

**GOD'S FAITHFULNESS IS SHOWN IN HIS MERCIES**

Hear again the Word of the Lord to His Church on this fifth day of Christmas, as God speaks His enduring Promise of mercy in faithfulness:

*Ever eternal I will cause to establish your descendants;  
and (I will) build from generation to generation your throne."*<sup>1</sup>

**Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**

Merry Christmas! God, in His mercy, has allowed us to live through half of this festival season which is given to us to celebrate the incarnation of our Lord. This is first day of this part of the Church year in which we do not celebrate either a major or a minor Feast of the Lord.

(Those among us who celebrate the Church Year in our daily devotions have already rejoiced in four great days – the Nativity, St. Stephen, St. John and Holy Innocents. Those of us who follow that pattern each year are reminded why the color that predominates outside the Church is red. That, whether the uninformed or uninitiated know it or not, is because of the blood which was shed for the proclamation of the Good News unto all people – the true reason for this season. That is, the enfleshment of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity to bear our sins into a bloody death, that our sins may be atoned – covered over. From His death in our trespasses comes the ability of those who believe in His death and resurrection to face bloody death for the good confession of the Faith). It is through the death of His Son that God fixed these words in eternity:

*Ever eternal I will cause to establish your descendants;*

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<sup>1</sup> *Psalm 89:5 MT.*

*and (I will) build from generation to generation your throne.”<sup>2</sup>*

At the beginning of this morning’s service, those words were enacted out before those whom God had called into this place this day. There, next to the font, an infant girl, granddaughter of faithful members of this congregation, was shown to be a public illustration of God’s faithfulness shown in His mercies to every generation since His Son, Jesus, was presented at the Temple. Through the rite of “Public Recognition of Holy Baptism,” the Church in this place was reminded of the means which God established to save His people – and their children – for all the generations of the New Testament era. For some 55 generations<sup>3</sup> since the incarnation of our Lord and His later establishing Holy Baptism as His means of grace – God’s people have administered Holy Baptism – in homes, in hospitals, in any and all locations which can be thought of – and God’s Word to the faithful of old, spoken through the Song of Ethan the Ezrahite, (the later added header to today’s Psalm) has been fulfilled.

God has allowed us, in this place, today, to witness a presentation of Bee Addison Mohler to His Church as one redeemed, that is, bought back from sin, death, and hell, by the blood of Jesus through her death and resurrection through the Water and the Word.<sup>4</sup> The sacrament remembered today shows the faithfulness of her parents to the Word of God – for Baptism in the Name of the Triune God connected to that of the candidate as water is sprinkled, poured, splashed, or swiped upon her is truly, no matter the quantity of water or the reasonability of the one being baptized, a,

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<sup>2</sup> *Psalm* 89:5 MT.

<sup>3</sup> Assumes: 40 year generations from 4 BC to AD 1900; 20 year generations from AD 1900 – 1980; and 10 year generations since.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Romans* 6:4.

*bath of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, which He poured upon you through Jesus Christ the Savior of us, that we may be justified by His grace (and) heirs we may become according to the hope of life eternal.*<sup>5</sup>

(This day is a reminder why you are to be familiar with the Rite of Emergency Baptism printed out in the back of your hymnals. Someday you may be, as Father Addison was, called upon to add to someone else's earthly name to God's eternal Holy Family name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). Yes, we had a picture before us this morning – a living depiction, though with less hairy men – of our bulletin cover. Again, that image is one God's fulfillment to His people long ago, centuries before the birth and presentation of the Christ Child, of these words:

*Ever eternal I will cause to establish your descendants;  
and (I will) build from generation to generation your throne.”*<sup>6</sup>

Every time a man, woman, or child is added to God's Household through His means of grace, those words are completed. For the New Testament believer, that word is enacted as we, you, were, through no action, decision or cooperation of your own – that is why infant baptism is so powerful an illustration of God's work, grace, mercy and faithfulness in our age – through the Water and the Word you were added to the line of God's Promise. For as Christ is, by virtue of His earthly lineage from His Mother Mary, Jesus is the Son of David, so are you named a son of David – whether you are male or female – as one united to Christ Jesus with the Sacrament.

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<sup>5</sup> *Titus* 3:5-8.

<sup>6</sup> *Psalms* 89:5 MT.

If you are struggling with God's Word and Work in Holy Baptism, know that to doubt His Word, and His promises, is to sin. It is for that sin that Jesus made atonement, having been placed fully under the Law of the Old Covenant in the shedding of first blood at His circumcision, continued throughout His mortal, incarnate life. Jesus, as the embodiment of God's faithfulness shown from generation to generation in His mercy, was brought into the Temple. The Real Presence of God, which the prophet of the Old Testament had seen depart on account of the unrepentant sins of the Israelites, now, on the fortieth day of His mortal life, entered His Temple again. As He was carried in, He was recognized for that which He had come to be – the consolation of Israel in the forgiveness of their sins.

It would be, before Jesus entered His fifth decade of incarnate life, that He would fully enter the Temple a final time to complete the atonement rite for His people's sins. On the day in which our Savior died, when He had breathed out His last, the veil in the Temple was torn, and the Christ entered the Most Holy Place as both High Priest and Sacrificial Victim for His people's sins. Jesus alone is God's faithfulness shown in His mercies to those who even then rejected Him. Our Psalm declares:

*For who in skies can be compared to You;  
who (is) like unto YHWH in sons of Elohim?  
El being feared in council of Holy Ones;  
great and terrible above all around Him.<sup>7</sup>*

In the Word envisaged in our bulletin cover today, the great and terrible God is depicted as coming to His people in a form which allows them to remain in His

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<sup>7</sup> Psalm 89:7-8 MT.

Presence. His coming to them, His coming to us in the form of an infant – wow, Bee is just a just a couple of weeks older than Jesus was that day long ago – He did so that people, beginning with Simeon and Anna at His presentation, could testify that God had truly come to be with His people. He veiled His glory that they might see Him, believe in Him, and tell others of Him. Without His coming to them in veiled form:

*His glory would only strike one with terror; but the faithfulness which encompasses Him softens the sunlike brilliancy of His glory, and awakens trust in so majestic a Ruler.<sup>8</sup>*

Without His coming to us in veiled forms – most rightly remembered this fifth day of Christmas with the Visible Word of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and the invisible yet powerful Word of Absolution – we too would be struck with terror. God, in His unveiled glory, is confessed to be brighter than the sun. The fire of His holiness burns hotter than the flames of atomic bombs. It consumes all sin, sinfulness, and unrepentant sinners – for the unholy cannot remain for a moment in the unveiled Presence of the Holy without God’s merciful Word to shield it, to shield us, to cover you. Our Song of the Day proclaims:

*YHWH Elohe Sabaoth, who is as You are mighty YH;  
and Your faithfulness round about You?<sup>9</sup>*

The answer to that question is: no one in himself or herself. Yet, anyone who is in Christ Jesus, who bears the Name of God that is given with the Water and Word. The three-fold intensification of God’s revealed Name, literally translated, “I AM, Gods

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<sup>8</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, “Psalms,” v. 5, Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001. p. 586.

<sup>9</sup> *Psalm* 89:6-9 MT.

of the Heavenly Hosts,” is coupled with one of God’s greatest attributes, which is? His faithfulness. Three times in today’s Psalm, we declared God’s faithfulness. Twice our translation connected His faithfulness to His *Hesed* (His unfailing mercy, loving-kindness, sacrificial condescension to us – a word full of grace for sinners). Twice God’s Word also connected His faithfulness to the phrase translated: *from generation to generation*. God’s faithfulness is shown through His mercies, which, for the sakes of sinners like you and me, are veiled under means which allow us to remain in His Holy Presence, to be touched by Him, to be forgiven by Him. All of that, and more, are reason for the Church to continue to chant on days like this, translations of ancient words such as these:

*Heseds of YWHW eternal I will sing;  
from generation to generation I will cause to proclaim Your faithfulness  
with my mouth.<sup>10</sup>*

This day, you have added your voice to those of preceding generations of the faithful. Today, your voice continues the proclamation of God’s faithfulness for succeeding generations. Oh what wonderful words we have received and confess as we continue to celebrate a very, merry Christmas!

**The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus**

Christmas I (*Lutheran Service Book* one-year series)

Psalm 89:1-8; II Samuel 7:1-16; Galatians 4:1-7; Luke 2:33-40

December 29, 2013

*Paster Michael S. Mercheux*

***Soli Deo Gloria***

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<sup>10</sup> Psalm 89:2. MT

*Heseds of YWHW eternal I will sing;  
from generation to generation I will cause to proclaim Your faithfulness  
with my mouth.<sup>11</sup>*

*For I said, "Eternal Hesed was established;  
heavens You cause to make firm Your faithfulness in them."<sup>12</sup>*

*"I have cut covenant for My chosen One;  
I have sworn to David My servant:  
ever eternal I will cause to establish your descendants;  
and build from generation to generation your throne." Selah<sup>13</sup>*

*Then, all of you let praise, O heavens, Your wonders, O YHWH;  
Your faithfulness in assembly of Holy Ones.  
For who in skies can be compared to You;  
who (is) like unto YHWH in sons of Elohim?  
El being feared in council of Holy Ones;  
great and terrible above all around Him.  
YHWH Elohe Sabaoth, who is as You are mighty YH;  
and Your faithfulness round about You?<sup>14</sup>*

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<sup>11</sup> *Psalm 89:2. MT*

<sup>12</sup> *Psalm 89:3 MT*

<sup>13</sup> *Psalm 89:4-5 MT.*

<sup>14</sup> *Psalm 89:6-9 MT.*