

And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this? (v.14)

In October 1996, Lance Armstrong, a competitive cyclist, was diagnosed with advanced testicular cancer, which had spread to his lungs and his brain. Everyone predicted the end of his career; doctors feared for his very survival. But Lance's perseverance triumphed over doubt. Beginning in 1999, he has won six consecutive victories at the Tour de France, a feat no other cyclist has achieved.

Today's reading reveals two conflicting perspectives in the face of devastating news: Mordecai's faith and Esther's fear. Haman has tricked the king and convinced him to destroy all the Jews. The city of Susa is bewildered. Mordecai was devastated and fasted, wept and wailed. He wore sackcloth and ashes as he kept his position at the king's gate. Esther heard about this and sent clothes out to him. He wouldn't take them. Esther then sent one of the eunuch's assigned to her to speak with Mordecai. Mordecai gave him the edict from the king and asked that Esther go into the king's presence and plead for mercy for the Jews.

Esther was afraid knowing that if anyone went into the king's presence except when called for they could be put to death. Mordecai had great faith though that God would deliver. He tells Esther that even if she remains silent God will provide deliverance. He encourages her that it was for such a time as this that she was placed in that royal position.

Our fears often get the better of us. Mordecai's focus was on God and he trusted completely in him. It's like the time Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water. When his eyes were on Jesus all was well but as soon as he took his eyes off of Jesus his fears overcame him and he began to fall into the water. Let's keep our eyes focused on Jesus. And let's take courage too...for it may be that God has called us for such a time as this.

Pray: asking God to increase our faith.

Reflect: do I fear for my own life too much instead of reaching out to those who are perishing without Jesus?

If the king regards me with favour and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfil my request, let the king and Haman come tomorrow to the banquet I will prepare for them. (v.8)

Imagine the musical score set to the story unfolding in the book of Esther. In the first chapter of Esther, the melodies are upbeat and bright throughout the 180-day banquet given by King Xerxes. Queen Vashti's insubordination is a brief but dark interlude in the music. The tempo picks up in chapter two until chapter three, when Haman's murderous plot hatches. The once-cheerful harmonies give way to a plodding death march. And as chapter five opens, the instruments are completely stilled. Nothing can be heard; the audience waits, breathless. Esther stood before the king in verse one. As the readers, we are practically holding our breath as he extended the royal sceptre, and Esther finally advanced towards the throne.

Now I don't know about you but at this stage I would probably run up and blurt out what's on my mind. If I'm Esther I'd be saying that Haman is trying to kill me and my people, please save us. We might blurt out a flurry of accusations and half sentences, trying desperately to persuade the king to see the situation our way.

Esther is much wiser and more astute. She invites the king and Haman to a banquet. She knows how much the king likes his parties. During the evening the king asks what Esther wants. Again instead of blurting it all out, she invites him back again the following day. She shares fine food with him and her company. And in doing that she is reminding the king what a blessing she is to him. Again she invites Haman back to so that when the time is right to accuse him he is right there to hear it.

Esther's approach reminds us that it is often better to take our time rather than rush on in. She fasted and prayed for three days before even approaching the king. Now she takes it slowly with him. Her calculated patience and caution served her purposes well. Let's take our time and make sure we pray before we act as well.

Pray: for patience in a situation you are dealing with.

Reflect: do I rush in without thinking and praying things through?

What should be done for the man the king delights to honour? (v.6)

The Thistle Centre is always mobbed in the lead up to Christmas. Saturdays are particularly busy with people desperate to find gifts for family and friends. In the middle of the shopping centre sits a little hut and winter display – it is Santa’s grotto. And there is a long line that snakes its way through the centre as excited children wait to tell Santa what it is they want for Christmas. I wonder if that’s what Haman feels like as the king calls him in and asks him what he should do for the one the king delights in. Haman treated the question as if the king had just asked him to fill out his Christmas wish list. He hardly knew where to start!

The king has had a sleepless night after a great banquet with Esther. Since he can’t sleep he calls for the book of the chronicles of his reign. And as it is read out he hears about Mordecai’s faithfulness to the king in exposing a plot to kill him. He realises he has not honoured Mordecai in any way to show his appreciation. The king values loyalty. Not only does he deal swiftly with those who would try to usurp him, he also seeks to honour those who are loyal to him.

And so as Haman is asked by the king how he should honour such a person, Haman thinks of himself and comes up with a lavish idea – he suggests a royal robe, a royal horse and a royal procession to honour the one the king delights in. Haman thinks he has made it. Then he is brought swiftly down to earth as the king says go and do this for Mordecai the Jew.

Here we start the cycle of reversals in the book of Esther. What Haman imagined to be his good fortune was now the good fortune of his arch-enemy, Mordecai. His “Christmas list” had been delivered to the person whom he hated most. We’re just beginning to see how God executes justice in the book of Esther. God is just, punishing the wicked and rescuing the righteous. Sometimes we don’t see this justice here and now. We can wonder why those choosing to disobey God seem prosperous and carefree. But God always works it out in his time. Trust him.

Pray: for the faith to keep going despite things not going as we expect.

Reflect: do I patiently wait for God to bring his plans to bear?

Grant me my life – this is my petition. And spare my people – this is my request. (v.3)

Bastille Day commemorates July 14, 1789, the beginning of the French Revolution. Until the storming of the Bastille, Louis XVI and the nobility enjoyed luxurious living at the price of the peasants' hard labour in the fields. The French Revolution was a bloody era that reversed the fortunes of nobles and peasants.

Today's reading records one of the greatest reversals of fortune in all the Bible. Haman lost everything. However, it's not only that he lost all that he's worked to gain, but he lost it to his arch-enemy, Mordecai. At every turn, Haman endeavoured to destroy Mordecai and even his entire race. He even went to the extravagant lengths of having a gallows built for Mordecai's execution.

It's the second banquet Esther has invited the king and Haman to. The king asks what it is Esther wants – he even offers her up to half the kingdom. Now Esther plucks up the courage to ask for her safety and the salvation of her people. She tells him the plans to annihilate the Jews. And the king gets mad and asks who it was that made this decision. And Esther points to Haman.

Haman is given the death sentence. He is hung on the very gallows he had designed and had built for him. Not only would Mordecai not die but he would be given the very role that Haman once had. Mordecai would go on to receive the king's signet ring and also Haman's estate. The house of proud Haman was taken down. A reversal of fortunes took place.

While this was the "seen" reality, an unseen reality prevailed. It's the reality of God at work in any and every situation, no matter how bleak. It's the reality of God keeping His promises to His people. It's the reality of vindication for the righteous and punishment for the wicked. It's the reality of faith. Keep trusting God no matter what.

Pray: for the faith to believe in God's goodness.

Reflect: do I focus too much on the problem and not on God?

And Mordecai came into the presence of the king, for Esther had told how he was related to her. The king took off his signet ring...and presented it to Mordecai. (v.1-2)

Haman has been dealt with, his estate given to Queen Esther and Mordecai takes his place as prime minister in the land. There is something of a poetic justice to all of this. The king recognises Mordecai's role in this as well as his previous role in saving him from a plot to kill him. He realises he needs a good and trustworthy right hand man and gives the role to Mordecai whom he discovers is related to him through marriage. The reversal of fortunes is almost complete.

We could take the words of Xerxes in 6:9 and re-work them slightly to explain this dramatic reversal: 'This is what is done for those whom the Lord delights to honour'. He honours those who honour him and that is vividly demonstrated here. Mordecai has remained faithful and true to God from the beginning. The encouragement for us is to honour the Lord in all we do – how we live, how we speak, how we act and how we think.

The reversal of fortunes is, of course, massively significant for the whole Jewish people throughout the entire Persian empire. A decree is issued, sealed with the king's signet ring that effectively annuls the previous decree that sought their slaughter. And so there is great rejoicing among the Jews. The Lord has bestowed on them '*a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.*' (Isaiah 61:3).

This is surely the only possible response to such a great deliverance, to so great a salvation. It ought also to be mirrored in our lives in the light of what God has done for us in Jesus – he has annulled the decree of death for our sins by a decree that says whoever believes in the crucified and risen Messiah is saved. What joy and blessing is ours!

Pray: thanking God for your salvation.

Reflect: do I honour God in every area of my life?

And these days of Purim should never cease to be celebrated by the Jews, nor should the memory of them die out among their descendants. (v.28)

Memorial Day in America was first observed on May 30, 1868, as a day to commemorate the sacrifices of American soldiers. General John Logan, national commander of the Grand Army of the Republic, declared at that time the importance of such days of national remembrance: “Let . . . no ravages of time testify to the present or to the coming generations that we have forgotten as a people the cost of a free and undivided republic.”

Mordecai’s commemoration of the festival of Purim provided a means for the Jewish people to remember their deliverance. He deliberately prescribed that this festival would be celebrated annually (v.21). Year after year, generation after generation, the story would be retold of God’s miraculous rescue of His people.

There would be great rejoicing and partying. This was no solemn remembrance in the temple but rather joy filled days celebrating God’s goodness, faithfulness, love and provision. These were days of feasting and joy as they shared the story of God’s deliverance for them. They gave gifts to each other and to the poor so no-one excluded.

This prescription given by Mordecai provided a safeguard for God’s people against the perils of spiritual forgetfulness. Remembering what God has done in the past helps us to trust and obey for the future. We too are prone to forget, often not deliberately, but as time passes some things are not as clear as they once were. We have spiritual amnesia. We can guard against that though by remembering regularly all that God has done for us. Perhaps you can keep a journal, writing down your prayers and answers to them, and as you look back you see how God heard and provided in days gone by. Doing this helps us not to forget and encourages us to keep trusting and obeying.

Pray: thanking God for answered prayer in recent days.

Reflect: do I remember all that God has done for me?

Mordecai the Jew was...held in high esteem by his many fellow Jews, because he worked for the good of his people. (v.3)

A look at Time's most important people of the twentieth century produces a few not-so-common names: Emmeline Pankhurst, Leo Baekeland, and Louis B. Mayer. Only the Trivial Pursuit buffs are likely to know that Pankhurst was responsible for women's suffrage in England, Baekeland for designing the first plastic, and Mayer for founding MGM. Their accomplishments, while noteworthy, don't guarantee that their names have an indelible place in our memories. Mordecai and Esther are much the same. They are remembered for a season and then forgotten as others come along. Their names and achievements are recorded though for us to look back and remember.

The story ends right where it began, but completely reversed. We have the same king and the same city we started with. Now Esther is queen and Mordecai running the country. Mordecai is not interested in himself but is working for the good of his people and looking out for their welfare issues.

So who are you, Haman or Mordecai and Esther? None of us want to be a Haman. And yet we often act like him. Doing whatever it takes to get our plans moved forward, no matter who it hurts. Conniving, scheming, planning, plotting. Looking out for number 1. Doing whatever we need to at work to make sure we get that promotion, and not somebody else. Talking about ourselves to everybody else. In short, revealing pride and arrogance. But as we have seen, pride comes before destruction.

But we don't want to be like that. We want to be like Esther and Mordecai. They simply did what was asked of them. They humbly, quietly, went about their business, obeying God and doing what was right. And God, in His own timing, and in His own way, raised them up to positions of honour and prominence that nobody could have ever imagined. God will do that for you too, if you follow His ways, and wait for His timing, and trust Him with your life and your decisions.

Pray: asking God to help you follow him more closely.

Reflect: do I trust God with my life and my decisions?

Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. (v.8)

What happens if you rewrite the story of The Three Little Pigs from the wolf's point of view? Teacher and author Jon Scieszka thought children would be fascinated by such a revision. He was right. His book The True Story of the Three Little Pigs quickly went through several printings and made the list of bestselling children's books.

In the story, the wolf claims he wasn't intent on having pork for dinner but was tricked by three selfish pigs. He was just out to borrow a cup of sugar for his grandma's birthday cake. He was sneezing, not huffing and puffing, when the straw house just happened to collapse.

We can see through the wolf's twisted reasoning in this children's tale because we know the story so well. But are we as able to see through Satan's logic? His conversation with God about Job illustrates the problem. He charged that Job had selfish motives for serving God. Satan's strategy is often similar in our lives. He tries to convince us that evil motives are good and that good motives are evil. And sadly many fall for his tricks.

As we will see as we go through the book of Job, this man stands out as different. Twice in this opening chapter we read the very same words describing Job: *'he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.'* Now blameless does not mean that he was sinless rather that he was complete, sound, wholesome, morally innocent, having integrity. Upright means to be straight, level, upright, proper. Job lived his life well. He trusted God and feared God. He feared God because he was a holy, awesome, righteous God. He recognised God's goodness and perfect ways and wanted to walk in them so he shunned evil. He trusted in God completely so even when Satan comes to tempt he stands firm.

Pray: asking God to help us see through Satan's twisted logic.

Reflect: could the description of Job be used for me and my life?

Shall we accept good from God and not trouble? (v.10)

In the fall of 1982, Deborah Kiley set out with three other young people to deliver the 58-foot yacht Trashman from Maine to Florida. Off the coast of North Carolina, they encountered gale winds and mountainous seas that sank their boat. Enduring 4 gruelling days at sea without food or fresh water, the crew clung to life in a rubber dinghy in shark-infested waters.

In her book *Albatross*, Deborah recalls how one of the crew shouted curses at God for their dilemma. Despite her fatigue, Deborah silently recited The Lord's Prayer and asked God to teach her through this crisis. Later, the same young man drank seawater, became delirious, jumped overboard, and was eaten by sharks. Eventually, the survivors were rescued by a Russian freighter.

Each of us responds in different ways to a crisis. Centuries ago, Job was hit by one wave of bad news after another. In chapter 1 it was the calamity of losing servants and livestock. Job kept trusting God. Here in chapter 2 Satan gains permission to attack Job's body to see if he can tempt him away. At one point his wife told him to curse God and die. Job reply is interesting and profound. He says '*Shall we accept good from God and not trouble?*' He recognises that God is the giver of all good things yet he realises that life can be tough and difficult. He trusts God to sustain him despite temptation and trouble.

One of the hardest questions to answer from people who are going through tough times is why does God allow suffering. If you and I are baffled by the suffering of good people, we can put the question squarely before God, argue with Him if we must, and struggle with our doubts. But let's not blame Him. God didn't explain to Job what He was doing but said that He could be trusted to do what is right (Job 38-42). And He has assured us in His Word that Jesus suffered on our behalf, rose from the dead, and is now preparing a suffering-free place for us. Let's be like Job and keep trusting. Let's be like Deborah and ask God to teach us through a crisis.

Pray: asking God to give us strength for the crisis we are facing right now.
Reflect: what is God teaching me just now through my situation?

May the day of my birth perish. (v.3)

At age 30 she was ready to give up. She wrote in her diary, “My God, what will become of me? I have no desire but to die.” But the dark clouds of despair gave way to the light, and in time she discovered a new purpose for living. When she died at age 90, she had left her mark on history. Some believe that she and those who introduced antiseptics and chloroform to medicine did more than anyone to relieve human suffering in the 19th century. Her name was Florence Nightingale, founder of the nursing profession.

We get the sense here in chapter 3 that Job is ready to give up. Despair is upon him and he cannot see a way ahead. He has enjoyed a life of success and prosperity but now he is questioning the purpose of living. He has enjoyed health and wealth and a great family. Now he is losing it all. His wealth and possessions are being destroyed. He has lost his children. He has lost the respect of his wife. And he is suffering through sores. What’s it all about he says. And then in his depression he suggests it would be better if he had never been born.

Many of us suffer bad years where tragedy strikes in one way or another. The queen had a year that she described as her ‘annus horribilis’ – 1992. There were 3 divorces in the family and a fire at Windsor Castle. The temptation in times like that is to feel like we wish life was over. Darkness overwhelms us and depression sinks in. But we can survive. Just as Florence Nightingale came out of her depression and found ways to help others, so too Job lived through his grief, and his experience has become a source of endless comfort to suffering souls.

Maybe you’re in a difficult and dark place just now and you feel like you don’t want to go on. Remember Job. As we will continue to see there is a battle in the spiritual realms and Satan may appear to be winning at times but the ultimate victory is God’s. We can trust him to stand with us in the dark places, and to lead us in the way everlasting.

Pray: asking God to stand with you in the dark place you are in.

Reflect: how can I stand with others suffering depression?

Your words have supported those who stumbled; you have strengthened faltering knees. (v.4)

Words are a very important part of life. They have the power to comfort and heal, or tear down and destroy. Job has always been a man whose words have helped others. He has supported people through difficult times and lifted them up. Now he is in a dark and difficult place. His three friends heard he was in trouble and have come to him. We read at the end of chapter 2 that seeing his suffering they simply sat quietly beside him. And sometimes that is the best we can do for our friends – sit with them quietly. Our presence sometimes is more of a comfort than our words. And these friends sat with him for seven days and nights.

After Job's outburst in chapter 3 about wishing he had never been born, the first of his friends breaks the silence and speaks. He is trying to encourage Job as they will all seek to do. However we will see them speak truth, untruth and misapplied truth. We have to be careful that in trying to help we don't misapply what the Bible teaches. We have to be careful to speak the truth even if it is unsettling at the time.

Eliphaz basically says you've helped others now listen to your own advice that you gave them. And there is wisdom there but it is hard to apply that same advice when you're struggling. He also suggests that Job should remember his piety and his blameless ways. He encourages Job to find hope in the fact that he has been blameless, upright and good.

Eliphaz claims that the voice of the vision he received asserted that no one can be pure before God. Like so many things which will be spoken by Job's friends, it sounds so right, but is either partial truth, or misapplied principle. Regarding sin, no one is righteous. But regarding blameless purity of behaviour, we've read three times now that Job was the man. We have to be careful what we say and how we apply truth to life.

Pray: thanking God for friends who will stand with you in difficult days.

Reflect: how can I use my words and/or my presence to support someone who is struggling?

But if it were I, I would appeal to God. (v.8)

When was the last time you wandered through a bookshop and looked at the books? The last time I was in Waterstones I took a bit of time to look at the types of books on offer. One of the biggest sellers are the ‘...for dummies’ series. These are ‘how to’ books telling us how to do something or learn something. They even have a ‘The Bible for Dummies’ and ‘Christian Prayer for Dummies’. There is a sense to which as Eliphaz continues talking to Job here he is giving him a ‘how to’ talk.

He starts chapter 5 by asking Job who will listen to his problem? After all, he insists, trouble and affliction are what sinful people should expect. The difficulties of the angry, the jealous, and the foolish aren’t coming from nowhere - they are from God, he says. Eliphaz says, “If it were me, I would seek God. If you’re innocent, you’ll be delivered. If you’re guilty, you won’t be.” Job’s friend actually has the nerve to tell him he should be happy about all this! Clearly, he insists, God is using this pain as discipline - to purge out Job’s evil!

Eliphaz of course bases all of this on his own experience of life and situations he has seen. Everything he is saying is based on experience, not on what God has said. Then he tries to back it up by insisting that it’s a spiritual revelation. And he finishes by saying in verse 27 ‘*we have examined this and it is true.*’

Some of what Eliphaz shares is good and true – it is based on experience of God at work. Other bits they put in themselves. We are in a far more fortunate position than Job’s friends. We have the Bible readily at hand. We have the ultimate ‘how to’ book. We don’t need self help books or people’s opinions – we need to turn to the Living Word. Let’s open our Bibles and use them. The next time a friend needs help let’s use the Bible in our counselling and sharing. The Bible contains all we need for living life today.

Pray: thanking God for His written Word.

Reflect: do I use Scripture when I am sharing with people and dealing with problems in life?

A despairing man should have the devotion of his friends. (v.14)

A college student named Kelly shattered her arm in the first volleyball game of the season. This meant she couldn't work at her part-time job. Then her car stopped running. To top it all off, the young man she had been dating stopped calling. Kelly felt so low that she began spending hours alone in her room crying.

Laura, a Christian friend on the volleyball team, became concerned about Kelly and decided to help her. So she planned a party. She and some friends collected money, and a couple of guys got Kelly's car running again. They found a temporary job she could do, using just one hand. And they gave her tickets to see her basketball hero when his team came to town. Before long, Kelly was herself again. When she asked why they did all this for her, Laura was able to tell her about the love of Jesus.

When people are low they need their friends. They need them to be there for them – so presence is important. They also need encouragement so practical help is often required as well, particularly if there is some specific need.

Job's friends came to him in his grieving and they did the right thing to start with – they sat with him for seven days. But then they started to speak and lecture him. Eliphaz has suggested in the previous 2 chapters that Job must have sinned and God is punishing him. This was not what Job needed to hear – especially as this was not the reason for his distress and difficulties. What Job needed was reasons to keep hoping (verse 11), kindness to be shown to him (verse 14), and words that did not presume guilt (verse 29-30).

Do you have a friend in need just now? What is it they need from you? They need above everything your personal support – sit alongside and show them kindness.

Pray: praying for a friend in need.

Reflect: how can I support a friend in need just now?

My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and they come to an end without hope. (v.6)

Job is in a difficult place. He has no job to focus on during the day, no work to keep him busy and occupied. He is in mourning and it is eating him up. As the day passes night time comes and he is unable to sleep. The darkness surrounds him physically as well as spiritually and emotionally. He tosses and turns in his bed and cannot sleep without thinking of all that has been. His wife's words of rebuke are in his ears, pictures of his children's faces in his eyes, and the feeling of his physical pain from the sores so painful. He cannot sleep. The day passes quickly but the night is long.

I think we can probably identify with Job – there will have been times in our lives when the day has passed by in a flash but evening comes and the tossing and turning as we cannot sleep on account of all that has happened and is running through our minds.

And at this moment Job is talking to God. He has spoken with his friends in chapter 6 but here his focus is on God. He cannot sleep and his days are running fast as he feels he hurtles towards death and so he complains to God. He asks what is happening. Job even questions in verse 17 why he is so important that God would spend his attention on him. He wonders why God would cause all this misery to a person so insignificant as Job. For this we only have to look back to chapter 1. Job is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. Job loves God and follows God and that is why he is important to God.

God asks of us that we would follow him wholeheartedly. We do not need to be the next Billy Graham or John Wesley, we simply have to be obedient to the master. And so when despair comes and the sleepless nights, remember that our life is but a vapour in the dawn of time. Turn your mind to God and ask him to be by your side.

Pray: asking for peace in your current tough situation.

Reflect: do I follow God simply and faithfully?

Surely God does not reject a blameless man. (v.20)

Job's first friend, Eliphaz, started by hinting that Job's problems were really a result of some secret sin that Job needed to confess. Job answered that he was hoping for comfort from his friends, not condemnation. Now the second friend speaks up. Bildad will be a little harsher to Job than Eliphaz was. Zophar, the next speaker, will be even harsher. It is thought that these three are speaking in order of age, with the oldest going first. The older you are, usually the less harsh you become. Is that true in your life? Have you mellowed as the years have progressed? Are you more gracious as the Saviour has worked with you in the refiner's fire?

Bildad accuses Job of being a windbag! Bildad is saying that Job is accusing God of being unfair. In a way, there is truth to this. This is what Job has been struggling with. Look how Bildad goes on though. How incredibly unfeeling Bildad must be to make a statement like this to Job about the loss of his children. This is one of the most devastating things anyone could ever say. "Your kids died because of the judgment of God. They got what they deserved." I imagine that if I were Job that would be the point where I punched Bildad in the nose.

As Bildad continues he basically accuses Job of forgetting God because of his riches. Like so many self-righteous people, Bildad judged the rich simply for being rich. Being rich isn't a sin, and Job proved that you can be very wealthy and still be devoted to the Lord. Job has never forgotten God. Even when he had great wealth he was devoted to following God and walking in his ways. Yes he enjoyed wealth but he loved God and gave him first place in his life. That is a lesson worth learning for us too – no amount of wealth or fame should draw us away from our first love. God expects and demands first place in our life.

Pray: for forgiveness for times you have placed something else above God and allowed something else to have first place in your life.

Reflect: am I more gracious and less harsh as I age?

He performs wonders that cannot be fathomed. (v.10)

When writer Aletha Lindstrom needs a lift for her spirits, she thinks of her favourite poetry book called “Who Tells The Crocuses It’s Spring?” That prompts her to ask other questions like, “Who makes the trees turn all those beautiful colours in the autumn? Who splashes rain in shining puddles? Who makes the stars shimmer in the night?”

Job recognises how big and huge and amazing and mighty and powerful and awesome God is. He says in response to his friends that God performs wonders and miracles that we simply cannot work out. He mentions to the mountains, the earth and the sun. If we thought on the world and everything that happens within it for a moment we would recognise it is God who reminds the sun to rise at its appointed time every morning; it is God who keeps the earth steadily rotating at tremendous speed; it is God who feeds the sparrow and dresses the lilies in their splendour; it is God who guides the feathered flocks southward in the autumn and then brings them north again in the spring. Praise God for being the creator and sustainer of the world.

In the midst of all this Job gets another thing right that his friends haven’t grasped – how can a mortal be righteous before God (verse 2)? Although Bildad made some truthful statements about those who forsake the Lord, they were mixed in with horrible lies and accusations against Job. Job’s response is, “Even with the truth in your statement, you’ve forgotten one thing: no one can be truly righteous before God. As blameless as your life may be, you’re not going to measure up to His purity and perfection. You can’t match wits with Him, you can’t overpower Him. Bildad, you can’t even question Him!”

We know the answer. The answer doesn’t come from what we do for God, but what God has done for us. Jesus died on the cross in our place paying the penalty for our sins – that’s how we are made righteous before God.

Pray: thanking God for Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross for you.

Reflect: do I recognise God’s hand in the world around me? Praise Him for his creation.

Tell me what charges you have against me? (v.2)

Job's friends talk a lot about God. Job, however, when he speaks he talks to God as well. Prayer is such a privilege and blessing. The creator of the universe is interested in us. He wants us to talk to him and share with him – and yes even to bring our complaints before him. He will answer us in various ways – sometimes it's a no, sometimes a not yet, and sometimes a yes. We have to trust and respect him in that. He knows the beginning from the end. He knows what we need and when we need it. When situations come up in life we should not simply talk about God but we should talk to God.

As Job talks to God he asks what the charges are against him. He wants to know what his sins are. It is good to examine our lives at times to see if there is any unconfessed sin – and when we discover it to seek God's forgiveness. We do have to be careful with that though – it is not about dredging up sins long since dealt with. There are sins we need to confess and then move on from. God has promised us in His word that he removes our sin as far as the east is from the west. He speaks of casting it into the deepest sea. And yet for some reason we want to dwell on those. Be careful when examining your life for sin that you don't dwell on sins long since dealt with – for they will just come back to tempt you again.

Corrie ten Boom, in her book "Tramp for the Lord" had these words to say regarding forgiveness: It was 1947. I had come from Holland to defeated Germany with the message that God forgives. It was the truth they needed most to hear in that bitter, bombed-out land, and I gave them my favourite mental picture. Maybe because the sea is never far from a Hollander's mind, I like to think that that's where forgiven sins are thrown. "When we confess our sins," I said, "God casts them into the deepest ocean, gone forever. Then God places a sign out there that says No Fishing Allowed!"

Pray: thanking God for his forgiveness.

Reflect: is there sin in my life that I need to deal with?

Oh how I wish that God would speak. (v.5)

Have you ever made up your mind about someone and something they have supposedly said or done? You heard about it from someone else and took their word for it. Now as you challenge the person you do not listen to a word they say because you have already made up your mind. Nothing they say will change that. You are not interested in their side or willing to accept that what you have heard could be wrong. Then in the end you discover that the person you challenged was right and you feel foolish for not believing them.

That's a bit like where we are at with Job and his friends. The first two have challenged Job that there must be sin in his life that has caused all this pain and destruction around him. They assert that Job must have sinned badly for God to have brought the punishment he has. Job has responded by saying there is no sin he knows of. He wants to know what it is God has against him. This doesn't wash for his friends.

So the last one, Zophar, gets in on the act. He'll be the toughest of the three friends. He's also probably the youngest. It's not uncommon for people to see things as "black and white" when they're younger. Most people mellow with age. Zophar lays straight into Job. He says that Job talks a good game but there must be sin. If only God would speak he says then we would all know what it is you have done.

Once again, the philosophy comes out: "Job, if you would just repent, then you would be delivered." All three of his friends have reached the same conclusion: that it was Job's sin which had brought this about, and if he'd repent, God would heal him. They were all wrong, but it was three against one. Was Job getting godly wisdom from his three friends? No. They were using their own flesh to discern and decide, just like the majority rule usually does. When it comes to discerning godly advice and counsel, don't ever think that just because the majority says it, its right.

Pray: for godly wisdom in dealing with matters.

Reflect: do I seek God's face and counsel or do I trust in my own ability?

Doubtless you are the people and wisdom will die with you. (v.1)

We often worry what other people will think of us and some of our life choices. When it came to my baptism at age 16 I was scared what people would think, I thought they might laugh at me and mock me. When I was preparing to leave the bank and go train for ministry I remember wondering how people would respond – would they understand, would they laugh, would they try and talk me out of it? I was very fortunate in the friends and colleagues I had – they were very supportive.

Job's friends are not that supportive. They really do think he has a sin issue that needs dealt with. As Job replies here in chapter 12 he does so with a fair amount of sarcasm. He says come on now guys you are so bright and intelligent – who will people turn to for wisdom when you die. Then he says “I'm not a moron, guys. The true things you're saying aren't some sort of divine revelation that only you possess.” I have a mind of my own and just because I disagree with you does not make me wrong.

Job began with cutting sarcasm directed at his know-it-all friends and then reminded them that he understood the principles about which they have spoken, but concluded they were irrelevant to his situation. He despaired at the derision of his friends

As Job goes on to talk of robbers prospering we see him refute the simplistic idea that the righteous always prosper and the wicked always suffer. In this he tries to draw the parallel with his situation. He has lived life well – God referred to him as blameless and upright – and yet this difficulty is upon him. It is not down to sin.

In life the righteous do suffer whilst it would appear evil goes unpunished. There is a day coming when the righteous will go to heaven and the evil will be punished eternally. We can take courage from Job and keep trusting in God despite our circumstances.

Pray: for courage to keep believing.

Reflect: am I assured of my place in heaven? Give God thanks for your salvation.

Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him. (v.15)

Author Joe Bayly, who lost three sons through death, described two examples of comfort he had received during his deepest grief: “Someone came and talked to me of God’s dealings, of why it happened, of hope beyond the grave. He talked constantly and said things I knew were true. I was unmoved, except to wish he’d go away. He finally did. Another came and sat beside me. He didn’t talk. He didn’t ask leading questions. He just sat beside me for an hour and more, listened when I said something, answered briefly, prayed simply, and left. I was moved. I was comforted. I hated to see him go.”

Job is struggling with his friends. They have come to comfort him but they have gone on and on at him. He knows the stuff they are saying by and large but it is not helping him. He suggests that they be silent and they might understand something (verse 5). Sometimes we simply need to be there for people, not to talk but to sit and listen and pray.

Job tells the guys to just be quiet and let him speak for a moment. “Listen, you three. I haven’t forsaken the Lord because of what’s happened to me. Regardless of what happens to me in this life, my hope is in God. Whether I’m rich or poor, healthy or afflicted, I will not waver from this hope.” That’s the hope Job has. Verse 15 he says ‘*Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him.*’

Sometimes we hear folks tell us that we need to be challenged to have enough faith to be healed. Perhaps a tougher question is: “Do you have enough faith NOT to be healed?” I think Job’s is the stronger faith here. Even if God slays Job, Job won’t stop trusting in the Lord. Evangelist D. L. Moody once said, “Trust in yourself and you are doomed to disappointment; trust in your friends, and they will die and leave you; but trust in God, and you will never be confounded in time or eternity.” Job knew the truth of this. I wonder if we do in times of trouble and difficulty.

Pray: for your faith to increase.

Reflect: do I trust God regardless of what is going on around me?

If a man dies, will he live again? (v.14)

A soldier on the battlefield hadn't received any mail for weeks. During a break in the fighting, he was handed an envelope. Inside was a bill for £3.52. A note read: "If this bill isn't paid in 5 days, you will be in serious trouble!" I wonder if that soldier smiled over the irony.

Troubles come in all sizes, from small irritants to life-threatening crises, from the loss of a £20 note to the loss of a loved one, from the breakdown of our car to the breakdown of our health. When troubles begin to add up, they can push us to the breaking point. Job knows all about that. Job is in the midst of his great time of affliction. He is broken and buffeted and in verse 13, Job longs for the day when God will call his number and he will be allowed to die. Now, do not feel that this is the cry of a hopeless man. Job is anything but hopeless. In truth, he is hopeful! He knows that he has a God upon whom he can depend. He knows that when his time comes to leave this world, he will be far better off than he is now.

In the midst of this chapter as it begins with the morbid but realistic thought that life on earth is short, we find Job wrestling with life and death. He speaks of a tree being cut down but there is hope that new shoots will come. Then he asks the age old question '*If a man dies, will he live again?*' Many have asked it. Job had hope that God would call him home. Friends we have that same hope. And it is an assured hope now that we know Jesus died for our sins, was raised from the dead, ascended into glory to prepare a place for us and promised one day to return for us. Let's not get too troubled in life – recognise we are here but for a short time and this is not our home – our home is in heaven!

John Owen, the great Puritan, lay on his deathbed. His secretary wrote (in his name) to a friend, "I am still in the land of the living." "Stop," said Owen. "Change that and say, I am yet in the land of the dying, but I hope soon to be in the land of the living."

Pray: thanking God for the hope of heaven.

Reflect: am I looking forward to going home one day?

Your own mouth condemns you, not mine. (v.6)

Friendly fire occurs when there was intent to do harm to the enemy which causes injury to your own side. According to the website of the American War Library, just over half of the coalition troops killed or injured during the 1991 Gulf War were victims of friendly fire incidents. Of those, about 165 US casualties were due to “friendly fire” out of a total of 367 who lost their lives.

Job has his friends around – well if you can call them friends. The first round of conversations has taken place. Now the friends come back for round 2. And they are getting tougher on poor Job. They are relentless in their attack on him. Eliphaz comes back accusing Job of sinning by attacking God with his complaints. He felt Job was guilty of empty words and had not exhibited godly fear and righteous prayer but rather was sinning in his prayer (verse 4&5). Eliphaz calls Job a liar. Isn't it strange how people can condemn you by projecting their own sins on you? Eliphaz is the one who is deceived, not Job. Eliphaz is under the deception that he is giving Job comforting words of encouragement instead of words full of poison and accusation. He doesn't understand why Job can't accept them. He says, in Job 15:11 *'Are God's consolations not enough for you, words spoken gently to you?'*

Notice that nothing Eliphaz says is particularly wrong. It's just that he is trying to apply these truths from God's Word to the wrong man. Job isn't an evil man who is being punished by God for his sins. But he doesn't let up with the battering ram approach.

What about me? Do I do this with my words? Do my friends back away because of the presumption I apply wrongly to their lives due to my own rigid thinking? Do they say to themselves “He misuses the Bible because he uses its words as a club instead of as a means of comfort”? Am I so concerned with proving a point sometimes that I miss the opportunity to really listen and have something of value to give?

Pray: asking God to help you use your words wisely and gently.

Reflect: am I guilty of “friendly fire” with my words?

But my mouth would encourage you; comfort from my lips would bring you relief. (v.5)

Job begins his reply by saying who needs enemies when I have friends like you. They have not comforted him in his distress rather they have condemned him and made him feel worse. Job says here's how you should have done this guys. If I was in your shoes this is what I would do. I would listen and be sympathetic. A comforter's ability to help is not so much her talent for using words as it is her capacity to be sympathetic. That's the type of understanding Job longed for when his friends began trying to correct him.

Dr. Paul Brand has beautifully expressed this truth in his book "Fearfully and Wonderfully Made". He writes: "When I ask patients and their families, 'Who helped you in your suffering?' I hear a strange, imprecise answer. The person described rarely has smooth answers and a winsome, effervescent personality. It is someone quiet, understanding, who listens more than talks, who does not judge or even offer much advice. 'A sense of patience.' 'Someone there when I needed him.' A hand to hold. An understanding, bewildered hug. A shared lump in the throat."

Often when we get alongside someone in difficulty we struggle to know what to do. So we resort to filling awkward silences. We spout forth all kinds of things from our mouths – some of it helpful but much of it not. We forget that the language of feeling speaks louder than words. In Romans 12:15 we read '*mourn with those who mourn*'; quite literally 'weep with those who weep.' As we have said before it is often better to simply be there alongside offering company than to speak. To hold a hand rather than bend an ear. That's what Job wanted and what he would offer in similar circumstances.

Pray: for wisdom in dealing with a distressed friend and for the wisdom to 'weep with those who weep' rather than talk.

Reflect: do I tend to overwhelm with words rather than empathise with hugs?

My spirit is broken. (v.1)

An old missionary couple had been working in Africa for years and were returning to New York to retire. They had no pension; their health was broken; they were defeated, discouraged, and afraid. They discovered they were booked on the same ship as President Teddy Roosevelt, who was returning from one of his big-game hunting expeditions. No one paid any attention to them. They watched the fanfare that accompanied the President's entourage, with passengers trying to catch a glimpse of him.

As the ship moved across the ocean, the old missionary said to his wife, "Something is wrong. Why should we have given our lives in faithful service for God in Africa all these many years and have no one care a thing about us? Here this man comes back from a hunting trip and everybody makes much over him, but nobody gives two hoots about us." "Dear, you shouldn't feel that way," his wife said. "I can't help it; it doesn't seem right."

When the ship docked in New York, a band was waiting to greet the President. The mayor and other dignitaries were there. The papers were full of the President's arrival, but no one noticed this missionary couple. They slipped off the ship and found a cheap flat on the East Side, hoping the next day to see what they could do to make a living in the city.

That night the man's spirit broke. He said to his wife, "I can't take this; God is not treating us fairly." His wife replied, "Why don't you go in the bedroom and tell that to the Lord?" A short time later he came out from the bedroom, but now his face was completely different. His wife asked, "Dear, what happened?" "The Lord settled it with me," he said. "I told him how bitter I was that the President should receive this tremendous homecoming, when no one met us as we returned home. And when I finished, it seemed as though the Lord put his hand on my shoulder and simply said, 'But you're not home yet!'"

Our hope is in Jesus and not in our circumstances. Keep going!

Pray: for strength to keep going.

Reflect: have I taken everything to the Lord in prayer?

Such is the place of one who knows not God. (v.21)

It's now Bildad's turn again and he basically tells Job to be quiet and stop rambling on. He says "Job, you are very angry and are tearing your hair out, but that isn't going to change your circumstances." Then he goes on a rant about what kind of things are waiting for the wicked.

Do you think Bildad has anybody in particular in mind when he's describing all the calamities that await for a wicked person? He's talking about Job. Bildad is talking about the things that will happen to "the wicked". But his implication is that he's talking about Job. Some folks like to talk to you about things, but do it in a way where they don't just come out and say that you're bad, but you still get the message. It's all about good communication.

A farmer walked into an attorney's office wanting to file for a divorce. The attorney asked, "May I help you?" The farmer said, "Yea, I want to get one of those dayvorcees." The attorney said, "Well, do you have any grounds?" The farmer said, "Yea, I got about 140 acres." The attorney said, "No, you don't understand, do you have a case?" The farmer said, "No, I don't have a Case, but I have a John Deere." The attorney said, "No, you don't understand. I mean do you have a grudge?" The farmer said, "Yea, I got a grudge. That's where I park my John Deere." The attorney said, "No sir, I mean do you have a suit?" The farmer said, "Yes sir, I got a suit. I wear it to church on Sundays." The exasperated attorney said, "Well, sir, does your wife beat you up or anything?" The farmer said, "No sir, we both get up about 4:30." Finally, the attorney says, "Okay, let me put it this way. WHY DO YOU WANT A DIVORCE?" And the farmer says, "Well, I can never have a meaningful conversation with her."

I think that one of the things necessary for "meaningful conversation" is to get to the point. Say what you mean. Mean what you say. But be mindful to do it in love.

Pray: for the courage to speak meaningfully in a current situation.

Reflect: do I speak clearly and openly and with love?

I know that my Redeemer lives. (v.25)

When the Berlin wall came down and when communism fell one of the amazing things that happened was that people had access to the files that the secret police had kept on them. For many people it made uncomfortable reading. People whom they trusted had betrayed them – family members, husbands, wives, children etc. they thought they knew these people but they were wrong. It left them wondering: What can I know for certain? Truth is there is very little we can know for certain. I believe the only certainty we truly know is that one day we will die.

Job knows this and he is ready for it. He has suffered much as we know and his friends are not helping. Bildad has come for the second time and has spoken of the wicked and their struggles but hasn't actually made it clear that is talking about Job. Job replies by saying how long will you go on tormenting me. Even if it is true that I have sinned what has it to do with you – surely it is between me and God.

Now his mood changes a little. In the midst of all this trouble and heartache he knows that one day he will die but that is no bad thing – for his Redeemer lives. He declares that he knows his Redeemer lives. Job makes one of the most memorable statements in the entire Bible right here. Having no written Bible to read, having such a limited knowledge base, he is able to make these amazing proclamations. In these early days of man's history, the truth about God was known - the gospel was being proclaimed.

First, he asserted that God lives. There is no more basic and essential proclamation of faith than this. Then he refers to him as '*my Redeemer*'. A redeemer is one who buys back or pays ransom. Job knew that there was a price to pay. Though he was blameless, he knew he wasn't sinless, and someone had to pay that price. He believed - he knew - that without God to pay it, he would be lost. He was convinced that God would be his Redeemer. Friends, our Redeemer lives too and he will one day take those of us who trust in him to be with him forever.

Pray: thanking God that your Redeemer lives.

Reflect: do I know Jesus as my Redeemer and Lord?

Though evil is sweet in his mouth...yet his food will turn sour in his stomach. (v.12-14)

The absent-minded professor strode into his freshman zoology class with a paper bag in his hand and a twinkle in his eye. His broad grin projected the delight he felt in knowing he was about to initiate his rather squeamish students in the methods of animal dissection. In his typical professorial style he proudly announced, "I have brought a frog, fresh from the pond, that we might together study its outer appearance and later dissect it." With that he opened the bag and carefully unwrapped the contents. To his complete puzzlement, there was a ham sandwich. "That's strange," he said. "I distinctly remember eating my lunch."

Job 20 tells about a person who recognised that evil can taste good, despite being very bad for the one who partakes of it. This is round 2 for Zophar and he begins by saying that he has heard Job's comments and feels he needs to reply. He is not for accepting where Job is at. He, as the others, still feels that Job's predicament is down to sin in his life. So Zophar admonishes Job to reconsider the fate of the wicked.

Even though Zophar wrongly implied that Job was suffering as a consequence of his sin, the principle he set forth was right: a person who feeds on evil will sooner or later realise what a fool he has been.

It is important for us to watch what we fill our lives with. Is what we watch on the television pure and honouring to God? Are the jokes we laugh along to appropriate for a child of God? Are the web pages our eyes glance on to the kind of images that we should be viewing? Are we swallowing the pleasures of sin for a while?

Be on your guard always lest we eat what tastes good but is actually bad for us.

Pray: for wisdom to know what is right and pure and holy.

Reflect: am I careful what I fill my mind with?

Listen carefully to my words; let this be the consolation you give me. (v.2)

During the darkest hours of the Civil War, Lincoln wrote to an old friend in Springfield, Illinois, asking him to come to Washington. Lincoln said he had some problems he wanted to discuss with him. The old neighbour called at the White House, and Lincoln talked to him for hours about the advisability of issuing a proclamation freeing the slaves. Lincoln went over all the arguments for and against such a move, and then read letters and newspaper articles, some de-nouncing him for not freeing the slaves and others de-nouncing him for fear he was going to free them. After talking for hours, Lincoln shook hands with his old neighbour, said good night, and sent him back to Illinois without even asking for his opinion. Lincoln had done all the talking himself. That seemed to clarify his mind. "He seemed to feel easier after that talk," the old friend said. Lincoln hadn't wanted advice. He had wanted merely a friendly, sympathetic listener to whom he could unburden himself.

That's what we all want when we are in trouble. Someone to listen to us. Someone we can unburden to. Someone who will not judge or criticise us. Someone who will simply let us share what is on our hearts. I used to love going down to see my grandfather when something was bothering me – not only for his advice, but as often just for his ear. Many a time he would simply sit and listen and then I would go away again.

That's what Job wants now. He is trying to come to terms with all that has happened to him. He has lost his wealth and his health and his family and he is struggling to comprehend the enormity of the hole in his life. He knows and trusts in God but cannot understand all that has happened. He simply wants to voice his thoughts to see if he can clarify his thinking. Up until now his friends have not let him do that. Every time he has spoken they have responded by accusing him of not grasping the fact he has sinned when that has nothing to do with it. Let us be the kind of friends who lend our ear and simply listen and offer consolation to.

Pray: for a friend in need and for the grace to simply sit with them.

Reflect: am I a good listener?

Are not your sins endless? (v.5)

A congregation was having trouble with the preacher preaching far too long. They had a business meeting about the matter and it was decided that they would buy a gavel and after one hour, someone would tap on the pew to signal that time was up. The preacher agreed to this tap arrangement. The first night a young boy wanted the honours of keeping time and tapping on the back of the pew in front of him. After one hour, the boy was too embarrassed to make the noise of tapping on the pew. The preacher continued to preach on and on, and all the eyes of the congregation became focused on the boy. They all began to mouth the words to the boy, "Go on, go on." He became angry, and tried to hit the pew with a loud knock; however, as he came down with the gavel, he hit the person on the head sitting in front of him. The wounded member as he was falling over in his seat said, "Hit me again, I can still hear him!"

Just like that preacher, the arguments with Job's friends just go on and on and on. It never seems to end. They don't say much that's new; they just repeat the same old arguments again and again. In spite of Job's clear presentation of truth, Eliphaz refuses to hear it. He continues to assert that Job has not been the reverent soul he claims to be. He is still convinced that Job's riches led him into sin, taking pledges, and doing whatever it took to expand his fortune, even at the expense of the poor. Eliphaz accuses Job of having turned away widows and orphans who needed help, and claims that this is the reason he's been afflicted.

Of course in the midst of all this some of what Eliphaz says is good and true and wise advice for sinners to follow. If we would but turn from our sin and follow God's instructions and ways then God will hear and answer our prayers and will lead and guide and bless us as we go through life. God will save us from our sin and restore our relationship with him. Let's learn to continually examine our lives and confess our sin, and let's walk in His ways always.

Pray: confessing your sin before God.

Reflect: am I walking in God's ways?

I have not departed from the commands of his lips; I have treasured the words of his mouth more than daily bread. (v.12)

A pilot was flying his small plane one day, when he heard a noise which he recognised as the gnawing of a rat. Wondering what its sharp teeth were cutting through, he suddenly realised with horror that it might be an electric wire. Then he remembered that rodents can't survive at high altitudes. Immediately he began climbing until finally he had to put on his oxygen mask. Soon the gnawing sound ceased, and when he landed he found the rat - dead.

One of the ways to gain help with handling bad stuff in our lives is to learn to fly at a higher altitude. Dwight L. Moody said, "Sin will keep you from this Book or this Book will keep you from sin."

In the midst of all that is going on in his life Job is able to utter these remarkable words '*I have treasured the words of his mouth more than daily bread.*' He has taken in what God has said and is living by it. In Job's day, the Word of God had not yet been written by Moses, but it had come verbally through the descendants of those who heard from God. Job treasured those words. The Psalmist understood this too as he said in Psalm 119:11 '*I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.*'

Job has seen the connection between his obedience to the Lord and having God's Word in his heart. No matter what is going on around him he is trying to remain focused on God and living God's way. That must have been so hard for him yet he knew it was the only way.

I wonder if we treasure God's word as Job does. Oh we may have various versions of the Bible on our bookcases but do we read it, memorise it, love it and live it.

Pray: thanking God for His Word.

Reflect: do I read, memorise, love and live God's Word?

The groans of the dying rise from the city. (v.12)

Sometimes when we're going through tough times, all we can think of is our own problems. Yet it would seem that Job is concerned about others who are victims of injustice. He speaks here of the poor and weak and vulnerable. He has an obvious concern for them in spite of where he is at himself. He himself trusts in God and that love for God, despite his own struggles with what is happening, compels him to think of others. What an example to us to stop wallowing in self pity and consider the needs of others.

It reminds me on this year of the centenary of the Titanic disaster of Rev John Harper. This widowed pastor was on board the Titanic with his six year old daughter. As the ship began to sink he placed her on a lifeboat with a kiss and with tears streaming down his face promised her she would see him again some day. He then turned back with no thought for himself and went to save others. Then the boat began to break in half.

John Harper was seen swimming frantically to people in the water leading them to Jesus before the hypothermia became fatal. Mr. Harper swam up to one young man who had climbed up on a piece of debris. Rev. Harper asked him between breaths, "Are you saved?" The young man replied that he was not. Harper then tried to lead him to Christ only to have the young man who was near shock, reply no. John Harper then took off his life jacket and threw it to the man and said "Here then, you need this more than I do..." and swam away to other people. A few minutes later Harper swam back to the young man and succeeded in leading him to salvation. Of the 1528 people that went into the water that night, six were rescued by the lifeboats. One of them was this young man on the debris. Four years later, at a survivors meeting, this young man stood up and in tears recounted how that after Harper had led him to Christ, Harper had tried to swim back to help other people, yet because of the intense cold, had grown too weak to swim. His last words before going under in the frigid waters were "Believe on the Name of the Lord Jesus and you will be saved."

Pray: for opportunities to share the gospel and courage to take them.

Reflect: am I as concerned for the poor and lost?