

## Of Whom Shall I Be Afraid?

Psalm 27, Easter Sunday IV

May 6, 2007

Beloved of the Lord.....Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." Jesus is the life and strength of each believing heart. He is our resurrection, our life! We need to remember this truth, because we live in a world which is surrounded by death. We have all been to funerals. We have all seen death with our own eyes. Just seven days ago, as you well know, a beloved member of our congregation died. It was the Lord's will, the Lord's time, to take her from this vale of tears to Himself in heaven. We have the comfort and assurance that she is heaven, because of the words of Jesus who said, "I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." To die in the Christian faith is to then live with the Lord in heaven. It is not death to die, if we die in the Lord. Jesus said, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." This means we will never die the second death which is hell. Rather if we believe that Christ Jesus is the Savior of all men, we shall live forever with Him who is the resurrection and the life.

This is why David says in our psalm this morning, "Of whom shall I be afraid?" There is a fearlessness in David's words...an absolute confidence that since the Lord is his light and salvation, what could he possibly be afraid of? It is as Paul said, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" True Christians walk by faith and not by sight. We say the same words that David and Paul said. When Christ is our life we do not even fear death!

When David wrote psalm 27, it appears his own son Absalom had become David's enemy. Being overtaken by pride and vanity (a lesson to us all), Absalom had turned against the Lord and against David. Like the enemies of Christ in our world today, Absalom hated those who followed Christ. Absalom hated his own father David. Jesus said, "He that is not with Me, is against Me." The Lord Jesus Christ is a stumbling stone, a rock of offence to unbelievers. The enemies of Christ stumble and trip over Christ, they are offended by Him, because He teaches that man is not righteous, but sinful! Therefore all who follow Christ by faith, will be persecuted by those who don't follow Christ by faith. If we teach that Jesus is True God, equal with the Father and the Holy Ghost, and that He is the risen Savior of all men, the enemies of the Lord will be offended by this truth, for they live under the delusion that they can save themselves. Like Absalom, it hurts their vain pride to hear that they are sinful by nature, that all their good works are nothing more than filthy

rag. Though we speak the truth, they will hate us for speaking the truth. Jesus said, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." Jn 15

Therefore if we speak out against homosexuality, abortion, or premarital sex, the world will hate us. If we say that Jesus Christ is the ONLY WAY to heaven, and all who do not believe in Him will be damned, indeed the world will utterly hate and persecute us. They will make our life difficult and try to make us feel bad, though we are doing good by speaking the truth. They will be like unbelieving Absalom, who persecuted his own father David. Yet we should remember that though our enemies hate us, Jesus said, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." Mt. 5 Jesus loved His enemies so much that He died on the cross to save them. We, who were once His enemies, are saved by His grace. As God forgave us, so we are to forgive even our enemies.

David writes, "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple." David here speaks of the happiness of being in God's Tabernacle, the earthly house where he would often pray and consider God's Word! David, being on the run from Absalom, was unable to worship in the tabernacle. Being hunted by his enemies, he longed to worship in the house of the Lord. He wished himself to be in the Tabernacle, where God lived through His Word.

Things are no different today. Indeed this world persecutes God's children. When we go home today and leave church, we face another week of persecution by the world. One way or the other, the world will mock our faith, and mock our Christ. They will tempt us to abandon church and God, they will tempt us to sin. When we do good by faith, they will say we do evil. And when we do not do the evil that they do, they will accuse us of being self-righteous. a goody-two-shoes. They will do whatever they can to lead us into sin and shame. Often enough they succeed and we fail. The world is much better at doing evil, than we are at doing good. We often yield to their temptations. We covet or lust, we fail to love our neighbor as ourselves, we worship idols by not putting God first in our lives.. "We daily sin much, and indeed deserve nothing but punishment," as our hymnbook says.

But then by the grace of God we repent of these sins, don't we? Though we fall into sin, when God's law convicts us, we return to the Lord by faith. We

repent. And when we come to church, when we like David come to this earthly tabernacle to consider and think about God's Word, it is here we find His grace. Here in church the Gospel of Jesus Christ still reigns. In a world filled with false churches with false messages and false pastors who serve their own belly, God has spared us so that the truth yet prevails here. We give all glory here to God for His mercy, and we take no credit for ourselves. Like David, our heart rejoices to hear of the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ. Many of you will commune today, and God will give you His own body and blood for the remission of sins. We go to church not so that we can give to God, we go to church so that God can give to us. "Given and shed for you, for the remission of sins." Through communion God gives you strength to lead a holier life. God gives you strength to amend your evil ways and continue to fight the good fight of faith, against sin.

David now writes, "For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock." Truly, when we see the sin and shame of our life, what can we do but flee to the Lord? He hides us and puts us beyond Satan's reach by His grace. We flee to the wounds of Christ, where there is peace and safety. Though the world around us howls and rages, like a wild beast ready to devour (27:2), Christ is our Good Shepherd, our Guardian, our Protector, our Defender. "Oh whom shall I be afraid?...Whom shall I fear?" For He sets us upon a Fortress, upon a Rock, which is Christ. And our enemies can only stumble and trip over this Rock that we stand upon. Their arrows cannot penetrate nor pierce through the armor of Christ. For Christ opened the gates of heaven before us when His hands and feet were pierced on the cross. Satan was crushed under the heel of Christ, when Christ conquered sin and death on the cross.

Therefore our head is lifted up above our enemies. We rise above our enemies of the world, for God gives us the knowledge of His grace and wisdom. It is through God's Word that we have the vantage point and we see the world as it is. Through the Word of God we are also able to see the outcome of the battle we are presently in. We do all things through Christ who strengthens us! For Christ is the Victor, and He gives His victory to us! And though we be in the midst of the battle at the moment, when we lift up our voices in prayer, He hears us. He cannot, nor will not forget us! God says in Isaiah (49), "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." It is utterly impossible for God to forget about us. For the sake of Christ He will also answer our prayer. It may not always be a yes, He may

not always give us what we want at the time we want it, but He always gives us what we need, and He does not give us what we do not need. Nevertheless, "Ask and it shall be given you". "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

David now writes, "Hide not thy face far from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help." Like us, David too at times worried about God's wrath. David knew his sin. David knew of his own unworthiness before the Lord. In spite of this David trusted in the Lord's mercy. So ought we to trust in this same mercy. For often in life we feel as if God has hid his face from us. We fear that He will not forgive our great sins. We fear He will divorce us and put us away. We too pray as David did, "Leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation." But what ought we to do when we fear and are afraid? Shouldn't we remember the benediction we receive every week in church? "The Lord make His face shine upon Thee and be gracious unto thee!" Even in the midst of our afflictions, God's face is still shining down upon us! The light in the face of God's own Son gives us peace! And even if family and friends were to forsake us, if our own flesh and blood turned on us or abandoned us, your Lord and your God never will! David says, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up." When it seems all is lost, your Good Shepherd takes you up in His gentle arms by His grace! Whom shall we fear!

Therefore brethren, though our enemies are as numerous as the sands of the sea, though there are spiritual powers of great might, what does it matter? If God be for us, who can be against us! God is the light and the salvation of every believing heart! Of whom shall we be afraid, when we live in God's grace? He is by our side upon the plain....He lights the path making it straight before us! This path leads to heaven! Therefore whom shall we fear? Not even death is to be feared when Christ is the light of our life! And so even though we lost a beloved member, though we lost a sister in Christ, she is still in Christ and with Christ in heaven. All glory belongs to God alone. May the knowledge of His grace, given to us freely through the Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen our fearful hearts so that we may be fearless and courageous. Of whom shall we be afraid when we have Christ? Therefore "Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD." Amen.