

INSTALLATION SERMON PREACHED BY DR. NORMAN A. MADSON, SR. FEBRUARY 19, 1961
 the installation of Pastors Arvid Gullerud and Keith Olmanson
 MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH, EAU CLAIRE, WIS.

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PRAYER

Thou God of all grace and truth, who hast not only reconciled us to Thee through the willing obedience, suffering and death of Thine only begotten Son, but hast also committed unto us poor sinners the word of reconciliation, bidding us go forth into all the world with its life-giving message, grant us grace by Thy Holy Spirit, so to preach the stern message of Thine all-demanding law, that sinners may of a truth learn to understand from what they have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. May we who are to preach the Gospel never lose sight of the two-fold truth: "Without the Law the Gospel is not understood: without the Gospel the Law benefits us nothing." May it ever be said of our ministry:

"O blessed ministry
 Of reconciliation,
 That shows the way to God
 And brings to man salvation!
 Lord, Thou preserv'st Thy fold,
 Dost call, enlighten, keep,
 Dost comfort and uphold."

To that end bless the preaching of Thy saving word also in this hour for the sake of Christ, our one and only Saviour. Amen.

Text: Psalm 46, 10.11:

BE STILL, AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD: I WILL BE EXALTED AMONG THE HEATHEN, I WILL BE EXALTED IN THE EARTH. THE LORD OF HOSTS IS WITH US: THE GOD OF JACOB IS OUR REFUGE. SELAH.

These were the words. Holy Father, sanctify us through Thy truth, Thy word is truth.
 Amen.

Fellow redeemed, grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

As little children we have learned to sing the mightiest anthem ever composed by mortal men - Martin Luther's "Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott." Rightly has it been called "God almighty's grenadier march."

"A mighty fortress is our God,
 A trusty shield and weapon;
 Our help is He in all our need,
 Our stay whater'er doth happen;
 For still our ancient foe
 Dost seek to work us woe:
 Strong mail of craft and power
 He weareth in this hour,
 On earth is not his equal."

"Still must they leave God's word its might,
 For which no thanks they merit;
 Still is he with us in the fight
 With His good gifts and Spirit.
 And should they, in the strife,
 Take kindred, good, and life,
 We freely let them go, they profit not the foe;
 With us remains the kingdom."

It is well that we have learned that hymn, And I trust that we as Christian parents shall never forget to tell our little children as they are learning it, that the 46th was Luther's favorite Psalm. It was this Psalm to which he would turn when the burdens placed upon him were a little too much for him to bear. Then it was that he would turn to his fellow teacher Philip Melancton and say: "Let us sing the 46th Psalm."

But why was it so dear to him? Luther knew his Bible, and he knew how to make use of it. There have been very few men in the history of the Christian church who have so lived themselves into the very text of Scripture itself as had Martin Luther. When at the historic debate at Leipzig in 1519 on the Primacy of the Pope, his opponent, the learned Dr. Eck, complained that Luther had a copy of the Bible on the lectern before him, and asked to have it removed - it was removed. But that did not stop Luther from quoting at will Scripture whenever it was needed.

And he was concerned about how Scripture was used. He used to say: "Man muss nicht allein ansehen, ob es Gottes Word sei, ob es Gott geredet habe, sondern viel mehr, zu wem es geredet sei, ob es dich treffe oder einen andern." And he loved this Psalm in particular because it brought him comfort in his turbulent life, and also told him what would happen to all who did not have Scripture itself as their anchor. So we ask you to-day:

TO WHOM WILL GOD BE A MIGHTY FORTRESS?

1. To all who recognize Him as the omnipotent Jehovah, the Lord of hosts, but who also remember
2. That He is the God of Jacob.

1. "Be still, and know that I am God." There are times when it is highly necessary that a word like this be spoken to us. First of all, we must know that it is God who speaks, and then we must also know that He has meant it for us. If this were not the case, the Bible would have little or no meaning to us. "Zu wem ist es geredet?" asks Luther.

When things happen to me as a believer which are entirely beyond what I had any reason to expect in my ministry - when it appears that the God, whom I have honestly sought to serve, seems suddenly to have left the scene, and I am faced with those who claim that I have entirely missed my calling, so that I am unfit to serve the church of God as an overseer, what am I to do? Must I at once yield, and let them take over what had been entrusted to me by a God who still claims the right of way?

I will have to ask myself: Am I the only one who has been troubled about the course which the synod is now taking, or are there others who find themselves wondering whether or no they are in the right fellowship? Those of us who lived through the painful experience we had in Mt. Olive congregation in Mankato last year will naturally have a right to ask: "Does our present pastor take any other stand than that which was taken by our former pastor so far as church fellowship is concerned?" Not if he is to be judged by the resolution he offered at the recessed convention last November. For what was the heart and center of that substitute motion? Taking 1 Cor. 1,10 as the starting point ("Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment"), he tells us that it involves his Lord's directive. (Rom. 16,17 is still there), involves his salvation, involves the salvation of his children, involves the question whether or no Mt. Olive congregation shall continue as a truly orthodox Lutheran church, he moved that we withdraw from the Synodical Conference. But what happened to that substitute motion? It was waved aside by a chairman who did not want to confuse the people. And so I was forced to resign from a congregation whose pastor is convinced that Romans 16, 17 is still in force, and that it applies to the disorderly conduct now being practiced on every hand by a church body which formerly was orthodox. Can there be any question as to the unionism now being practiced?

Are we to sit silently by while president Rogness of the Norwegian merger is conducting devotions down at the Missouri Springfield Seminary? While the blaspheming Dr. Martin Scharlemann of Concordia Seminary of St. Louis is lecturing to the members of TALC? While a Dr. Pelikan and von Schenk are having their prayer sessions with the monks and priests at Collegetown, Minnesota? While a Lambert Brose is conducting a column in the official TALC organ, THE LUTHERAN STANDARD? Should any more testimony be necessary? But it is those who remind our people of these things which are called trouble-makers. And I want

to be numbered among them, for our Bible does have something to say on this very matter. Those who remain silent under such conditions are called by Isaiah: "Dumb dogs." I am 100% agreed with the editor of our Sentinel who wrote me recently: "I am all fed up on a theology which has only tolerance for errors and enmity for those who expose it."

Yes, the Lutheran Hour Speaker may claim for himself, as he did in a recent issue of Christianity Today that he is a "loyal Missourian." But how loyal was he back in 1945 when he refused to apply Rom. 16,17 to erring believers? The Germans have an expression to the effect that: "Zu behaupten ist nicht zu beweisen," to claim a thing doesn't prove anything unless you can prove it by your life. He claims that he abides by what a Dr. Franz Pieper teaches in his Dogmatics. But if he had studied Dr. Pieper in all seriousness he would have discovered that the Common Confession makes use of that which he calls an "immoral thing." You make use of an expression which may be understood in two different ways. You may ask the questions, "Unionism with whom?" as does the Lutheran Hour speaker, and that at a time when what we have referred to above is taking place under his very eyes. But it isn't going to convince anyone who knows the facts.

This Psalm takes us back to one of the great moments in the history of God's economy of grace. The patriarch Jacob had decided to return to the land of his birth, Canaan. God had most signally blessed him in the land of Mesopotamia. But as he is approaching his homeland he is informed that his brother Esau whom he had wronged is coming against him with an armed band. What does Jacob do? Well, first he sends messengers begging for peace. Then he sends gifts which only a man of wealth could afford. But the angered Esau comes on apace. Then it is that Jacob does that which he should have done to begin with - he goes to God in fervent prayer. And what was the substance of that prayer? "Lord, I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands." Genesis 32,10.

Jacob had divided his possessions into two separate groups, sending the women and children and the slowly traveling animals to the north of the brook Jabbok, and he alone on the south bank entered into a struggle with Jehovah, who had come to him in the form of a man. As the day is dawning God asks Jacob that he will let Him go. But what was the patriarch's reply? "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." Gen. 32,26. When God had asked him what his name was and had been told that it was Jacob, Jehovah went on to say: "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hath prevailed." Gen. 32,28.

And the remarkable thing about God's economy of grace is this, that there are times when He will look with favour upon our refusing to carry out what He has commanded us to do. Here He blesses the patriarch for refusing to let him go. We find the same thing in the life of Moses some years later. Coming down from Mt. Sinai what does Moses see before him? His beloved Israel dancing around a golden calf. And what does he do? He goes to God in earnest prayer: "If thou wilt forgive their sins (then comes the dash, which is used to indicate a sudden transition of thought) -- and if not, blot me, I pray thee out of thy book which thou hast written." Ex. 32,32. God tells him to go on, but Moses will not take another step unless God's grace goes with him. And that refusal is blessed, for God's grace goes with him. And even so here. God's grace is vouchsafed the patriarch, and He is exalted among the heathen, yea, in all the earth, no matter how hopeless it might have appeared. It is the ultimate victory which will result whenever we trust in God's gracious promises. It is that thought which William Cowper has in mind when he sings in his hymn of absolute trust:

"Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head."

He is after all what He calls Himself "the Lord of hosts," so that with a Paul Gerhardt you can unabashedly confess:

"If God Himself be for me,
I may a host defy,
For when I pray, before me
My foes confounded fly:
If Christ, the head, befriend me,

If God be my support,
The mischief they intend me
Shall quickly come to naught."

2. But we must not only recognize Him as the omnipotent Jehovah, the Lord of hosts, we must also recognize Him as the God of Jacob. And what does that mean? That was the name by which he entered into that all night struggle with Jehovah in prayer. In other words, it means that he will help all those who humbly admit that they have nothing to offer Him but their sins and shortcomings. What was Jacob's prayer? "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant." Gen. 32,10.

It was Luther who called humility "the mother of all virtues." But what is humility? There are few definitions which surpass that of Tryon Edwards:

"Humility, the fairest, loveliest flower
That grew in Paradise, and the first that died,
Has rarely flourished since on mortal soil.
It is so frail, so delicate a thing,
'Tis gone, if it but look upon itself;
And they who venture to believe in theirs
Prove by that single thought they have it not."

That you will find the confession of every true child of God. What was the confession of the Centurion of Capernaum, the only man who was to hear words of praise for the greatness of his faith. "I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof." Matt. 8,8. What was the confession of the prodigal? "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Luke 15,21. What was David's confession when Nathan had revealed unto him the heinousness of his sins? "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." Ps. 51,4. But where that confession is sincere, and where the poor sinner has turned to Him who alone has the power and the will to forgive sins, there will be forgiveness as full and free as Paul has assured us in these most gracious words: "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Rom. 5, 20. And why is that? Because:

"There's a wideness in Gods mercy
Like the wideness of the sea,
There's a kindness in His justice
Which is more than liberty;
There is welcome for the sinner
And more graces for the good,
There is mercy with the Saviour,
There is healing in His blood.

"For the love of God is broader
Than the measure of man's mind;
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind.
If our faith were but more simple
We should take Him at His word;
And our lives would be all sunshine
In the presence of the Lord."

So what do you glean from the experience through which you have been led these past several years? In view of the words of our text, you will completely have misapplied them unless you have found comfort and assurance in them as meant for you. May you then, with an Olearius, be given grace to sing in the midst of your afflictions:

"Learn to mark God's wondrous dealing With the people that He loves;
When His chastening hand they're feeling, Then their faith the strongest
God is nigh, and notes their tears, Though He answers not, He hears;
Pray with faith for though He try you, No good things can God deny you."

Amen.

