

Second Sunday in Advent
December 4, 2016
Psalm 34:1-9

In Christ Jesus, whose mercies and blessings we have tasted, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Many years ago in my study on the stages of grief I ran across this interesting statement made by a mother who had lost her 11 year old daughter in death. She wrote: *"God does not comfort us only to make us comfortable, but to make us comforters."*

Whether she realized it or not, she was in a few words summing up what the Apostle Paul wrote in II Cor. 1:3-4: **BLESSED BE THE GOD AND FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, THE FATHER OF MERCIES AND GOD OF ALL COMFORT, WHO COMFORTS US IN ALL OUR TRIBULATION, THAT WE MAY BE ABLE TO COMFORT THOSE WHO ARE IN ANY TROUBLE, WITH THE COMFORT WITH WHICH WE OURSELVES ARE COMFORTED BY GOD.**

Many times when the Lord allows trials and afflictions to come upon us and then comforts us in those trials with His Word, He does so in order to prepare us for giving comfort to others who have experienced the same. There is a saying, "You don't know what I go through until you have walked in my moccasins" and another "no one can feel the same except one who has experienced the same."

David was a man of many blessings, but he also had his share of sorrows and trials in his life as well. After he had been anointed to be king of Israel, Saul turned on him. Several times Saul tried to kill David so that he had to flee and become a fugitive even though he was to be the next king.

Throughout all of his trials and afflictions, David also experienced the Lord's rich blessings and comfort. The Lord had chosen him to be the next king and the Lord was going to protect him. But there was another reason why the Lord was giving so much comfort and mercy to David. And that was so David, through his Psalms, could be a comforter to many others; yes, even to you and me. In our Psalm this morning

DAVID INVITES US TO SHARE IN THE EXPERIENCE OF TRUSTING GOD!

We could entitle this Psalm: *Blessed is the man who takes refuge in God.* David learned that from experience. Learned it so well that he could write in verse 8: **OH, TASTE AND SEE THAT THE LORD IS GOOD; BLESSED IS THE MAN WHO TRUSTS IN HIM!** The phrase "taste and see" tells us that God's goodness is something which must be experienced before it can be truly appreciated.

This Psalm is one of 8 psalms that David wrote while fleeing from King Saul. David had jumped from the frying pan into the fire. He left the land of Israel and fled to Gath, the very home of the giant Goliath, whom he had killed some years earlier. This city was in the country of Philistia. Now, why David fled here, we are not told. Perhaps he thought that would be the last place Saul would look for him. Perhaps he thought he could disguise himself and not be recognized. Perhaps he thought the Philistines would accept him thinking that he had defected from Saul and was now on their side. But none of this happened. Immediately this famous man was recognized and we are told in I Samuel 21:10-11: **THEN DAVID AROSE AND FLED THAT DAY FROM BEFORE SAUL, AND WENT TO ACHISH THE KING OF GATH. AND THE SERVANTS OF ACHISH SAID TO HIM, "IS THIS NOT DAVID THE KING OF THE LAND? DID THEY NOT SING OF HIM TO ONE ANOTHER IN DANCES, SAYING: 'SAUL HAS SLAIN HIS THOUSANDS, AND DAVID HIS TEN THOUSANDS'?"**

The people brought David before the king and pointed him out. "This is David the hero of the Israelites, the king of the land." And David was filled with fear. But the Lord spared David's life by having him pretend that he was insane. We read vs. 12-15 of I Samuel: **(DAVID) WAS VERY MUCH AFRAID OF ACHISH THE KING OF GATH. SO HE CHANGED HIS BEHAVIOR BEFORE THEM, FEIGNED MADNESS IN THEIR HANDS, SCRATCHED ON THE DOORS OF THE GATE, AND LET HIS SALIVA FALL DOWN ON HIS BEARD. THEN ACHISH SAID TO HIS SERVANTS, "LOOK, YOU SEE THE MAN IS INSANE. WHY HAVE YOU BROUGHT HIM TO ME? "HAVE I NEED OF MADMEN, THAT YOU HAVE BROUGHT THIS FELLOW TO PLAY THE MADMAN IN MY PRESENCE? SHALL THIS FELLOW COME INTO MY HOUSE?"**

The belief of the Eastern culture was that insane people were spiritually possessed and dare not be harmed. King Achish was afraid to harm David but he also was afraid that David in his madness might harm him, so he let him go.

David then penned this Psalm of thanksgiving and praise to the Lord for his deliverance. But he not only praises the Lord, he also invites us, calls upon all who read these words to do the same with him. He has been rescued, comforted, delivered and now he invites us to learn from his experience so that we always place our trust in the Lord for deliverance from trouble.

And isn't that part of our calling while here on this earth. The Lord tells us in Heb. 10: **LET US CONSIDER HOW WE MAY SPUR ONE ANOTHER ON TOWARD LOVE AND GOOD DEEDS. LET US NOT GIVE UP MEETING TOGETHER, AS SOME ARE IN THE HABIT OF DOING, BUT LET US ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER-- AND ALL THE MORE AS YOU SEE THE DAY APPROACHING.** The Apostle Paul in writing to the Thessalonians says: **WE LOVED YOU SO MUCH THAT WE WERE DELIGHTED TO SHARE WITH YOU NOT ONLY THE GOSPEL OF GOD BUT OUR LIVES AS WELL, BECAUSE YOU HAD BECOME SO DEAR TO US. ...FOR YOU KNOW THAT WE DEALT WITH EACH OF YOU AS A FATHER DEALS WITH HIS OWN CHILDREN, ENCOURAGING, COMFORTING AND URGING YOU TO LIVE LIVES WORTHY OF GOD, WHO CALLS YOU INTO HIS KINGDOM AND GLORY.** Peter repeats David's words for he too experienced that undeserved comfort and love. He wrote in his first Epistle **LIKE NEWBORN BABIES, CRAVE PURE SPIRITUAL MILK, SO THAT BY IT YOU MAY GROW UP IN YOUR SALVATION, NOW THAT YOU HAVE TASTED THAT THE LORD IS GOOD.**

Have you tasted the Lord's love and mercy? This is not only an invitation, it is a challenge! Put God to the test in every situation. He has promised His faithful help. Trust Him! Rely on Him! Completely, implicitly, without reservation put your confidence in Him! Taste of His goodness and inwardly digest His words of Promise. Look at His works. He has never failed in the past and He will never fail in the future either.

Oh, we of little faith. As 2016 rapidly draws to a close, we look back and see that it has been a caustic, angry year of political debates and divisive elections. Race relations have gotten worse in many areas. Terrorism is still present with fires and floods and storms and severe droughts plaguing our country. We individually have also had our share of sorrows---some of you have lost loved ones, others encountered sicknesses or injuries. Yet the Lord never once failed in His promises of deliverance; never once failed to see us through every problem great or small; never once let us face the future on our own. Oh, yes we have tasted of His grace and mercy. And it is always good!

This past year also has been littered with our sins in thoughts, words and deeds, and yet never once were we without our Savior's love and forgiveness. How amazing is that! Over and over and over again we have failed to keep God's Law during this past year and yet over and over and over again God's grace and forgiveness was there to lift our spirits and strengthen us in our faith walk pointing us to the cross.

Having tasted of the Lord's goodness, David cannot contain himself any longer and he cries out: **I WILL BLESS THE LORD AT ALL TIMES; HIS PRAISE SHALL CONTINUALLY BE IN MY MOUTH. MY SOUL SHALL MAKE ITS BOAST IN THE LORD; THE HUMBLE SHALL HEAR OF IT AND BE GLAD. OH, MAGNIFY THE LORD WITH ME, AND LET US EXALT HIS NAME TOGETHER.** There is no time in our life when His praises cannot or should not be on our lips and in our hearts. When the full magnitude of the Lord's kindness and mercy toward us sinful people sinks into the heart, we realize that even a lifetime of praise is not enough. As the hymnwriter says; *"When all Thy mercies, O my God, My rising soul surveys, I'm lost in wonder, love and praise...But, oh! Eternity's too short to utter all Thy praise."*

Our praising will not so much center in the many blessings we have received, great as they are, but it will center in the Lord Himself; the giver of those blessings. David says: **IN THE LORD** my soul shall make its boast. He didn't pat himself on the back for having come up with the idea of pretending to be insane. He didn't pride himself in his own ingenuity, but boasted in the Lord, in His grace, in His mercy for having spared his life. So do we boast in our Savior-God for our salvation and our forgiveness?

When we hear of David's plight our first inclination is to pity him. But David says, No, be glad, **BE GLAD and MAGNIFY THE LORD WITH ME, AND LET US EXALT HIS NAME TOGETHER.**

David continues: **THE ANGEL OF THE LORD ENCAMPS ALL AROUND THOSE WHO**

FEAR HIM, AND DELIVERS THEM. Our Savior is with us always even till the end of the world and promises us He will deliver us. He said, **CALL UPON ME IN THE DAY OF TROUBLE; I WILL DELIVER YOU** (That's His promise), **AND YOU SHALL GLORIFY ME."** (That's our response)

He also sends His angels to watch over us and protect us. We read Psalm 91:11-12: **FOR HE SHALL GIVE HIS ANGELS CHARGE OVER YOU, TO KEEP YOU IN ALL YOUR WAYS. IN THEIR HANDS THEY SHALL BEAR YOU UP, LEST YOU DASH YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.**

Our text concludes with David's words **BLESSED IS THE MAN WHO TRUSTS IN HIM!** How very happy is the person who both in good times and in bad can lay everything into the Lord's hands. *Oh, what peace we often forfeit, Oh, what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer!*

How much more happy, content and peaceful our lives would be if we would only learn to **CAST ALL OUR CARES UPON HIM WHO CARES FOR US.**

We began our sermon this morning with a quote from a mother who lost her daughter through death. At first she did not want her personal tragedy to be a source of comfort and help to others. In fact when she was encouraged to write down how she was comforted by God in her distress she said she was repulsed at that idea. In self-pity and misery she refused to share her feelings and express the comfort she received. But as she faced the grief, she was led by the Lord to accept her daughter's death and felt the need to comfort others who faced the same grief. That is why she wrote the book. In one section she wrote: *When we have tasted and seen that the Lord is good, we are anxious to try Him again. It would be good for all of us who grieve to look back and thankfully remember the help God has given us in our trouble.*

May we who have tasted the Lord in faith and seen that our God indeed is good, join David in praising Him continually and together magnify His name throughout this Advent season and the coming new year.

How very happy is the man who trusts in the Lord!

Amen.