

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity, October 8, 2017

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)
Hymns: 226, 437:1, 413, 428, 417: 5-7
Lessons: Psalm 146, Ephesians 2: 19-22, Acts 2: 1-13.
Sermon Text: Psalm 11.
Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltreter

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Much advice is available. Even if we don't ask for advice, advice is jumping out at us from every source: Books have been written giving advice on every subject under the sun. Newspaper and magazine stories and columns continue to give advice daily and weekly. Radio and TV talk shows give all sorts of advice on how to do things and what to do in almost every circumstance of living.

There is much unsolicited advice. And sometimes the advice that people offer, even well-meaning people offer to the Child of God, to us, is lousy advice. It is just plain wrong advice. It is advice that would point us away from God rather than toward God.

That is the kind of advice that David, the writer of this Psalm has been given: Someone, perhaps even his so-called "friends" or followers had told him *"Flee like a bird to your mountain. For look, the wicked bend their bows; they set their arrows against the strings to shoot from the shadows at the upright in heart. When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?"* We find the answer to that question in our text:

GOD'S CHILDREN TAKE REFUGE IN THE LORD.

1. Those who are **not** of God offer other advice.
2. The Lord is just and will reward wickedness with destruction.
3. The Lord is gracious and will give eternal goodness to those who believe in Jesus Christ, His Son.

David's "friends" or advisors were telling him 'Our enemies are too strong. We might as well give up and flee! Fly away like a bird and be safe!' We don't know when this psalm was written. It may have been from the time that Saul was persecuting him, or even at the time when David's own son Absalom was rebelling against him.

But to these fears of his friends, David replies *"I take refuge in the Lord!"* How can you say that our enemies are too strong and that we should give up? David did have to flee, to run away physically at times, such as when Saul was persecuting him, and when Absalom rebelled against his father. But he did not despair or lose his hope in the Lord. Yes, there were times that his faith faltered. But God always allowed David to regain confidence in the Lord God.

As I said, there is much advice today. Many people would look at us, would look at our problems, at our difficulties, and say 'I know how to solve your problems. If only you would do this, or if you would do that. . .?' Even now, as the foundations of faith and morality are being destroyed, what can God's people do? What can such a small group as we do? Isn't this exactly the age we live in, too? When *"the wicked bend their bows, they set their arrows against the strings"*, they are taking aim at us, at God's people. The picture here is to *"shoot from the shadows at the upright in heart"*. The wicked try to ambush us, to slay us unawares.

It seems that every day the very foundations of morality are being destroyed. Even the visible church is abandoning the basic doctrines of God's Word! Standards of morality, which form the basis for society, are crumbling. And when a God-fearing leader, or any Christian speaks out, he or she is attacked, and in some

cases, morality is made into a political issue. Yes, we are being ambushed by the devil and the world around us. Those who want to follow God's Word have many attacks upon them. What then should we do? Should we give up and run for the hills?

Where is our refuge? God's children take refuge in their Lord. We've seen in our own lives that those who are not of God offer other advice. But we see from Scripture that God is just, and that he will reward unrepented wickedness with eternal damnation. But on the other hand, we must be assured from scripture that the Lord is gracious and will give eternal goodness to those who believe in Jesus Christ, his only-begotten Son. What can the righteous do when we are being attacked and ambushed, and everything that we've been taught is important is attacked by the world and the power of the devil? We can answer with David ***"In the Lord I take refuge."*** We can also say ***"The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord is on his heavenly throne. He observes the sons of men, his eyes examine them. The Lord examines the righteous, but the wicked and those who love violence his soul hates. On the wicked he will rain fiery coals and burning sulfur; a scorching wind will be their lot. For the Lord is righteous, he loves justice, upright men will see his face."***

Even though it seems as though the wicked are prospering in their wickedness, we know that God is still ruling in the heavens. Nothing escapes his detection. He sees the deeds of the ungodly.

We've seen news stories of riots and 'demonstrations' in many places, for example, and how there were video cameras in helicopters actually filming crimes taking place. And we've also read how, as a result of such video tapes, people have been arrested and ultimately punished. I think that's like the picture of God sitting on his throne in heaven, watching what is going on here on earth. Scripture tells us that God has better vision than those brilliant lights from police helicopters that help find evil-doers. And such helicopters also have infrared heat-seeking cameras which can see and detect warm bodies even in the dark! We use these earthly pictures to illustrate how God sits in the heavens and knows what is going on here on earth. In his holy temple, ***"He observes the sons of men, his eyes examine them."*** Nothing escapes his vision. Scripture also tells us that the Lord hates evil, and tells us what will be the end of the wicked. When he comes in judgement, he will punish every sin of the unbeliever. ***"On the wicked he will rain fiery coals and burning sulfur. A scorching wind will be their lot."*** Thus God's Word describes the coming punishment of wickedness.

But on the other hand, those who are righteous through Christ, will dwell with God in eternal happiness. David reminds us at the end of the psalm ***"For the Lord is righteous, he loves justice, upright men will see his face."*** Remember, it is only through faith in Jesus Christ that one is upright, that one is righteous, that one is good in God's sight.

A truly good work is everything that a believing child of God does in the fear and love of God. So our confidence must be with David in this psalm, that we are upright because of the blood of Jesus Christ. We are among the righteous because God puts upon us those beautiful robes of Jesus Christ, telling us "your sins are forgiven". Isaiah tells us (33:6) ***"He will be the sure foundation for your times"***.

Although the foundations of society and the standards of morality seem to be crumbling, what can the righteous do? We can turn to the Lord our God, and take refuge in him, and what he tells us in his Holy Word. And, as St. Paul says to Timothy we can accept this, that ***"Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness"*** (2 Tim. 2:19). We were just singing with the hymnwriter "I walk in danger all the way. The thought shall never leave me that Satan, who has marked his prey, is plotting to deceive me. This foe with hidden snares may seize me unawares if ever I fail to watch and pray. I walk in danger all the way". We also sang, and this is true of our lives, "Oft in adversity I know not where to flee." We do get confused. We don't always stop and think 'Where do I get the answers? Where do I get the hope?' We are going to find the answers, and the hope we need in the scriptures, the Word of God.

You are going to find comfort in God's Word. You are going to find encouragement for your life in searching the scriptures, so that with the hymnwriter we can say "I walk with angels all the way. They shield me and befriend me. All Satan's power is held at bay when heavenly hosts attend me; they are my sure defense, all fear and sorrow, hence! Unharmful by foes, do what they may, I walk with angels all the way." The next verse, emphasizes "I walk with Jesus all the way. His guidance never fails me."

The Lord is righteous. He loves justice. Upright men, those made upright by faith in Jesus Christ will see his face. That will happen on judgement day, when we are taken to be with Jesus Christ in heaven.

We see these ideas in many psalms. I'd like to point to just one more psalm this morning, Psalm 46: ***“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble”***. That's the psalm that found its way into Luther's great Reformation hymn “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God, A Trusty Shield And Weapon!” At times in his life when Luther was discouraged, he is reported to have said ‘let's sing Psalm 46’. He was referring to the hymn which can remind us of the comfort found in God's Word. Read Psalm 46. Be reminded that ***“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging,...The Lord Almighty is with us, the God of Jacob is our fortress!”***

So we must conclude that the Child of God must not take every piece of advice that is offered, even from well-meaning people. God's children, of whom we pray that we may always be numbered, will take refuge in their LORD, the one who created them and sustains them by providing all they need for their body and life, both here on earth and for eternity. God's children will test, or “try the spirits” and realize that some advice is damning and will lead to eternal destruction. The Lord is just and will reward wickedness with destruction; and the LORD is extremely loving as well as he is angry with sin. We can trust and place all our confidence in him, for he will graciously give us eternal life. Amen.

Reprinted from Ministry By Mail for June 7, 1992