**Evening Prayer of a Christian**

**Propose of Lent:** To draw all to God. To turn our hearts to God before Easter.

During this time of repentance, reminding us in all the time of our earth tribulation, to give heart to our sorrow and strength through faith to our repentance.

**Overall purpose of the sermon:** What to do on those sleepless nights?

Most nights we can sleep, but when trouble comes it is hard to get to sleep. For a spouse to nonchalantly tell a mate to stop worrying and go back to sleep does not help.

*The Law:* For a Christian to spend the night in restless worry and forego the pleasures of a refreshing sleep is not only foolish, but may also verge on the sin of forsaking trust in God.

*The Gospel:* In those times of stress, in not finding our own path to restful sleep, we must look to the Gospel, for God and God only makes the Christian dwell in safety under the shelter of God’s protecting hand.

The psalm we are looking at tonight (Psalm 4) may give us some comfort in this area of what to do in those sleepless nights.

In interpreting a psalm, we look at three aspects of the psalm – as Jesus is all three: Prophet, Priest and King, so we look at the psalm from these three aspects.

**The Kingly Aspect of the psalm:**

King David, in his flight before his rebellious son, Absalom, had just escaped across the Jordan River with just his loyal palace guard. Through Absalom’s political intrigue over the past months he covertly raising an army, recruiting this army from all Israel. Now ahead of an army of rebels, he had surprised David just outside Jerusalem. The army of Absalom was much larger than what David could muster from his standing forces in the palace.

David avoided the trap, racing with his small body of men across the Jordan. It would take at least a day or two for Absalom’s army to regroup and catch up, so David told his men to get a good night’s sleep. David knew that it would be hard for his men to sleep in their anxiety of what the next few days would bring.

In order, therefore, to stimulate his own courage and to revive the drooping spirits of the men, David composed this hymn (Psalm 4) and sang it to his men that night, which on account of divine inspiration, has become a song of consolation for all those who are in trouble. In spite of the fact that as David sang, the army of Absalom was now raiding the storehouses of the capital to compensate Absalom’s rebels, the joyful confidence of David was a richer treasure from God, a rich treasure we can have as well.

**The Prophetic Aspect of the psalm:**

Jesus is dealing with the persecution he is getting from wicked men. Jesus as a child probably memorized all the psalms, so Psalm 4 seemed the best one to pray in His situation. In His human weakness, Jesus cries out to God for help, always remembering that His relief is from on high. He ponders how His persecutors have turned His godly honor into shame, loving vain words and lies over truth. He understood that God has sanctified (set apart for himself) the godly and is always eager to listen to their cries for help.

Jesus knows not to be anxious and, in that anxiety, to fall into the sin of a lack of faith. He knows to commune with his heart upon his bed, deliberating and reflecting in the silence of the night and be still before God. The godly have done their part trusting in the day upon God, doing the right thing (showing the soundness of their penitence, the real character of their conversion), now also in the night watch continue to trust in God.

In the darkness, doubt creeps in and it is common to say, “How can this work out for the good for me? Is there any chance and probability at all that there will be any deliverance for me in this time of trouble?” This is apt to come to the lips of even the truest children of God when it *looks* like all hope seems to be cut off.

Now Jesus urgent prayer rises to the throne of His Father, “Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us,” mimicking the blessing of God’s kindness and mercy which the Aaronic priesthood continually gives to His people (do God’s people believe the promise of this blessing they hear every week?). And so the pleading of Jesus changes into a bold confident assertion.

Despite the fact that things may look like all hope is lost, His Father has put gladness into His heart, causing Jesus to rejoice in the midst of his outward affliction and to wait patiently for the deliverance of God with calm. He has more joy in His soul that if His granary and vineyards were overflowing with produce. Despite *the fact* that Jesus’ enemies seemed to have the upper hand in their scheming and *the fact* that political darkness was growing around Him, the joyful confidence of Jesus was in a richer treasure.

Thus, the reason Jesus probably picked Psalm 4, is the conclusion: “I will therefore lay me down in peace, without further thought of worry, and drift off into a restful, refreshing sleep, undisturbed by anxious thought.” Why? “For You, Lord, and only in You, make me dwell in safety.” Under shelter of God’s protective hand the believer is always safe.

Jesus took your anxiety to the cross and there destroyed sin’s mortal grasp upon our hearts. Now as our reading in Jeremiah said, “Since we are called by God’s name, He is always with us and does not leave us.” We have the assurance of Paul’s words in Romans 8:

*For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.[[1]](#footnote-1)*

**The Priestly Aspect** *(How do I apply this psalm to my life? Or that of my congregation?)*

A lot of our anxiety is based on our earthly perspective. David and Jesus, despite the fact of horrible earthly circumstances, both had a joyful confidence in a richer treasure they have in the shelter of God’s protective hand.

People who have no faith in God do not have the assurance we have in God and so all they can do is lie on their beds and continue to scheme in their vanity, using their own ability to get out of their bad situations. Useless futility, faithless idolatry, trusting in self and not their Savior. But because of the gospel we don’t have to scheme to overcome our problems, but trust in the Lord. You have made your commitment to God, be assured that God has made a commitment to You.

Hymn 880

Christ the Son of gladness,

dispelling all our sadness.

Shines down on us in warmest light,

forgetting our selfish plight.

*Suggestion of how to rely on God (third use of the Law)*

But sometimes our mind does not want to cooperate with our heart of faith, and it grinds out thoughts that cannot be stopped. Best thing I find is get up (sleepy-time prayers in bed don’t cut it) and go into a room by yourself and bring up all your mind’s stray thoughts to God in vocalized prayer and asking Him to (1) take care of the problem, (2) helping you to trust and rely on Him more, and (3) please send to you refreshing sleep. I find that works 75 percent of the time.

*Final Prayer*

O God of our comfort, create in us new and contrite hearts, that we, lamenting our sins of worry: regretting and fretting over our circumstances, and acknowledging that our worry is all because of our lack of trust in You, may obtain from You, the God of all mercies, perfect remission and forgiveness and so that we may lay down in our bed at night in peace, without further thought of worry, and immediately drop off into a refreshing sleep, undisturbed by anxious thoughts. Amen.

Lent III Midweek

Psalm 4; Psalm 118:1-3; Jeremiah 14:9; Romans 8:38-39

March 27, 2019

Rev. David Kaiser, Pastor Emeritus

1. *Romans 8:38-39 ESV.* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)