Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

According to Q/A 2 of the Catechism, there are three things that you must know to live and die in the joy of belonging to Jesus. And the first of these is “how great my sin and misery are.” And that is what the first section of the catechism explores. And in one of the sermons in that section, I borrowed an illustration I heard another minister use recently. He recalled looking for a diamond for an engagement ring, because he planned to propose to his girlfriend. So, he visited a jeweller, but all the diamonds that he was shown looked dull and pretty much the same. But then the jeweller said, “Oh, wait a minute, I forgot something.” And he went behind the counter and pulled up a black velvet cloth. Well, when the man looked at a diamond that he had already looked at, but this time against the backdrop of that black cloth, it absolutely sparkled! It seemed to pick up every bit of light in the store and reflect it and refract it into all the colours of the rainbow. The difference was extraordinary. And what made the difference was the black background. And it is the same with salvation; to fully understand the loveliness of Christ as your Saviour, you must understand the poison and corruption and wickedness of your sinful nature and what your sins deserve. And that is how Lord’s Day 4 ends: God’s justice demands that our sins “be punished with the supreme penalty – eternal punishment of body and soul.”

And so, with the black cloth background of our sin and misery properly in place, we are ready to start examining the diamond. And the diamond is the second thing you must know to “live and die in the joy of [belonging to Jesus],” which is “how I am set free from all my sins and misery.” So, in short, the diamond is salvation. And this is what the *second* section of the Catechism is about. It is the largest section of the Catechism and with each Lord’s Day we examine another facet of this incr diamond!

And the first facet is Lord’s Day 5, where we **Very Good News** **-** **Deliverance is Possible**; by God’s grace in Christ, we can receive heaven instead of hell. And we are going to see this from our text in Job 9. Have you boys and girls ever used a **template** before? A template is when you put some object on top of a piece of paper and you draw around it so that you end up with the same shape. Well, Job is a template of salvation. If we want deliverance from our sin and misery, then we must do as Job did. And what Job did is three things: He **Recognized God’s Majesty**, He **Confessed His Sin**, and He **Cried Out for a Mediator**.

1. So, let’s look at the first thing Job did: He **Recognized** **God’s** **Majesty**.
   1. If you know the book of Job, you will know that job was a righteous man. And this means that he strived to obey God’s commands and trusted in His promises. But the devil told God that Job’s righteousness was just because he was prosperous and healthy. So, the Lord gave the devil permission to take away Job’s prosperity and health. And that is what the devil did. But, by and large, Job was steadfast in his righteousness. He continued to honour the Lord. Where Job did eventually err was that he demanded an explanation from God for why all this had happened to him. And at the end of the book, God appeared to Job and told him that as God He did not *owe* Job or anyone else an explanation for anything He did.
   2. But the major part of the book is a **conversation between Job and three of his friends**. And their consistent message was that Job must have done something terribly wrong to have been suffered so much loss. As they saw it, great suffering was always the result of serious sin. But that is not correct. And Job consistently responded to these friends that that was not the case. He couldn't explain why this had happened to him, which is why he eventually demanded that God give him an explanation, but it was not because of some great sin on his part.
   3. Well, **chapter 9** is Job’s reply to the counsel of one of these friends - Bildad. And what **Bildad** had said, as we see in chapter 8:6, was that God does not punish “*the pure and upright*.” So, if Job were to plead to God for mercy, God would restore Job to his “*rightful habitation*.” In other words, Job could once again be deserving of God’s favour if he would just repent and do good.
      1. And of course, this is **the philosophy of so many people** today. If you are good, then you deserve good from God. And if you do enough good, God will welcome you into heaven.
         1. Perhaps you have seen Ray Comfort’s videos. He interviews people on the streets. He says to them, “If you were to die today and stand before God would He let you into heaven?” And most people answer, “Yes.” And when he asks them, “Why?” they explain that it is because they are good people. So, as they see it, they deserve heaven.
         2. And I have to ask if this could be the perspective of some of you here today? I hope not because that is not what the Bible teaches. We will come to this again in a moment, but we read earlier in Romans that “*we all fall short of the glory of God*.” We are sinners and “*the wages of sin is death*.” What we *deserve* from God is hell.
   4. But Job’s reply to Bildad began with the majesty of God.
      1. Look again at **verse 2**, “*How can man be in the right before God? If one wished to contend [or argue or debate] with Him, one could not answer Him once in a thousand times.*”
      2. And then from **verses 4 to 13**, we have this remarkable and beautiful poem about the majesty of God as the Creator. Job was in awe of the power and majesty and glory and divinity of God. When Job saw earthquakes and volcanoes and the sunrise and the stars moving across the sky, it reinforced the greatness and perfection and majesty and glory of God compared with Job’s tininess.
      3. And all this led Job to say, in **verse 32**, “*[God] is not a man, as I am, that I might answer Him, that we should come to trial together*.” In other words, how could anyone view God as an equal? How could anyone think that God owed them anything? He is God! And we are creatures. He is up there! And we are down here. Next to Him, we are small and insignificant.
2. But what makes our situation before God *so much worse* is our sin. Our problem is not just that we are creatures but that we are *sinful* creatures. And this is our second point, as we see that **Job** **also** **Confessed His Sin**.
   1. Look again at verse 2, “*How can a man be in the right before God*?” Or, as the NIV puts it, “*How can a mortal be righteous before God*?” You see, God’s majesty is not just about His power, it is also about His **holiness**. In **Matthew 5:43**, Jesus said, “*You therefore must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect*.” And that is what holiness means – perfection – blamelessness – righteousness – all-good. And Job understood that his problem was not that he was not quite perfect, but that he was full of imperfection.
      1. Look at what he said **verse 20**, “*Though I am in the right [or although I might think myself right] my own mouth would condemn me*; *though I am blameless [or although I might think myself blameless] He would prove me perverse* *[which means sinful and guilty]*.”
      2. And in **verse 28**, “*I became afraid of all my suffering, for you will not hold me innocent*.”
      3. And all this led Job to acknowledge, in **verse 30**, “*If I wash myself with snow and cleanse my hands with lye [which is a type of soap], yet you will plunge me into a pit, and my own clothes would abhor me*.”
      4. Job understood that he was a vile sinner who did not deserve anything from God. And he confessed this to God. And we saw this earlier in our Romans 3 reading: “*None is righteous, no not one … No one does good, not even one … for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*.”
   2. And so, to any of you here today who might think of yourself as deserving of God’s favour, because you try and be kind to others, you have attended church many times, and you try and live a clean and moral life, you need to know that none of that makes you deserving of God’s favour because it is all tainted by and stained with sin. What you need to do is to ***get into the pit with Job***!
      1. Some of you will know the Easter hymn “Man of Sorrows, what a name.” It celebrates God’s amazing grace in Jesus Christ. But in that hymn, we call ourselves “ruined sinners.” We describe ourselves as “guilty, vile, and helpless.”
      2. Another well-known hymn is “Jesus, Lover of My Soul.” We will sing it after the sermon. And in it we sing, “Just and holy is Thy name, I am all unrighteousness, false and full of sin I am.”
      3. And that, dear friends, is how you need to view yourself. You need to understand and confess that you are a filthy, guilty, vile sinner who only deserves God’s condemnation.
3. For only then will you join Job who, as our third point, **Cried Out for a Mediator**.
   1. Now, I will explain what a mediator is in a moment, but as we read through Job’s reply in chapter 9, you probably noted that it is **far from perfect**. Some of what he says plainly comes from pain and depression and despondency. He feels alienated and confused. He feels that God has abandoned him. And so, there is cynicism and skepticsm in some of what Job says in this chapter. But that is often our natural and sinful reaction to suffering, isn’t it.
      1. Quite often in our worship services we recite **Lord’s Day 1, Question and answer 1** together: “I trust God so much that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven.” And the words just roll off our tongues; they are so easy to say. But the next day, when you receive a cancer diagnosis or you lose your job or you get a phone call about a family member who has been assaulted or killed in a car crash, do you go straight into the calm trust in God attitude? I don’t. There is pain and rage and confusion and where are you God? How could you let this happen? That is often our natural reaction to suffering, isn’t it.
      2. So, let’s be careful not to quickly jump on others in their time of suffering, when they react as Job did and as we have surely done also. Let’s first offer a shoulder to cry on and lean on, and our prayers, and at the appropriate time, we can point them to God and His promises.
   2. But even in the midst of his pain and cynicism, the Holy Spirit led Job to cry out for a mediator. And we see this in **verse 33**, where Job said in relation to God and himself, “*There is no arbiter between us, who might lay his hand on us both*.” And instead of “*arbiter*,” the NIV has someone “*to arbitrate between us both,*” and another English Bible version has an “*umpire*,” while another one uses the word “*mediator*.” And all these terms have in view someone who stands in the middle between two people or two groups who have a problem with each other. And this person’s job is to bring the two people or the two groups together. So, we will use the word **mediator** because it is the term used in the New Testament in relation to the person and work of Jesus, as we shall see next week.
      1. But one area of life where we hear about mediators today is **industrial relations** or the workplace. So, the workers at some job want a 10% pay rise and the boss is only offering a 2% pay rise, and no-one is willing to budge, and the workers and the boss are upset and angry. And so, a mediator is called in to help. And the mediator will talk to the boss and to the workers. And it is the mediator’s job to understand the situation and the perspective of both sides, to be impartial and sympathetic, and wise and fair. And what usually happens is that eventually the mediator gets the boss to add a couple of percent to his offer and the workers to drop a couple of percent from their offer, and in the end a deal for a 6% pay rise is agreed by all, because of the work of the mediator.
      2. Well, Job was looking for someone like that. He wanted someone who could help him with his situation before God. He couldn’t fix himself. His friends had been no help to him, and so, he longed for someone who could mediate between him and God, who could bring them together and restore the relationship. He wanted to be close to God again. He wanted to enjoy peace with God; to know that God was *for* Him, not against Him. So, what he needed was someone who could understand the situation of both sides and represent both sides and remove the problem that was keeping them apart.
   3. And this, brothers and sisters, is **the heart of the gospel**. As our Catechism puts it: “God requires that His justice be satisfied. Therefore the claims of His justice must be paid in full, either by ourselves or another.” But we cannot pay this debt ourselves. “Actually, we increase our guilt every day.” And another creature, like an animal or an angel, “cannot pay this debt for us, because God will not punish another creature for what a human is guilty of. Besides, no mere creature can bear the weight of God's eternal anger against sin and release others from it.” So, the mediator and deliverer we need is “one who is truly human and truly righteous, yet more powerful than all creatures, that is, one who is also true God.”
      1. And that is the **how** of deliverance. It is possible for our relationship with God to be restored, by a suitably qualified Mediator. And I trust that many of you know where all this is pointing us – to the Lord Jesus Christ. We will consider Him as our suitably qualified Mediator next time, but rest assured that He ticks all the boxes of the mediator or deliverer that we need. As**1 Timothy 2:5** says, “*For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*.”

So, ultimately, Job’s cry was answered in the Lord Jesus Christ. And Job looked ***forward*** in faith to the coming of this Mediator. Later, in chapter 19, Job spoke of Him as his “*Redeemer*,” and that this Redeemer would one day “*stand upon the earth*,” and that Job would eventually see Him “*face to face*.” Well, Jesus, the Mediator and Redeemer has come and stood on the earth. And He died and rose again for the forgiveness of sins. And He will come again to bring the new heavens and the new earth. And I hope and pray that Job is **your template** – that you recognize the majesty of God, that you have confessed your sins, and that your faith and trust is in Jesus as your Mediator. Amen.