Oh, that my words were now written!
Oh, that they were printed in a book!
That they were engraved with an iron pen and lead on the Rock forever!
For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that He will stand upon the earth at the Last Day.
And though worms strip away my flesh, I will see God in my flesh, whom I will see for myself and my eyes will look upon, and not a stranger. My heart fails me. [Job 19:23-27]

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. With God there is life. Culturally though death is sure. So certain are we of death, that even Christians build their lives on avoiding, evading, or postponing death. By a strange and reverse worship the church, aping culture, asserts and confesses the authority of death. For many Christians it seems to be the only sure foundation of power. The threat of death is the ultimate fear, and apparently has the power to bury even God. The power to kill is fundamental, and apparently sure.

Death hounds us. It tramples our bodies into distorted shapes. It marches through our minds, leaving a disordered mess. St. Paul says that because of death we don't even know ourselves. We're all going to die, all of us. That alone should make us love each other but it doesn't. We are terrorized and flattened by trivialities. We are eaten up by nothing.

Everything looks like it's born to die, but God sees it all differently. God looks at the death of all men like a parent looks on his sleeping baby, at rest in his crib. It's not eating, or drinking, and doing things that signal a person is living. Even though he is sleeping like a log, dead to the world, except for the sound of his breathing, his father doesn't think he's dead. He's alive. He's asleep.

We must not confuse death and life. Instead we need to listen to Job. Job rightly confesses that even though he dies, he will not die, but live. He will be raised from death to look at God face to face. Job is dead, but alive. You are dead, but alive. In the same way that we talk about someone who is asleep God speaks about those who've died. He says, *"To me, those lying in the grave are not dead. To you they are, but in My own time I will wake them and raise them from their sleep."*

We, like Job, believe that only God can reach down and wake us. He's done this by sending a Redeemer, His Son, Jesus Christ, who's no stranger to you. To His holy people on earth God has given grace to sleep through death. To free you from its debilitating effects. He makes you rich in the gifts of Jesus' victory over death so that your life overflows with joy, praises, and worship of Him. Yet how often this Godly certainty is not properly used by us. Instead, a whimpering loneliness, a dull, gray and drab life, full of quiet desperation and indifference, all hold their fortified position in our souls.

Job's death is dead. Your death is dead. Christ Jesus is your life. He comes to you to restore life to you. In the one action of Jesus going to the cross, God transfers sins and death from you to Christ. Jesus, faithful High Priest and Sacrifice, carries them to-the-death. With his death the new way of life with God becomes energetic with the blood of the Victim, Jesus. With His death, Jesus killed death itself, to make a living people, cleansed from dead works to serve the living Redeemer-God.

Your death, the big death happens at the baptismal font, not at the cemetery. And God is the One who raised you from the dead with Christ. As St. Paul says in Romans 6, you who are baptized have to learn to think in a different way. *Think of yourselves as dead to sin and alive to God through Jesus Christ.* Likewise, your eating and drinking of His Supper is a proclamation of this new life. As St. Paul writes, *"As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."*

On the other hand, psychologists have taught us to ask, *"Who am I?"* Your answer to that question gives baptism its importance. It gives you an identity. In this way you think of Christianity as an *"identity."* But the questions God asks are different. God asks, *"Adam, where are you? Where do you stand in relation to me? Where do you stand in relation to your spouse? Where do you stand in relation to the earth on which I placed you? Where are you in relation to time and work?"* The psychologist's question leaves both the question and answer hanging on how you relate to yourself. God's question always sets you in the presence of God, the earth and time, and other people.

Baptized you are baptized into *Jesus' death* to new life. You are not baptized so you can reflect on your relationship with yourself. When you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim *His death* until He comes to wake you from death. You don't eat and drink to announce what you've chosen to do with your time until you die. Your life is hidden with Christ in God. But you and all the saints are also here. Husbands and wives. Children and work. Widows and orphans. Congregations and neighborhoods. All the grubby relations of daily life. Your life is joined with your ear and mouth, your heart and body, in the company of the assembled people of God. That means, says Hebrews 4, that you are to *live* with boldness and confidence.

Your life is hidden in Jesus. Hidden under His cross, under temptation, under sickness, under sin, under death. Like your Redeemer you are revealed in the message about Jesus and the Cross. He is revealed as Redeemer by God's Word for faith. In the same way so are you. Your knowledge of yourself as Christian is in God's life-giving Word. Job heard it. You and all the saints hear it. Job confessed it. You and all Christians confess it. Job believed it. You and all the Church believe it.

Jesus sets you apart and calls you His body, the communion of saints, the Church — you and me, and all the believing baptized. Jesus offers you to the Father to be kept and guarded in His Name - to see the day of His glory. As Job confesses, *"I will see God in my flesh, whom I will see for myself and my eyes will look upon, and not a stranger."*

He wants you to see His glory, which has been done by His suffering on the Cross for you. In His suffering, Jesus was *"divorced from God"* as He *"divorced"* you from sin, judgment, and Satan's works. In His resurrection, Jesus carries you back to God in Himself, *"marrying"* you to God and each other. Raised from death you are brought to the wedding feast of the Lamb in His kingdom. The Bridegroom and His Bride.

At the feast Jesus also prays for you that the glory of His work is preached and believed by His bride, the Church. Thus, in Hebrews 2, Jesus is the Man under whom all things are put. He is the same God who was humiliated by suffering under all things. The glory of Jesus -- the glory of the church -- is the glory of His crucifixion and weakness. It is from the Cross that He first utters the authority of the forgiveness of sins.

He asks no one's permission to make things right with the Father or to open paradise to sinners. *"Father, forgive them; they know not what they do ... Today you will be with me in paradise."* While all is darkness and everything is falling in on Him, Jesus is suffering so that you who are set apart and the One who sets you apart come from, and end up, at the same heavenly wedding feast.

Here is where our talk about death and resurrection is rooted. Jesus' doing the will of the Father is the source of your life. This is why Jesus is called a merciful and faithful High Priest. He blots out and drowns your sins and death. He is able to help you who are tempted by sin, death, and the devil because He himself was tempted by them — yet without sin.

It is finished. Death is no longer assured! Instead, you know your Redeemer lives. And because He lives you may walk in newness of life, bold and confident that, *"This day is for the death of sin, all day long! This day is for the life of forgiveness in the blood of Jesus — trusting that word of forgiveness I live for that day when we will see each other face to face. It is for joy all day long, even with the most serious afflictions and the most deadening defeats."* Amen.