

Sermon for June 2, 2013 – Pentecost 3

Psalm 91:14-16

Theme: Cling to the LORD

- 1) *He will stand with you in trouble*
- 2) *He will deliver and show you His salvation.*

¹⁴ "Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. ¹⁵ He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him. ¹⁶ With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation."

What do the following things have in common: the tornado in Moore OK, a common cold, World War II, a toothache, cancer, Hurricane Katrina, and stubbing your toe on a dresser during the night? This: every bad and painful thing that happens on this earth – be it minor or major - is a result of sin.

After Adam and Eve fell into sin, God cursed the earth with the purpose of showing our absolute need for Him. Sin infected hearts don't want to be subject to God. The desire to be "god" caused Adam and Eve to sin in the first place, and this desire to be our own gods - masters of our own fate - continues in the nature of man. And if humans are this way, do you think they will turn to the LORD and submit to Him on their own, if all goes well? No – and the LORD knows this. This is why He cursed the earth after the fall into sin. This is why He allowed pain, danger and disaster on this earth – to show us that we need him. Without His salvation and protection we are lost.

So there is no shortage of pain and sorrow on this earth. Man does his best to make life less painful, to prevent disease and avoid disaster – but even his best efforts will not keep these things from him. Where there is sin, suffering, pain and death will soon follow.

Now, understand the LORD's intent in allowing these things. He is not a "monster" as atheists will claim. He gets no pleasure in our suffering. No, He has another purpose, one He expressed through the prophet Ezekiel, who wrote: '*As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways!*' (Ezekiel 33:11)

The LORD is more than happy to save and protect those who turn to Him in repentance and faith. He will stand by them in the face of every evil and deliver them. Even if the world comes crashing down around them – as it did for Noah – God will not abandon or forsake those who cling to Him in faith and love.

This is the point Psalm 91 makes, and on this truth we will meditate under the theme: **Cling to the LORD.**
1) *He will stand with you in trouble.* 2) *He will deliver and show you His salvation.*

Part One: *He will stand with you in trouble*

The author of Psalm 91 expresses great confidence in the LORD. Come what may, the Psalmist is convinced that the LORD will protect and preserve him. And what gives the Psalmist such confidence? Is this merely false bravado? No, His confidence is in the LORD. And why? Our sermon text tell us:

¹⁴ *"Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.*

The word translated as "love" in our text literally means "to be attached to" someone. The idea is of a love that will not let go. It's trust. It's faith.

God will rescue those who cling to Him in faith – those who love and trust in Him above all else. But here's a problem. We already said that people do not do this on their own. The human heart is inclined to rebel against God. So how can anyone love God?

The Scriptures tell us: *We love because he first loved us.* (1 John 4:19) *God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* (Romans 5:8) *God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.* (John 3:16).

In other words, God loved us even before we loved Him. In love He sent his Son to die for our sins. In love he sent the Holy Spirit to call us to repentance and faith through the preaching of the Gospel. Those who "*acknowledge his name*" that is, those who believe everything God tells us in His word about Himself, our sin and His salvation, stand under His divine protection. Such a person repents of his sin, acknowledges his absolute dependence on God, and trusts in Jesus.

God loves those who turn to Him in repentance and faith. He will rescue and protect them from every evil. How? First of all by preventing much danger and sorrow from coming their way. But if it does come their way, the Lord promises: *He will call upon me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him.*

Just think: when you, dear Christian, face trouble and call on the LORD, He will answer you. The first thing He will do is stand with you in trouble. Don't think of God as someone who is far off, who barely knows the pain or trouble you face. No, listen to how Isaiah describes the LORD when Israel was facing trouble. He writes: *In all their distress he too was distressed* (Isaiah 63:9). The LORD is not indifferent to our trouble or suffering. He sees it and doesn't like it. Imagine a parent watching his child having to go through something painful. No parent enjoys this. When we see our children distressed, we too feel distressed. God is the same way. Well why, then, does He allow trouble to come our way? He allows it only because He knows that the painful trial we experience will serve our good. We don't understand, but He does.

And once His purpose has been served, He will come and deliver us. How? He will stop the suffering. He will calm our anxiety. He will remind us of His great love in sending His Son to be our Savior. He will point us forward to our home in heaven – or even deliver us there. We may feel the heat of trial now, we may see evil surrounding us, but the Lord will rescue us from every evil attack and bring us safely into His kingdom

Part Two: *He will deliver and show you His salvation*

The LORD will stand with the man who clings to Him in faith and love. He promises: *I will deliver him and honor him.* ¹⁶ *With long life will I satisfy him and show him my salvation."*

God will not forget His plan for us. He wants us to live with Him in paradise. For this reason He created us. For this purpose He saved us. And He is truly happy with those who cling to Him in faith. He will make sure that they get through this earthly valley of the shadow of death to His side in heaven. He will honor them in the presence of their enemies on the last day – making their cup of blessing overflow. He

will give them eternal life in heaven, eternal favor, the right to be called His children, a room in His house and a seat at His table. They will enjoy His presence forever.

God is always working towards this end – even though it might not seem like it; even though it might seem as if we have been abandoned. Listen to how St. Paul describes it: ³⁵ *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?* ³⁶ *As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."* ³⁷ *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.* ³⁸ *For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* (Romans 8: 35-39)

Cling to the LORD, and He will stand with you in trouble. He will deliver you and show you his salvation. What does it mean to cling to the LORD? We already briefly mentioned that it is summarized by the idea of faith. But what does it mean to believe in the LORD? Does it merely mean to believe He exists and that He is powerful? *Even the demons believe that--and shudder.* (James 2:19).

Does it mean to keep God in my pocket as a good luck charm, and only pull Him out when I really need Him? Sadly this is how we often act towards God. We think about Him only when we have to – otherwise we think about ourselves a lot.

No, to cling to the LORD in love and faith is to realize our utter need for Him, and trust in His great mercy toward us. To cling to the LORD in love and faith is to treat Him as the Father that He is – our heavenly Father who loves us.

My children like to cling to me. You all see it at the end of the service. I have to remind them sometimes that I have other people to greet, that they can hug me later. They love me. They want nothing more than to be with me – that I listen to them, love them and spend time with them. They think I am the greatest Dad in the world simply because of who I am.

Well, that loving clinging that my children have towards me is what God the Father wants us to have towards Him. Like children, He wants us to trust in Him as our Father. He wants us to love, cherish, and hold onto Him. He wants us to be like little children, who find their greatest satisfaction in Him, who are not afraid to ask Him for help and who want nothing more than to be with Him.

Are we such kind of children of God the Father? Sadly we often act like bratty two-year olds or rebellious teens. We don't listen. We disobey. We do our own thing. We sin; and because of this we deserve every kind of disaster, death and damnation. Realizing this we cry out: "LORD, I do believe, help me with my unbelief."

Our Father hears our cry of repentance and forgives us for Christ's sake. He reminds us of our baptism – the day the Holy Spirit gave spiritual birth to us and declared us to be children of God. Through the Gospel in Word and Sacrament, he points out His love and care for us in Christ. Through these means the LORD strengthens our childlike faith and love in Him and His providence.

And as we cling to LORD as children cling to their father, He will protect and keep us, provide and preserve us. He will bring us safely into His Kingdom where we can enjoy His presence forever.

Cling to the LORD in love and faith. He will stand with you in trouble. He will deliver you and show you his salvation. Amen.