



## Mount Olive Devotion

Twelfth Week of Pentecost (August 17-21, 2020)

### Monday

1 Samuel 2:2-7

<sup>2</sup> “There is no Holy One like the LORD, no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God.

<sup>3</sup> Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth; for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.

<sup>4</sup> The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble gird on strength.

<sup>5</sup> Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry are fat with spoil. The barren has borne seven, but she who has many children is forlorn.

<sup>6</sup> The LORD kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up.

<sup>7</sup> The LORD makes poor and makes rich; he brings low, he also exalts.

If these words from First Samuel sound familiar it is because they are much like the Song of Mary in the first chapter of Luke. In Luke it is Mary, the mother of Jesus, who speaks; here it is Hannah the mother of Samuel, who was to become a great judge and priest in Israel. God’s reversal is being proclaimed: the proud are humbled and the mighty are defeated; those with full bellies are hungry and those with many children are forlorn. Meanwhile the humble are raised up, the feeble gain strength, the hungry have no lack, and those who were pronounced barren have borne children in abundance. This reversal is announced here, throughout the prophetic books, and especially it is heard in the words of Jesus known as the Beatitudes (Matthew 5). This great reversal is the good news coming to us throughout the history of God’s people that if we are without strength, hungry and forlorn we are still favored in God’s eyes. Indeed we are *most* favored, for God does not abandon God’s children, but embraces us all the more in our time of need. Good news indeed!

### Prayer

Help us to trust in your love and almighty power, O God. Keep us from despair and lead us in hope. We often falter and doubt. Forgive us. Be near us. Grant us your peace. We pray in Jesus’ name. AMEN.

## Tuesday

Exodus 15:1-3, 9-12

"I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously;  
horse and rider he has thrown into the sea.

<sup>2</sup> The LORD is my strength and my might, and he has become my salvation;  
this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him.

<sup>3</sup> The LORD is a warrior; the LORD is his name.

<sup>9</sup> The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, my desire shall have its fill  
of them. I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.'

<sup>10</sup> You blew with your wind, the sea covered them; they sank like lead in the mighty waters.

<sup>11</sup> "Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness,  
awesome in splendor, doing wonders?

<sup>12</sup> You stretched out your right hand, the earth swallowed them.

This song of praise comes to us from the lips of Moses, the leader of Israel, Miriam the prophet and sister of Aaron the High Priest, and the people of Israel following their rescue at the Red Sea. This story of deliverance is one of the central stories of God's people before Christ, showing the God of salvation at work in spectacular fashion. Even though much mischief and even evil has been done in the name of the Lord Warrior, it is good to know that God is our champion in the fight. If you have ever been in a battle for your life and have known the presence of a strong ally, you know the blessing of this one. God desires to be an ally for us. In Jesus, God's alliance with us is shown in sacrifice. In the Spirit, God's alliance with us is shown in the wisdom and comfort we receive. In the Creator, God's alliance with us is shown in God's ability to forgive and make all things new. We can be assured, whatever our need, God is with us.

## Prayer

We praise you, Lord of Hosts, for your mighty acts revealed to your people down through the ages. We praise you that you do not stand idly by when we are in need of an ally. You stand with us. You fight on our behalf. You suffer and even die that we might be saved and live. Thank you, God of all. Be near us every day. We pray this in Christ's name. AMEN.

## Wednesday

II Samuel 22:2b-7, 17-20

The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer,

<sup>3</sup> my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation,  
my stronghold and my refuge, my savior; you save me from violence.

<sup>4</sup> I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies.

<sup>5</sup> For the waves of death encompassed me, the torrents of perdition assailed me;

<sup>6</sup> the cords of Sheol entangled me, the snares of death confronted me.

<sup>17</sup> He reached from on high, he took me, he drew me out of mighty waters.

<sup>18</sup> He delivered me from my strong enemy, from those who hated me;  
for they were too mighty for me.

<sup>19</sup> They came upon me in the day of my calamity, but the LORD was my stay.

<sup>20</sup> He brought me out into a broad place; he delivered me, because he delighted in me.

This song of praise comes from the lips of David, future king of Israel, who was being pursued by the jealous and murderous King Saul. David attributed his narrow escape to God's divine intervention and here he sings his praise to this delivering, saving God. Notice how desperate David was for help. He says that "the cords of Sheol entangled me." That means that he was being dragged toward the grave as though someone had bound his limbs in cords and was pulling him into the pit. Our enemies these days are not likely to be jealous kings, but rather the isolation and loneliness that have come to us during this pandemic time. We have for so long been prevented from seeing, touching, or conversing directly with our dear ones that we can begin to wonder if we will ever be granted that pleasure again. Depression and despair threaten us and we need a Deliverer from these strong enemies. It is good to know, that Jesus the Christ is our Deliverer. As the writer to the Hebrews said: "We do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize with us in our weakness, but one, who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin."

## Prayer

We praise you, Lord Christ, that you know our weakness, our temptations, and our failures even better than we do. You know that even though we wish to be strong, we are often weak. Help us in our day of trouble. Come to us and bless us with strength and joy. Grant us the faith to believe that since we are yours, nothing can keep us from singing your praise. In your precious name, we pray. AMEN.

## Thursday

Daniel 4:34-37

I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored the one who lives forever. For his sovereignty is an everlasting sovereignty, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation.

<sup>35</sup>All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does what he wills with the host of heaven and the inhabitants of the earth. There is no one who can stay his hand or say to him, "What are you doing?" <sup>36</sup>At that time my reason returned to me; and my majesty and splendor were restored to me for the glory of my kingdom. My counselors and my lords sought me out, I was re-established over my kingdom, and still more greatness was added to me. <sup>37</sup>Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are truth, and his ways are justice; and he is able to bring low those who walk in pride.

This song of praise comes from a most unlikely source: a Babylonian king. This king has just been through a horrific experience. While strutting around atop his palace one day, admiring his fine kingdom, he said to himself, "What a splendid empire you have built with your own hands." In that hubris God struck him with madness. Instead of living in power and majesty and luxury, he became as a wild beast, roaming the grasslands and forests, naked, eating grass like an ox. He was driven from his position of power because of his failure to acknowledge that all power and authority come from God. But then here he says, "My reason returned to me." Indeed our reason returns to us when we acknowledge that it is *God* who has given us all things. We are mad if we fail to realize this, thinking that somehow we are the Maker and Redeemer of all things. As Luther said in the Small Catechism, "I believe that God has created me and all that exists. He has given me and still preserves my body and soul with all their powers. He provides me with food and clothing, home and family, daily work, and all I need from day to day. God also protects me in time of danger and guards me from every evil. All this he does out of fatherly and divine goodness and mercy, though I do not deserve it. Therefore I surely ought to thank and praise, serve and obey him. This is most certainly true."

## Prayer

It is certainly true that you have created me and all that exists, Gracious God. Open my eyes to your goodness and grant that every day I might live in gratitude and joy for all you have given me. In your Son, Jesus' name, I pray. AMEN.

## Friday

Revelation 1:4-8

<sup>4</sup> John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne,

<sup>5</sup> and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood,

<sup>6</sup> and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving<sup>[c]</sup> his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

<sup>7</sup> Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail. So it is to be. Amen.

<sup>8</sup> "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

In this great hymn of praise, John announces that our God is the one "who is, and who was, and who is to come." This brings to mind one of the most peaceful scenes one can imagine – being on a Minnesota lake at dawn in the summer. The light is just starting to creep over the horizon, painting the sky with color. As we see the light beginning to emerge, we know that the night is passing, the day is coming, and the Sun will travel across the sky and set at day's end. We see before us what is, what was, and what is to come. God is like that for us. While we sit in our present day we know that God has been with us from our earliest days, and God will be with us on our last day and even beyond. God will never quit being present with us from sunrise to sunset in our life. The psalmist once wrote that God watches over us from our going out (our birth) to our coming in (our death) and forevermore. Sunrise, high noon, sunset, God is present, guiding, loving, forgiving, and embracing us as we go. Thanks be to God!

## Prayer

Almighty and Gracious God, how good you are. Your love is everlasting and your mercy is from age to age. You are the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end. You are the one who has known us from before we were born and you will know us even in our death. How can we praise you? How can we ever thank you? Grant that our hearts might be turned ever toward you, so that all we do and say, might be to your glory. Grant this through Christ our Lord. AMEN.