

Charles St-Onge
 Winter 2002
 Study of the Psalms

| DATE | TITLE | INTROIT | PSALM | Choose | X |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------|---------------|----------|
| February 3, 2002 | 4 th Sunday After Epiph | Psalm 1 | Psalm 15 | 1 | X |
| February 10, 2002 | The Transfiguration | Psalm 2:6-12 | Psalm 51:1-13 | 2 | X |
| February 17, 2002 | 1 st Sunday in Lent | Psalm 91:9-12 | Psalm 32 | 32 | X |
| February 24, 2002 | 2 nd Sunday in Lent | Psalm 69:1-3, 5-6, 13 | Psalm 69:7-18 | 69 | |
| March 3, 2002 | 3 rd Sunday in Lent | Psalm 84:1-5 | Psalm 121 | 84 | X |
| March 10, 2002 | 4 th Sunday in Lent | Psalm 142:1, 5-7 | Psalm 142 | 142 | X |
| March 17, 2002 | 5 th Sunday in Lent | Psalm 43:1-5 | Psalm 50:1-15 | 43 | X |
| March 24, 2002 | Palm Sunday | Psalm 27:1-3, 14 | Psalm 31:9-16 | 31 | X |
| March 31, 2002 | Easter Sunday | Psalm 16:8-11 | Psalm 118 | 118 | X |
| April 7, 2002 | 2 nd Sunday after Easter | Psalm 29:1-2, 10-11 | Psalm 105:1-7 | 29 | X |
| April 14, 2002 | 3 rd Sunday after Easter | Psalm 39:3-5, 7-8 | Psalm 16 | 39 | X |
| April 21, 2002 | 4 th Sunday after Easter | Psalm 95:1-7 | Psalm 23 | 95 | X |
| April 28, 2002 | 5 th Sunday after Easter | Psalm 30:1-5 | Psalm 146 | 30 | X |
| May 5, 2002 | 6 th Sunday after Easter | Psalm 119:89-93, 105 | Psalm 66:8-10 | 119 | X |
| May 12, 2002 | 7 th Sunday after Easter | Psalm 100:1-5 | Psalm 68 | 100 | X |
| May 19, 2002 | Pentecost Sunday | Psalm 25:4-7, 22 | Ps 104:24-34 | 25 | X |
| May 26, 2002 | The Holy Trinity | Psalm 31:2, 19, 23-24 | Psalm 16 | 16 | X |
| June 2, 2002 | 2 nd Sunday after Pent | Psalm 50: parts | Psalm 4 | 50 | X |
| June 9, 2002 | 3 rd Sunday after Pent | Psalm 100 | Psalm 51:1-12 | 51 | X |
| June 16, 2002 | 4 th Sunday after Pent | Psalm 27 | Psalm 100 | 27 | X |
| June 23, 2002 | 5 th Sunday after Pent | Psalm 91 | Ps 69: parts | 91 | X |
| June 30, 2002 | 6 th Sunday after Pent | Psalm 27 | Ps 89: parts | 89 | X |
| Sept 1, 2002 | 15 th Sunday after Pent | Psalm 119:105-112 | | 119 | X |

Introduction to the Psalms

- Psalms are found throughout Scripture
- “The Song of Moses and Miriam” Exodus 15
- “The Song of Hannah” 1 Samuel 2
- “The Prayer of Habakkuk” Habakkuk 3
- “Hymn to the Logos” John 1
- “Hymn to the Servant” Philippians 2

GENRES

- “Hymns”
 - The title of the book of Psalms in Hebrew is “praises”
 - The last five psalms, 146-150, are called the “Great Doxology” or Praise
- “Laments”
 - Dominate the Psalms
 - Point to trouble from 3 sources: enemy, self, God
- Form:
 - 1) Invocation
 - 2) Plea for help
 - 3) Complaints
 - 4) Confession of sin or assertion of innocence!
 - 5) Curse of enemies (imprecation)
 - 6) Confidence in God’s response
 - 7) Hymn or blessing
 - Much to teach us about prayer in trouble!
- “Thanksgiving”
 - Joy over the rescue provided by the Lord
 - Usually commemorates a specific answer to prayer
- “Wisdom”
 - A Psalm containing proverbial teaching “the righteous vs the foolish”
- “The fool has said in his heart ‘There is no God’”
- “Kingship”
 - Often “messianic” psalms
 - Deal with the difficulty of rulership
 - Behind these psalms is almost always the assertion of God’s true kingship

AUTHORSHIP

- 73 Psalms: David (Books 1 and 2)
- 12 Psalms: Asaph (Psalm 50, 73-83), wrote the same time as David?
- 127, possibly 72: Solomon
- Hamin and Ethan the Ezrahite (post-exilic)
- 10 Psalms of the Sons of Korah (pre-exilic)
- 37 Psalms with no titles: “orphan psalms”; no title

PSALM 1

From the Hebrew

- ¹ Blessed (is) the man
 who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked
 and in the way of the ones exposed to condemnation does not stand
 and in the assembly of the scorning ones does not take a seat.
- ² For instead
 In the Torah of the Lord he delights,
 and in his Torah he continually meditates day and night.
- ³ And he is like a tree transplanted upon a stream of water
 that gives its fruit at the right time
 and its leaf does not wither
 and all he does is successful.
- ⁴ Not so the guilty,
 for like chaff they are driven by wind.
- ⁵ Therefore the guilty ones
 will not stand in the judgement
 and the ones exposed to condemnation in the congregation of the righteous
- ⁶ For the Lord knows
 the way of the righteous ones
 and the way of the guilty ones will perish

Form

A chiasm with concluding antithetical parallel:

A, B, C, B', A' -> A, A'

- A** **Blessed is the man...3 (similar parallel)**
 Walks not with the wicked
 Stands not with the ones condemned
 Sits not in the assembly of the scorning
- B** **For instead (the blessed man)...2 (climactic parallel)**
 Delights in the Torah
 Meditates on the Torah
- C** **Is a tree transplanted by water (opposed to one not transplanted)**
 Gives fruit at the proper time (vs. a barren tree)
 Its leaf does not wither (vs. a tree that is dying)
 All he does is successful (vs. one who is a failure)
- B'** **Not so the guilty...1 (less than 2 in B)**
 Driven by the wind (not consciously walking, sitting or standing)
 (*A reference to the Holy Spirit?*)
- A'** **Therefore the guilty ones will perish...**
 Will *not* stand when judgement comes
 Will *not* stand with the righteous

Notes

Blessed: same word used in the Sermon on the Mount

- Man here is singular: not “blessed are those” but “blessed is the one”
- Luther took this as a reference to Christ (LW 10:11)
- Consider the first three verses in light of this possibility

Torah: not just “the Law”, but also the record of God’s gracious acts

- Not “the law”: the Gospel is as much present in the OT as in the NT
- Augustine spoke of the NT being latent in the OT, the OT blatant in the NT
- Consider the psalms that speak of the gracious, saving acts of God

Transplanted: a tree moved from a deadly spot to one of life

- The tree is a common image in the bible
- The Tree of Life
- The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil
- Luke 13 and the parable of the fig tree
- The passive is used here: the tree has not transplanted itself!

Guilty: the unholy or ungodly ones

Righteous: the godly, holy ones: whose righteousness is this?

- Imputed vs. inherent righteousness
- If this is Christ, then it is his own inherent righteousness
- This righteousness becomes ours making us “not guilty”

Wind: same word used of the Holy Spirit in Genesis

- Emphasis on God’s hand in salvation?

PSALM 2

FROM THE HEBREW

- ¹ For what purpose are the Gentiles in commotion over you,
and the people growling in vain?
- ² The kings of the earth station themselves
and the ruling ones are found united
against the Lord and against Messiah.
- ³ “Let us tear away their bonds
and let us throw from us their fetters.”
- ⁴ The one sitting in heaven laughs,
the Lord (Adonai) scoffs at them.
- ⁵ Then he speaks out to them by his nostrils
and with his anger terrifies them.
- ⁶ “I pour out (as a libation) my king on Zion, my holy hill.”
- ⁷ Let me tell (recount, rehearse) of a decree:
The Lord says to me “My Son (are) you, I today have begotten you.
⁸ Ask! From me and I will personally deliver the Gentiles for your inheritance,
and for your possession (inheritance synonym) the extremities of the earth.
⁹ You will break (be displeasing to) them by your rod of iron,
like a fashioned vessel you will pulverize (Piel) them.”
- ¹⁰ So now, kings consider,
and be admonished (by the Lord – passive) governors of the earth.
- ¹¹ Serve! The Lord (YHWH) with reverence
and rejoice/tremble! With trembling.
- ¹² Kiss the Son lest he be angry
and you (plur.) perish in the way
when he begins to burn a little from his nostrils,
blessed (are) all seeking refuge in him.

CONTENT

Verse 1

- “tumult”, “rage”
- Why are they “in an uproar” or in “attack-mode”
- Genesis 45:24: Joseph sends his brothers away with an admonition “not to quarrel”

Verse 2

- “The kings of the earth take their stand”
- The general antipathy of the world to God and his Christ/Messiah
- “Messiah”
- Literally means “anointed one”
- Used in the Old Testament for the kings of Israel:
- 1 Samuel 12:3-5, Samuel refers to himself as “the anointed one”
- 1 Samuel 24:7: David refers to Saul as the Lord’s “anointed”

Luther's Works, Vol. 2, Lectures on Genesis

The second psalm likewise charges governments with a grave offense when it declares that with united forces and efforts they resist the Lord and His Christ and harass His kingdom (Ps. 2:1–2)...

Accordingly, Scripture does not bestow honor on the governments but threatens them with destruction and, as it were, makes them an object of open contempt. Nevertheless, it commands us most painstakingly to respect them, to give them honor, and to accord them every kind of service. Why is this?

Undoubtedly it is because the Lord Himself wants to be the only one to punish them, has reserved vengeance for Himself, and has not granted it to their subjects. Jeremiah, in chapter twelve (12:1), discusses how it happens that when the Lord is righteous, the way of the ungodly meets with success. But later he concludes (12:3): “Thou, O Lord, dost fatten them and prepare them for the slaughter.”

Accordingly, you may say that ungodly governments are like God's swine. He fattens them; He gives them wealth, power, honors, and the obedience of their subjects. Therefore they are not molested, but they themselves molest and oppress others. They do not suffer violence; they inflict it on others. They do not give, but they take away from others until the hour comes when they are slaughtered like swine that have been fattened for a long time. Hence the German proverb which says that a prince is a rare bird in the kingdom of heaven: *Fursten sind wildbrett im Himmel*.

Verse 3

- Who is speaking here?
- All our translations give it as the words of the kings
- There is no indication that this *must* be the case
- The assumption is that the kings are plural, whereas the narrative is singular
- But could it not be the Lord and his Messiah speaking?

Verses 4-6

- No force on earth can be a match to the Lord on his *throne*: a symbol of power
- It is the Lord who rules; the king is merely his symbol
- Other nations, even up to Rome, deified their rulers
- “His nostrils”
- Translated as “angry”, but almost literally, “God breathes out on them, smells them out”
- Smell, taste important in Hebrew thought; “taste and see that the Lord is good” (Ps 34:8)
- “I pour out as a libation”
- “Set”, “installed”, “anointed”: but almost the sense of sending the Son into the world
- This is one who will break the fetters, bonds and chains

Verse 7-9

- The rehearsal of the decree: a dramatic recounting
- Such is the power of the Word: saying it makes it so
- “remembrance” of events brings them into the present; the hearers participate
- The Gentiles will no longer rage, but will become an inheritance
- Breaking and pulverizing: “a broken and contrite heart, Lord, you will not despise”

Verse 10-11

- Poetic parallels:
- “consider”, “be admonished”
- “Serve!”, “tremble!”
- “tremble in trembling”: a common “Hebraism”

Verse 12

- Kiss the Son
- The kissing of the anointed one like kissing the Pope's ring
- A sign of allegiance

- Seeking refuge in the one who brings destruction
- Be on the right side!
- THIS Son or anointed one burns with divine anger!
- This suggests a Christological reading

Luther's Works, Vol. 10, Lectures on the Psalms

Such a person would fare the same way with Ps. 2, in which the three Persons also speak separately, as three individual Speakers. God the Father says (v. 6): "I have set My King on Zion, My holy hill." This King is certainly a Person apart from Him who installs Him as King. And then the words follow immediately (v. 7) "I will tell of the decree." These words sound as if the Father were still speaking, and that is what reason would suggest, though, in fact, it is the King, the Son, as is apparent from what follows (v. 7): "The Lord said to Me, You are My Son, today I have begotten You." That this Person is man is certain, for He is to preach and be the Messiah, as we hear in v. 2: "They rage against the Lord and His Messiah."

Thus we again find two distinct Persons here, the Father and the Son; and the Holy Spirit is present although not especially mentioned. It is He who composed and put into words this psalm, introducing the Father and the Son in Their own words. Thus the distinctive trinity of Persons in one indivisible divine essence is professed here together with the fact that the Son is Man and Messiah, just as this is professed in the last words of David.

PSALM 32

From the NIV

¹ Blessed is he
whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.
² Blessed is the man
whose sin the LORD does not count against him
and in whose spirit is no deceit.
³ When I kept silent,
my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long.
⁴ For day and night
your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was sapped
as in the heat of summer. *Selah*
⁵ Then I acknowledged my sin to you
and did not cover up my iniquity.
I said, “I will confess
my transgressions to the LORD”—
and you forgave
the guilt of my sin. *Selah*
⁶ Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you
while you may be found;
surely when the mighty waters rise,
they will not reach him.
⁷ You are my hiding place;
you will protect me from trouble
and surround me with songs of deliverance. *Selah*
⁸ I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you and watch over you.
⁹ Do not be like the horse or the mule,
which have no understanding
but must be controlled by bit and bridle
or they will not come to you.
¹⁰ Many are the woes of the wicked,
but the LORD’s unfailing love
surrounds the man who trusts in him.
¹¹ Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous;
sing, all you who are upright in heart!

Word Study

¹ “Blessed”: same as Psalm 1, The Beatitudes
“forgiven”: lit, “lifted up” (passive)
“covered”: (passive)
² “count against”: not even thought of
“deceit” or “treachery”, hiding of sins!

³ “bones”: lit, “strength”

⁴ “hand was heavy”: under the Lord’s
punishment or chastisement
“strength”: literally “moisture”!
“heat of summer”: drought

⁵ “acknowledged”: cause to make known
“cover”: conceal
“confess”: praise, laud, confess God’s name!
“forgave the guilt”: took away the
punishment, forgave the judicial guilt

⁶ “because of this let all the ‘sainted’ ones”
“while you may be found”
• or *where* you may be *met*?
⁷ “hiding place”: same for “conceal”, “cover”
“deliverance”: escape from danger

⁸ “instruct”: cause to be wise (passive)
“teach”: cause you to be directed
“way”: Christians are called “the way”

¹⁰ “unfailing love”: grace, mercy, compassion
“trust”: the one you turn to for security

¹¹ “righteous”: the one justified in God’s sight

Key Words

- *Maskil*: a reflection or meditation
- *Selah*: a musical notation: an interlude?

Structure

1. **General Condition:** “Blessed is the man...”
 - a) Whose sins are wiped away
 - b) Who does not cover them
2. **Specific Condition:** The Psalmist
 - a) Covered his sins: result, punishment
 - b) Acknowledged them to the Lord: result, declaration of “not guilty”
3. **General Condition:** “Therefore...”
 - a) Judgement: the rising of the waters
 - b) Deliverance: surrounded by songs
4. **The Lord Speaks:**
 - a) I will teach you the way you must go
 - b) Do not be like the horse or mule
5. **Conclusion**
 - a) Woe to the wicked
 - b) Rejoicing for the righteous

Content

“Blessed is he”

- The condition of one who’s sins are forgiven: he “abides in blessedness”

Luther: *Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven.* This is at once in opposition to the hypocrites, who do not need forgiveness and, like healthy people, have no use for a doctor. For they do not think they have iniquities but rely on themselves as righteous and do not eat with the tax collectors and sinners, because they are not like other people (cf. [Luke 15:2](#); [18:9](#) ff.). So the Pharisees rejected Christ, who bears the sins of the world, because they have none.¹

“whose sin the LORD does not count against him”

- Or, “whose sin is banished from God’s thought”
- Blessed is the one who is “not guilty” in the Lord’s eyes!

Verse 5: “I said, I will confess my transgressions...”

- Verse 5: Order of Confession and Absolution in TLH, p.15
- “I finally came to my senses”!
- This is what the Lord’s “chastening hand” always drives us to!
- Luke 13:1-11 and the Parable of the Fig Tree
- Mark 1:15, Jesus’ first words in Mark: “Repent, and believe the good news!”
- **Discuss:** How does the Lord accomplish this in our lives?

“I will teach you the way you must go”

- Cause you to be wise, cause you to be directed
- This is the Lord’s doing
- **Discuss:** How does this happen?

“The Lord’s unfailing love surrounds the man who trusts in him”

- Trust in the Lord is the goal, not self-righteousness

¹Luther, M. (1999, c1974). Vol. 10: Luther's works, vol. 10 : First Lectures on the Psalms I: Psalms 1-75 (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works (Ps 32:1). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.

Psalm 84

NIV

For the director of music. According to *gittith*.
Of the Sons of Korah. A psalm.

- ¹ How lovely is your dwelling place,
O LORD Almighty!
- ² My soul yearns, even faints,
for the courts of the LORD;
my heart and my flesh cry out
for the living God.
- ³ Even the sparrow has found a home,
and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may have her young—
a place near your altar,
O LORD Almighty, my King and my God.
- ⁴ Blessed are those who dwell in your house;
they are ever praising you. *Selah*
- ⁵ Blessed are those whose strength is in you,
who have set their hearts on pilgrimage.
- ⁶ As they pass through the Valley of Baca,
they make it a place of springs;
the autumn rains also cover it with pools.
- ⁷ They go from strength to strength,
till each appears before God in Zion.
- ⁸ Hear my prayer, O LORD God Almighty;
listen to me, O God of Jacob. *Selah*
- ⁹ Look upon our shield, O God;
look with favor on your anointed one.
- ¹⁰ Better is one day in your courts
than a thousand elsewhere;
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God
than dwell in the tents of the wicked.
- ¹¹ For the LORD God is a sun and shield;
the LORD bestows favor and honor;
no good thing does he withhold
from those whose walk is blameless.
- ¹² O LORD Almighty,
blessed is the man who trusts in you. ²

Notes

Lovely: beloved, adored
Dwelling place: tabernacle, tent
“YHWH Sabaoth, of hosts, of armies”
Soul: nephish: life force, life-being
Heart/flesh: from in to out
Living: the source of Nephish

Altar: also a place of refuge, protection
YHWH Sabaoth, of hosts, of armies

Praise: great boasting: “hallel”
“those”: the man, the Adam
“whose life is on the right course”
Baca: weeping or sorrow, or desert
Spring: source of life
“cause it to be covered with blessings”
Strength: wealth or prosperity

Lord God of Sabaoth

Shield: defenses: lit. “king”
Anointed One: Messiah

Thousand: or, “Teacher”

Favor: grace

Blameless: sound, with integrity

Trust: confidence, fait

² *The Holy Bible : New International Version*. 1996, c1984 (electronic ed.).
Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Elements of the Psalm

- A Psalm of *Life*
- Verse 2: all the psalmist's life calls out for the *living* God
- Verse 3: the Lord protects even the fragile birds *and their offspring*
- Verse 6: the desert valley shall be made a source for life
- Verse 11: the Lord is sun and shield: protector
- A Psalm of Dwelling in the Lord
- Our whole being should call out to be with the Lord
- The ones who are ever dwelling with the Lord are blessed
- They have set their hearts on the right path
- A Psalm of *Blessing*
- Verse 8 and 9 are the core of the Psalm, a prayer of protection for the King
- Bless the king, the Messiah

In our Liturgy

- Used for the laying of a cornerstone, groundbreaking
- LW 325: "For Many Years, O God of Grace"

The Journey to Jerusalem

- Verse 5 in different versions:
"Blessed are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion." (ESV)
"Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them." (KJV)
"Happy are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion." (NRSV)
"Happy are those whose strength comes from you, who want to travel to Jerusalem." (NCV)
- Consider Luke 9:51:
"As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem."

Questions for Discussion

- What is the tone of this psalm?
- How do we daily journey to Jerusalem?
- What does it mean in our day to ask God to look upon "our shield" (king) with favor?
- Who is the one "whose walk is blameless"? Is this the same as "walking with integrity"?

Psalm 142

NIV

A *maskil* of David.

When he was in the cave. A prayer.

- ¹ I cry aloud to the LORD;
I lift up my voice to the LORD for mercy.
- ² I pour out my complaint before him;
before him I tell my trouble.
- ³ When my spirit grows faint within me,
it is you who know my way.
In the path where I walk
men have hidden a snare for me.
- ⁴ Look to my right and see;
no one is concerned for me.
I have no refuge;
no one cares for my life.
- ⁵ I cry to you, O LORD;
I say, "You are my refuge,
my portion in the land of the living."
- ⁶ Listen to my cry,
for I am in desperate need;
rescue me from those who pursue me,
for they are too strong for me.
- ⁷ Set me free from my prison,
that I may praise your name.
Then the righteous will gather about me
because of your goodness to me.

Hebrew

A Maskil Of David? To David? By David?

- ¹ (With) my loud voice to the LORD I cry out
(With) my loud voice from the LORD I am
seeking favor
- ² I am pouring out before his face my complaint
my trouble before his face I am declaring
- ³ Covered itself up in me (is) my spirit (ruach)
You, you reveal the path of my life
In this way of my life that I walk
They have concealed snares for me
- ⁴ Behold! the south and perceive!
No one acknowledges me
I have no place to flee
No one cares for my life-force (nephish)
- ⁵ I seek favor from you, LORD
I say, 'You, you are my cave/refuge
My inheritance in the land of the ones alive.'
- ⁶ Give attention! To my rattling
For I am in incredible anguish
Snatch me away from my pursuers
For they are hardened against me
- ⁷ Cause me to go out! from my life's prison
to praise your name
By me the righteous will be caused to come
Because of your dealings with me

Content

"Maskil": a contemplative or didactic psalm: the article before David is ambiguous

"Behold! the south and perceive"

- Is this a cry about his rejection as the anointed one?
- The ones who rejoiced in his victories in Judah have now abandoned him
- The other interpretation is "right", in which case it could be reference to lack of strength

"You are my cave"

- Could be a play on words on David's part:
- He's in a cave, but God is his true "cave"

"By me the righteous will be caused to come"

- A prophecy regarding Christ, the true successor to David?
- The righteous will gather around him because of the way God has dealt with David
- They will see in David the one through whom God is truly ruling

Parallelism

Climactic parallelism verse 1 (part b explains the cry of part a)

Chiastic parallelism: verse 2 (synonymous, but order reversed)

The majority of verses are reason parallels (do a, for b is happening)

Context

- Was this written while David was hiding from Saul's armies?
- David is hiding at this point in an area north of Judah.

(1 Samuel 23:9-11, 14 NIV) "When David learned that Saul was plotting against him, he said to Abiathar the priest, "Bring the ephod." David said, "O LORD, God of Israel, your servant has heard definitely that Saul plans to come to Keilah and destroy the town on account of me. Will the citizens of Keilah surrender me to him? Will Saul come down, as your servant has heard? O LORD, God of Israel, tell your servant." And the LORD said, "He will."... David stayed in the desert strongholds and in the hills of the Desert of Ziph. Day after day Saul searched for him, but God did not give David into his hands."

Structure

I. **Address:** "I cry out / I seek favor"

II. **Promise / Complaint:**

- a) "You reveal the path of my life" but "They have concealed snares / No one is concerned"
- b) "You are my 'cave', my inheritance" but "I am in anguish / My pursuers are hardened against me"

III. **Request:** "Cause me to go out of my prison"

IV. **Resolution:** "By me the righteous will be caused to come because of your dealings with me"

Discuss: What does this psalm teach us about the form our prayers might take?

Meaning

(Luther's Works, Vol. 114): "Here you learn that praying, reciting your troubles, and lifting up your hands are sacrifices most pleasing to God. It is His desire and will that you lay your troubles before Him. He does not want you to multiply your troubles by burdening and torturing yourself. He wants you to be too weak to bear and overcome such troubles; He wants you to grow strong in Him. By His strength He is glorified in you. Out of such experiences men become real Christians. Otherwise, men are mere babblers, who prate about faith and spirit but are ignorant of what it is all about or of what they themselves are saying."³

Martin Luther recommends the praying of this psalm during times of distress and great temptation, when we begin to doubt God and wonder whether we have been left on our own.

³Luther, M. (1999, c1958). Vol. 14: Luther's works, vol. 14 : Selected Psalms III (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works (Ps 118:6). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.

Psalm 43

NIV

¹Vindicate me, O God,
& plead my cause against an ungodly¹ nation;
rescue me from deceitful and wicked men.
²You are God my stronghold.
Why have you rejected me?
Why must I go about mourning,
oppressed by the enemy?
³Send forth your light and your truth,
let them guide me;
let them bring me to your holy mountain⁴,
to the place where you dwell.
⁴Then will I go² to the altar of God,
to God, my joy and my delight.
I will praise³ you with the harp,
O God, my God.
⁵Why are you downcast, O my soul?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Savior and my God.

Hebrew

¹Arbitrate for me, God,
& defend my case against an unfaithful nation
from men of deceit and wickedness deliver me
²For you are God my fortress
Why do you reject me?
Why do I wander in darkness (judgement)
under the hostility of my opposition?
³Send your light and your truth,
They will cause me to be guided
They will cause me to go to your holy mountain
And to your tabernacle
⁴Then I will resolve to go to the altar of God
to (the Father), gladness of my joy
I will give worship to you with the lyre
God my God
⁵Why are you despairing, my life (nephish)?
And why do you growl in me?
Hope in God,
For I will still give worship to him
Savior (Jesus) of my being and my (Father)

Notes

- ¹Ungodly: unfaithful, the word “Hassidic”, as in “Hassidic Jew”
²Go: cohortative, expressing a desire or choice
³Praise: sometimes used of ritual worship, temple services
⁴Holy Mountain: Deuteronomy 12:2-5:

You shall surely destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess served their gods, ^eon the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. You shall tear down their altars and dash in pieces ^ftheir pillars and burn their ^gAsherim with fire. You shall chop down the carved images of their gods and ^hdestroy their name out of that place. ⁱYou shall not worship the LORD your God in that way. But you shall seek ^jthe place that the LORD your God will choose out of all your tribes to put his name and make his habitation⁴ there. (ESV)

Verses 2 and 3

For **you are God my fortress**

Why do you **reject** me?

Why do I wander in **darkness** (judgement)

under the **hostility of my opposition**?

Send your **light** and your truth,

They will cause me to be **guided**

They will cause me to go to **your holy mountain**

And to **your tabernacle**

- Light and truth are two primary images of Jesus in John’s Gospel
- “I am the light of the world”

- “I am the way, the truth, and the life”
- “Fortress” and “tabernacle” are made parallels
- “Hostile opposition” is contrasted with “holy mountain”

Context

- Many manuscripts place this psalm and psalm 42 together
- Psalm 42 begins “As the deer longs for flowing streams so my soul longs after you, O God”
- Judicial flavor
- David calls on God to be advocate for his case
- The evil men are bringing charges – a lawsuit against him
- Emphasized “God” over “Lord” -> God as the one known to all who rules over all peoples
- Could possibly be a reference to God as “Father”: the first person of the Trinity
- El: could be a reference to Father
- Yeshua: a reference to Christ?

Discuss: Is it possible to find the Trinity in the Old Testament? (John 5:45-47, Luke 24:44-45)

Content

I. **Address**: found in Psalm 42

II. **Promise/Complaint**:

- a) P: You are God my stronghold
- b) C: Why have you rejected me?

III. **Request/Result**:

- a) Req: Let your light and truth bring me to your holy mountain
- b) Res: I will go to the altar of the Lord, and praise you with the harp

IV. **Praise**:

- a) Put your hope in God

From: <http://www.pbc.org/dp/stedman/psalms/0384.html>

That is what this Psalmist is saying. When you can't shake the blues, and you have a depression of spirit that nothing seems to relieve; when you have tried to remember the past, and tried to recall the unshakable, unchangeable relationships that exist between you and God, but nothing helps; then there is nothing left but to rest upon his word, his truth, and to allow that to heal the heart. So the Psalmist closes again with the refrain that catches up the whole meaning of this song,

**Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my help and my God.” {Psa 43:5 RSV}**

Discuss: What does this psalm teach us about Christian prayer?

Psalm 31:1-18

NIV

For the director of music.

A psalm of David.

¹ In you, O LORD, I have taken refuge;
let me never be put to shame;
deliver me in your righteousness.

² Turn your ear to me,
come quickly to my rescue;
be my rock of refuge,
a strong fortress to save me.

³ Since you are my rock and my fortress,
for the sake of your name
lead and guide me.

⁴ Free me from the trap that is set for me,
for you are my refuge.

⁵ Into your hands I commit my spirit;
redeem me, O LORD,
the God of truth.

Commentary

Verses 1 and 2

- Theme: salvation from shame
- Good Friday / Passion Psalm
- Deals with the abandonment of the righteous

“That expression ‘righteousness of God’ was like a thunderbolt in my heart. When under the papacy I read, ‘In thy righteousness deliver me’ [Ps. 31:1] ... I thought at once that this righteousness was an avenging anger, namely, the wrath of God. I hated Paul with all my heart when I read that the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel [Rom. 1:16, 17]. Only afterward, when I saw the words that follow—namely, that it’s written that the righteous shall live through faith [Rom. 1:17]—and in addition consulted Augustine, was I cheered. When I learned that the righteousness of God is his mercy, and that he makes us righteous through it, a remedy was offered to me in my affliction.”

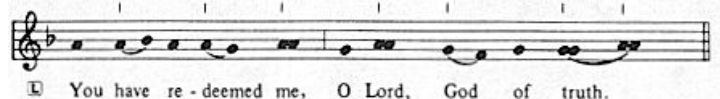
Verses 2,3 and 4

- “my rock of refuge”: boulder or block of rock
- “strong fortress”: house of defensive protection, *castle*
- “save”: save from peril or danger
- *Be, you are, be, you are*: request and promise repeated
- “my rock”: high cliff, “enchanted rock” size rock
- “lead”, “guide”: gently, as if to a watering hole
- “trap”: what traps are laid for us, and by whom?
- “refuge”: defensive protection

Verse 5

- The evening prayer of the pious Jew
- The last of Christ’s seven words: what does this imply?

6. The *RESPONSORY* follows the reading(s).



⁶ I hate those who cling
to worthless idols;
I trust in the LORD.
⁷ I will be glad and rejoice in your love,
for you saw my affliction
and knew the anguish of my soul.
⁸ You have not handed me over
to the enemy
but have set my feet
in a spacious place.

⁹ Be merciful to me, O LORD,
for I am in distress;
my eyes grow weak with sorrow,
my soul and my body with grief.
¹⁰ My life is consumed by anguish
and my years by groaning;
my strength fails
because of my affliction,
and my bones grow weak.

¹¹ Because of all my enemies,
I am the utter contempt
of my neighbors;
I am a dread to my friends—
those who see me on the street
flee from me.

¹² I am forgotten by them
as though I were dead;
I have become like broken pottery.
¹³ For I hear the slander of many;
there is terror on every side;
they conspire against me
and plot to take my life.
¹⁴ But I trust in you, O LORD;
I say, “You are my God.”

¹⁵ My times are in your hands;
deliver me from my enemies
and from those who pursue me.

Verses 6-8

- David’s case before the Lord
- “worthless idols”: nothingness, empty vanities
- “trust”: the essence of faith
- “rejoice”: in his steadfastness, faithfulness
- The Promise (Gospel)
- “handed me over to the enemy”: Satan?
- “spacious place”: poetic for utter freedom
- All of this is implied by Christ on the cross
- This is his answer to “My God, why have you forsaken me?”

Verses 9 and 10

“Wherever in the Psalms Christ complains and prays in bodily affliction according to the letter, there, in the same words, every faithful soul, born and trained in Christ, complains and prays, confessing that it has been tempted to sin or has fallen into sin. For to the present day Christ is spitted on, killed, scourged, crucified in us ourselves. Even now there lie in ambush for Him without ceasing the flesh with its feelings, the world with its pleasures, and the devil with his offers and temptations...”

Verses 11 and 12

“Since Christ was a true man, it naturally pained him to see his own friends all shying and running away from him and no one standing by him. In [Ps. 31:11](#) He laments: “Those who see me in the street flee from me”...

- The disciples who fled in the garden
- Peter who fled down the street from the courtyard

By contrast the other crying is very great and is felt very strongly, when in genuine terror of conscience we call God wicked, cruel, an angry tyrant, and a judge. For then it seems that God has forsaken us and that He wants to banish us to hell. That is how the saints often complain in the psalms ([Ps. 31:22, 12](#)): “I am driven far from Thy sight”; “I have become like a broken vessel.” This is certainly not a sigh that says: “Father”; it is the roar of hatred for God that cries loudly: “Harsh judge, cruel tormentor!” Now it is time to turn your eyes away from the Law, from works, and from your own feelings and conscience, to lay hold of the Gospel

- Law always turns us to the Gospel
- Law can come in many ways

Verse 15

- Lit: “the hand of my enemies”
- God will save me from my enemies’ power
- Parable of The Rich Fool

¹⁶ Let your face shine on your servant;
save me in your unfailing love.
¹⁷ Let me not be put to shame, O LORD,
for I have cried out to you;
but let the wicked be put to shame
and lie silent in the grave.
¹⁸ Let their lying lips be silenced,
for with pride and contempt
they speak arrogantly
against the righteous.

Verses 16- 18

- “Cause your face to shed light”
- “servant”: slave
- “unfailing love”: steadfast goodness, kindness
- “Shame”: the theme of the psalm come back
- David asks that shame become the lot of the wicked
- “silent in the grave”: go silently to Sheol, abode of the dead
- David cries out; but the wicked will lie silent
- Their silence will replace their arrogant speaking

NEXT WEEK’S PSALM: 118: 22-29

²² The stone the builders rejected
has become the capstone;
²³ the LORD has done this,
and it is marvelous in our eyes.
²⁴ This is the day the LORD has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.
²⁵ O LORD, save us;
O LORD, grant us success.
²⁶ Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD.
From the house of the LORD we bless you.
²⁷ The LORD is God,
and he has made his light shine upon us.
With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession
up to the horns of the altar.
²⁸ You are my God, and I will give you thanks;
you are my God, and I will exalt you.
²⁹ Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his love endures forever.

Psalm 29

Context

A call to worship, likely in the temple. 1) 29:1 calls on the angels to join in our worship, 2) 29:2 calls on “proper” worship of God, in “priestly garments” – according to the liturgy God instituted at Sinai and 3) 29:9 mentions the temple specifically. This might be considered an “opening hymn”. It calls the people to remembrance of whose presence they are entering.

NIV

¹ A psalm of David.
Ascribe to the LORD,
O mighty ones,
ascribe to the LORD
glory and strength.
² Ascribe to the LORD
the glory due his name;
worship the LORD
in the splendor of his holiness.

³ The voice of the LORD
is over the waters;
the God of glory thunders,
the LORD thunders
over the mighty waters.
⁴ The voice of the LORD
is powerful;
the voice of the LORD
is majestic.
⁵ The voice of the LORD
breaks the cedars;
the LORD breaks in pieces
the cedars of Lebanon.

Commentary

Ascribe: “speak words of the excellence of greatness of a person” (Dictionary of Biblical Languages)
Mighty Ones: sons of the gods, sons of God, sons of the strong, angels: all possible translations
Glory: manifestation of power: to ascribe to God glory is a confession of our sin (Jn 9:24, Jer. 13:16)
Due his name: “The *name* is divinity, especially the Person of the Son, for He is Himself the name and word of the Father. Hence the words *glory to His name* refer to the Person of the Son. Thus [Ex. 23:21](#) reads: “My name is in Him”; [Ps. 8:1](#): “How excellent is Thy name”; and [Phil. 2:9](#): “He has given Him a name that is above every name.”⁴
Worship: show allegiance by bending the knee, in “priestly garments” (“though this is a possible meaning, the contexts seem focused on the concept of worship rather than the instrumental use of objects”⁵)
Discuss: Could a bias against Christian liturgical worship have influenced the translators to make this sort of statement? Is it consistent with God’s revelation in the Old Testament?
Voice of Lord: normally calls the people to repentance and obedience. Recall the voice in Genesis 1, speaking over the waters. Voice and Word are in a sense coterminous. One implies the other.
Waters: Luther suggests that here the water refers to *us*, as a fleeting people always changing.
Powerful: vigorous, “virile”, and authoritative
Majestic: ornamented, beautiful, and beyond description
Discuss: How do we let the voice of the Lord be heard in our life? In what ways has “Christianity” perhaps lost or misunderstood the term “voice of the Lord”?

⁴Luther, M. (1999, c1974). Luther's works, vol. 10 : First Lectures on the Psalms I: Psalms 1-75 (J. J. Pelikan, et al Ed.). Luther's Works (Ps 29:2). Saint Louis: CPH.

⁵Swanson, J. (1997). Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament) (HGK2079). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

⁶ He makes Lebanon skip like a calf,
Sirion like a young wild ox.

⁷ The voice of the LORD
strikes with flashes of lightning.

⁸ The voice of the LORD
shakes the desert;
the LORD shakes the Desert
of Kadesh.

⁹ The voice of the LORD
twists the oaks
and strips the forests bare.
And in his temple all cry, “Glory!”

¹⁰ The LORD sits enthroned
over the flood;
the LORD is enthroned
as King forever.

¹¹ The LORD gives strength
to his people;
the LORD blesses his people
with peace.

⁶ “He causes to skip like a calf Lebanon and Sirion and like the son of unicorns/rhinoceros/oxes.”

Palmarum, Sixth Sunday in Lent Introit (TLH)

Save me from the lion’s mouth
And deliver me from the horns of the unicorns

Hebrew: “par” – r^e-haim of uncertain meaning
The antiquity of the Bible reveals itself!

Sirion: region in southern Lebanon near Mt. Herman
Lebanon: region known for its richness and wealth
Kadesh: place of dwelling for the Hebrews in the desert

The Lord exercises authority over those with power and might (Lebanon, the forested regions);, as well as over his faithful (in the desert wilderness).

To glorify God is to give glory to his Son. John says, “and we

Flood: Luther sees this as an allusion to Holy Baptism, and the way in which God presides over the font.

King: The Lord rules his Church through his Word – his voice.

Strength: While God continues to smash those of power and might (Lebanon, the forest, the oaks) he strengthens his own people (The Magnificat).

Peace: The Lord brings peace to his people: likely the chief reason this text was chosen for this Sunday.

Discuss: Christians choose particular music to emphasize the Scripture lessons for the day. For what types of service might this psalm have been used in Israelite worship? (praise, mourning, confession, celebration) Is this an appropriate psalm for Easter? What other times might we use this psalm?

Psalm 39

Context

A Psalm of David, written for Jeduthun, a court musician (1 Chr. 16:41-42: “With them were ⁿHeman and Jeduthun ^oand the rest of those chosen and ^pexpressly named to give thanks to the LORD, ^qfor his steadfast love endures forever. Heman and Jeduthun had trumpets and cymbals for the music and instruments ^rfor sacred song. The sons of Jeduthun were appointed to the gate.”) A Psalm of “complaint”, asking for the Lord to relent in punishment.

NIV

¹I said, “I will watch my ways
and keep my tongue from sin;
I will put a muzzle on my mouth
as long as the wicked
are in my presence.”

²But when I was silent and still,
not even saying anything good,
my anguish increased.

³My heart grew hot within me,
and as I meditated, the fire burned;
then I spoke with my tongue:

⁴“Show me, O LORD, my life’s end
and the number of my days;
let me know how fleeting is my life.

⁵You have made my days
a mere handbreadth;
the span of my years
is as nothing before you.
Each man’s life is but a breath. *Selah*

⁶Man is a mere phantom
as he goes to and fro:
He bustles about, but only in vain;
he heaps up wealth,
not knowing who will get it.

⁷“But now, Lord, what do I look for?
My hope is in you.

⁸Save me from all my transgressions;
do not make me the scorn of fools.

Commentary

I will watch: I resolve to guard (desire, intent, wish)

Discuss: What might the difference between “resolve to guard” and “watch” mean for us as Christians?

Discuss: “It’s better to remain silent and seem dumb than to open your mouth and remove all doubt.” (Old Proverb). Replacing dumb with sinful, would David agree with this proverb?

Meditated: word only used twice in the whole of Scripture: once in Psalm 5:2, and here. Muttering out loud under your breath, thinking “out loud, quietly.

Show me: cause to be known to me, imperative

Fleeting: word used only three times in Scripture. Also translated as rejected (Is. 53:3), forbear (Ez 3:27)

Breath: “idol” or “meaninglessness” – also “vain”

Phantom: “image” or “representation” or “idol”

“If a man were to feel his evil, he would feel hell, for he has hell within himself. You ask, “How can that be?” The prophet says, “All men are liars” [Ps. 116:11], and again, “Every man living is nothing but vanity” [Ps. 39:6]. But to be a liar and a vanity is to be without truth and reality. And to be without truth and reality is to be without God and to be nothing. This condition in turn is to be in hell and to be damned.”⁶

Discuss: What do verses 4-6 reveal about David’s attitude toward the Lord? Are they accusatory, or are they confessional? Do verses 7-8 help answer this question? What should then be our attitude toward the Lord in the face of troubles in our life?

⁶Luther, M. (1999, c1969). Vol. 42: Luther's works, vol. 42: Devotional Writings I (J. J. Pelikan, et al, Ed.). Luther's Works (Vol. 42, Page 125). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

⁹I was silent; I would not open my mouth,
for you are the one who has done this.
¹⁰Remove your scourge from me;
I am overcome
by the blow of your hand.
¹¹You rebuke and discipline men
for their sin;
you consume their wealth
like a moth—
each man is but a breath. *Selah*

¹²“Hear my prayer, O LORD,
listen to my cry for help;
be not deaf to my weeping.
For I dwell with you as an alien,
a stranger, as all my fathers were.

¹³Look away from me,
that I may rejoice again
before I depart and am no more.”

“At mass a Christian man should call to mind the failings or the excesses he feels. He should pour all these out freely before God with weeping and groaning as woefully as he can to his faithful Father, who is ready to help him. And if you do not know or recognize your need, or experience no spiritual attacks, then you ought to know that you are in the very worst possible plight. For the greatest temptation is that you find yourself so hardened, hardhearted, and insensitive that no trouble moves you.”⁷

Rebuke: just punishment for crimes committed

Discipline: justly inflict punishment for sin or liability

Wealth: Lit. “that in which you delight”. What gives someone worth in the eyes of the world. 55% of the Gospels deal with money! Possibly what Jesus has in mind in Matthew 6:18.

“each man is like a breath”: each man is meaningless

“When David calls himself a sojourner (Ps. 39:12), one could wonder why he is saying this, since he was a most powerful king of Israel and was in possession of the Promised Land. But he regards these things as trivial and has in sight another and far better habitation, which is a matter of no concern to those who are busily engaged in robbery and usury in this life, as if there would be no future life.”⁸

Deut 26:4-6: 5 “And you shall make response before the LORD your God, ‘A wandering Aramean was my father. And he went down into Egypt and sojourned there, few in number, and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous. 6 And the Egyptians treated us harshly and humiliated us and laid on us hard labor. 7 Then we cried to the LORD, the God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression.”

Discuss: In what ways do we as Christians remind ourselves that we are “aliens and strangers” in a foreign land?

Look away: cause your gaze to turn away from me.
“I am a flash in the pan – let me flash!”

⁷Luther, M. (1999, c1966). Vol. 44: Luther's works, vol. 44 : The Christian in Society I (J. J. Pelikan, et al, Ed.). Luther's Works (Vol. 44, Page 63). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

⁸Luther, M. (1999). Vol. 4: Luther's works, vol. 4 : Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 21-25 (J. J. Pelikan, et al Ed.). Luther's Works (Ge 23:5). Saint Louis: CPH.

Psalm 95

Context

It is the opening psalm of the Roman Catholic, Anglican and Lutheran morning prayer⁹. The Benedictine rule (500s AD) used it as the “Invitatorium”, or the invitation to worship, of the *nocturnes* prayer office. Apparently it was in use in the East much earlier than this. It served as the last entrance psalm in some rites; arriving after this psalm marked you as “late”!

NIV

¹Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD;
let us shout aloud
to the Rock of our salvation.

²Let us come before him with thanksgiving
and extol him with music and song.

³For the LORD is the great God,
the great King above all gods.

⁴In his hand are the depths of the earth,
and the mountain peaks belong to him.

⁵The sea is his, for he made it,
and his hands formed the dry land.

Commentary

Come: lit. “go”, an imperative. Go where?

Sing: a cry of exultation, in praise of the subject

Shout: in public worship, joyful ringing out of triumph. A command for “all y’all and I”, continuing or in the future.

Rock: a prominent rock mass: “enchanted rock”

Salvation: word from which we get “Jesus”, “Joshua”

Come: meet before for the purpose of worship

Thanksgiving: praise rendered by “acknowledging and abandoning sin”.

Music and song: lit. “psalms”

Discuss: What does it mean that our worship should be intimately tied with a confession of sin? How is this expressed in our worship as Christians?

Lord: the name God gave to Moses at Sinai: used for God vis a vis the covenant of Sinai

God: El, the name by which God was known to Abraham: the God of natural revelation?

Gods: Also used of “God” singular elsewhere. May denote the council of heaven, or even the council of earthly ruling powers (

Hands: “under his control” according to the idiom

The Psalmist describes God’s control over all elements of creation. God is sovereign over his creation, from the depths of the sea to the heights of the mountains. An indictment of the various “nature gods” of the pagan religions: Dagon, the Sea God, the mountain gods, etc.

Discuss: What does it mean for us that God is the one who made heaven and earth, visible and invisible?

⁹ <http://www.bartleby.com/65/ve/Venite.html>

⁶ Come, let us bow down in worship,
let us kneel before
the LORD our Maker;
⁷ for he is our God
and we are the people of his pasture,
the flock under his care.

Today, if you hear his voice,
⁸ do not harden your hearts
as you did at Meribah,
as you did that day
at Massah in the desert,
⁹ where your fathers tested and tried me,
though they had seen what I did.

¹⁰ For forty years
I was angry with that generation;
I said, "They are a people
whose hearts go astray,
and they have not known my ways."

¹¹ So I declared on oath in my anger,
"They shall never enter my rest."

Two acknowledgements of our position before God: 1) his is our maker, 2) he is our shepherd. The focus is always on who God is: the only thing we bring to God is acknowledgment of sin.

Discuss: The Psalm opens with a call to worship, and then describes the reasons for this worship: God's attributes of power, creativity, and providence. Consider the following popular Christian worship song in light of this psalm's structure:

I have a secret garden
A place of joy and rest
with living springs and fountains
and fragrant fruitfulness.
My garden is reserved for
my sweet beloved King.
No other one may enter
for His is everything.¹⁰

PSALM STRUCTURE

Part I: What We Should Do

Part II: Why We Should Do It

Harden: cause your inner man to be stubborn

Massah: testing

Meribah: quarrelsome

Discuss: This was the incident of the water coming from the rock in the wilderness. What might the connection be between this "rock" and the "rock of salvation" in the beginning of the Psalm?

Angry: loathed, felt a loathing

Journey language is common in the psalms: the Hebrews understood God to be a God of action, and so they were a people of movement as well. They did not "move in the road of the Lord".

Declared in my anger: breathed out from my nostrils my intense displeasure.

Rest: a place of ease or lack of oppression

The psalm could be read starting at verse 7 and continuing to verse 6. Consider: "So I declared on oath in my anger, they shall never enter my rest. *THEREFORE*...Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord."

¹⁰ [A Garden for My King](http://songsofpraise.org/garden.htm), Susan Tolle,
<http://songsofpraise.org/garden.htm>

Psalm 30

Context

NIV: "A psalm. A song. For the dedication of the temple. Of David."

Trans: "A psalm. A "Hannukah" (dedication) song. The house. Of David."

Could also be the tabernacle, or could refer to the dedication of the temple site, on the grounds of the threshing floor of Ornan (1 Chr. 21:2-14). "House" is another possible translation: could refer to any building, although usually in Psalms the place of worship is meant. Could even be "for the house of David." If the former is the case, then this psalm was written after David's census and the subsequent plague on Israel. This psalm emphasizes the temporary nature of God's discipline (the Law), but the permanence of God's favor (the Gospel).

NIV

¹ I will exalt you, O LORD,
for you lifted me
out of the depths
and did not let my enemies
gloat over me.

² O LORD my God,
I called to you for help
and you healed me.

³ O LORD, you brought me
up from the grave;
you spared me
from going down into the pit.

⁴ Sing to the LORD,
you saints of his;
praise his holy name.

⁵ For his anger lasts only a moment,
but his favor
lasts a lifetime;

Commentary

Exalt: lift up, raise up

Lifted: drawn me up like water (out of the depths added by NIV)

Called: ask or request something, with a focus that the asking is intense or desperate, imploring for aid in a difficult or dangerous situation.¹¹

Healed: restored, forgave

An invocation and thanksgiving is followed by a reason: "for". This is an important part of the psalms and Luther stresses this aspect of prayer: we praise for a *reason*, speaking to God of his mighty acts that are the purpose and enabler of our praise.

Brought: caused my Nephish to come up

Grave: Sheol: the underworld. The abode of the dead. The permanent local of the wicked, but the righteous are never left there indefinitely.

Spared: kept me alive

From: "so that I was not among those going down"
"from among those going down"
"from going down to those in the pit"

Discuss: Last week we talked about heaven. What do we Christians believe about "the afterlife"? What is it? Where is it? How might we understand the concept of "Sheol"?

Sing: Specifically sing praises to God in worship; likely a liturgical term.

Saints: word for "Hassidic". Pious, godly, faithful to God.

Praise: also a liturgical term, for confessing God
"Give worship to the Lord, you saints, confess his holiness."

Moment: his anger is furious but quickly passes

Favor: almost literally "grace"

Lifetime: a blessed, joyous lifetime

¹¹Swanson, J. (1997). Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament) (HGK8775). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

weeping may remain for a night,
but rejoicing
comes in the morning.

⁶ When I felt secure, I said,
“I will never be shaken.”

⁷ O LORD, when you favored me,
you made my mountain
stand firm;
but when you hid your face,
I was dismayed.

⁸ To you, O LORD, I called;
to the Lord I cried for mercy:

⁹ “What gain is there in
my destruction,
in my going down into the pit?
Will the dust praise you?
Will it proclaim
your faithfulness?”

¹⁰ Hear, O LORD,
and be merciful to me;
O LORD, be my help.”

¹¹ You turned
my wailing into dancing;
you removed my sackcloth
and clothed me with joy,

¹² that my heart may sing to you
and not be silent.
O LORD my God,
I will give you
thanks forever.

Weeping: can imply repentance from sin
Rejoicing: Ringing cries of exultation (tying back to 30:1)

Discuss: What does this say about the nature of confession of sins and absolution? Is there weeping in the life of the Christian? What form should it take?

Secure: complacent, at ease, in a state of thoughtlessness
Shaken: be moved, usually of the righteous or unrighteous

Discuss: David talks about his “security” leading to complacency (30:6). How do we avoid the twin dangers of 1) complacency and 2) despair in our lives as Christians? Does this psalm provide any insight into this question?

Favored: in your grace
Dismayed: terrified, greatly troubled
Called: recited, proclaimed, announced
Mercy: imploring grace

The Hebrew word for “called”, “אָרָא”, ka-rah, is a similar root as the Arabic for “called”, ko-ran.

Gain: plunder, ill-gained profit
Destruction: in my blood
Pit: a different pit than the one in 30:3: a pit for catching a lion or, alternatively, the pit of Sheol.
Faithfulness: reliability, sureness, truth

Discuss: David seems to be pleading here to God’s vanity. Who will declare his wondrous deeds, or accomplish his work, if he is dead and in the pit? What do you think of this argument? Do we ever argue with God that our present suffering seems to have no purpose? What similarity might there be between this kind of argument and Jesus’ parable in Luke 11:5-8?

1 Ch 21:15-17: And God sent the angel to Jerusalem to destroy it, but as he was about to destroy it, the Lord saw, and he relented from the calamity. And he said to the angel who was working destruction, “It is enough; now stay your hand.” And the angel of the Lord was standing by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. And David lifted his eyes and saw the angel of the Lord standing between earth and heaven, and in his hand a drawn sword stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces. And David said to God, “Was it not I who gave command to number the people? It is I who have sinned and done great evil. But these sheep, what have they done? Please let your hand, O Lord my God, be against me and against my father’s house. But do not let the plague be on your people.” (*ESV*)

Give thanks: the praise in liturgical worship in the OT

Psalm 119:89-96 (Lamed)

Context

Psalm 119 is an “acrostic” psalm. Each section begins with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet (or, more accurately, “alephbet”) in succession. Verses 89 to 96 form a section, which begins with the Hebrew letter “lamed”, our letter “L”. An example of an “acrostic paragraph” would be:

A mouse went out. Before he did, he packed a suitcase. Carrying this case, he left. Danger lurked along his path. Everywhere he looked, there were traps. Foes had placed them. Guarding himself, he set out...

The overall theme of the psalm is praise of the Word of God. With the exception of verse 90, every verse of this section contains a reference to the Word of God in some form. In fact only verses 122 and 132 of the psalm contain absolutely no references to God’s Word or judgement in some form. There are eight synonyms for the Word of God used in the psalm: law, word, saying, commandment, statute, ordinance, precept, testimony, way and path.

The psalm possibly dates from the time of Ezra and Nehemiah (Second Temple Period), when reminders to remain faithful to God’s Word would have been especially important.

NIV

⁸⁹Your word, O LORD, is eternal;
it **stands firm** in the heavens.

⁹⁰Your faithfulness continues
through all generations;
you established the earth, and it **endures**.

⁹¹Your laws **endure** to this day,
for all things serve you.

⁹²If your law had not been my delight,
I would have perished in my affliction.

⁹³I will never forget your precepts,
for by them you have preserved my life.

Commentary

Eternal: Through all time, as far as the most ancient past and into the furthest future.

Word: רבד; : statement, account, event

Heavens: The Word of God is present with the LORD.

Faithfulness: steadfastness, firmness, fidelity. God is worthy of trust, for his trustworthiness is a divine attribute.

Earth: As the Word stands firm in the heavens, so the earth also endures. The Word of God has established the earth, so how can it be otherwise?

Laws: פּוֹמֵי : judgements, “plans”, legal decisions

Serve: serve him through their labor or work

Discuss: Rm 1:20: “For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made.” In what sense can we say that **all** things serve God? Is this a reflection of the “1st use of the Law”, how the Law keeps the universe and society from self-destruction?

Law: הַרְאָה : direction, instruction, prophetic teaching

Delight: the object in which one finds happiness or joy

Precepts: מִצְוֹת : principles to be obeyed under covenant

Preserved: kept alive, restored to life, revived, nurture

⁹⁴ Save me, for I am yours;
I have sought out your precepts.

Save: deliver me, root for Jesus and Joshua
Sought: consulted or inquired of

Discuss: David commands salvation because he has “sought out” the LORD’s “precepts”. Why has his inquiry of the Lord’s precepts given him a basis to call out for salvation? Note that he has not pleased obedience *to* the law, but rather a “consultation” *of* the law.

⁹⁵ The wicked are waiting to destroy me,
but I will ponder your statutes.

Statutes: divine testimonies, or witnesses
Ponder: show myself attentive to, understand

Ge 31:51-52: Laban also said to Jacob, “Here is this heap, and here is this pillar I have set up between you and me. This heap is a witness, and this pillar is a witness, that I will not go past this heap to your side to harm you and that you will not go past this heap and pillar to my side to harm me. (NIV)

Luther writes: Understanding safeguards, so that heresy will not lead astray the one walking in simplicity and he is not destroyed by ungodly teachers.

⁹⁶ To all perfection I see a limit;
but your commands are boundless.

Perfection: good things, pure things, completeness
Limit: width, breadth
Commands: חוקים : legal conditions of a contract, authoritative directions. From which we get “Bar Mitzvah”: son of the command.
Boundless: abundant, great, powerful

Luther writes: “It is taken in the sense of “perfection,” the way people in the world attempt to perfect their own things and bring them to the highest point. But all these things are again lowered and cease to be perfected. Like a stream, temporal things come and go, rise and fall, increase and decrease, are begun and finished...Not so eternal things. But this word is spoken against all who are wise and seeking in a carnal way, because after they might have perfected many things, either by seeking their own or by teaching their own, another destroys again. What does it profit them but toil and affliction of the spirit? They rejoice in perfecting. Therefore they will necessarily be saddened when the end of their perfection comes, when what they have perfected is destroyed by another. Then it comes about that their spirit lives in narrow spaces, always small and confined. But he who by hope lives in the commandment and Word of God, having nothing in this world, craving nothing of these narrow things, surely lives in the broadness of spirit. For “Thy commandment is exceedingly broad.” And having thus consoled himself, he exhorts to contempt of the world and also of every vain wisdom, which in any case seeks the things that are in the world. Now the Jews seek their kingdoms by wisdom, and the heretics seek glory. But there will be an end of their perfection, because they seek narrow things, while I seek the broadest and freest things forever.”¹²

¹²Luther, M. (1999, c1976). Vol. 11: Luther's works, vol. 11 : First Lectures on the Psalms II: Psalms 76-126 (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works (Ps 119:96-97). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.

Psalm 100

Context

One of a series of “praise psalms” with very much the same content. They all contain similar elements: 1) A call to joyful worship, 2) An exhortation to enter his courts with thankofferings, 3) An acknowledgment that the Lord is creator of the universe, 4) An acknowledgment that the Lord is *our* creator, 5) An expression of God’s faithfulness and righteousness.

Psalm 95

¹ Oh come, let us sing to the LORD;
let us make a joyful noise
to the rock of our salvation!

² Let us come into his presence
with thanksgiving;
let us make a joyful noise
to him with songs of praise!

⁴ In his hand are
the depths of the earth;
the heights of
the mountains are his also.

⁵ The sea is his, for he made it,
and his hands
formed the dry land.

³ For the LORD is a great God,
and a great King above all gods.

⁷ For he is our God,
and we are
the people of his pasture
and the sheep of his hand.

Psalm 100

² Worship the LORD with gladness;
come before him
with joyful songs.

⁴ Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise;
give thanks to him
and praise his name.

³ Know that the LORD is God.
It is he who made us,
and we are his;
we are his people,
the sheep of his pasture.

⁵ For the LORD is good
and his love endures forever;
his faithfulness continues
through all generations.

Psalm 96

¹ Oh sing to the LORD a new song;
sing to the LORD, all the earth!

⁸ Ascribe to the LORD
the glory due his name;
bring an offering,
and come into his courts!

¹⁰ Say among the nations,
“The LORD reigns!
Yes, the world is established;
it shall never be moved

⁵ For all the gods of the peoples
are worthless idols,
but the LORD made the heavens.

¹⁰ He comes to judge the earth.
He will judge the world
in righteousness,
and the peoples
in his faithfulness.

23 hymns in *Lutheran Worship* are based loosely on this cycle of psalms, 6 on Psalm 100. Now Thank We All Our God is based loosely on these psalms. Consider also All People That on Earth Do Dwell (LW 435):

¹ All people that on earth do dwell
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice
Him serve with mirth, his praise forthtell
Come ye before him and rejoice.

² Know that the Lord is God indeed
Without our aid he did us make
We are his folk he doth us feed
And for his sheep he doth us take

³ Oh enter then his gates with praise
Approach with joy his courts unto
Praise, laud and bless his name always
For it is seemly so to do

Discuss: Two weeks past we studied Psalm 95. This week we study Psalm 100. Why would these psalms be especially turned to during the Easter season? Is there anything about these psalms that makes them particularly suited to Easter?

NIV

A psalm. For giving thanks.

¹ Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.

² Worship the LORD with gladness;
come before him with joyful songs.

³ Know that the LORD is God.
It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people,
the sheep of his pasture.

⁴ Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise;
give thanks to him
and praise his name.

⁵ For the LORD is good
and his love endures forever;
his faithfulness continues
through all generations.

Commentary

Thanks: Liturgical thanks in the context of public, ceremonial worship.

Earth: Could be either the earth as in the world, or the land as in Israel. The latter seems more likely as the reference is to the entrance of the courts, and being the sheep of his pasture.

Gladness: as in a sacred festivity, a inward joy

Songs: lit., ringing cries of jubilation (over Zion)

Know: Complete inner acceptance and confidence is implied, not simply head knowledge.

The psalm (100:3) states: “The Lord made us, and not we ourselves.” Why does the Holy Spirit put us in mind of this, as though no one actually knew it? Truly, the entire world has need of this teaching. For all who are presumptuous about their works do not know that they were made by the Lord; and they need to be reminded that they were made by the Lord. Otherwise they would humble themselves before their Creator and not be presumptuous about their own powers, because whatever they have, they have from God. Thus ignorance of the act of creation makes us presumptuous. So does God’s exceedingly great friendliness toward us.¹³

Discuss: Given everything that has come before in this psalm, what is the purpose of being reminded that we are his sheep? Why would it be cause for rejoicing that we are lowly creatures of the Creator, as lowly as sheep?

Good: pleasing, agreeable, pleasant

Love: covenant loyalty, benefits, kindness, favor

‘Good’ in Scripture is not an abstract quality, nor is it a secular human ideal; ‘good’ means first and foremost what God is, then what he does, creates, commands and gives, and finally what he approves in the lives of his creatures. It is not that the biblical writers assess God in terms of a prior concept of goodness, but rather that, contemplating the supreme glory of God’s perfections, they apply to him the ordinary word for acknowledging worth. By so doing, however, they give that word a new depth of meaning. They define good in terms of God; not vice versa. Accordingly, the biblical position is that God, and God alone, is good without qualification¹⁴

Discuss: What does it mean that God is our definition of “good”? C.S.Lewis’ “good” vs. “safe”.

¹³Luther, M. (1999, c1964). Vol. 4: Luther's works, vol. 4 : Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 21-25 (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works (Ge 21:18). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.

¹⁴Wood, D. R. W. (1996). New Bible dictionary (3rd ed. /) (Page 424). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.

Psalm 25

Context

An acrostic psalm: each verse begins with a sequential letter from the Hebrew alphabet. Three major divisions: 1) 1-7: Petition for help, 2) 8-14: Confession the goodness of the Lord, 3) 15-21: Continue plea for help, 4) and an epilogue inv. 22 making the psalm a general one for all those in need of help.

NIV

Of David.

¹To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul;

²in you I trust, O my God.

Do not let me be put to shame,
nor let my enemies triumph over me.

³No one whose hope is in you
will ever be put to shame,
but they will be put to shame
who are treacherous without excuse.

⁴Show me your ways, O LORD,
teach me your paths;

⁵guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my Savior,
and my hope is in you all day long.

⁶Remember, O LORD,
your great mercy and love,
for they are from of old.

⁷Remember not the sins of my youth
and my rebellious ways;
according to your love remember me,
for you are good, O LORD.

Commentary

Lift: am lifting up, an ongoing action

Shame: the disapproval of those around you

Triumph: to be in a state of joy after a conquest

Hope: lit. “look for”, await God’s future action

Luther: No one views his neighbor with clear eyes except the Christian, whose sight is bright and pure. He looks upon his enemies with the eyes of mercy and compassion, and wishes them no evil. Even when his enemy is wroth and angry with him, he thinks to himself: “This bigwig is a wretched person; he is damned already; why should I wish him further evil? If my enemy continues on that course, he is the devil’s own.”¹⁵

Luther: “Now our Lord is a God who permits the faithful to suffer and the ungodly to rage, but still does not forsake the pious in their need, and finally overthrows the monsters and rescues His own. In these verses, therefore, the psalmist would use his own example and experience to admonish and encourage us to trust and hope in God, as the First Commandment teaches. Such trust is good, noble, and wholesome here in time and hereafter in eternity. It is the most acceptable offering to God and the finest service and honor we can render Him.”¹⁶

Discuss: Does hatred of your enemies breaks the 1st commandment?

Show: cause me to know, or become aware of

Teach: instruct, train, focus on application of learning

Truth: lit. “lead me into your truth/faithfulness”

Remember: recall, invoking an action in response

Mercy: state of being declared in fellowship

Love: steadfast relationship; “glory”

Contrast: 1) Remember – your mercy
2) Remember not – my sins

¹⁵Luther, M. (1999, c1959). Vol. 23: Luther's works, vol. 23 : Sermons on the Gospel of St. John: Chapters 6-8 (J. J. Pelikan, et al, Ed.). Luther's Works (Jn 7:25). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.

¹⁶Ibid, vol. 14

⁸ Good and upright is the LORD;
therefore he instructs
sinners in his ways.

⁹ He guides the humble in what is right
and teaches them his way.

¹⁰ All the ways of the LORD
are loving and faithful
for those who keep the demands
of his covenant.

¹¹ For the sake of your name, O LORD,
forgive my iniquity, though it is great.

¹² Who, then, is the man
that fears the LORD?
He will instruct him
in the way chosen for him.

¹³ He will spend his days in prosperity,
and his descendants
will inherit the land.

¹⁴ The LORD confides in those
who fear him;
he makes his covenant known to them.

Good: The understanding that God's goodness is somehow reflected in his merciful and loving relationship to sinners continues to be expressed.

Discuss: David asks that God not remember his sins "for you are good". What is the understanding of God's "goodness"?

Humble: those who lack pride, those tormented and weak. This is the same word used in the "Sermon on the Mount", where Jesus says, "Blessed are the *meek*, for they shall inherit the earth."

Right: lit. "judgement"; leads them through or into it

¹⁰ All the paths of the Lord are
are faithful and honest
to the ones who guard his covenant/testament
and his testimonies/witness

Discuss: Is there a difference between the NIV interpretation and the Hebrew? Note: NIV is alone in translating "witnesses" as "demands". All other major translations use "testimonies" or "decrees".

Fear of the Lord:

"Some people fear God for the sake of God alone; they do the best they can and very conscientiously avoid evil. Others fear God for the sake of God and, at the same time, for the sake of the threatened punishment; their works are less good and perfect. Still others fear God only for the sake of the threatened punishment; these only seem to do good. The first are the children of God; the second are an admixture of children and bondsmen, and the third are slaves." (Luther, Christmas 1516)

"The fear of God is reverence and the spiritual worship of God. In this sense Scripture everywhere uses the expression 'the fear of the Lord.' For the worship of God in its truest form does not consist in works, however great and holy, but in true and genuine reverence." (Luther, On Jonah)

Discuss: How does one balance the fear of the Lord with not fearing the Lord?

¹³ Another connection to Matthew 5? It is the meek who will inherit the land.

Confides: brings into his counsel, emphasis on secrecy
NRSV/ESV: friendship of the Lord
KJV: secret of the Lord

Discuss: Does God hide his covenant from those who do not fear him?

Psalm 16

Context

Six psalms carry the title of “*miktam*” (56, 57, 58, 59, 60), and the meaning of the word is much disputed. Possible meanings include “mystery”¹ or “atonement or expiation”². Seem to be psalms of trust in the Lord sung in the midst of trial or tribulation. They are “cries of faith”. Emphasis is placed here on the Lord’s blessed presence both in life and in death. Notice again the emphasis on “resurrection of the flesh” in verse 10. This reads like a Messianic or prophetic psalm.

¹ Leupold, H.C. (1969), *Exposition of the Psalms*, Baker Book House

² Swanson, J. (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament)*. Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

NIV

A *miktam* of David.

¹ Keep me safe, O God,

for in you I take refuge.

² I said to the LORD, “You are my Lord;

apart from you

I have no good thing.”

³ As for the saints who are in the land,

they are the glorious ones

in whom is all my delight.

⁴ The sorrows of those will increase

who run after other gods.

I will not pour out

their libations of blood

or take up their names on my lips.

⁵ LORD, you have assigned me

my portion and my cup;

you have made my lot secure.

⁶ The boundary lines have fallen for me

in pleasant places;

surely I have

a delightful inheritance.

Commentary

Safe: word not there: lit. “keep me” or “guard me”

Refuge: place trusted to keep one safe: “In God I trust”

Lord: first is name for God, second is “Adonai”

Apart: very difficult to translate. Suggests that for David “good” cannot be found anywhere else than in the Lord.

“A George W. Bush Moment”: For David, there are only two groups of people: the “quadesheem”, or holy ones, and the ones who run after other gods.

Holy: sacred, pure, undefiled

Glorious: mighty, majestic, powerful, beautiful

Run: hast, impetuous, rash

Pour: verb always used for “drink offerings”

⁵ The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and my cup

- Most literally, David has cast his lot in with the Lord, and placed his trust with the holy ones. “Cup” here is taken synonymously with “portion”.

The Cup in Scripture

Of wrath: Psalm 11:6, 75:8, Jer. 25:15, Ez. 23:31, Mark 14:36

Of salvation: Psalm 23:5, Psalm 116:13, Mark 14:23

Discuss: When instituting the Lord’s Supper, Jesus does not say, “this wine is the New Testament in my blood” but “this cup”. How does/doesn’t our communion practice at Memorial emphasize Christ’s drinking of the Cup of Wrath and giving us the Cup of Salvation?

Boundary lines: could also be translated “portion”!

Pleasant places: “I have a pleasant portion/fate”

Inheritance: can be either literal (land) or metaphorical

⁷ I will praise the LORD,
who counsels me;
even at night
my heart instructs me.

⁸ I have set the LORD
always before me.
Because he is at
my right hand,
I will not be shaken.

⁹ Therefore my heart is glad
and my tongue rejoices;
my body also
will rest secure,

¹⁰ because you will
not abandon me
to the grave,
nor will you let
your Holy One
see decay.

¹¹ You have made known
to me the path of life;
you will fill me with joy
in your presence,
with eternal pleasures
at your right hand.

⁷ I will kneel full down before the Lord
who has advised me;
even at night my inmost being disciplines me

Discuss: In what sense does our inmost being discipline us at night? Is David speaking here of dreams? Or simply saying that even in the quiet hours he is being trained?

⁸ I have made as if the Lord is always in my face
Right hand: figurative location of power and authority
Shaken: slip, lack security, be worried

Luther: “Because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved,” namely, from the right hand, though I might be moved from the left hand. Thus not only for Christ but for all Christians the Lord is at the right hand. But at Christ’s and our right hand are the things of the soul and the spiritual things, while on the left hand are the temporal things and those of the body. Therefore the Lord is at our right hand when He stands by for faith, grace, humility, chastity, and everything that is for the salvation of the soul, so that it may not lack them but rather make progress. Not on the left hand, however, since He is not present for the body and the things of the body, yes, He lets it be scourged, humbled, suffer want, and be afflicted. And therefore it is rather the devil who is at our left hand.¹⁷

Discuss: What does it mean that the Lord is on our right but not on our left?

Ac 2:25-31: David said about him: “I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will live in hope, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.” “Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. (also Ac 13:35-38, Lk 4:34, Ac 3:14)

Luther: There are many other passages of the same sort, such as **Ps16:11:** “Thou shalt fill me with joy with Thy countenance”; and **Ps 8:5:** “Thou hast crowned Him with glory and honor,” where he points out that Christ was rewarded with eternal glory for the cross, which He had borne because of His love for righteousness and hatred of iniquity. Therefore it is a most comforting verse, assuring us that glory will follow on our suffering.¹⁸

Discuss: Can you think of other passages of Scripture that speak both about Christ and about us?

¹⁷Luther, M. (1999, c1976). Vol. 11: Luther's works, vol. 11 : First Lectures on the Psalms II: Psalms 76-126 (J. J. Pelikan, et al. Ed.). Luther's Works (Ps 110:5). Saint Louis: CPH.

¹⁸Luther, M. (1999, c1955). Vol. 12: Luther's works, vol. 12 : Selected Psalms I (J. J. Pelikan, et al, Ed.). Luther's Works (Ps 45:8). Saint Louis: CPH.

Psalm 50

Context

This psalm is about the reception of the benefits of the sacraments! It distinguishes sharply between those who come before the Lord desiring his gifts and those who merely go through the motions.

Whether or not this is a description of Judgement Day, a past *theophany* or a present one is the subject of debate. It seems to be a past event and yet could also be a present event (*Luther*). Whatever the event, this psalm is a *didactic* one, meant to teach about the right approach to the worship of the Lord.

Asaph: 1 Chr. 15:17, 25:1, 2 Chr. 29:30 mention him. “David also commanded the chiefs of the Levites to appoint their brothers as the singers who should play loudly on musical instruments, on harps and lyres and cymbals, to raise sounds of joy. So the Levites appointed Heman the son of Joel; and of his brothers Asaph the son of Berechiah.” (1 Chr. 15:17). Called a “seer” in 2 Chr. 29:30.

NIV

A psalm of Asaph.

¹ The Mighty One, God, the LORD,
speaks and summons the earth
from the rising of the sun
to the place where it sets.

² From Zion, perfect in beauty,
God shines forth.

³ Our God comes
and will not be silent;
a fire devours before him,
and around him a tempest rages.

⁴ He summons the heavens above,
and the earth,
that he may judge his people:

⁵ “Gather to me my consecrated ones,
who made a covenant with me
by sacrifice.”

⁶ And the heavens proclaim
his righteousness,
for God himself is judge. *Selah*

⁷ “Hear, O my people,
and I will speak, O Israel,
and I will testify against you:
I am God, your God.

Commentary

Mighty One, God, Lord: Three titles are given for the LORD. The first is God, the second is “capital-G God” describing his transcendence and omnipotence, and the third is YHWH, describing his immanence and covenant faithfulness.

Zion: God is localized, and desires to be looked for in certain places and things. The “the holy hill” in Jerusalem.

Shines forth: His glory is manifested, is remarkably present.

Be silent: lit. “will not be found mute or speechless”

Discuss: The opening of this psalm describes the LORD poetically as one who comes in power and glory. Compare this with Jesus’ imagery in Luke 12:49: “I came to cast fire on the earth” and Luke 12:54-56? “When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once, ‘A shower is coming.’ And so it happens. And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, ‘There will be scorching heat,’ and it happens. You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?”

The Lord calls all of creation at judgement. The council of heaven declares his ability to judge: they are his witness.

Consecrated: faithful, loyal, holy ones, ones in covenant.

Covenant: The covenant of Sinai: likened to marriage.

Declare: cause to be obvious or conspicuous.

Righteousness: justification, vindication, victory

Speak: say to someone directly with purpose.

The Lord is both prosecuting attorney and judge, for he alone can be completely impartial and objective, knowing all things and being the one who *is* justice.

⁸ I do not rebuke you for your sacrifices
or your burnt offerings,
which are ever before me.

⁹ I have no need of a bull from your stall
or of goats from your pens,

¹⁰ for every animal of the forest is mine,
and the cattle on a thousand hills.

¹¹ I know every bird in the mountains,
and the creatures of the field
are mine.

¹² If I were hungry I would not tell you,
for the world is mine,
and all that is in it.

¹³ Do I eat the flesh of bulls
or drink the blood of goats?

¹⁴ Sacrifice thank offerings to God,
fulfill your vows to the Most High,

¹⁵ and call upon me in the day of trouble;
I will deliver you,
and you will honor me.”

¹⁶ But to the wicked, God says:
“What right have you to recite my
laws or take my covenant on your lips?

¹⁷ You hate my instruction
and cast my words behind you.

¹⁸ When you see a thief, you join with
him; you throw in your lot
with adulterers.

¹⁹ You use your mouth for evil
and harness your tongue to deceit.

²⁰ You speak continually
against your brother and slander
your own mother’s son.

²¹ These things you have done and I kept
silent; you thought I was altogether
like you. But I will rebuke you and
accuse you to your face.

²² “Consider this, you who forget God,
or I will tear you to pieces,
with none to rescue:

²³ He who sacrifices thank offerings
honors me, and he prepares the way
so that I may show him
the salvation of God.”

Burnt offerings: lit. “the things brought up”

The LORD makes the point that burnt offerings the Israelites make are not for the sake of God, but for their sake. What God truly desires is a world without a fall, and humans without sin. Only perfect obedience to the Law, or the death of the sinner him or herself can accomplish this. The LORD does not want the Israelites to make the mistake of their pagan neighbors, in thinking that the sacrifices on the altar “feed” God or appease him. The sacrifices mediate God’s grace to the LORD, not the other way around.

Thankofferings: “The sacrifices of God are a broken and contrite spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.” (Psalm 51:17).

Luther: But the true acts of worship are described in [Ps. 50:14](#) in the words: “Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving and pay your vows to the Most High.” External rites serve these and stir you up to praise Him who hears, rescues, governs, and saves so that you trust Him, endure His hand, learn to be mortified and die, and in all these respects show forth a patience worthy of godly men. This is the sacrifice of our body and a reasonable sacrifice (cf. [Rom. 12:1](#)).¹⁹

50:15: One of Luther’s favorite passages, quoted 35 times.

Discuss: Altar sacrifices are to be a sign of faith on the part of the offerer that God is gracious and merciful. That is why this verse is followed by verse 15: “Call upon me in the day of trouble.” The most pleasing words to God are *kyrie eleison!*

Commandments: ¹⁶ II ¹⁷ I, III ¹⁸ VI, VII ^{19,20} VIII ²⁰ IV

Luther: Those who now do not want to accuse themselves and justify God, when they are chosen in gentleness and goodness, will finally do this when they are overcome by power and severity, namely, after death and in the last judgment.²⁰

Verse 23: The Gospel! He who walks by his own righteousness forfeits receiving the righteousness God alone can give.

Discuss: The sacraments of the Church, then, are not to be taken lightly. Those who make sacrifice (in other words, commune and participate in the New Testament) will not receive the benefits of the Lord’s body and blood just by “going through the motions” without faith or trust in Christ.

¹⁹Luther, M. (1999, c1970). Vol. 6: Luther's works, vol. 6 : Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 31-37 (J. J. Pelikan, et al ed.). Saint Louis: CPH.

²⁰Luther, M. (1999, c1974). Vol. 10: Luther's works, vol. 10 : First Lectures on the Psalms I: Psalms 1-75 (J. J. Pelikan, et al ed.). Saint Louis: CPH.

Psalm 51

Context

Probably the best known “penitential psalm” in the psalter. Designated as the psalm for Ash Wednesday and the 5th Sunday of Lent in the LW lectionary, now for the 3rd Sunday after Pentecost in the new lectionary. It has one of the longest titles of any psalm. The sin in question is not only the adultery with Bathsheba but also the conspiracy to “murder” her husband Uriah.

Several portions of this psalm have made their way into our liturgy. Parts of it are the offertory used in both LW and TLH Divine Services: “Create in me a clean heart, O God”. Verse 15 is the opening versicles for our Matins services: “O Lord, open my lips”. LW 373 is a paraphrase of much of this psalm in hymn format.

NIV

For the director of music. A psalm of David. When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba.

- ¹ Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
blot out my transgressions.
- ² Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.
- ³ For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.
- ⁴ Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you are proved right
when you speak
and justified when you judge.
- ⁵ Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from
the time my mother conceived me.
- ⁶ Surely you desire truth in the inner parts;
you teach me wisdom
in the inmost place.
- ⁷ Cleanse me with hyssop,
and I will be clean; wash me,
and I will be whiter than snow.
- ⁸ Let me hear joy and gladness; let
the bones you have crushed rejoice.
- ⁹ Hide your face from my sins
and blot out all my iniquity.

Commentary

2 Samuel 11:1-12:23 tells the story.

The first three verses are all synthetic parallels, where the first stick (phrase) says the same as the second.

- ¹ Spare me! God,
according to your kindness
according to your great compassion
wipe out (from your memory) my transgressions
- ² Launder clean my great wickedness
and from my sin against God cleanse me!
- ³ Because my transgressions I, I am aware of them
and my sin is continuously before my face

Against you only: All sin, even sin against our neighbor, is a sin against God, who as Judge holds the greater punishment.

Justified: pure, undefiled, above reproach

Conceived: clearly David considered himself human from conception, for he considered himself capable of sin.

Truth: faithfulness, loyalty, stability

Wisdom: cleverness, prudence

Hyssop: Used in ritual cleansing: Lev. 14:4, cleansing of a leper, and cleansing of someone who has touched a body.

Nu 19:18: Then a man who is ceremonially clean is to take some hyssop, dip it in the water and sprinkle the tent and all the furnishings and the people who were there. He must also sprinkle anyone who has touched a human bone or a grave or someone who has been killed or someone who has died a natural death.

Snow: Possibly where Isaiah received his inspiration.

Is 1:18: “Come now, let us reason together,” says the LORD. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.”

Bones: can figuratively be strength, essence.

¹⁰ Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
¹¹ Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.
¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit
to sustain me.

¹³ Then I will teach transgressors
your ways, and sinners
will turn back to you.

¹⁴ Save me from bloodguilt, O God,
the God who saves me, and my
tongue will sing of your righteousness.
¹⁵ O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth
will declare your praise.

¹⁶ You do not delight in sacrifice,
or I would bring it; you do not
take pleasure in burnt offerings.
¹⁷ The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit;
a broken and contrite heart,
O God, you will not despise.

¹⁸ In your good pleasure make
Zion prosper;
build up the walls of Jerusalem.
¹⁹ Then there will be righteous sacrifices,
whole burnt offerings to delight you;
then bulls will be offered
on your altar.

Discuss: The first verses speak of justification; the removal of the guilt and stain of sin. Verses 10-12 will speak of sanctification: the creation of a new heart of obedience. Must the one precede the other? Why do Lutherans emphasize “justification as logically prior to sanctification”?

¹⁰ Create for me an ethically pure heart, God
and a reliable spirit make new in my inmost parts
¹¹ Do not cast me from your face
and take your Holy Spirit away from me
Cause to return to me the joy of my salvation
And support me with a noble spirit.

Discuss: After justification comes sanctification, a fruit of which is evangelism. What is the primary missionary task according to David?

Bloodguilt: death, blood, guilt of having killed

God is always the first to take the initiative. It is he who must first “open our lips” before we can come to him in praise.”

Discuss: Two interpretations of this:

1) Physical fulfillment of the letter of the law without a change in our spiritual being is empty and vain before God.
2) All sacrifices before God are a reminder of our disobedience before the Lord. They are required by the law, but God’s preference would be for them never to have to be performed!

Is 57:15: For this is what the high and lofty One says— he who lives forever, whose name is holy: “I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.

Luther: The one who is most depraved in his own eyes is the most handsome before God and, on the contrary, the one who sees himself as handsome is thoroughly ugly before God, because he lacks the light with which to see himself.²¹

These verses tie the psalm not only to David’s sin but to the whole community of Israel. David’s sin has impacted the entire community, and so David pleads for the protection of the entire community.

²¹Luther, M. (1999, c1974). Vol. 10: Luther's works, vol. 10 : First Lectures on the Psalms I: Psalms 1-75 (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works (Ps 51:10). Saint Louis: CPH.

Psalm 27

Context

The contrast between the first verses (1-6) and last verses (7-12) is the most astonishing part of this psalm. The psalmist begins with great confidence in God's goodness, then moves to a plea for salvation. But this is the attitude of prayer: to come to God first in confidence before asking favors.

NIV

Of David.

¹The LORD is my light and my
salvation— whom shall I fear?

The LORD is the stronghold of my
life— of whom shall I be afraid?

²When evil men advance against me
to devour my flesh, when my
enemies and my foes attack me,
they will stumble and fall.

³Though an army besiege me,
my heart will not fear;
though war break out against me,
even then will I be confident.

⁴One thing I ask of the LORD,
this is what I seek: that I may dwell
in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD
and to seek him in his temple.

⁵For in the day of trouble
he will keep me safe
in his dwelling; he will hide me
in the shelter of his tabernacle
and set me high upon a rock.

⁶Then my head will be exalted above
the enemies who surround me;
at his tabernacle will I sacrifice
with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make music
to the LORD.

Commentary

Light: An expression often used for happiness, joy, peace

Verb Tenses

The verbs here are translated in the present tense. They could just as well be translated in the past tense. KJV and ASV both translate these as past tenses. In that case, these are recollections of the Lord's past faithfulness as encouragement for continued confidence in his protection.

Confident: Confidence is the hallmark of true faith. That in which you place your confidence is your god.

Luther: "Thus the prophet here teaches and admonishes all believers by his example not to become smug, proud, or presumptuous, but to fear and pray that they may not lose their treasure."²²

Discuss: Do we Christians pray that we may not lose faith? Do we ever take our faith for granted and assume it can never be taken away?

Day of trouble: The first place of refuge for the Christian should always be the Lord and his dwelling.

Tabernacle: Tabernacle can be thought of both physically and spiritually. But most likely it is here the "spiritual" tabernacle of close communion and fellowship with God. The closer one finds oneself to God the less the worries of this world will bother and frighten. The prayer of every Christian should be to remain in this close, intimate contact, always a gift of the Holy Spirit through the Word and especially the Sacrament of the Altar.

Jn 1:14: And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (*ESV*)

²²Luther, M. (1999, c1955). Vol. 12: Luther's works, vol. 12 : Selected Psalms I (J. J. Pelikan, et al, Ed.). Luther's Works (Ps 26:1). St Louis: CPH.

⁷ Hear my voice when I call, O LORD;
 be merciful to me and answer me.
⁸ My heart says of you, “Seek his face!”
 Your face, LORD, I will seek.

⁹ Do not hide your face from me,
 do not turn your servant
 away in anger;
 you have been my helper.
 Do not reject me or forsake me,
 O God my Savior.

¹⁰ Though my father and mother forsake
 me, the LORD will receive me.

¹¹ Teach me your way, O LORD;
 lead me in a straight path
 because of my oppressors.
¹² Do not turn me over to the desire of
 my foes, for false witnesses rise up
 against me, breathing out violence.

¹³ I am still confident of this: I will see
 the goodness of the LORD
 in the land of the living.

¹⁴ Wait for the LORD;
 be strong and take heart
 and wait for the LORD.

The heart is led to worship by God. We do not come to worship out of our own strength, but the Spirit in our inmost being urges us to “seek his face”

TLH 429 “Lord, Thee I Love With All My Heart”

Lord, thee I love with all my heart
I pray thee, ne'er from me depart
With tender mercy cheer me...
Lord Jesus Christ, My God and Lord, My God and Lord
Forsake me not I trust thy word

Luther: God sports with the children He loves and, as it seems to the flesh, shows Himself angry and dreadful. Hence there arise the well-known laments “I am driven far from Thy sight” (Ps. 31:22) and “Hide not Thy face from me” (Ps. 27:9). But these are merely instances of sporting. God will not deceive or cheat you. Just hold fast to His infallible and unchanging promise.²³

Discuss: Do we think of the pain and suffering of this world as God merely “sporting” with us? What does this mean?

Luther: Who will doubt that this is why more people become wealthy, prominent, and famous among strangers than at home and in their parental circles? For God is the Father of all; He loves the stranger to the point of giving him food and clothing.²⁴

Discuss: Why do Christians so often put family above faith?

LW 512 “Lord, Take My Hand and Lead Me”

Lord, when the tempest rages I fear no foe
For you, the Rock of Ages, are always near
Close by your side abiding I fear no foe
For when your hand is guiding in peace I go

Luther: “Whatever you do and think, especially in times of suffering, when you are an afflicted Christian, do not, if you believe, sit in judgment on your life and actions; otherwise you will go wrong. You are dumb, stupid, you are being tried and led captive, and you cannot speak aright about your affairs or pass judgment on them. You are told to ‘wait on the Lord’.”

Discuss: Luther refers again and again to 27:14. We have all had circumstances where the Lord blessed us, but the blessings were soon forgotten in a time of need. What makes it so difficult to trust in the Lord again and again?

²³Luther, M. (1999, c1964). Vol. 4: Luther's works, vol. 4 : Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 21-25 (J. J. Pelikan, et al, Ed.). (Ge 22:13). St Louis: CPH.

²⁴Luther, M. (1999, c1960). Vol. 9: Luther's works, vol. 9 : Lectures on Deuteronomy (J. J. Pelikan, et al, Ed.). (Dt 10:21). St Louis: CPH.

Psalm 91

Context

Traditionally the psalm read on Ash Wednesday because of its association with the temptation of the Lord (see 91:11-12). It contains much common psalm imagery: the Lord's wings, the Lord is fortress, protection from enemies. The chief image is that of dwelling with God.

Psalm Structure

91:1: THEME
91:2: I have made the Lord my refuge
91:3-8: If the Lord is your refuge, he will shelter you
91:9: I have made the Lord my refuge
91:10-13: If the Lord is your refuge, he will guard you
91:14-16: The Lord's promise to those who trust him

NIV

¹ He who dwells in
 the shelter of the Most High
 will rest in
 the shadow of the Almighty.
² I will say of the LORD,
 “He is my refuge
 and my fortress,
 my God, in whom I trust.”
³ Surely he will save you
 from the fowler's snare
 and from the deadly pestilence.

⁴ He will cover you with his feathers,
 and under his wings
 you will find refuge;
 his faithfulness will be
 your shield and rampart.
⁵ You will not fear the terror of night,
 nor the arrow that flies by day,
⁶ nor the pestilence
 that stalks in the darkness,
 nor the plague
 that destroys at midday.

⁷ A thousand may fall at your side,
 ten thousand at your right hand,
 but it will not come near you.

⁸ You will only
 observe with your eyes
 and see the punishment
 of the wicked.

Commentary

Shelter: “under the cover”, secret place, protection
Shadow: protection, safe-place

Refuge: shelter from danger and harm
Fortress: stronghold occupying a defensive position

Snare: “that which brings sudden control of another”
Pestilence: plague that brings ruin and destruction (deadly)

LW 484: “All Praise To Thee My God This Night”

1. All Praise to thee my God this night for all the blessings of the light
 Keep me, oh keep me King of kings beneath thine own almighty wings
5. When in the night I sleepless lie my soul with heav'nly thoughts supply
 Let no ill dreams disturb my rest no pow'rs of darkness me molest

Terror: lit. “you will not fear the fears of night”

The twin evils of society: war and disease. These are the two greatest mysteries of life. Natural disasters, other than drought, would not have been as common for Israel.

1 Sa 18:7: As they danced, they sang: “Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands.” (*NIV*)

Discuss: The idea of being at the “center of the hurricane” and yet not having it touch you is evoked here. What kind of faith is this?

⁹ If you make the Most High
your dwelling—
even the LORD,
who is my refuge—

¹⁰ then no harm will befall you, no
disaster will come near your tent.

¹¹ For he will command his angels
concerning you

to guard you in all your ways;
¹² they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike
your foot against a stone.

¹³ You will tread upon the lion
and the cobra;
you will trample the great lion
and the serpent.

¹⁴ “Because he loves me,”
says the LORD, “I will rescue
him; I will protect him, for he
acknowledges my name.

¹⁵ He will call upon me,
and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble,
I will deliver him and honor him.

¹⁶ With long life will I satisfy him
and show him my salvation.”

⁹ For you Lord are my shelter from danger

The Most High you have made your dwelling place (mine)

⁹ Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge,
even the most High, thy habitation; (*KJV*)

⁹ For thou, O Jehovah, art my refuge!

Thou hast made the Most High thy habitation; (*ASV*)

Mt 4:6: “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written: ”“He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.” (*NIV*)

Luther: The angels are our guardians, but on our ways. This solution Christ points out learnedly when He, in turn, quotes the commandment: “You shall not tempt the Lord your God.” He points out that it is man’s way not to fly in the air (for that is the way of the flying creatures) but to use the steps which had been constructed from the roof of the temple in order that the descent might be easy and without danger. Therefore when we are engaged in our calling and in the performance of our duty, by a command either from God or from men who have the legitimate right to call upon us, then let us believe that we shall not lack the protection of the angels.²⁵

Discuss: Luther understands “in all your ways” as meaning when we are doing the Lord’s will. Do we understand the Lord’s protection this way?

Mk 16:17-18: And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.” (*NIV*)

Luther: Would that we truly understood and impressed on our hearts the divine promises, namely, that our sins have been forgiven us, that death and the devil have been conquered, and that hell has been destroyed, as this is gloriously proclaimed in [Ps. 91:13](#)²⁶

Discuss: How do Christians misinterpret these passages? How should they be properly understood?

Luther: But our nature is such that it is presumptuous when there is peace and despairs when there is war, although one should steer a middle course and not lose heart in dangers but should trust in God’s mercy and call upon His name, according to what is stated in [Ps. 50:15](#): “Call upon Me in the day of trouble.” Likewise [Ps. 91:16](#): “I will show them My salvation.”²⁷

Discuss: How do we go about steering a middle course in our life as Christians?

²⁵Luther, M. (1999, c1958). Vol. 1: Luther's works, vol. 1 : Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 1-5 (J. J. Pelikan, et al, Ed.). (Ge 2:18). St Louis: CPH.

²⁶Luther, M. (1999, c1966). Vol. 8: Luther's works, vol. 8 : Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 45-50 (J. J. Pelikan, et al, Ed.). (Ge 49:13). St Louis: CPH.

²⁷Luther, M. (1999, c1964). Vol. 4: Luther's works, vol. 4 : Lectures on Genesis: Chapters 21-25 (J. J. Pelikan, et al, Ed.). (Ge 21:18). St Louis: CPH.

Psalm 89

Complaint Psalms: Those psalms that consist largely of complaints of an individual or a community against God. These include Psalms 6, 13, 22, 35, 39, 42-43, 102 (individual) and Psalms 9-10, 44, 60, 74, 77, 79, 80, 85, 88-90 and 108 (communal).

The Covenant With David

¹⁹ Once you spoke in a vision,
to your faithful people you said:
“I have bestowed strength on a warrior;
I have exalted a young man
from among the people.
²⁰ I have found David my servant;
with my sacred oil I have anointed him.
²¹ My hand will sustain him;
surely my arm will strengthen him.
²² No enemy will subject him to tribute;
no wicked man will oppress him.
²³ I will crush his foes before him
and strike down his adversaries.
²⁴ My faithful love will be with him,
and through my name his horn will be exalted.
²⁵ I will set his hand over the sea,
his right hand over the rivers.
²⁶ He will call out to me, ‘You are my Father,
my God, the Rock my Savior.’
²⁷ I will also appoint him my firstborn,
the most exalted of the kings of the earth.
²⁸ I will maintain my love to him forever,
and my covenant with him will never fail.
²⁹ I will establish his line forever,
his throne as long as the heavens endure.
³⁰ “If his sons forsake my law
and do not follow my statutes,
³¹ if they violate my decrees
and fail to keep my commands,
³² I will punish their sin with the rod,
their iniquity with flogging;
³³ but I will not take my love from him,
nor will I ever betray my faithfulness.
³⁴ I will not violate my covenant
or alter what my lips have uttered.
³⁵ Once for all, I have sworn by my holiness—
and I will not lie to David—
³⁶ that his line will continue forever
and his throne endure before me like the sun;
³⁷ it will be established forever like the moon,
the faithful witness in the sky.” *Selah*

The Rejection of Covenant

³⁸ But you have rejected, you have spurned,
you have been very angry with your anointed one.
³⁹ You have renounced
the covenant with your servant
and have defiled his crown in the dust.
⁴⁰ You have broken through all his walls
and reduced his strongholds to ruins.
⁴¹ All who pass by have plundered him;
he has become the scorn of his neighbors.
⁴² You have exalted the right hand of his foes;
you have made all his enemies rejoice.
⁴³ You have turned back the edge of his sword
and have not supported him in battle.
⁴⁴ You have put an end to his splendor
and cast his throne to the ground.
⁴⁵ You have cut short the days of his youth;
you have covered him
with a mantle of shame. *Selah*

The Plea: Salvation From Death

⁴⁶ How long, O LORD?
Will you hide yourself forever?
How long will your wrath burn like fire?
⁴⁷ Remember how fleeting is my life.
For what futility you have created all men!
⁴⁸ What man can live and not see death,
or save himself from the power of the grave? *Selah*

The Plea: Covenant Restoration

⁴⁹ O Lord, where is your former great love,
which in your faithfulness
you swore to David?
⁵⁰ Remember, Lord,
how your servant has been mocked,
how I bear in my heart the taunts of all the nations,
⁵¹ the taunts with which your enemies have mocked,
O LORD, with which they have mocked
every step of your anointed one.
⁵² Praise be to the LORD forever!
Amen and Amen.

Form of the Psalm

- Begins with a recitation of the covenant made with David
- Poetry to the Prose of 2 Samuel 7:8-16 (almost word for word!)
- An “everlasting covenant”
- A “messianic covenant”

2 Sa 7:8-16: ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel. And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.’ (*ESV*)

Theology of the Complaint Psalms

- “Why is God letting this happen to us?”

⁴⁶ How long, O LORD?

Will you hide yourself forever?

How long will your wrath burn like fire?

1) God is hidden

- How can the God who is present in all places be “hidden”?
- Greek understanding of divine omnipotence

2) God is wrathful

- How can a good and gracious and above all *impassible* God be “wrathful”?
- Greek understanding of divine impassibility

A) The God who is hidden and the God come in wrath are “two sides of the same coin”

- “The same situation that is described as a result of God’s absence is also described as an experience of God’s hostile activity... The experience of God as absent and as hostile belong together.”²⁸
- *Luther’s Bondage of the Will*: “But God hidden in his majesty neither deplors nor takes away death, but works life, death, and all in all. For there he has not bound himself by his word, but has kept himself free over all things. Diatribe, however, deceives herself in her ignorance by not making any distinction between God preached and God hidden, that is, between the Word of God and God himself. God does many things that he does not disclose to us in his word; he also wills many things which he does not disclose himself as willing in his word. Thus he does not will the death of a sinner, according to his word; but he wills it according to that inscrutable will of his.”²⁹

B) When experiencing the God of wrath and hostility, we turn to the God of revelation.

²⁸ Floysvik, Ingvar *When God Becomes My Enemy* (Concordia Academic Press, St. Louis, MO, 1997), p.151

²⁹ Luther, M. (1999, c1972). Vol. 33: Luther's works, vol. 33 : Career of the Reformer III (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works (Vol. 33, Page 140). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

- “We further see that their beliefs about God are not based upon their experiences in the present situation but on revelation and history... Faced with a hostile God, they assume that he is characterized by steadfast love, faithfulness, and righteousness, and that his deeds are wonderful, even though their experience tells them the contrary.”³⁰
- *Luther’s Bondage of the Will*: “Diatrobe, however, deceives herself in her ignorance by not making any distinction between God preached and God hidden, that is, between the Word of God and God himself. God does many things that he does not disclose to us in his word; he also wills many things which he does not disclose himself as willing in his word. Thus he does not will the death of a sinner, according to his word; but he wills it according to that inscrutable will of his. It is our business, however, to pay attention to the word and leave that inscrutable will alone, for we must be guided by the word and not by that inscrutable will. After all, who can direct himself by a will completely inscrutable and unknowable? It is enough to know simply that there is a certain inscrutable will in God, and as to what, why, and how far it wills, that is something we have no right whatever to inquire into, hanker after, care about, or meddle with, but only to fear and adore.”³¹

C) The tension in Scriptural understanding

1. What has happened to us is done by God
2. According to his own revelation, God has done what he would do when provoked to anger
3. According to his revelation and covenant, he would be provoked to anger by sin and unfaithfulness
4. This time the reason does not seem to apply
5. The Lord is good, just and rich in steadfast love and faithfulness³²

- These points are kept in creative tension in the complaint psalms
- The psalmist therefore turn with them to God in faith and trust

⁵² Praise be to the LORD forever!
Amen and Amen.

- The complaint of the psalms is for a restoration to covenant
- They are coming to God in trust on the basis of his revealed promises to them.
- “Psalm 89 sets forth at length the character and power of God and the promises he made to David and David’s offspring. This picture is then contrasted with the present situation. It is clear that the psalmist wants more than defeat turned to victory. He wants the return of the situation stipulated by the Davidic covenant.”³³

D) Therefore prayer is always based on God’s promises in his revelation to us

- Prayer to the hidden God is prayer to the God of wrath and of law
- Therefore we always pray *based on God’s promises to us* and his covenant in Jesus Christ
- The “New Testament” in his blood for the forgiveness of sins

E) This is the theology of the cross!

³⁰ Floysvik, Ingvar *When God Becomes My Enemy* (Concordia Academic Press, St.Louis, MO, 1997), p.157-158

³¹ Luther, M. (1999, c1972). Vol. 33: Luther's works, vol. 33 : Career of the Reformer III (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works (Vol. 33, Page 140). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

³² Floysvik, Ingvar *When God Becomes My Enemy* (Concordia Academic Press, St.Louis, MO, 1997), p.159

³³ Ibid, p.161

Psalm 119:105-112 (Nun)

Context

Psalm 119 is an “acrostic” psalm. Each section begins with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet (or, more accurately, “alephbet”) in succession. Verses 105 to 112 form a section, which begins with the Hebrew letter “Nun” נ, our letter “N”. An example of an “acrostic paragraph” would be:

A mouse went out. Before he did, he packed a suitcase. Carrying this case, he left. Danger lurked along his path. Everywhere he looked, there were traps. Foes had placed them. Guarding himself, he set out...

The overall theme of the psalm is praise of the Word of God. Every verse of this section contains a reference to the Word of God in some form. In fact only verses 122 and 132 of the psalm contain absolutely no references to God’s Word or judgement in some form. There are eight synonyms for the Word of God used in the psalm: law, word, saying, commandment, statute, ordinance, precept, testimony, way and path. The psalm possibly dates from the time of Ezra and Nehemiah (Second Temple Period), when reminders to remain faithful to God’s Word would have been especially important.

NIV

¹⁰⁵ A lamp to my feet is your word
and sunshine on my path

¹⁰⁶ I took an oath, and I will rise up
to keep your righteous judgements

¹⁰⁷ I am suffering very greatly; Lord
keep me alive! by your word

Commentary

Rbd: “Word”, the speech, matters, actions of God

Path: Hebrew emphasizes morality as a right journey, a good path traveled, vs. a way or “state” of being

Formula of Concord Intro: We believe, teach, and confess that the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments are the only rule and norm according to which all doctrines and teachers alike must be appraised and judged, as it is written in **Ps. 119:105**, “Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”³⁴

2 Pe 1:19: And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. (*NIV*)

John 1:4: “In him was life, and the life was the light of men.”

Fpymh: “Judgements”, sentences or legal verdicts

Righteous: justice, fair-balances, good government

- “You speak to me in riddles and you speak to me in rhymes / My body aches to breathe your breath, your words keep me alive” SM
- By the power of his word, God sustains all things, gives new life in baptism, and bread and wine become Christ for us.

Formula of Concord: “After God, through the Holy Spirit in Baptism, has kindled and wrought a beginning of true knowledge of God and faith, we ought to petition him incessantly that by the same Spirit and grace, through daily exercise in reading his Word and putting it into practice, he would preserve faith and his heavenly gifts in us and strengthen us daily until our end.”³⁵

³⁴Tappert, T. G. (2000, c1959). The book of concord : The confessions of the evangelical Lutheran church (Formula: 1, 1). Phil: Fort.Press.

³⁵Ibid (Formula: 2, II, 16)

¹⁰⁸ The free offerings of my mouth accept favorably, please, Lord; and train me in your judgements

¹⁰⁹ My life is in my hands continually, and your Torah I will not forget.

¹¹⁰ The wicked set a snare before me, but from your precepts I will not wander.

¹¹¹ I will take possession of your testimony as an everlasting inheritance, for a joy to my heart they are.

¹¹² I incline my heart to do your regulations forever, to the end.

- The Lord summons from us *confession*: a denial of claims to our own importance, and a profession that he alone is *Lord*. Such offerings are *never* left to our devising (see the Pentateuch!)

Tr/ṭi “Torah”, the Law and Gospel of the OT; the sum total of God’s involvement, gracious and just.

Luther: “Throughout Ps. 119 we read the words “Teach me,” “Instruct me,” “Give me understanding,” etc., and there are many similar words. But with all these words not only God’s essence but especially His will is commended. Therefore those who presume to grasp Holy Scripture and the Law of God with their own intellect and to understand them by their own effort are exceedingly in error. For this is the source of heretics and godless dogmas, since they approach, not as receptive pupils but as bustling teachers.”³⁶

ḡyḏwḡPi “Precepts”, principles or regulations that act as a causative code: “if x happens, the people will do y”.

ṭwḏ[e “Statute, Testimony”, either synonymous with precept, possibly a reference to the 10 commandments.

Luther: Again, the question is whether this could or could not be understood in this way, that “inheritance” here be construed as referring to riches and not to people, so that “inheritance” and “cup” would be the same, as Ps. 119:111 states: “I have purchased thy testimonies for an inheritance forever.” For the poor man has nothing for an inheritance; he is not an heir, except of faith and truth and the Gospel. Thus blessed Paul says that he is laying up treasure for his children as an inheritance (2 Cor. 12:14). And Christ has inherited the Law.³⁷

qj 0 “Regulation”, ordinance, regulation, statute, another perscription for action or relationship.

Luther: Those who first consider a work that is commanded as to its reasonableness and usefulness, forgetting that God does not require the work, but the subjection and obedience of the will and opinion, want to stand in judgment themselves, that is, they want to obey and rule at the same time, those foolish and disobedient people. And therefore in Ps. 119 (what is to be noted very particularly) there is so frequent a prayer concerning commandments and law, for he is not praying to do such great or such fine things, but he is praying only for obedience to the Law and for the knowledge of obedience, so that the eye is rather directed not to the work to be done but to the obedience which the Law requires.³⁸

- Emphasis on the inclination of the *heart*: bending of the *will*

³⁶Luther, M. (1999, c1968). Vol. 29: Luther's works, vol. 29 : Lectures on Titus, Philemon, and Hebrews (J. J. Pelikan, et al, Ed.). Saint Louis: CPH.

³⁷Luther, M. (1999, c1974). Vol. 10: Luther's works, vol. 10: (J. J. Pelikan, et al Ed.). Luther's Works (Ps 17:7). Saint Louis: CPH.

³⁸Luther, M. (1999, c1976). Vol. 11: Luther's works, vol. 11: (J. J. Pelikan, et al, Ed.). Luther's Works (Ps 126:1). Saint Louis: CPH.