of all others;

Jesus comes to us today – announcing to all that all “are considered worthy of a place in that age” [to come] and “in the resurrection from the dead;” proclaiming the happy ending for all who “...after [their] skin has been destroyed, shall in [their] flesh, see God, [standing by their own] side, and behold [with their own] eyes, and not another.”

Jesus comes to us today -- as One unjustly treated like Job and every Job who has ever or will ever live.

Jesus comes to us today -- as One standing beside us in our pain; standing with all in God’s embrace and inclusion.

Jesus comes to us today -- not only to be our *goel* – our sibling, friend, and advocate; but to form us to be *goelim* – siblings, friends, and advocates for all others; and especially to those who, like Job, suddenly and without reason lose everything for reasons they cannot fathom.

Jesus comes to us today -- so that we, and through us, all people, may see God face to face, and have the happy ending promised to all by the one who suffered, died, and was raised for all, now and forever. Amen.

Amandus J. Derr
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