

## VINDICATED IN CHRIST

Our sermon for this “Vindicate Me” Sunday is drawn from our inspired Psalm. With that having been already chanted, hear this translation of the Psalm’s opening words:

*Vindicate me, O Elohim,  
and defend my legal case from (a) people (who are) not pious;  
from (a) man of deceit and injustice, deliver me.<sup>1</sup>*

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

Today we have entered Passiontide. That means that the time for Lent’s penitential purple is nearing its end. In just two weeks the things from which we have all been fasting, in the Lord’s services from the “Alleluias” in particular, and today the lesser Glorias, those joyful words will be ours again. With them we will again respond to our having received joy on account God’s vindicating us through the death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ.

Yet, to reach those days of gold and while, we need, for our own reflections on the Passion of our Lord, to behold the Table of the Lord’s purple replaced with scarlet, scarlet displaced by black, black removed to expose an empty table of bare wood. Today, we have entered again into the somber days of the Church Year. The calendar has again turned to the pages which mark the days in which our Lord’s suffering, Passion, and death are so vividly recalled.

On this calendar day, the Propers (the changeable readings of the Lord’s Services) began with the recitation of another Psalm that declares the Christ. It proclaims Him Who was pure, innocent, and without sin in His Person. It speaks of Him Who, for your vindication, bore your sins into death and the grave – those which are actual and committed; thought and not thought; deeded, misdeeded, as well as all good works you did not accomplish in the Faith. You are free to hold the words of

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<sup>1</sup> *Psalm 43:1.*

today's Psalm in your hearts as you hear of Christ's triumphal entrance into Jerusalem to be the Final and Perfect Sacrifice, His agony in the Garden, His pleas to the Father on the cross. This day's Words prepare you to spiritually, and perhaps physically, walk through all the coming days of proclamation about His following the Stations of the Cross. Hear again, as Jesus cries out against anyone and everyone whose sins placed Him on the executioner's cross:

*Vindicate me, O Elohim,  
and defend my legal case from (a) people (who are) not pious;  
from (a) man of deceit and injustice, deliver me.<sup>2</sup>*

Because God, on the third day, vindicated the Christ Who died in your sins, yes, in the sins of the whole world, you who bear His image in your persons may also cry those words whenever you are unjustly accused. Through the Word of God, we are being guided by the Holy Spirit to pray that God would continue to declare us right, to vindicate us. God's Psalm is given to us, to you to speak, chant, or sing particularly when the pressures of this fallen world, the devil, and most particularly, your own sinful nature weighs upon you.

As you do so, it can be helpful for you to remember that this Psalm, with the one before it, contains legal, courtroom language. That is used to lead you to remember God's vindication of you in Christ. It is yours to recite whenever the Accuser, Satan, the ancient prosecutor of God's people, places legal charges before you for breaking the spirit and letter of God's Law. That is to say that this day's Psalm that proclaims the Father's vindication of the Son is yours to hear when you are tempted to believe that the sins of which you have repented have not been forgiven!

Does that then mean that you who are forgiven will never doubt that forgiveness because you have this day's declaration of God's judgment of grace? Most certainly

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<sup>2</sup> Psalm 43:1.

not! The Psalm even leads you who believe that Jesus, who was eternally declared to be just and right in His resurrection from the dead, that you will still have times in which you may feel, think, or experience that which follows your petition for divine vindication. It even gives you these godly words to use at those times:

*For you are Elohe, my Means of safety.  
For why have you cast me off?  
Why (in) mourning am I caused to go in (the) oppression (of my) enemy?*<sup>3</sup>

Dear ones, God has so heard your cries for justice, that He, following Christ's cry for justice, "Vindicate Me!" which is yours now in Him, reminds you that God alone is your means of safety against impious people, from any person who acts in the stead of the deceiver (the devil), any agent who wills to turn you from God's justice in Christ to the injustice of the Anti-Christ. This Psalm of Christ, that declares Christ and His pleas for you, gives you divine permission to express how the faithful truly feel and think in the presence of unjust persecution. It gives you words that grant you divine the right to question God in the hope of hearing His just answer: *Why have you cast me off?*

That is a question that is common to all Western peoples when they experience grief. It is one that expresses a longing for divine providence from the God Who truly exists, particularly when people of the Faith think and feel they are suffering some sort of injustice on account of the Faith which we confess. The Psalm gives us God-pleasing words to express the experience of loneliness that believers face in the midst of persecution.

God knows that feeling, those thoughts, that very human condition. In this Passiontide you will be reminded of the God-Man's cries of forsakenness to the Father. You will hear of His living these words – in Himself, for you: *Why (in) mourning am I caused to go in (the) oppression (of my) enemy?* God knows all believers will have times

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<sup>3</sup> Psalm 43:2.

like that, that is why He gives those whom He has vindicated His own words to express their laments in the face of worldly and otherworldly persecutions. From that, our Psalm continues, as it declares the Christ who is the answer to your cries of forsakenness, lament and desire for vindication:

*Send out Your light and Your truth;  
let them cause to lead me,  
let them cause to bring me to Your holy Mountain and to Your dwelling.<sup>4</sup>*

Jesus is the One Scripture reveals to be the incarnate manifestation of God's Light and Truth. He is the Light of Life and Truth Everlasting. He even testifies to those attributes about Himself, as did others.<sup>5</sup>

From God's vindication of Jesus in His resurrection, the person of the Faith, experiencing separation from God on account of humankind's old enemies pressures, that person of the Faith, in the midst of doubt is given words to call for God's light and truth to lead him or her. The Psalm, as it declares the Christ, gives us, you, godly words that ask for deliverance and a rightful place in God's eternal Presence. This day again, a Psalmist's words (Hellenic Jews thought that was King David) are given to you that you might remember His vindication of you in Christ Jesus. They declare to you the divine rights God gives to those whom He has declared just and right in Christ:

*And I will go to (Your) Altar, O Elohim;  
to El my exceeding joy,  
and I will cause to praise You in (the) lyre,  
O Elohim my Elohe.<sup>6</sup>*

Truly one who is freed by God's Word of justice — bought and brought about by the death of Jesus — is able to return again to God's Holy Table. The Psalm moves the faithful from his or her cries for justice in the midst of unjust persecution to return to

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<sup>4</sup> Psalm 43:3.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Luke 1:76—79 and John 14:6, etc.

<sup>6</sup> Psalm 43:4.

the places where God has promised to give the divine table food and drink that restores the broken; sustains them in the fight against sin, death, and the devil; and strengthens them, you, to life everlasting.

When the Psalm was first recorded, a repentant person who had lamented God's seeming aloofness in the face of persecutions could return to the Lord's Altar and partake of the sacrifices offered there. Since Christ has become the Final Sacrifice, New Covenant faithful who have lamented God's seeming abandonment are free to return repeatedly to receive the divine benefits of the Final Sacrifice. They, you, with all who confess as true all that Jesus has commanded – the Truth of the Ten Words; the benefits of the Our Father; the right confession of the Creeds; the salvific blessings of Holy Baptism; the Real Presence of Jesus in the Sacrament of the Altar; and the power of God's Holy Absolution declared through His called and ordained servants – you join in that unity before the Lord's Altar Table.

This, the 43<sup>rd</sup> Psalm calls you to do in joy. Yet, that which is translated, “exceeding joy” is not necessarily always coupled with that which we think of as happiness or satisfied contentment. In the midst of regular joyful recalling that we can partake of the food and drink of forgiven sinners, we still, at times, fall back into sorrow on account of those who persecute us – the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh. We are forgiven, but not yet fully delivered from this veil of tears. Like the Psalmist, at such times of pressure, we also cry:

*Why (are) you cast down, O my soul, and why (are) you murmuring discouragement within me?<sup>7</sup>*

Those words recognize, in a healthy way, that though God has not forsaken us – for He continues to vindicate us in Christ – our own living souls still groan under the weight of sin. The day's Psalm gives us divine words to call ourselves to turn from

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<sup>7</sup> Psalm 43:5a.

disappointment, disillusionment and dispondence on account of worldly and spiritual tribulations. This Psalm gives us a pattern for faithful living under the crosses of this life.

The Christian's daily struggle, your wrestling with your Old Adam, is given in the rhythm of Psalm 43. Such words help us to daily drown our Old Adams that the New Man in Christ may rise up in us. The lines of today's vindication Psalm move you from petitioning God in the midst of trials to a confession of repentant hope. The divine words then return you to complaint and confession of the genuine sadness that still comes to a repentant sinner. They then lead you back into another petition; then declare joy. They have just moved you to remember the soul-despondence that comes to the forgiven. Finally, the Psalmist's words call you to continue to place your hope in God.

*Cause to hope in Elohim;  
for again I will cause to praise Him,  
(the) Help (of) my countenance and my Elohe.<sup>8</sup>*

It is the Word that reminds you that, amidst all the pressures and trials of this life, when you are facing the wiles and workings of man's most ancient foe, that, in the One Who conquered him, and bound him, and will on the Last Day cast him forever into the lake of fire, in Christ Jesus alone you have cause to hope. Christ has borne your persecutions. Christ will silence all the persecutors of the Faithful in one Day.

That then gives cause for you to remember the Word of the Lord's forgiveness that moves you to praise Him. You are vindicated, beheld as just, in the divine courtroom. Your prosecutor – your Accuser, the Satan – has been defeated by Jesus!

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

Lent V (LSB One-Year Series)

Psalm 43; Genesis 22:1-14; Hebrews 9:11-15; John 8:46-59

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<sup>8</sup> Psalm 43:5.

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*Pastor Michael H. Morehouse*

***Soli Deo Gloria***

**Translation, Third draft, Psalm 43**

*Vindicate me, O Elohim,  
and defend my legal case from (a) people (who are) not pious;  
from (a) man of deceit and injustice, deliver me.<sup>9</sup>*

*For you are Elohe, my Means of safety.  
For why have you cast me off?  
Why (in) mourning am I caused to go in (the) oppression (of my)  
enemy?<sup>10</sup>*

*Send out Your light and Your truth;  
let them cause to lead me,  
let them cause to bring me to Your holy Mountain and to Your  
dwelling.<sup>11</sup>*

*And I will go to (Your) Altar, O Elohim;  
to El my exceeding joy,  
and I will cause to praise You in (the) lyre,  
O Elohim my Elohe.<sup>12</sup>*

*Why (are) you cast down, O my soul, and why (are) you murmuring  
discouragement within me?  
Cause to hope in Elohim;  
for again I will cause to praise Him,  
(the) Help (of) my countenance and my Elohe.<sup>13</sup>*

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<sup>9</sup> Psalm 43:1.

<sup>10</sup> Psalm 43:2.

<sup>11</sup> Psalm 43:3.

<sup>12</sup> Psalm 43:4.

<sup>13</sup> Psalm 43:5.