

GOD'S GOOD SPIRIT LEADS TO CHRIST

Hear again the Word of God for the Feast of Pentecost:

*Teach me to do Your will,
for You are my Elohe;
Let Your good Spirit cause to lead me on level ground.¹*

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

Today, we shall learn through the proclamation of first half of Psalm 143 that the Word is God's way on earth to grant you the Holy Spirit; the Spirit leads you to Jesus; and Jesus is the Way to the Father. That Psalm is counted as the last of the seven penitential Psalms. It is the song of the Church which calls upon God for forgiveness. Its position as the Verse in the Propers of the Day (the weekly changeable readings in the Lord's Services) serves to help us behold this Feast Day as one of repentant joy for that which God is doing in building His Church on earth. The Psalm as Verse was spoken from the sacrificial position. This means that you, dear ones who have been bought by the blood of Jesus, fulfilled your roles as God's holy priests in offering the sacrifices of prayer and thanksgiving. The Word of God in the Psalm served to bridge the sacramental proclamations of the Word of God in the *Acts of the Apostles* and the *Gospel of St. John*.

Our words this morning, spoken in unison from the Psalm of the Day, declare that the work of saving us from everything and anything that would separate us from the holy and living God, that work is all God's. You were to hear in the Psalm how the Lord has chosen to work in these last days as His Word came out of your mouths. Our words, spoken directly from a faithful translation of God's Word, declare the Faith which trusts in God's grace and forgiveness. They prepared us each and all to hear of Jesus' declaration that He would send the Holy Spirit. His was the coming for which the Church had waited for millennia. That confession of the Faith of the ages was offered back to God today when you spoke words like these:

¹ *Psalm 143:10.*

*Teach me to do Your will,
for You are my Elohe;
Let Your good Spirit cause to lead me on level ground.²*

If you meditated a bit on the words you spoke this morning, you likely have arrived at the understanding that the Church's Psalm for the day declares the nature of God, and the nature of man. It also proclaims to you that the Christian life is more composed of receiving from God than giving to Him. It is a life that is to be filled with the desire to receive more good gifts from God, rather than just having His gifts. It is a being that is concerned with becoming more devout than being religious. All of that began with the Psalm for the High Feast of 50 Days, called, *A Psalm of David*:

*O YHWH, hear my prayer,
cause to give ear to my supplications;
in Your faithfulness answer me, in Your righteousness.³*

After you had heard quite a bit of the Word of God this morning, you spoke those words to petition God to hear your prayer and supplications. You said you wanted Him to answer you from His faithfulness and righteousness. So, yes, they are a plea from anyone who is of the Faith. (King David is claimed to be their author, and we have ample biblical evidence that he believed that God is faithful and righteous). In addition, they most certainly comprise the words the perfect Man, Jesus, God-in-our-flesh spoke to the Father. They are a reminder to the faithful who prays them in the Spirit, through Christ, to the Father, that the person of the Faith can trust God to hear your words. Back to the text, as David, Jesus, and you say:

*O YHWH, hear my prayer,
cause to give ear to my supplications;
in Your faithfulness answer me, in Your righteousness.⁴*

We who pray this Psalm begin with calling upon God by the Name with which He has revealed Himself. In doing so, we are led to recognize that He is the

² *Psalm 143:10.*

³ *Psalm 143:1.*

⁴ *Psalm 143:1.*

Creator God, by and through Whom all good things came into being and are sustained. With the ancient Old Testament Church, with Jesus, and with all who pray this day's Psalm in the Faith, we ask the Great I Am to incline his "ear" to our supplication for His favor. The ancient Greek faithful translated the Hebrew we render "supplication" to mean specific entreaties to the One Who alone has power to grant our requests.

You may have noted that our supplications are offered with trust in God's faithfulness. They count on His righteousness. That means, in praying the Psalm in the Faith, with King David, Jesus, and all the holy ones drawn out by God from all generations of humans since these words were first given, we depend upon God to act according to His good and gracious nature. We are about to go deep into the mysteries of the Faith for a moment. Hang on, we will come up for air in a bit: this is worth learning and taking to heart.

God's good and gracious Nature is shown most clearly in the reality that Jesus – Who as the Second Person of the Holy Trinity was right with God the Father from eternity – imputes His righteousness to us. That word, "imputed," means that you who remain in His Faith are covered in Jesus. So, when the Father turns to hear your prayers, because you are clothed in Jesus, He hears Jesus.

The One True God is perfectly pure. He is a cleansing fire. He shines more brilliantly than the sun. Those words describe His holiness. And, it is a revealed reality that nothing unholy can remain for an instant in the Presence of the Holy.

That is why the imputation to you of Jesus' rightness with the Holy Father is so important. Without being clothed in Jesus, your prayers will not be heard – that is to say, answered according to God's good and gracious will. Wrapped in Jesus, you know that the Father hears your specific requests asked according to His will. (Up for air)! Turn back to the Psalm for the day as you declare:

*And do not enter into judgment with Your servant,
for before Your Face all (the) living are not righteous.⁵*

⁵ Psalm 143:2.

That is the first specific request that you asked for after having declared your faith in God's faithfulness, rightness and justness (Yep – real words). In Christ Jesus, with King David who had faith in Him (remember, you recently heard him say, "The Lord said to my Lord"), your first specific request is that God not enter into His work of judgment against you.

That is why it is eternally important to be "clothed in Christ." God has already rendered judgment on Him, as He bore your sins on the Cross. He who had no sin, became sin for you. He was clothed in your sins, they were imputed to Jesus. He bore those sins into death. In His death He freed you from your sins. (Not: He freed you to sin! "Let it not be!" as the Apostle so often declares). Sin is that which covered you in your conception. Sin is anything you think, say, or do that is against God's Holy Word. (That is what you were publicly declaring as God began His Service to you in the Preparation of today's Order of Service). Our Psalm continues:

*For has pursued, (the) enemy my soul,
he has crushed to earth my life,
he has caused me to sit in darkness as (the) dead eternal.⁶*

Those words end what may be considered the first of four divisions of the Psalm. We will likely not treat all the divisions today. In part, that is because confessional Christians in our age are accustomed to a 20- or so minute sermons. It is also in part because today, we are going to hear more people join this confession of the Faith, as they *renounce the devil and all his works and all his ways.*

The ultimate enemy, as he is declared by today's Psalm, is the devil. He is the enemy of the believer's soul. He works against the faithful day and night, through his minions the fallen angels – demons – along with the lusts of this fallen world and the desires of the sinful flesh which still clings to you.

⁶ Psalm 143:3.

When you confess your sinful state, and the temptations of the world to which you have fallen prey and the deceptions of the devil, God the Holy Spirit, through the Word, shows you your state. You confessed about your enemy, the Satan, that he has ground your life into the dust of the earth (from whence you have come to whence you shall return). You declared that, this past week, the deceiver has drawn you from the pure Light of God's holiness into the darkness of death.

Yet, despite all that, you cling to the promises you have already declared when you said: *in Your faithfulness answer me, in Your righteousness*. In the strength of that prayer, in the Word of God, the Holy Spirit moves you to confess your trials, temptations and sins. He also gives you the Power of God to answer this question as will several more new confessors of the Faith (new members of CLC) will do today:

*Do you intend to continue steadfast in this confession and Church and to suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from it?*⁷

It is a source of consternation when a person or two per year falls away from this confession and Church after they have declared their assent, by the grace of God, to that question. If you are tempted to be one of those few, ask us again what we believe, teach, and confess before you head off into some other-than-right-teaching Church body. If you think that you are free to leave to another confession of faith having given your agreement with God's Word as you joined this or a sister congregation in the Faith of Jesus, check your understanding. There is nothing in Holy Scripture that teaches that the visible Church on earth is a free association of like-minded people. That last is how the world, particularly the American spirit thinks.

God's Word tells you what He thinks about your state apart from Him, in His Body, in a rightly confession congregation. That is why the true believer prays for God to deliver us from the things, the beings, the people and the confessions of faith (including sectarian and apostate (fallen away) churches that bear the name "Lutheran"). God

⁷ The Commission on Worship of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. *Lutheran Service Book Agenda*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006, 33.

understands your frustrations with the temptations of this life. Jesus carried all of them onto the cross and into death. That is why these words are His as much as yours when you are faced with the taunts, threats and tests of the enemy:

*And therefore my spirit faints upon me,
my heart within me (is) appalled.
I remember (the) days of old;
I meditate in all (that) You have done;
in the work of Your Hands I ponder.
I stretch out my hands to You,
my soul (thirsts) as (a) parched land for You. Selah.⁸*

That last word seems to indicate a plucking of strings. It marks the end of the first half of the Pentecost Psalm. (We will not get through the whole Psalm this year as we did in 2010. Perhaps in 2018 we shall....) Yet, what you have again heard, that which you declared several minutes ago, is summed up in those petitions to God. As you asked them in the Holy Spirit, you declared what sin, all sin, including your sin, has moved you to behold. That is, that you look to God in Christ Jesus to continue to take all your deserved punishment for breaking of God's Word away from you. You trust in Him as you open empty hands in prayer – showing you have nothing to offer to God and only every good thing from Him to receive. You declare that it is the Word of God which declares His wonders worked for the faithful of old that you trust. You understand that the Holy Spirit moves you to continue to believe. In the revealed mysteries of God which you know from His Word (and if you have trouble remembering, you are free to spend more time in it each day and at four services and three or more Bible studies a week here). From that Word, you were moved to declare, even as we implored God from souls thirsting for Him:

*Teach me to do Your will,
for You are my Elohe;
Let Your good Spirit cause to lead me on level ground.⁹*

⁸ Psalm 143:4-6.

⁹ Psalm 143:10.

Most Wednesday evenings for more than two years now, members of this congregation have, through the chant of the one at the Lord's Table, asked God to teach us His will. Then we chant: *Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in Your Truth.*¹⁰ Today we have proclaimed what God's truth is, as we each declared: He is my God. We proclaimed, as a right sacrifice to God, that God teaches His will through His good Spirit. That Spirit, working through the Word of God, is the One Who leads you on the right path. That is the ground leveled of sins' highs and lows, evened out in the death of Jesus. Jesus is the Path to the Father; the Spirit is the Path to Jesus; and the Word is God's way on earth to grant you the Holy Spirit.

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

Feast of Pentecost (*LSB* One-year series)

Psalm 143; Genesis 11:1-9; Acts 2:1-11; John 14:23-31

June 8, 2014

Paster Michael A. Morehouse

Soli Deo Gloria

¹⁰ *LSB* Vespers.

Psalm for David:

O YHWH, hear my prayer,

cause to give ear to my supplications;

in Your faithfulness answer me, in Your righteousness.¹¹

And do not enter into judgment with Your servant,

for before Your Face all (the) living are not righteous.¹²

For has pursued, (the) enemy my soul,

he has crushed to earth my life,

he has caused me to sit in darkness as (the) dead eternal.¹³

And therefore faints upon me my spirit,

within me (is) appalled my heart.¹⁴

I remember days of old,

I meditate in all (that) You have done,

in the work of Your Hands I ponder.¹⁵

I stretch out my hands to You,

my soul is as (a) parched land for You. Selah.¹⁶

Make haste to answer me, O YHWH, fails my spirit;

do not hide Your Face from me,

lest I be as one going down to the Pit.¹⁷

Cause me to hear in (the) morning of Your steadfast love;

for, in You I put my trust;

cause to teach me which way I should go,

for to You I lift up my soul.¹⁸

Cause to deliver me from my enemies, O YHWH;

to You I have fled.¹⁹

Teach me to do Your will;

for You are my Elohe;

Your good Spirit cause to lead me in level earth.²⁰

For (the) sake of Your Name, preserve me;

in Your righteousness cause to bring out from trouble my soul.²¹

And in Your steadfast love, cause to cut off my enemies;

and cause to destroy all adversaries of my soul;

for I am Your servant.²²

¹¹ Psalm 143:1.

¹² Psalm 143:2.

¹³ Psalm 143:3.

¹⁴ Psalm 143:4.

¹⁵ Psalm 143:5.

¹⁶ Psalm 143:6.

¹⁷ Psalm 143:7.

¹⁸ Psalm 143:8.

¹⁹ Psalm 143:9.

²⁰ Psalm 143:10.

²¹ Psalm 143:11.

²² Psalm 143:12.