

GOD'S PUBLIC SERVICE CONTINUES IN EACH NEW YEAR

Hear again the Word of the Lord to His Church, that which was given long ago for public proclamation on the first day of each New Church Year:

Who shall ascend the Mount of YHWH, and who shall stand in His Holy place?¹

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

God, in His grace, has once again allowed His Church to enter into a New Church Year. Today's declared Word initiates in our ears emphasis in the Church. This is the half of the year in which we celebrate the Body of Christ Present in Jesus of Nazareth.

To that end, for centuries, God's public services for His people have begun each year with proclamations of Christ's advents. Through those, we recall that He continues to reveal His mercy afresh. This He does as Advent weekly texts declare the Christ of Scripture who became one with us, in our flesh. We are reminded that He is the One who still comes to save now!

In God's services during the next four Sundays, the Hope, Peace, Joy and Love of the Lord will be read into your ears. His Word on Wednesdays will fit into the overarching Advent weekly themes that are reflected in the colored candles' light. The Word will guide us to learn anew to prayerfully read, inwardly reflect, and wrestle with the temptations that come to God's people as we remain in His Word. In ways yet to be recorded and proclaimed, all of that will help us to answer this age-old question:

Who shall ascend the Mount of YHWH, and who shall stand in His Holy place?²

As we prayerfully walk through Advent, our Altar Guild will change the colors in the Chancel from bluish purple (used to remind us of the repentant nature of those who continue to find hope and peace in Christ's comings for His people), to rose (as we remember the Joy we have in being part of the Rose of Sharon), back to blue (for a morning in which we will hear of God's Love in preparing the way for Christ, Whose birth will be heralded that very evening)!

¹ Psalm 24:3.

² Psalm 24:3.

God has brought us again to the time of lights, colors and sounds that began around 1,500 years ago. It is a season given and preserved in order to remind us of the reasons for Christ's coming into this fallen creation. It is truly a treasure for us that God's public service has continued in like fashion each new year. It truly helps to declare the comings of Christ to His people through proclamation, sights and music. You are free to hear and know that all of this is done for you. That is because you are among those who can rightly answer that you are declared fit by God, as you remain attached to Christ, to be living answers to this question:

*Who shall ascend the Mount of YHWH, and who shall stand in His Holy place?*³

When that two-part question was first posed to the people of God, He had united them under one king in the land God promised to them. That verse is part of a Psalm that the Greek-speaking Jews long ago ascribed to King David. Even if it were not composed by him, since it bears witness to the True Christ of God, we confess that the words of this day's Psalm were first recorded, then guided and preserved by the Holy Spirit.

That same Living God still speaks through the ancient Word today to declare to us our sin, and our Savior. This new year, you have surely noted, God has guided us to return to speaking and hearing the longer Sunday Psalm selections instead of the short Introit verses. We might say, in this place, that this is the year of the Psalm. On account of that, it is fitting today that the weekly Psalm readings begin with the 24th one.

That can be stated because it appears, and many have commented over the centuries, that today's Psalm is one composed for use in God's public services, beginning with those in the Tabernacle. Then it seems to have been chanted in Solomon's Temple worship orders. It appears to have been used in the Temple rebuilt during the time of Ezra-Nehemiah. Then, it was heard in the Temple totally reconstructed under Herod the Great's behest and direction. From there it has been chanted, sung and spoken by the faithful in synagogues and churches down to the present day. You might have heard, in

³ Psalm 24:3.

our responsive chanting of the Psalm today, how it aptly fits as a teaching and worship preparation Psalm for settling us hearers into the Word of God.

For many centuries, today's Psalm has been heard as one of the prophecies of the coming world kingdom of Christ.⁴ Yes, it is true, that we have continued to learn that the Psalms speak of Christ, for He Himself testifies of that truth.⁵ Even so, He is more difficult for you theologians to find in some Psalms than in this one. That is because this one declares the Christ throughout.

To make it easier for us to hear of Him in this Psalm, we may follow a helpful tradition that divides the Psalm into three parts.⁶ The first part appears to be hymnic in form, and consists of the first two verses. The second part follows a question and answer format, and consists of verses three through six. The third part also is formed by questions and answers, in a liturgical or public worship form, and consists of the last four verses. Hear again the first part of the Psalm of the day:

To YHWH (is) the Earth and all its fullness, (the) world and all the ones dwelling there; for He upon (the) waters has founded it, and upon all rivers made it firm.⁷

If you have been attentive to those words as they have been chanted, and now spoken into your ears, you hear the Name of the Lord. You heard about His work of sustaining and upholding His creation. If you were not so attentive to the Word, repent, and believe it is here to declare to you your Savior! Now that you are all a bit more in tune to the Psalm, hear its hymnic opening again:

To YHWH (is) the Earth and all its fullness, (the) world and all the ones dwelling there; for He upon (the) waters has founded it, and upon all rivers made it firm.⁸

Not too long ago, and every once in a while, this congregation sings words drawn from those verses as part of the Lord's Divine Service to us. Because of our

⁴ Cameron, Bruce A.tr. *Reading the Psalm with Luther*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, (1993) 2007, 61.

⁵ Cf. *Luke 24:44*.

⁶ Gunkel, Hermann. *Ausgewahlte Psalmen*. Goettingen: Dandenhoed und Ruprecht, 1917, 45ff.

⁷ *Psalm 24:1-2*.

⁸ *Psalm 24:1-2*.

congregation's history with the order of Matins, and our flexibility in creed use for the Festival Service, words formed from the opening of the Psalm are declared among us several times each year.

Of course, I am referring to the *Te Deum*! It seems the composer(s) of that great sung creed, whose persons are veiled in the mists of history, had this Psalm of worship in mind. Can you hear it echoed in this phrase:

We praise You, O God; we acknowledge You to be the Lord. All the earth now worships You, the Father everlasting.... (LSB 223).

So were formed the words that have been imprinted in generations of the faithful in the singing Church. The Psalm opens, as does the *Te Deum* composed centuries later, with a hymn of praise to God the Creator. It reminds worshippers of the Father who created through the Word as the Spirit hovered over the waters. The Psalm then moves to its second division:

Who shall ascend the Mount of YHWH, and who shall stand in His Holy place?⁹

Clean hands and pure heart, who does not lift up to what is false, my soul, and swears not deceitfully, will receive blessing from YHWH and justice from (the) Elohe of his salvation. This is (the) generation of those seeking Him, who are seeking your face, O Jacob. Selah.¹⁰

That begins with the question we have for today's theme text. It names the Lord by His proper name again. It follows an almost catechetical form. That is to say that the question is answered with that which makes it clear that only the ritually clean and morally pure Man may approach the Presence of the Lord. We learn from the answer that that Man must be in the priestly office, for only the priests of YHWH could enter into the Holy Place in the Tabernacle and Temple. There is only One who could truly ascend the Mountain of the Lord and stand without perishing in His Holy Place while remaining perfectly pure. That Man was foreshadowed by the Israelite Levitical priesthood.

⁹ Psalm 24:3.

¹⁰ Psalm 24:4-6.

Yet they, like the members of the New Covenant priesthood, were still sinners, even when they had been declared clean. There was One Man who never lifted up His soul to anything that is false, who never swore deceitfully. That One is the Christ, Jesus of Nazareth.

When He took upon Himself to deliver man (can you hear the *Te Deum?*), He then overcame death's dread sting. Then He received blessing from God the Father. He rose from the dead and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

That is why we may declare that, as you remain in Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of God, you too may ascend the Mount of YHWH and stand in His Holy Place. In Christ, you are free to approach God in the Word, to receive His Holy Food from His Table. The Psalm of Christ, declares of you who are His Church in this generation:

this is (the) generation of those seeking Him, who are seeking your face, O Jacob.
Selah.¹¹

In the Old Covenant era, the name Jacob stood for the nation of Israel. They were to be the ones who remained faithful to God's Word of Promise. God called them to remain the generation of those who continued to seek Him where He could have been found — His Word and His sacrifices. Those who held to God's promises were tied to the Christ Who was then to come.

In this New Covenant era, the name Jacob stands for those who remain faithful to Christ in the Church. They are you who are called to remain the generation of those who continue to seek Him where He promises to be found — in Word and Sacraments. God holds you fast to Himself because He has tied you to the Christ Who has come, and Who will come again. To you, the third section of the Psalm calls out,

*Lift up, O gates, your heads, and all of you be lifted up, O doors of eternity,
and will come in King of the glory.¹²*

Who (is) this King of the glory?

YHWH, strong and mighty, YHWH mighty in battle.¹³

¹¹ Psalm 24:6.

¹² Psalm 24:7.

¹³ Psalm 24:8.

All of you lift up, O gates, your heads, and lift up, O doors of eternity, and will come in King of the glory.¹⁴

Who is this King of the glory?

YHWH Sabaoth (is) the King of the glory. Selah.¹⁵

This section alone declares the Name of YHWH three times, once for each Person of the Holy Trinity. This third section of the Psalm sings of the triumphal entrance of the Lord's Messiah. It even proclaims His Name and title. His Name is heard in the answers to the Old Covenant catechism questions that ring out from the Psalm.

We can perhaps envision worshippers, those who had become ceremonially clean, coming to bring their offerings and sacrifices that they might be declared pure before the Lord. We can almost hear them calling out to one another. Think of how we chanted the Psalm this day with alternating questions and answers. Of Whom did you think we were singing?

For centuries into millennia, worshippers call out that the gates and doors of the Temple precincts be opened for their coming clean and pure King. Turn your mind to that that which the crowds called out as Jesus approached the Temple Mount from the Mount of Olives. As we have heard, in time, for all time, they were calling out that King Jesus, the King of Glory might ascend God's Mountain, and enter into the Temple of the Lord! They wanted Him to Hosanna, to Save Now! Our Psalm cry goes forth:

Who is this King of glory?

This first time the question is answered, the King is twice called by God's proper Name. That means that the strong and mighty, mighty in battle, King Who ascends the Mountain of the Lord is God Himself. As that is declared, even as it was today tied to King Jesus, the people call to allow the Advent of our King into the place where God's mercy is delivered. Again the question rings out:

Who is this King of glory?

¹⁴ Psalm 24:9.

¹⁵ Psalm 24:10.

The Psalm answers by declaring His proper Name, in the Hebrew, attached to His title, as it proclaims:

YHWH Sabaoth (He is) the King of the glory.

The Psalm literally may be translated to read this answer to the Name and title of Him Whose Advent is heralded: “I AM Who causes to be, leader of the angelic and celestial armies, the King of all that is set apart.” That describes only One King in all of eternity. That One is none other than Jesus, our eternal King.

In this year of the Psalms, we celebrated the Advent of King Jesus. We herald Him Who came to Save Now by taking our sins onto Himself without having sin in Himself. We call out to Him Who bore our sins into death and the grave to free us from them. This year, we have chanted the Psalm to declare to us first, and to all who will hear, that the King of Glory is here. We continue to proclaim that He continues to come to open the gates of the eternal Kingdom for all believers.

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

Advent I (Lutheran Service Book one-year series)

Psalm 24; Jeremiah 23:5-8; Romans 13:11-14; Matthew 21:1-9

December 3, 2017

Pastor Michael A. Merhouse

Soli Deo Gloria

TRANSLATION, SECOND DRAFT:

To David, Psalm:

To YHWH (is) the Earth and all its fullness, (the) world and all the ones dwelling there; for He upon (the) waters has founded it, and upon all rivers made it firm.¹⁶

*Who shall ascend the Mount of YHWH, and who shall stand in His Holy place?¹⁷
Clean hands and pure heart, who does not lift up to what is false, my soul, and swears not deceitfully, will receive blessing from YHWH and justice from (the) Elohe of his salvation.¹⁸ This is (the) generation of those seeking Him, who are seeking your face, O Jacob. Selah.¹⁹*

*Lift up, O gates, your heads, and all of you be lifted up, O doors of eternity, and will come in King of the glory.²⁰
Who (is) this King of the glory?
YHWH, strong and mighty, YHWH mighty in battle.²¹
All of you lift up, O gates, your heads, and lift up, O doors of eternity, and will come in King of the glory.²²
Who is this King of the glory?
YHWH Sabaoth (is) the King of the glory. Selah.²³*

¹⁶ Psalm 24:1-2.

¹⁷ Psalm 24:3.

¹⁸ Psalm 4:4-5.

¹⁹ Psalm 24:6.

²⁰ Psalm 24:7.

²¹ Psalm 24:8.

²² Psalm 24:9.

²³ Psalm 24:10.

[I] THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

*IN THE PLAIN FORM IN WHICH THE HEAD OF THE FAMILY
SHALL TEACH THEM TO HIS HOUSEHOLD*

THE FIRST

“You shall have no other gods.”

What does this mean?

Answer: We should fear, love and trust in God above all things.^[1]

^[1] Tappert, T. G. 2000, c1959. *The Book of Concord : The confessions of the evangelical Lutheran church*. Fortress Press: Philadelphia