

**+ Job 19:23-27 + My Redeemer Lives! +
+ The Christian Victory Service of Ilgvars Briedis + 23 February 2016 +**

Dear Family and Friends of Ilgvars Briedis, especially you dear Christopher, Andrejs, Daniel, and David,

“I’m 82 years old. I’ve lived a long life. I’ve seen so much and been through so much, but one thing has never changed—the Lord.” I had stopped by Ilgvars’ home on Thursday morning. It was my monthly visit to bring him the Word of God and the Lord’s Supper since he was largely homebound and unable to attend worship at our church. When I came to visit, the arthritis was bothering him. Being out of breath frustrated him, and he seemed pretty resigned to the pain. Yet as we talked about the Lord of grace who will never leave or forsake his people, the Lord of grace who watches over his people, the Lord of grace who rescues the sinner from the slavery of guilt and who forgives sin, his spirits perked up. No matter what had happened in Ilgvars’ life, no matter what temptations and demons haunted him, the Lord had never given up on him. Ilgvars knew that the Lord, his Savior, had never changed.

Because Christ had never given up on him, Ilgvars knew that he would see Jesus, his living Savior, someday. No matter what the arthritis and the heart issues did to his body, no matter how much his body declined, he would see Jesus. The Lord would be with him through the pain and the heart issues until he brought him to eternal rest in his heavenly home. Little did any of us realize, but the Lord would do just that later Thursday afternoon. It was with that confidence in Christ his Redeemer, his Rescuer, his Deliverer that Ilgvars departed this life for the glories of heaven. It was with that same confidence that an ancient believer named Job once confessed, **“I know that MY REDEEMER LIVES!”** (Read Job 19:23-27)

I don’t know how well you know the story of Job. He was well-off, well-loved – basically living the dream. He had everything he could hope for and life was good. No one could compete with his wealth or reputation. If there was a person in the ancient world who had stability, it was Job...until Satan attacked. In the course of a day he lost his crops, his animals, his workers, his wealth, even his children. Then his health went too. The only people remaining for him—his wife and friends—only seemed to be left around to pile on guilt and shame. So Job sat in the dust and suffered.

He complained and wondered why all of that had happened to him, but no matter what he was enduring, one thing had not changed and would not change—his Redeemer. Job knew that he had a Redeemer who would come to his aid, who would defend him, who would deliver him.

This wasn’t wishful thinking. This wasn’t trying to think positively when everything else seemed to be going down the drain. This was a knowledge, a confidence based on fact, on experience. The Lord in his grace had delivered Job from sin’s guilt. Surely he would one day rescue Job, even if it simply meant giving him eternal life after death. Job was so confident of that that he wanted his words **“written on a scroll...inscribed with an iron tool on lead...engraved in rock forever.”** It was the same rock-solid confidence that Ilgvars had the day he was called home to heaven.

With that rock-solid confidence, Job in his suffering and pain confessed, **“I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns with me!”** God had promised that a Savior would come who would rescue sinners like Job, like Ilgvars, like you and me from the curse of sin and guilt and death. God promised it and Jesus did it.

Jesus, that long-promised Redeemer, became a human being and lived the life that we could not—perfect, holy in every thought, every word, every action, but that wasn’t enough. God’s Word tells us that **“The wages of sin is death...”** (Romans 6:23) Every time you sin you earn for yourself more and more death until that paycheck is cashed with your last breath.

Yet Jesus took all those wages that Job had earned and Ilgvars had earned and you have earned and I have earned and cashed that check in our place. He became our advocate, our defender before the holy God by offering his own life on the cross, but it didn’t end there. Remember what Job confessed and Ilgvars believed—**My Redeemer lives!**

You see, Jesus didn’t stay in the tomb. No, on that first Easter morning, the tomb was empty. Angels announced it. Women saw it. The disciples saw him. **My Redeemer lives!** He lives proving that your sins are fully paid and death can no longer hold the One who paid the price. He lives proving that Jesus is who he said he is and that God keeps all of his promises. He lives proving that Ilgvars now enjoys Christ’s eternal victory in the glories of heaven—and one day in the flesh will see Jesus with his own eyes.

Ilgvars knew far too well that he was a sinful human being who deserved nothing, but God's rejection and condemnation. He knew far too well how temptation and guilt always threatened him. He knew far too well how much he deserved to go to hell. Ilgvars was painfully aware of his desperate need for a Savior.

Yet no matter where he had been or what he went through over those 82 years, Ilgvars knew this: **My Redeemer lives!** Jesus, my Redeemer, will not abandon me. He will not leave my side. Because Jesus lives, heaven is my home. That means that no matter what I'm going through, a brighter day is coming. God's forgiveness belongs to me, because **My Redeemer lives.**

That's what Ilgvars longed to see! He longed to see Jesus with his own eyes someday. Yes, he's been reduced to dust and ashes, but because Jesus lives, he now shares in Christ's eternal resurrection victory. Ilgvars knew that death is not the end—that there is One who will stand upon the very dust of his grave. Ilgvars knew that when his skin would be destroyed, a day would come when the Lord would literally give him flesh again, and in his own flesh—glorified, changed, fit for life with God in heaven, he would stand up again. No more arthritis. No more heart issues. No more pain. No more demons. Only glory with Jesus his living Savior. Ilgvars knew he would see God with his own resurrected eyes—not as a disembodied spirit floating around—but with his own eyes. He longed for that day to see Christ!

...And that impacted his life. After years of wandering away from his Savior and the Word of God, he became a member of our congregation in 2002. To his dying day, he always rejoiced to see what the Lord was doing through our congregation. He rejoiced when I showed him pictures of the progress on our building—and he so wanted to be here helping us. He rejoiced to see how the Lord was taking the good news of Jesus to others. For a few years, he served as a property officer putting to use some of that construction knowledge he had gained over the years. Knowing his generous Savior also moved Ilgvars to share that same unquestioning generosity with others trying to help anyone who asked for it.

Ilgvars knew far too well how desperately he needed Jesus. By faith in his living Savior, he knew that Jesus would defend him, protect him, speak up for him, and cleanse him of all his guilt. That's the reason Ilgvars now enjoys a glorious eternity with his living Savior forever. That's what makes every Christian's funeral a Victory Service, because without Jesus, without the Redeemer who lives, without that fact, it's all meaningless.

Because your Redeemer lives, someday by God's grace through faith in Jesus, you'll see your father, your grandfather, your brother, your friend, your fellow believer again gathered with all believers in Christ around the throne of the Lamb of God, but that won't be the best part of all. No, the best part is that you will be with your living Redeemer forever. You will see Jesus face to face, and you will enjoy his victory for you for all eternity.

What a glorious day that will be! What a glorious reality to be one of the countless saints triumphant from every nation, tribe, people and language rejoicing around the throne of the Lamb who took away the sins of the world! What a glorious reality that Ilgvars even now enjoys!

On February 18, Ilgvars Briedis fell asleep in Jesus and finally saw the face of his living Redeemer. He saw his living Savior in all his gracious glory with nail-pierced hands outstretched welcoming Ilgvars home to heaven. No more pain. No more heart issues. No more demons. Only glory with Jesus his living Savior and Redeemer. On that day, Jesus made all things new, and now Ilgvars lives with his Redeemer.

So amidst your sadness and grief, know this. Christ is risen! Your Redeemer lives, and even when you and I are turned back to dust, the Son of God will stand and you will see him. On that Last Day, he who is "**the resurrection and the life**" (John 11:25) will call you from your grave to enjoy his eternal victory body and soul. How our hearts yearn within us because **our Redeemer lives!** Set it in stone. This matters as much for you as it did for Ilgvars. **Your Redeemer lives for you!** Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Amen.