

THE CHRIST WHO COMES TO SAVE NOW!

Our sermon for this last Sunday in the Lenten season is taken from our inspired readings. Hear again the Word of the Lord:

*We beseech You, O YHWH,
cause to save us, we pray You;
we beseech You, O YHWH,
cause to give us success, we pray You.
Blessed (is) He entering in (the) Name of YHWH;
we bless You from (the) House of YHWH.¹*

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

According to a Lutheran theologian of the AD 1950's, the most ancient names given to this day of the Church Year were: "The Lord's Day of Palm Branches;" "Hosanna Sunday;" and "The Paschal Day of Flowers."² For congregations like this one, this is a day blooming with joy in the coming of Jesus as the Christ to "Save Now!" as we wave the palm fronds in remembrance of our triumphant King. We know from the great "Hosannas" which have rung out that there are no more Sundays in Lent for this year. This is a week of fulfillment, and a transition week in the Church.

Some of you may recall that the 118th Psalm which ends the Sundays of Lent will be used to begin the Easter season. As we have the Psalm in part today, so will we will soon receive it for the Easter Day service. Later, at the Easter evening service, we will have the whole Psalm to remember. As it set the theme for Lent, this Psalm sets the tone for the Easter weeks. That reality flows scripturally from the

¹ *Psalm* 118:25-26

² Lindemann, volume 2, p. 90.

Lenten reality proclaimed through the 118th Psalm: *God's mercy endures forever in the Christ Who comes to save now!* With that theme ringing in your ears, hear now the beginning words for this week's days of fulfillment:

*All of you open for Me the gates of righteousness,
that I may go in them to cause to give thanks to YH!³*

Today, you declared words which Jesus likely sang as He headed to the Mount of Olives. From there He would be taken back into the city to be the Perfect, Complete Sacrifice for sins. Today's call to open the gates of righteousness is given to be proclaimed by the One Who is fully right with God. Jesus completely, wholly, and sinlessly obeyed His heavenly Father. He alone could sing today's words in Truth.

Even so, He, and the disciples who had received His New Covenant meal for the first time, apparently sang them as The Eleven headed to the Mount of Olives. Weeks ago we deduced that from the history of the liturgical use of the 118th Psalm by pilgrims headed up to Jerusalem for the annual Passover Feasts. On the First Sunday of Lent we were able to connect today's Psalm and the Old Testament Feasts.

From that we have learned that the 118th Psalm has remained important for the Lord's New Testament Feasts. Today's Psalm may be called the Psalm of the Festival Half of the Church Year. It appears in whole or in part in the Sundays and Feast Days between the beginning of Advent and the beginning of Trinity. It only

³ Psalm 118:19.

shows up on one Sunday in the Non-Festival Half of the Year (that which we call the Trinity Season).⁴

The 118th Psalm appears on twelve days in the more historic One-year lectionary. That should not be a surprise as it is a very Christological text. Jesus is in it (through the words and phrases which are completely fulfilled only in Him). Jesus is under it (in inspiring its lines and uses). Jesus is above it (watching over it to ensure its faithful transmission without doctrinal error across tens of generations of the faithful).

The proclamation of Christ comes through this day's Festival Psalm! That is why, on this day of the Festival Service in this place, the Psalm stands where a hymn "normally" would be placed. That was done so that you would hear the Lenten season end with the conclusion to the words that we spoke responsively thirty-five days ago.

The 118th Psalm was also added back in to today's Service to set the tone for that which has been called the "Holy Week of Fulfillment" of Old Testament prophecy. Beginning today, perhaps for you more than at any other time of the year, the next week may allow you to hear more of Jesus' fulfilling the words of the Old Testament. Hear now as the Psalm declares how you may enter into the Presence of the Lord in His Holy City:

*This (is) the gate for YHWH,
righteous ones shall enter in it.*⁵

⁴ Feast of St. Stephen (all verses); Confession of St. Peter (all verses and v. 22 for Gradual); Circumcision of our Lord (vv.6-7 for Gradual); Lent I (vv. 1-13); Palmarum (vv.19-29); Easter Day (vv. 15-29); Easter Evening (all verses); Easter Monday (all verses); Easter 5 (v. 16 for Gradual); Pentecost Eve (v. 25 for Gradual); Pentecost Tuesday (v. 20 for Gradual); and the 14th Sunday after Trinity, (vv. :8-9 for Gradual).

⁵ *Psalm* 118:20.

The opening lines for today, as we have heard, declare that the One Who is right with God may enter into His City to give Him thanks. Now in the second verse of this part of the Psalm, we now hear that out of all the gates into the Holy City there is one gate by which one that is right with God may enter into His Presence. The text has moved from speaking of *the gates of righteousness*, to, *the gate for YHWH*.

There is a little letter (𐤑) that comes in the Hebrew before the Name of God in the second verse. It can be normally literally translated with the words, “to, for, or by.” English translations smooth the text by rendering *the gate for YHWH*, with “the gate of the Lord.” That is OK. All the gates of the Holy City are God’s gates.

Yet, our Psalm now speaks of one gate. This one may also be rendered “the Gate to YHWH.” No one enters into the Holy City except through His gates. Further, no one can enter into the Presence of God in His Holy City into His Temple except through One Gate, that of the Faith. That was true on earth when He dwelt in shining cloud in the Temple built of hand hewn stones. It is true on earth as He dwells in the Temple built of divinely hewn living stones.

The “gate of YHWH,” the “gate to YHWH,” is only One, and He is the Christ! In Him, the truly Righteous Man Who once entered into the Holy City of old meekly seated on the donkey’s colt, in Jesus, now are all those who are one with Him free to enter into the Holy City of the New Jerusalem. We do not enter in to make sacrifice as did the priests of old. Rather, here we partake of the benefits of the eternal

High Priest's sacrifice. Our Psalm sounds forth:

*I cause to thank You,
for You have answered me,
and have become to me for Salvation.⁶*

Those words are for you who recognize that you can only enter into the Holy City through the Gate to the Presence of the Lord if you are completely right with God. The Psalm reminds you that you have cause to give thanks for God's becoming your Salvation, your *Yeshua*, your Jesus. Remember, God heard your cries for His steadfast enduring mercy on Lent I. He is again declaring to you that He has answered your petitions of this past March. His Word declares that He has done so on account of His grace, not because of your fasting and other fine bodily and spiritual preparations. For that, today, you gave Him thanks by declaring Him blessed as He comes in His own Name! The Holy Week of Fulfillment Psalm continues:

*(The) Stone the builders rejected has become for (the) head of the corner.
From YHWH this has become;
it (is) marvelous in our eyes.⁷*

Those words declare what the readings for this week will proclaim. That is: Jesus is the Cornerstone of the Temple God is building from living stones through His Means of Grace. Jesus was the Stone rejected by the builders of the Old Temple, as they cast Him outside its walls to die. They had placed their desires in a worldly restoration of God's Presence in His Temple. (He had been declared to be absent by the

⁶ Psalm 118:21.

⁷ Psalm 118:22-23.

prophet centuries before Jesus entered it again from the Mount of Olives). When Jesus failed to save the chanting crowds that day long ago in the manner which they desired, they turned on Him. The Psalm sounds forth their cries on the Lord's Day of Palm Branches, as they thought Jesus would fulfill their dreams for the worldly honor:

*This (is) the Day YHWH has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it!*⁸

There is a little Christian children's ditty that takes those words and turns them into a round. Those words have also been turned into a so-called contemporary praise hymn. While those things might make such words fun to sing, and perhaps easy to remember, it divorces them from the context of this day's Psalm. If that has gored your favorite so-called Christian mantra, so be it! Scripture is to be taken in its context, even in Christian songs.

There is no Day that the Lord has made that is not connected to the Day in which our Lord died. The rejoicing and gladness of God's people in the revealed glory of God always has come from the declaration that the son of Eve would be struck in the heel as He crushed the head of the serpent. Easter always follows Good Friday, and the Hosanna Sunday always leads to the Cross, for Jesus, for you.

To hold to any other teaching or order of God's salvation work is to depart from the Scriptures. What the crowds of the Paschal Day of Flowers missed in their joy

⁸ Psalm 118:24.

was the reason for the praise line in the Psalm. That is, that God Himself was going to, in time, send His Son to die to fulfill the very next phrases of this Festival Psalm:

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Blessed (is) He entering in (the) Name of YHWH;
we bless You from (the) House of YHWH.⁹*

God heard the cries of the faithful of the Old Covenant. Even as their sacrifices were slaughtered, and the smoke of their burning arose before God, they needed to continue the sacrifices. They needed to give to understand that they could never offer enough to completely satisfy the wrath of God; to completely pay the price demanded for sin; to rescue them from eternal death; and to save them from the eternal flames of Hell. Even as the flames consumed their gifts, they kept on sinning and needing to sacrifice. So, they continued to cry out, "Save Now!"

God heard their cries, even as Jesus entered through the gates of the ancient earthly Holy City. He knew that He was fulfilling those words even for the crowds who would so soon turn on Him. Jesus knew, as He now knows, that the words, of "Hosanna!" are yours too. That is why He enlightens your understanding of the import of the Lord's Day of Palm Branches, as we declared:

*El, YHWH causes to give light to us;
all of you bind the festal procession;*

⁹ Psalm 118:25-26

*with branches come unto the horns of the Altar.*¹⁰

Without God's answering those cries for light, you could not behold Jesus as the Christ. You know that He is the Light of the world. Apart from God's Word fulfilled in Jesus after that first Hosanna Sunday, you would have to do as the ancient faithful did. Your sacrifices for sin would be drawn in such numbers that they would crowd up to the very corners of the Altar. Instead of coming to receive God's gifts from a Table which recalls His Last and Final sacrifice for your sins, you men would have to travel to Jerusalem each year with the required animals, to have them slaughtered. You would need to wear your sacrifice blood-stained clothes each day as a reminder of what true salvation from sin and all its consequences means.

Yet, you know that the 118th Psalm has been fulfilled in Christ Jesus. You believe that you spiritually wear the garments that present you as pure and undefiled before God. You know that you have been liturgically washed in the blood of Jesus. In Christ, your sins are taken away. You, unlike the crowds on the first Paschal Day of Flowers, can say, sing, or chant these words as fulfilled for you:

*My El You are,
and I will cause to give thanks to You,
my Elhoe, I will extol You.*¹¹

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

Lent VI, Palmarum (LSB One-Year Series)

¹⁰ *Psalm 118:27.*

¹¹ *Psalm 118:28*

John 12:1-12; Psalm 118:19-29; Zechariah 9:9-12; Philippians 2:5-11; Matthew 21:1-9

April 13, 2014

Paster Michael A. Morehouse

Soli deo Gloria

TRANSLATION, THIRD DRAFT:

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From YHWH this has become;
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*This (is) the Day YHWH has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it!*

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cause to save us, we pray You;
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*Blessed (is) He entering in (the) Name of YHWH;
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El, YHWH causes to give light to us;
all of you bind the festal procession;
with branches come unto the horns of the Altar.*

*My El You are,
and I will cause to give thanks to You,
my Elhoe,
I will extol You.*

*All of you cause to give thanks to YHWH;
for good into eternity (is) His steadfast love!*