

**GOD HAS LIFTED HIS BANNER FOR HIS SOLDIERS TO RALLY AROUND**

Hear the Word of God for this *Wednesday in Holy Week*, as the Word of God continues to lead us to reflect upon the Passion of the Christ:

*You have set up for the fearing ones, (a) Banner, for it to be displayed before (the) face (of the) bow. <sup>1</sup>*

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

You who have spent time hearing the daily readings since Palm Sunday's declaration of Jesus' intent to "Save Now," His people have been led through Jesus' Passion narratives. Monday, we heard from St. John's Passion narrative, and the Psalm's declaration that it is God's boundless love that saved us from spending eternity feeling death's dread sting. Tuesday, we heard from St. Mark's Passion account, and reflected on Jesus' bearing the kingly crown—bearing the thorns of His passion—for us.

Today, the traditionally named, "Spy Wednesday," we have just heard St. Luke's Passion record, coupled with a Psalm that declares God's Banner raised up to bring heart to beleaguered Christians. That Banner is the rallying point for Christians facing the arrows of mankind's most ancient foe. Truly, in the image of Christ the crucified One, God has lifted His banner for His soldiers to rally around.

Each day this week has been marked with true accounts of the devil's arrow strikes that Christ Jesus, and His faithful followers, received as He neared the day on which He would pay the price demanded for the full weight of sin in the cosmos. Each day has proclaimed to us more details about the first Holy Week. When put together, they reveal fulfilment of this plea offered in every generation by the faithful of God for around 3,000 years:

*For the sake of Your beloved ones, that they may be rescued, continue to give Salvation by Your Right Hand, and deliver us!<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> *Psalm 60:6 MT*

<sup>2</sup> *Psalm 60:7 MT.*

For your sake, O beloved of the Lord, God continues to give salvation by His Right Hand. He keeps it before your faces in images of Him Who is the Image of the Living Father. His salvation comes through none other than Christ our Lord.

It is Christ Jesus, Who, after He had paid the divine redemption price in His blood, rose from the grave and ascended into the heavens to take His seat at the right of the Father. From that position He has all rule, authority, and power, in heaven, on earth and under the earth. He rules on earth through His proclaimed Word. He continues to give His blood-won salvation to rescue – through God’s Word of Holy Absolution and the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. He continues to deliver us through His eternal life sustaining Sacrament of the Altar. All of that you are called to recall when you face the assaults of the old evil foe and his earth-bound minions. Know that He keeps this promise before you every time He calls and gathers you into His Presence to give you His Word and Sacraments:

*You have set up for the fearing ones, (a) Banner, for it to be displayed before (the) face (of the) bow. <sup>3</sup>*

From the Old Covenant era, God had been giving that promise to those who were trembling on account of worldly and other-worldly foes. In the time to which the ancients ascribed King David’s composing this day’s Psalm, there was war in the Promised Land. According to the superscription added to the text for the day, fighting had taken place from the north of Israel – namely against that area we call Syria – down to the south – the end of the Dead Sea, in an area now part of southern Jordan.

Enemies were, as we follow the header to the Psalm, pressing in upon Israel on all sides. As the faithful faces those onslaughts, the Lord’s Banner was among them. The Ark often went with them into battle. The Tabernacle Tent was in their midst.

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<sup>3</sup> Psalm 60:6 MT

They had visual reminders of God's promises in their midst, and He was Present among them to grant them His victories.<sup>4</sup>

For them, His presence was awe-full, terrifying, and glorious. They responded to Him with sacrifices of blood. Those were to remind repentant sinners of the price their eternal salvation was going to cost.

For their enemies, God's Presence was awful, terrifying, and deadly. They beheld the power of God working through His people, and were repeatedly defeated. They became the holocausts – literally, whole burnt offerings – demanded by God of unrepentant sinners.

What of us today? Where do we see divine things such as the Tabernacle of Moses and the Ark of His Presence for us to rally around. Where are the offerings that we might receive forgiveness and be strengthened in the fight against our enemies?

God, in His loving-kindness and mercy for we who are daily beset by the devil and his horrible allies, keeps His Banner and signs before us. He places us in congregations. These are found wherever God assembles together pastors, people and His Table. These reminders of His Presence in the battles against our spiritual and worldly foes, He most clearly established in the week in which He was betrayed.

That week has led to this week. Here, on each year's Spy Wednesday, we hear accounts of those who speak and act, when the biblical daily records of Holy Week depict a silent Jesus. Yes, some of us heard today a third Passion narrative following Palm Sunday's triumphal procession. Into our ears these words and actions of Jesus' mortal and spiritual enemies still ring:

*Then he went in, Satan, into Judas, the one called Iscariot, who was from the number of the Twelve; then, having gone away, he talked together with the high priests and soldiers of the thing – (that is) how he might hand over Him to them. Then they rejoiced and made agreement together with*

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<sup>4</sup> Luther, Martin. *Reading the Psalms with Luther*. Bruce A. Cameron, ed. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007. 141.

*him to give silver. Then he consented, and he sought (a) good time to handover Him apart from (a) crowd to them.* <sup>5</sup>

This Holy Week Wednesday, the biblical accounts declare the plotting of Jesus' foes in the fight for our salvation. Jesus, as true God, had known from before He laid the foundation of the cosmos, what His enemies would do. Jesus, as true Man, had the prophetic Scriptures to turn to in His time of need. He had the first verses of this day's chosen Psalm to turn to as He ached over that which was coming to Him on behalf of all people, and most assuredly for you who would believe in Him. On that Spy Wednesday, in the face of all the arrows the devil and his forces would launch against Him, Jesus could turn to, and echo words like these:

*You have caused to make Your people (see) hard things, You have caused to give us wine of reeling.*<sup>6</sup>

Jesus, as all of faithful Israel for all time narrowed into One Person, could take that lament into Himself. You will hear, over the coming days, of His pleas and groaning to the Father on account of the burden of sin, your sin, that He was bearing that Wednesday long ago. You will be called to reflect on the steadfast love He showed for you as He allowed the spy, and his eager masters to work their evil on Him that you might receive His love. He places His images before you that you might find comfort in beholding them when you cry, under the pressures of the devil, the world, and your own sinful flesh:

*O Elohim, (give) to us Help from the Adversary, for vain (is the) salvation of man.*<sup>7</sup>

Yes, dear ones in Christ, God has given you help from all the woes and wiles of the Adversary, the Satan, the deceiver, the ancient murderer of man and God. On this day when the Church remembers Jesus' silence, when we hear again the foe speak his will and work his ways all humans to destroy, we have God's grace for sinners

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<sup>5</sup> Luke 22:3-6.

<sup>6</sup> Psalm 60:5. MT

<sup>7</sup> Psalm 60:13. MT

depicted visibly before us. Font, Table, written Word, Pastor, all stand under the image of the cross – the image of the devil’s defeat and Jesus’ triumph. Here, in places like this, you behold God’s faithfulness to His promises such as these:

*You have set up for the fearing ones, (a) Banner, for it to be displayed before (the) face (of the) bow. <sup>8</sup>*

Behold the image of Christ on the cross. See His body hanging limply in death. Look at His thorn crowned Head. Remember His love for you. His victory over sin is depicted for you.

Then recall this, these earthly things, are images of the reality that Jesus, from his death, had exchanged a crown of thorns for that of gold.<sup>9</sup> His naked, bloodied Body is now ever-living and clothed in brilliant light. His glory of the cross has become your glory over all your enemies that press in upon you on all sides. The plotting, scheming and spying of His enemies has brought fulfillment of this prophecy again to you:

*In Elohim we will do valiantly, for He will tread down our foes!<sup>10</sup>*

Behold Him lifted high, all His enemies under His feet. Know that, in the elevation of the consecrated bread and wine Christ, with His True Body and Blood is held before the face of all our enemies and brings comfort to all our allies. Believe that in His death, Christ has delivered us from the Evil One, *the devil as the sum of all evil.*<sup>11</sup> Behold God’s Victory Banner for you – Christ-crucified for the forgiveness of all your sins!

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

Lent VI, Wednesday, *Palmarum* (LSB One-year series)  
Psalms 60, 27, 118:19-29; Isaiah 62:11:-- 63:7; Luke 22:1-23, 56

March 28, 2018

*Pastor Michael A. Morehouse*

***Soli Deo Gloria***

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<sup>8</sup> *Psalm* 60:6. MT

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Rev. 14:14.

<sup>10</sup> *Psalm* 60:12. MT

<sup>11</sup> *The Book of Concord the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. 1959 (T. G. Tappert, Ed.) (435). Philadelphia: Mühlenberg Press.

*“But deliver us from evil. Amen.”*

In the Greek<sup>2</sup> this petition reads, “Deliver or keep us from the Evil One, or the Wicked One.” The petition seems to be speaking of the devil as the sum of all evil in order that the entire substance of our prayer may be directed against our arch-enemy. It is he who obstructs everything that we pray for: God’s name or glory, God’s kingdom and will, our daily bread, a good and cheerful conscience, etc....

This petition includes all the evil that may befall us under the devil’s kingdom: poverty, shame, death, and, in short, all the tragic misery and heartache of which there is so incalculably much on earth. Since the devil is not only a liar but also a murderer,<sup>3</sup> he incessantly seeks our life .... He breaks many a man’s neck and drives others to insanity... many he hounds to suicide or other dreadful catastrophes.

Therefore there is nothing for us to do on earth but to pray constantly against this arch-enemy. For if God did not support us, we would not be safe from him for a single hour.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The first edition of the Large Catechism reads erroneously, “In the Hebrew.”

<sup>3</sup> *John 8:44.*

<sup>12</sup> *The Book of Concord the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.* 1959 (T. G. Tappert, Ed.) (435). Philadelphia: Mühlenberg Press.