

- 1 **“Do not mortals have hard service on earth?
Are not their days like those of hired laborers?**
- 2 **Like a slave longing for the evening shadows,
or a hired laborer waiting to be paid,**
- 3 **so I have been allotted months of futility,
and nights of misery have been assigned to me.**
- 4 **When I lie down I think, ‘How long before I get up?’
The night drags on, and I toss and turn until dawn.**
- 5 **My body is clothed with worms and scabs,
my skin is broken and festering.**
- 6 **“My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle,
and they come to an end without hope.**
- 7 **Remember, O God, that my life is but a breath;
my eyes will never see happiness again.**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The word of God before us today speaks of suffering. It does it through the mouth of a man named Job. We don’t know when he lived. However, there are clues that indicate that he possibly lived in the days of Abraham. There are also indications that he lived in a place later called Edom which is southwest of the land of Israel.

Job asks the question, *“Since life is hard enough, why does God allow even more misery into my life?”* The question of suffering has bothered people, including believers for a long time. Either we are ourselves suffer, or someone that we know suffers. The *“Why?”* question arises. *“Why does the Lord allow this suffering?”* In search of answers we go to the Biblical book of Job. Here, we join Job in this prayer from verse 7, **“Remember, O God, That My Life Is But a Breath.”**

Let me summarize the situation which Job is in. Job is reported to be one of the greatest men in the East. Job has also been blessed by God to have faith in God’s promises.

Satan, the devil asked for permission to tempt Job to see if Job would give up his faith. The Lord permitted the devil to do this. Job first lost his possession and his children. Then Job himself was afflicted with painful

health issues. Some friends come to comfort him, but they basically tell him he has obviously committed some great sin and he needs to confess so that God will heal him. Job is angered. In chapter six he responds by saying that he hasn't done anything wrong. He knows he's not perfect, but he hasn't done anything to deserve the suffering that he is going through. In the beginning of chapter seven Job is still speaking, but he now talks about how miserable he is.

1. Life is futile. (It ultimately out of our control.)

As he is speaking, Job shares an important truth that the Lord God wants us to remember. Life is futile. That sounds awful, but remembering life is futile will help us remember that we should not put our trust in this life, but in God.

A. What is Job saying? First, he speaks of the fact that life is full of misery.

1. I have entitled Job's recital of misery as, "*Hard work, long nights, bad health.*"

Job says, "**Do not mortals have hard service on earth?**" We work hard and what do we end up with? We are exhausted, we need to go back to work the next day and we hope that we get something out of it or that it adds up to something. Job is pointing out that life is full of exhaustion and disappointment. When you feel this way, please understand that God knows.

2. There is more. Job indicates that we lose sleep at night. We either lose sleep because we are worrying or because bad health deprives us of sleep. So we are miserable at night too!

3. Then Job adds that we are miserable because we suffer from bad health.

Job says, "**My body is clothed with worms and scabs, my skin is broken and festering.**" He may have had a severe form of leprosy. You and I work hard our whole life and you may retire to back pain and arthritis, to Multiple Sclerosis or Parkinsons, to cancer or Alzheimers, etc. Job's motto would be "*life is hard and then it gets worse.*"

Does this mean that everything about life on earth is bad? Absolutely not! However, the only thing that can help us with the futility of life is God. We must put our trust in him.

B. There is one more negative that Job brings out. Life is short. In verse 6 he says, "**My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and they come to an end without hope.**" I have a picture of a weaver's shuttle. I would presume that when an expert weaver is working that the thread flies off the spool. However, when the weaver is done, he or she will cut the thread. I believe

Job is thinking that his life is quickly drawing to its end. The Lord God is about to cut the “thread” of his life. If the doctor ever tells us that we have a deadly disease, we may wonder if our life will be cut short. That idea of dying before our time weighs heavily on us, just as it did for Job.

C. As Job speaks of the futility of life it is important that we place the blame where it belongs. God did not want people to have to go through a futile existence here on earth. His initial words instructed Adam and Eve to care for Eden and be fruitful and multiply. He warned that if they rebelled death would come into the picture. After they disobeyed he told Eve her life would be filled with pain and he told Adam that by the sweat of his brow he would earn a living and then he would return to dust. (Genesis 1) So the Apostle Paul writes that “**the wages of (our sins) is death.**” (Rom 6:23) Not just in this life, but misery can extend in to the next life for eternity.

D. Years ago a mom gave her daughter a coin to put in the offering plate. When the offering plate arrived, the child did not want to release the shiny coin. The mom had to take her hand and make her put it in the plate. That is a good illustration of how we are by nature. By nature we want to cling to what we can see and enjoy in the here and now. At times the only way to get us to let go of life is to let us experience the harshness and futility of life. Then we are willing to look to him and to think about spiritual and eternal things. The Lord God is always working to have us trust him above all else.

E. Suffering and futility are hard, but thank God that he cares enough to send trouble so that we can look to him. Also, he doesn’t just send us trouble. He sends help. There is good news.

2. Turn to God.

In verse 7 we see Job turning to God in this midst of his suffering. This is what we are to do.

A. His words in verse 7 also show us what we do when we turn to God.

1. In his words are a confession. “**My life is but a breath.**” He doesn’t mention sin, but he is thinking, “*my life is short and it is because of sin.*”

Later on, Moses would write in Psalm 90, “**You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence. All our days pass away under your wrath; we finish our years with a moan.**” (8,9) The believer will always confess, “*God it is not you, it is me.*”

2. His words form a prayer. “**Remember, O God, that my life is but a breath; my eyes will never see happiness again.**” “Remember” is cry for

mercy. Job wants the Lord to forgive his sins and help him. When you and I ask for God's help we can add to our prayer, "*O Lord, help me not for my sake, because I am a sinner, but for Jesus' sake.*" Amen."

I believe that when Job says, "**my eyes will never see happiness again.**", he is worried that he will not see the face of God in heaven. He is concerned that what has happened to him may mean that God has condemned him. If we ever have doubts about our salvation, we need to pray for strength. We need to go to the Scriptures where we have assurance that God wants to save us and not condemn us.

B. Job prayed, "**Remember, O God.**" because he knew his God as Savior.

1. Job certainly knew God had the power to save him. In verse 4 and 14 of chapter 6, he calls God, "**Almighty.**" His God created the world and everything in it. The God he is praying to created Adam and Eve and gave them earth as their beautiful home. This God had rescued Noah from the flood. Job knew God could help him.

2. In verse 10 of chapter 6, he calls God, "**The Holy One.**" In Mark 1:24 Jesus is called, "**The Holy One of God.**" Jesus is God's holy Son. He came into a world suffering to suffer and die and take away Job's sins and our sins. His holy life and holy blood was able to pay for every sin. Job knew that even if he died, he could go to Heaven because of God's promise of a Savior. In his dark hour, however, he wanted assurance. Later towards the end of the book of Job, God's does speak to Job and he restores his health.

In our darkest hours we need to go to the cross and we do that by going to the Word of God in the Bible and the Sacraments. At the cross we are assured that God loves us. God was willing to suffer for us to save us. Jesus' suffering was for good. So as we suffer, we know that in the end God will take us to heaven. We also know that any suffering is for our good and for the good of his people. This is what St. Paul was saying in the New Testament reading today, "**And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.**" (Romans 8:28)

Conclusion: There is the history of John Chrysostom, Bishop of Constantinople. About 403 A.D. in his old age was removed from office. He was banished from his country, thrust into misery and abused, made to flee and suffer hunger and disease. His dying words were, "*Glory be to God for all things.*"

As we go through life we may pray like Job, “**Remember, O God, That My Life Is a Breath.**” The Lord will hear and help even if our suffering continues. We can be sure of his love and of our salvation in the cross of Jesus. So when we approach our death we too can say, “*Glory to God for all things.*” Amen.