

**IN NOMINE JESU**  
**HEAR HIS CONSOLATION**

He is Risen!

Hear again the Word of God for this fourth Sunday in the season of the Resurrection of our Lord:

*The steadfast love of YHWH thus will never die, thus all His compassions will not end.<sup>1</sup>*

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

As people of the cross and empty tomb, we Christians know that we are living in the end times. (And have been since the death of Jesus). Global war, famine in large parts of the world grows, potentially pandemic influenza outbreaks infect many, global economic meltdowns decrease people's financial security, generally accepted murder has become the law in many countries, moral decline accelerates across the earth, false religions that challenge God's word of Christ-crucified grow and deceive many souls, and so-called "natural" disasters appear to be increasing in frequency and intensity, all these things show our need to recall the meaning of the Second Commandment that we might have God's comfort in these Last Days. In giving the Command to remember the Sabbath Day, God was, and is, calling His people to *in every time of need, call upon him, pray to him, praise him, and give him thanks.*<sup>2</sup> Christians are to receive great consolation that we have a Father in heaven, whose Son became one with us to bear our sins, and that the Holy Spirit leads us to pray.

That reminder predates these words of Lamentations for this week by

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<sup>1</sup> *Lamentations 3:33.*

generations: *The steadfast love of YHWH thus will never die, thus all His compassions will not end.*<sup>3</sup> Yet those words are still as valid for us today as they were for the people when they were first given. God, Who, in His steadfast love, watches over all, wills to restrain evil and bring good from it. He is One Whom the believer may approach at any time. This can be done as simply as saying God's Word of Promise back to Him. For example, in times of worldly, physical, or spiritual trouble, the Christian may recall the words of today's text: *(God) does not afflict from His heart and grieve the sons of men,*<sup>4</sup> and, led by the Holy Spirit compose a prayer such as this:

“Lord God, we give you thanks that it is not Your nature to afflict and grieve us. We confess that we do not always remember that truth, and look for the good You have promised to bring even out of evil. Forgive our lack of faith. Strengthen us in the same, give us courage to call upon you in good and bad times, and to trust that Your will is to work all things for good to those who cling to You...”

Such a prayer, beginning with the Word of God, centered and drawn from the Word of God reminds the petitioner of God's steadfast love. Perhaps Christians worry and fret so much, become angered over the seeming injustices in this world, and generally become disgusted with our times because we do not return to the Word of God enough? The greatest and best service to God, one borne of thanksgiving for all He does for us is found in the repeated use of the simple means of grace that He has provided for us. In a phrase, that means, return to the Lord your God where He has promised to be found – in His Word and Sacraments. To encourage people downcast on account of their

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<sup>2</sup>Tappert, T. G. 2000, c1959. *The book of concord : The confessions of the evangelical Lutheran church.* Fortress Press: Philadelphia

<sup>3</sup> *Lamentations* 3:33.

<sup>4</sup> *Lamentations* 3:33.

world the Psalmist chanted:

*The Lord lifts up the humble; he casts the wicked to the ground.*<sup>5</sup>

And the prophet declares:

*The steadfast love of YHWH thus will never die, thus all His compassions will not end.*<sup>6</sup>

Upon which teaching Jesus builds, saying:

*All of you together now certainly have pain, but again you will see (Me), and your hearts will rejoice, and your joy no one may lift from you.*<sup>7</sup>

Out of which St. Peter encourages:

*For this is gracious, if, on account of (a) consciousness of God, someone bears up under pain, suffering unjustly.*<sup>8</sup>

Which is why you were encouraged to sing in this day's first hymn:

*The Lord our God is good: His mercy is forever sure. His truth at all times firmly stood and shall praise from age to age endure.*<sup>9</sup>

And all that returns back to the Word for the week:

*All [YHWH's] compassions will not end; they are new for the morning ...*<sup>10</sup>

When the prophet wrote those words from his divinely guided heart, inspired by the Holy Spirit, he had witnessed a lot of affliction and grieving. He had personally suffered a great deal. His nation had been torn asunder on account of the citizens' unrepented sins. The Babylonians had brought Jerusalem to ruin. The nation of Judah was conquered. Deportation was upon the remnant who had survived the horrors

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<sup>5</sup> Psalm 147:6, *English Standard Version*.

<sup>6</sup> Lamentations 3:33.

<sup>7</sup> John 16:22.

<sup>8</sup> I Peter 2:19.

<sup>9</sup> *Lutheran Service Book*, "All People That on Earth Do Dwell," St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 791, stanza 4.

of the wars, and the humiliation of national defeat. God had removed His Presence from their midst. Even to the faithful it must have seemed that God had utterly abandoned them to destruction.

Out of those dreadful times, which to those in the Faith suffering through all may have seemed to herald the end of the world, the prophet, guided by the Spirit of the living God, composed the book we call Lamentations. He had been the one God had used to try to call the sinning people and their nation to repentance. Now he was the one through whom the people who were still in the Faith would hear God's Word of consolation.

To capture the attention of the hearers of the Hebrew composition of comfort in their midst of their pain and suffering, the prophet used literary tools that do not translate directly into our language. In the book of Lamentations, the first, second, fourth and fifth chapters use each letter of the Hebrew alphabet to begin each new verse. All the Hebrew chapters then, but the third, consist of 22 lines. The third and center chapter triples the alphabet for a total of sixty-six lines. It is in this chapter that God proclaims hope in the midst of sorrow. He does this after the human writer has just applied the general misery of the fallen nation to himself specifically. God, working through the intellect and skill of His chosen human messenger, in the Book of Lamentations is communicating with all the beauty of the language. The prophet, in the midst of his lament, in the Faith begins the consolation out of his woe with the first words of today's

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<sup>10</sup> *Lamentations 3:22b-23a.*

Old Testament text, which begins with the eighth consonant of the Hebrew language (Heth), one-third of the way through the alphabet:

*The steadfast love of YHWH thus will never die, thus all His compassions will not end.*<sup>11</sup>

In the beauty of the ancient language, hearers who have been led through the Hebrew alphabet twice, and then the first third of that alphabet three times, with cries of woe and lament ringing in their ears, have now heard the beginning of a confession of God's unconditional sacrificial love, and mercy. The Holy Spirit deigns to strengthen hope by causing the hearers to reflect upon God's infinite love and compassion. Proof of His grace and mercy continues with the next words:

*They are new for the morning; great is Your faithfulness.*<sup>12</sup>

That means that the downtrodden, the faithful who suffer on account of sin even when it is not their own, but that of their nation and its leaders, may see God's unconditional love and everlasting grace in the daily forgiveness that He offers. They, you, are free to live under His mercy even when all seems lost in your world. It is an historical truth, based on centuries of recorded deliverance, that God will not let evil prevail against His faithful people. The proof is that every day God, through the forces He established – which some discount as just “nature” as if the wind, rain, sun and sea were agents of themselves – work together to provide for the creatures of the earth. That those forces sometimes cause evil, bring disease, and work destruction upon people is

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<sup>11</sup> *Lamentations 3:33.*

<sup>12</sup> *Lamentations 3:23.*

not God's will. That is a result of the corruption that entered into creation as a result of man's will. That people cause harm or death to one another is not God's will, that is the result of their own free human choices to place self over others. When the elements and people bring evil, be assured that God has already seen it coming, and has willed to restrain it for the ultimate good of His people of the Faith. God has spoken, and this is the believer's true confession:

*"YHWH is my portion," cause my soul to say, "therefore I will wait for Him."*<sup>13</sup>

Lest the hearer doubt, the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet begins the three sentences. Each begins with "Tov," which means, "good." Three "goods" are proclaimed that the faithful be encouraged in his or her waiting on the Lord, especially in times, seasons, and years of trial. God says:

- *Good is YHWH to the ones seeking Him, to the soul that seeks Him.*<sup>14</sup>
- *Good it is for the one waiting, and that silently, for (the) salvation of YHWH.*<sup>15</sup>
- *Good it is for a mighty man thus to bear (a) yoke in his youth.*<sup>16</sup>

The crescendo of hope builds from trust in seeking the Lord. It reminds the faithful one that such waiting may be done in trust, for the Lord's salvation comes. That is the promise of the Christ. (Some of you may recall that the Hebrew root word for salvation is none other than the word we transliterate "Jesus.")

That the faithful may be encouraged in the silent waiting on the Lord's Jesus, His life and work then comes forth from the text. For, while the encouragement of the

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<sup>13</sup> *Lamentations 3:24.*

<sup>14</sup> *Lamentations 3:25.*

<sup>15</sup> *Lamentations 3:26.*

<sup>16</sup> *Lamentations 3:27.*

Lamentation is for the hearer, it finds its fulfillment and perfect completion in Jesus. He is the One, Whom God declared Good, Who bore the yoke of suffering in His youth. He carried the yoke – of the cross – across His neck, dying for sinners, those who often forget what such patient endurance means, sometime before the 41<sup>st</sup> earthly anniversary of his birth. It is in Christ alone that the one waiting under the trials, temptations, and tribulations of this fallen creation finds God’s mercy and grace, hope and forgiveness.

The next Hebrew letter appears in the text to remind the faithful that Jesus truly *[sat] alone in silence when it [was] laid upon Him.*<sup>17</sup> Like a lamb led to slaughter, He did not cry out. He bore our iniquities on the tree, into the grave, and for our justification rose from the grave. From that, two gifts are named as the faithful person’s waiting response (each begins with the same letter):

- *He should cause to give his face in (the) dust; there may be yet hope.*<sup>18</sup>
- *He should cause to give his cheek to (the) striking one; let him be filled in insults.*<sup>19</sup>

Can you hear how those texts work best, and completely, and for you in Christ Jesus?

He is the one who was humbled unto the dust of the earth. Dust from dust He became that you might have His resurrection from the dust of the dead. He received the blows that all sinners deserved, bearing the taunts and humiliations of those who despised Him for they did not know Him. Jesus is the One who took the full brunt of the punishment that you might never have it. Hope comes to the faithful when he or she

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<sup>17</sup> *Lamentations* 3:28.

hears and knows that God experienced total lamentation for sin. And that brings us to the next three verses, which each begin with “Ci,” which means “thus,” or “for,” in other words, the conclusions presented by the Lord out of His steadfast love and compassion:

- *Thus Adonai will not cast off forever;*<sup>20</sup>
- *Thus, if He causes grief, then He will have compassion according to (the) abundance of His steadfast love;*<sup>21</sup>
- *Thus He does not afflict from His heart and grieve the sons of men.*<sup>22</sup>

These end times will not last forever. God has promised that, even if someone were to persecute you unto your death, God will not abandon you to the grave. Earthly sorrow will end. God will have pity on the faithful. God will bring spiritual prosperity to His people. If God finds Himself, as a loving Father, needing to bring earthly correction to you on account of your earthly sins, He will not continue the chastisement forever. You may have hope in the knowledge that those truths are reality. You have heard it declared that it is not God’s nature to bring affliction and pain. Rather it is His will to deliver you from all manner of harm to body and soul.

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

Resurrection IV (LSB One-year series)

Lamentations 3:22-33; I Peter 2:11-20; John 16:16-22

May 3, 2009

*Pastor Michael A. Morehouse*

**SOLI DEO GLORIA**

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<sup>18</sup> *Lamentations* 3:29.

<sup>19</sup> *Lamentations* 3:30.

<sup>20</sup> *Lamentations* 3:31.

<sup>21</sup> *Lamentations* 3:32.

<sup>22</sup> *Lamentations* 3:33.