

A GOOD DAY IN THE COURTS OF THE LORD'S HOUSE

Hear again the Word of the Lord to His Church:

*For good (is a) day in Your courts (than) (a) thousand (elsewhere);
I have chosen to stand at the threshold in (the) house of my Elohe, (rather)
than (to) dwell in (the) tents of evil.¹*

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

Today's Psalm is to be sung by those who are waiting at the threshold of the Lord's eternal House. From all that we have heard, said, sung, and chanted today, this is a good day in the courts of the Lord's House. Now, you might be thinking that you are already in the Lord's House. In a way that is true, but there is through this place of Word and Sacrament ministry an eternal house. Its door is entered through the Water and the Word. Its threshold is crossed at the Table of the Lord. There, Christ the God in the Most Holy Place reaches down with His Body and Blood to touch those whom He has named with His Name. They are we who need His help, His forgiveness, life, and salvation every day until the holy angels come to bear us across the heavenly portals and into His Real Presence without sin, eternally. That help He gives in this entrance place to His grace, with His Holy Word poured into our ears, and from there to our lips and lives. God's Word declares:

How beloved (are) Your dwelling places, O YHWH Sabaoth!²

Those words are to be chanted or sung by the faithful who long to be with the Lord. They are right and fitting for places such as this building wherein God has gathered for Himself people who yearn to be in His presence. In the visible Church, in places wherein God's pure Word is taught and His Sacraments are rightly administered, can be discovered by the faithful the forecourts and thresholds of the invisible House of the Lord. In places such as this where people conceived and born unholy are declared

¹ *Psalm 84:11.*

² *Psalm 84:2.*

holy by the Living God, heaven truly meets earth, the divine eternal reality of God's House is connected to the temporal passing reality of God's House on earth.

That should be reason enough for you to hunger to be in this place when God's Holy Word is preached, and His cleansing Sacraments are administered. For some of us, even missing a day of this, even when we have a regular four opportunities a week to receive God's gifts, missing one out of four services a week seems to bring a loss into our lives. I am not speaking of guilt, but of a hunger to be in the Lord's House, receiving His gifts, responding to His Word with holy sacrifices of prayer, praise and thanksgiving.

That is how your New Adam in Christ feels and thinks about all that goes on in the Lord's services to us in this place. However, your Old Adam cares not a whit for all of this, and would rather be anywhere but here. He, aided by the temptations of this world, and the deceptions of the devil, moves you to desire to be someplace else, doing that which brings you earthly pleasure. That Old Adam wars with your New Adam, and that is one reason why God uses words such as this, at regular times of the year, to call you back to that which He desires to work in you. Our Psalm continues:

Longs, and faints even, my soul for (the) courts of YHWH; and my heart and my flesh sing for joy to El, El (the) living One.³

Does that describe your experience today on your way into the outer courtyards of the Lord's House? Or, were you distracted by the trials, joys, cares and concerns of this life? If so, repent, turn away from your Old Adam and all his evil desires, and your New Adam will again be raised to live in the courts of the Lord's House in the death of Christ in your sins. This is His cry, and it is your cry in Him:

Longs, and faints even, my soul for (the) courts of YHWH; and my heart and my flesh sing for joy to El, El (the) living One.⁴

The Psalmist seems to be yearning for being in the Presence in the Lord while he is yet apart from it. Various commentators have theories about why he is hungering to

³ Psalm 84:3.

⁴ Psalm 84:3.

be in the Lord's House. For us today, it shall suffice to say that the Psalm's cry is of the faithful of long ago. It expresses the heaven on earth desire of one who trusted in the Promise of the coming of the Word of God in our flesh. The words of the Psalm also communicate the heaven on earth desire of one who trusts in the fulfilled Promise of the coming of the Word of God in our flesh.

Today's Psalm, read in our midst, has been proclaimed. It was done so that you may know that God sees your New Nature's desire as you sit, stand, and recline at the entrance to Christ's Church in the heavens. That is the deep meaning poured forth from these words:

*For good (is a) day in Your courts (than) (a) thousand (elsewhere);
I have chosen to stand at the threshold in (the) house of my Elohe, (rather) than
(to) dwell in (the) tents of evil.⁵*

That is the song of your New Adam, the confession of your New Nature in Christ. It is a song only poured forth in this Church Year series twice a year. It is declared on this Sunday and on Trinity 19 every year. It may be chanted in a Lord's Service celebrating the anniversary of a congregation – something our congregation has not seemed interested in doing in the past. Why those words might be used at such an event should be obvious, for they truly show the connection between the heavenly and earthly that takes place in the Divine Service. Hear them, hear your New Adam's, hear this congregation's confession of her desire as part of the Church Militant:

*I have chosen to stand at the threshold in (the) house of my Elohe, (rather) than
(to) dwell in (the) tents of evil.⁶*

Your New Nature in Christ never chooses to dwell in evil. Your Old Nature in Adam ever chooses to dwell in evil. You, with the Psalmist, are not speaking of living with evil men. Rather, today your words declared that you are actually not willing to live in the houses of the evil one, the devil, the Satan, Lucifer, the fallen angel. This is reinforced in you each time you pray the Our Father, wherein your petition may be

⁵ Psalm 84:11.

⁶ Psalm 84:11.

literally rendered, “Deliver us from the evil one.” Our Psalm looks at that reality from the viewpoint of one who has been prevented from coming into the Lord’s House, as it proclaims the longing of the New Adam in each Christian:

Even (the) “twittering bird” finds (a) house and (the) “straight forward darting bird” (a) nest for her in which she may lay her young at Your altars, O YHWH my King and My Elohe.⁷

There the image of little birds, such as finches or sparrows being able to enter the Old Testament Temple during the years when many of the Israelites had been deported from their land. Birds which only move on the ground in darting motions, such as the swallow, could find a place to build their nests in the open air courtyards of the Lord’s earthly Temple, even when foreign conquerors prohibited God’s chosen people from coming near the Temple gates. It would be as when this place was struck with fire by a now-convicted arsonist, you were able to see in here, but, for days, could not kneel here to receive God’s gifts. Some of you remember that time, when the floors were covered in plastic, the weekday services had to be cancelled. You also can remember the joy we had when we were able to receive God’s gifts on the very next Sunday amidst the renovation work. What a thrill to have again that which someone tried to keep us apart from in this place. God’s Word in the Psalm rings out:

*Blessed (are the) ones living (in) Your house forever singing Your praise.
Selah.⁸*

Yes, when one has been prevented from receiving God’s gifts in the places where He has promised to be, one, you, can truly behold yourselves as blessed. Here, in chant, song and word, you are living in God’s eternal House, all the while waiting for your time to join forever the eternal chorus, *Holy, Holy, Holy*. With a plucking of strings, the first division of the Psalm ends with the declaration of our, of your, blessedness in the Presence of God, in His House, in His Word and Song. The Psalm of the Day then sings out:

⁷ Psalm 84:4.

⁸ Psalm 84:5.

*(Among the) blessed ones (is the) man whose strength (is) in You;
in whose heart (are the) high roads.⁹*

As you find God's strength in His Word, you are truly found among those blessed by God. True eternal strength on earth is given to the faithful as they remain in the Lord. It is received through the strength of Him Who bore the sins of the whole world in His sinless flesh. It is the strength of God to bear all things for the benefit of those who will be named with His Name. Such might is given to you as you stand in the forecourts of the heavenly Temple, that is, in God's faithful congregations on earth.

The high roads in the hearts of the faithful are the paths developed in us through His Word. That Word enters into us. It levels out the rough places, removes the pits of sin, and fills in that which we are lacking in ourselves in order that we might remain now and forever in the Presence of the Holy One. The High Road that is built in us is Jesus. It is the way of the cross. It leads to faithful into the Presence of Our Eternal Father. The Psalm moves further into earthly imagery in order to describe heavenly realities:

*As they go in (the) Valley of Baca; (a) place of springs they make it;
even (with) blessings (the) early rains cause to enwrap it.¹⁰*

That is desert imagery. It is what we pray for after so many weeks of drought in this place where God has caused us to live. When the rains do come, this desert will bloom beyond that which it is doing now because of the warm weather. The blessings of life will come back into this arid land.

God's Word works in like manner in we who were once ruled by our Old Adams, lifeless in sin. The Word came upon us as spring rain, and we blossomed into the New Life of the New Adam. That Word grows and produces fruit in the faithful. That is composed of the good works which God does through you. As the desert blooms after

⁹ Psalm 84:6.

¹⁰ Psalm 84:7.

the rains, so too do we Christians sprout forth through the washing of the water and the Word.

For they go in strength upon strength, (they) will be seen (in) El Elohim in Zion.¹¹

Those who remain in the Word of the Lord are now, and will be forever seen before God. As you remain in the Word in this life, you can be certain that you will look upon the Face of the Living God in His heavenly home forever. The second division of the Psalm concludes with the plucking of strings after it declares:

YHWH Elohim Sabaoth, hear my prayer, cause to give ear, OElohe of Jacob. Selah.¹²

You who are in Christ are freed to call upon the Lord in the Faith. You cry out to Him in the knowledge that He hears your petitions. He who is the God of the ancient faithful is your God Who as you call out in the faith of Christ, hears your pleas. Again, you are hearing that this is the Great I Am, the Creator God, the Lord of the Angel Hosts Who hears you. For what do you pray in this day's Psalm? You ask God that you might behold His Christ even as you call out:

Our Shield see, O Elohim, and cause to look upon (the) Face of Your Messiah.¹³

Here, in the outer courts of the Lord's House on earth, in the Presence of the Living God, you plead with Father to see the Son when He looks at you. In doing that, He does not see your sin. As you are covered by Christ, you are moved to conclude your chant by declaring your joy. This you do in His house here as you stand at the threshold to eternity with the Lord. You are moved in the Psalm with that reality to declare of yourself, in the Faith, of your New Adam:

O YHWH Sabaoth, blessed (is the) man (who) trusts in You.¹⁴

¹¹ Psalm 84:8.

¹² Psalm 84:9.

¹³ Psalm 84:10.

¹⁴ Psalm 84:13.

You who are the blessed of the Lord in Christ, please stand again at this threshold of God's eternal House. This is a good day in the courts of the Lord's House. Hear, receive and believe God's blessing from His Word:

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

Transfiguration (*Lutheran Service Book* one-year series)

Psalm 84; Isaiah 55:10-13; II Corinthians 11:19-12:9; Luke 8:4-15

February 22, 2014

Pastor Michael A. Morehouse

Soli Deo Gloria

To (the) choirmaster, upon the lyre, for (the) sons of Korah, (a) Psalm.¹⁵

How beloved (are) Your dwelling places, O YHWH Sabaoth!¹⁶

Longs, and faints even, my soul for (the) courts of YHWH; and my heart and my flesh sing for joy to El, El (the) living One.¹⁷

Even (the) sparrow finds (a) house and (the) swallow (a) nest for her in which she may lay her young at Your altars, O YHWH my King and My Elohe.¹⁸

Blessed (are the) ones living (in) Your house forever singing Your praise. Selah.¹⁹

Blessed ones (is the) man strength to them in You from (the) high roads in their heart.²⁰

As they go in (the) Valley of Baca; (a) place of springs they make it; even blessings it caused to entwrap, (the) early rain.²¹

For they go in strength upon strength, will be seen El Elohim in Zion.²²

YHWH Elohim Sabaoth, hear my prayer, cause to give ear, OElohe of Jacob. Selah. ²³

Our shield see, O Elohim, and cause to look upon (the) Face of Your Messiah.²⁴

For good (is a) day in Your courts (than) from (a) thousand; I have chosen to stand at the threshold in (the) house of my Elohe, than (to) dwell in (the) tents of evil.²⁵

For (a) Sun and (a) Shield (is) YHWH Elohim; favor and glory He bestows, YHWH; not He withholds good for the ones walking in uprightness.²⁶

O YHWH Sabaoth, blessed (is the) man (who) trusts in You.²⁷

¹⁵ Psalm 84:1.

¹⁶ Psalm 84:2.

¹⁷ Psalm 84:3.

¹⁸ Psalm 84:4.

¹⁹ Psalm 84:5.

²⁰ Psalm 84:6.

²¹ Psalm 84:7.

²² Psalm 84:8.

²³ Psalm 84:9.

²⁴ Psalm 84:10.

²⁵ Psalm 84:11.

²⁶ Psalm 84:12.

²⁷ Psalm 84:13.