

## *In Nomine Jesu*

### **God's steadfast love continues**

Hear again the Word of the Lord to His church:

*Your righteousness (is) like the mountains of El (God); Your verdicts (are like) the great deep; man and beast You continually cause to save, O YHWH (Lord).<sup>1</sup>*

Thus far our text.

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

Yesterday we celebrated the Triumphal Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. That we just heard recapitulated in the reading from St. John's Gospel. From that, our attention turns today and the next two days to deep reflection on His holy Passion, as we prepare once again to journey with Him to Calvary. To that end, this day, we began our meditation with a reading from the 36<sup>th</sup> Psalm.

It is a Psalm that may come into our ears each year. When the Psalms were added to the Historic Lectionary, six verses from Psalm 36 were assigned for today. This Psalm in its entirety is also appointed for the morning on the second Thursday of the month. Otherwise it does not appear in the Lectionary.

For millennia, the Church has held that the verses of the Psalm chosen for today were written 3,000 years ago by King David under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. They speak beautifully of Christ's "boundless love that He showed us when He saved us from the wrath of God, sin, death and hell by His blood."<sup>2</sup> As such, they provide a worthy focal point for today's meditation.

As we prepare to enter our day's Psalm, it is helpful to note that the superscription to Psalm 36 reads, "To the choirmaster. Of David, the servant of the Lord." The single Hebrew word that is translated in the ESV, "to the choirmaster," is translated in the Septuagint (the Greek Translation of the Old Testament) to read, "unto the *telos*." That means, unto the end or purpose.

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 36:6.

<sup>2</sup> Excerpt from Luther's Exhortation to Christians in preparing to receive the Lord's Supper.

On this Monday of Holy Week, you are free to be thankful to God for inspiring these words for they, so beautifully and poignantly draw you back to that moment on Good Friday, AD33, when Jesus said from the Cross, “*Tetelestai*,” It is finished! God’s purpose was accomplished! His *chessed* (*loving-kindness*) and steadfast faithfulness reached their culmination, as His *telos*, His end. That is for us to understand that His work of atonement, was completed. So, we may say tonight, that this Psalm is about God’s ends, which are to deliver His mercy and faithfulness for you in Christ Jesus.

Now to our text:

*O YHWH, unto the heavens (is) Your Chessed (lovingkindness), Your steadfast faithfulness (reaches) as far as the clouds.*<sup>3</sup>

This verse beautifully sets the theme for this pericope, or cutting from Scripture, and for Holy Week itself. In the original text, the words “your *chessed*” and “your steadfast faithfulness” appear together in the *very middle* of the first of these verses. As you sang in the *Great Hallel* (Psalms 113-118) several weeks ago, these words speak to God’s profound redemptive love for you. That is brought to its fullness during Holy Week.

Consider how God’s love and faithfulness in the Psalm is tied to today’s Old Testament reading from Isaiah. There, it describes Jesus willingly giving His back to those who cause to strike and His cheeks to those plucking out the hair. It records that He did not cause to hide His face from disgrace and spitting. That means that, in the face of severe persecution, Jesus loved you deeply and remained steadfastly faithful to you by bearing your sin to the Cross. That is a divine mercy way beyond earthly understanding.

When push comes to shove, are you steadfastly faithful to Him? Do you continue to confess Christ-crucified when you are faced with persecution in a world that reviles and rejects Him?

If you did not answer those questions with, “Yes,” take heart. Jesus knew you would have times when you would not remain faithful to Him and the good confession of the Faith. Jesus raised you in your Baptism from suffering for those moments under death’s eternal sting.

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<sup>3</sup> *Psalm 36:5.*

When the enemy may come to kill you, as today's Gospel text recounts the chief priests plotted to do to Lazarus, are you prepared to remain a servant of Jesus, following Him and dying for His sake in the same manner that He was prepared to die for you? Are you prepared, like Jesus and for His sake, to be a grain of wheat that falls into the earth and dies? If the answer is no, then repent, being assured that our Lord died for this sin, too!

Back to our text:

*Your righteousness (is) like the mountains of El (God); Your verdicts (are like) the great deep; man and beast You continually cause to save, O YHWH (Lord).*<sup>4</sup>

God is perfectly righteous and His verdicts are perfectly just. Thus He demands perfection. From the time of every human's conception, he or she has failed and continues to fail.<sup>5</sup> That you confess, when you say that, you "have sinned in thought, word and deed, and ... (you) cannot free (yourself) from (your) sinful condition."<sup>6</sup> Since God is a God of justice, the price of your sin is your death, this is a price that had to be paid. Nothing less. Faced with death, you, and all humans, need rescuing.

The solution to your predicament is right here in the text: "*man and beast You continually cause to save, O YHWH.*"<sup>7</sup> The very name of Jesus is imbedded in the words we translate, "You continually cause to save!" The saving One is Jesus.

Jesus came down from heaven and took on human flesh for you. He kept the Law perfectly on your behalf. He took on your death penalty, bearing your sin to the Cross. There His flesh was cut and His blood spilled for you.<sup>8</sup>

Without Christ and Him-crucified, you could not have been redeemed and would have been destined to spend eternity separated from the love of God. It is only through His Passion and intercession that you are restored. For a perfectly just verdict cannot be altered. Remember that St. Peter reminds us in today's Epistle that Jesus did not retaliate for the reviling and suffering that He sustained, but kept His focus and trust on the Father's perfect justice and paid the price for your sin! By His wounds that trickled with His blood, you have been healed!

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<sup>4</sup> Psalm 36:6.

<sup>5</sup> Psalm 51:5.

<sup>6</sup> "Confession," Divine Service 4, Lutheran Service Book, page 203.

<sup>7</sup> Psalm 36:6b.

<sup>8</sup> Reflected in Hebrews 9:12b and 15a, which is the Gradual text assigned for Monday of Holy Week.

We now return to our text:

*How precious Your chessed (loving-kindness), O God,<sup>9</sup>*

How precious indeed!!! Today's Gospel text recounts the anointing of Jesus' feet by a woman named Mary. She was sister to Lazarus and Martha, a different Mary than the one called, Magdalen. (You will remember that the feet that Mary anointed were the feet that would soon be bruised by the serpent on the path to your salvation)!<sup>10</sup> Mary used a pound of ointment that was made from a plant indigenous to India and was worth about 300 denarii, or 300 days' wages for a common laborer of the time. Three hundred days' wages amounted to about one year's pay. That is a lot of money! How did Jesus' disciples gathered with Him at the time of the anointing deal with those realities?

Even though Judas was what we would call a kleptomaniac or a thief, and his motivation was not at all pure of heart, he still made a point that on the surface we would all consider to be a good one. A year's pay can indeed help many people who are poor! Even so, this oil was needed to prepare Jesus for burial. What was at stake here was the atonement for the sins of the world, with an impact to last to eternity!

Is this not ultimately what the poor really needed?! Is this not ultimately what you really need?!

In the big scheme of things, the value of even a year's wages was nothing compared to the inestimable value of our Lord giving Himself up for Mary, and for you!!! How precious is God's *chessed*, namely Christ and Him-crucified, to you? If the answer is not that salvation in Christ is the most precious gift you have ever been given and possessed, then repent! Be assured that our Lord died for this sin too!

Our text continues:

*Therefore the sons of man in the shade of Your wings continually take  
refuge.  
They will continually be abundantly satisfied out of the fullness of Your  
house,  
and (from )the stream of Your pleasures You will continually cause  
them to drink.<sup>11</sup>*

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<sup>9</sup> Psalm 36:7a.

<sup>10</sup> Genesis 3:15.

<sup>11</sup> Psalm 36:7b-8.

One of the great “*chessed*phanies” (meaning appearances or manifestations of God’s *chessed*; I made up a word here) of Holy Week was our Lord’s institution of His Supper. In this place, His house, He regularly gathers you, His Royal Priesthood, into the refuge in the shade of His High Priestly raiment,<sup>12</sup> giving you His Very Body and His Very Blood for the forgiveness of your sins. He satisfies your souls on His fullness, or abundance!<sup>13</sup>

The word translated here as the “stream,” or “river” from which you drink, has echoes of “inheritance.”<sup>14</sup> Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, King David was anticipating Christ’s very Words of Institution, “This cup is the new testament in My blood...!”<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the word translated here as “pleasures,” or “delights,” is quite literally “Eden!”<sup>16</sup>

In His Divine Service, you experience Heaven on Earth, as you begin to enjoy the eternal inheritance of God’s mercy and grace that you will experience in full in the New Jerusalem, ever mindful that you are there only because you have been given access to this Most Holy Place through His blood.<sup>17</sup>

As our text continues:

*For with You (is) the fountain (or source) of life,<sup>18</sup>*

You know that means in the waters of baptism you received the benefits of Christ’s Passion and Resurrection! As St. Peter reminds us in the Epistle reading, you quite literally died to sin and live now to righteousness. We would say this you receive through Holy Baptism. You were buried with Christ into His death. Your sins were forgiven and you were declared right with the Father. You were “clothed with the robe of Christ’s righteousness that covers all your sin,” and raised with Him through faith to new life in the “Holy Ark” of His church!<sup>19</sup> With God is the fountain of life: from Cross to Font!

Continuing in our text:

*in Your light we continually see light.<sup>20</sup>*

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<sup>12</sup> “shool” H7757; Isaiah 6:1.

<sup>13</sup> “deshen” H1880; parallel in Jeremiah 31:14, “I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness...” (NASB).

<sup>14</sup> “nachal” H5158 from H5157.

<sup>15</sup> “diatheke” G1242; can also mean “covenant” but Hebrews 9:15 supports the use of “testament” here.

<sup>16</sup> H5730 and H5731.

<sup>17</sup> John W. Kleinig, *Concordia Commentary: Hebrews* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017) p.454-5.

<sup>18</sup> Psalm 36:9a.

<sup>19</sup> Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Service of Holy Baptism, *Lutheran Service Book*, pp. 268 ff.

<sup>20</sup> Psalm 36:9b.

What is this light of God which is proclaimed? Scripture today gives us the answer. In today's Old Testament text, Isaiah calls on those who walk in darkness and have no light, to trust in the name of the Lord.<sup>21</sup> It is this very name of the Lord, Jesus, literally "YH saves," in which you are to trust. As our Gospel text reminds you, the light of God is Christ and Him-crucified!<sup>22</sup>

Further, the opening to this evening's liturgy, "*Jesus Christ is the light of the world, the light no darkness can overcome,*" reminds you the same.<sup>23</sup> It is only in this light, that you see Light. As you sang throughout Lent, all of the light of Scripture gathers around the head of the Cross of our Savior. <sup>24</sup> At your Baptism, Jesus called you out of darkness and into His marvelous light, as you received the sign of the Cross on your forehead and over your heart.<sup>25</sup> When Jesus tells you that you are the light of the world, He is saying that you have been redeemed by His Cross, you bear His Cross, you see the world through the lens of His Cross, and you testify to His Cross through your words and actions.<sup>26</sup>

Our text concludes:

*Continue Your Chessed to them that know (and confess) You,  
and Your righteousness to the upright-(in) heart.<sup>27</sup>*

There we have a prayer that comes with a promise attached! The very fact that you know and confess the forgiveness of your sins and the sins of the world, through Christ and Him-crucified, is a testimony to His continuing *chessed*. The very fact that you know that in our Lord's Resurrection you have become His righteousness in the eye of the Father, is a testimony to His continuing *chessed*. <sup>28</sup><sup>17</sup> The very fact that on a daily basis you remember the benefits of Christ's Passion and Resurrection given to you in your Baptism, is a testimony to His continuing *chessed*. The very fact that no less than weekly, having granted you access to His Most Holy Place, He gathers you here to receive His absolution, hear His Word proclaimed and feast on His very Body and Blood for the forgiveness of your sins, is a testimony to His continuing *chessed*. And the very fact that every year, He draws you to a

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<sup>21</sup> Isaiah 50:10b.

<sup>22</sup> John 12:35-36a.

<sup>23</sup> John 8:12, 1:5; opening of Evening Prayer, *Lutheran Service Book*, p. 243.

<sup>24</sup> *Lutheran Service Book*, "In the Cross of Christ I Glory", v 1. p 247.

<sup>25</sup> 1 Peter 2:9, Holy Baptism, *Lutheran Service Book*, p 268.

<sup>26</sup> Matthew 5:14-16, also Ephesians 5:8-10, Phillipians 2:14-16.

<sup>27</sup> Psalm 36:10.

<sup>28</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:21.

period of intense reflection on His Passion as you journey with Him to Calvary, is a testimony to His continuing *chessed*. This prayer which ends our text is one in which you pray that God would always lead you to remember all that He has done and is continually doing for you out of His *chessed*, through Christ and Him-crucified, died and resurrected. Amen.

**The peace which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.**

*Soli Deo Gloria*

Monday in Holy Week

*Psalm 36:5-10; Isaiah 50:5-10; 1 Peter 2:21-24; John 12:1-36 (37-43)*

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