

Psalm 98:1-4 (First Sunday after Christmas—Series B)

“Our Salvation is Jesus”

Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Enfield, CT

December 27, 2020

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text is the Introit for the Day, Psalm 98:1-4:

¹Sing to Yahweh a new song because He has done wondrous things. His right hand and His holy arm have caused salvation for Him. ²Yahweh has made known His salvation. Before the eyes of the nations He has revealed His righteousness. ³He has remembered His lovingkindness and His faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. ⁴Make a joyful noise to Yahweh, all the earth. Break forth and sing for joy and sing praises.

“It’s war out there,” Sergeant Smally said, “so be careful!” Frank Billings barely heard him. He was deep in his own thoughts. It was his first day back after the incident.

Incident sounded so insignificant. In reality, it was the most important *incident* of Frank’s 28 years on the force. For almost three decades, he had stared danger in the face without as much as blinking. Then came the *incident*.

It had been a routine domestic disturbance call—a husband getting violent with his wife. Frank had handled dozens of cases like it. This time, however, as he and his partner were subduing the man, he came up with a pistol and fired four shots before Frank could wrestle it from his hand. Frank had felt one bullet whiz past his ear.

It wasn’t until after he had secured the man that he realized his partner, Ozzie, had taken a bullet. It was only a flesh wound, but it was enough to put Ozzie out for a couple of weeks. It had really scared Frank. Forty-eight years old and only two years away from retirement, Frank was confronted with his own mortality. Now, on his first day back after 30 days on administrative leave, Frank wasn’t sure he could handle the fear. It *was* a war out

there. There were hidden dangers on all sides. He felt as though he were on the brink of disaster.¹

The world is a dangerous place out there, isn't it? It's much more dangerous than it appears. There is violence. There is chaos. There is danger from our fellow human beings. There is danger from disease. There is threat of not having enough to make ends meet, paying the bills, putting food on the family table. Stress, anxiety, depression, and other mental illnesses affect many, including ourselves. It is a scary world. Many people experience danger from the threat of exposure to the elements. Countless numbers suffer and die as victims of malnutrition and disease. Even in our technologically advanced age, life is uncertain. It is war out there.

The 18th-century composer, Hans Adolf Brorson, penned the hymn "I Walk in Danger All the Way." It continues these many centuries later to truly describe the life we live today.

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 I should fail to watch and pray.
I walk in danger all the way.

I pass through trials all the way,
With sin and ills contending;
In patience I must bear each day
The cross of God's own sending.
When in adversity
I know not where to flee,
When storms of woe my soul dismay,
I pass through trials all the way.

¹ Jacob A. O. Preus, *Just Words* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2000), 189-190.

And death pursues me all the way,
 Nowhere I rest securely;
 He comes by night, he comes by day,
 He takes his prey most surely.
 A failing breath, and I
 In death's strong grasp may lie
 To face eternity today
 As death pursues me all the way. (*LSB* 716)

That danger which we face in this life has its roots in the corruption of the whole human race by sin, the corruption of the whole world by the fallenness that followed Adam and Eve's eating of the forbidden fruit. As a result of sin, there is also warfare taking place between God and humanity. We not only face the dangers of other people and life lived in a messed-up world, but we are also in the bull's eyes of God's righteous judgment against our sins and our sinfulness. There is no safe place for sinners. "If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?" (Psa. 130:3 ESV). The answer: No one. We all deserve His wrath and punishment for what we have done and for what we have left undone, our failure to love God with all that we are and our failing to love other people as ourselves.

So how can it be that the psalmist says to sing to Yahweh a new song? How can he even suggest that people "make a joyful noise" and "break forth and sing for joy and sing praises"? The answer: Because God has acted for His fallen creation. God has done something wondrous. God's right hand and holy arm caused salvation for Him. God has saved humanity from sin and its consequences, from His own wrath and judgment, and from death.

What a wondrous picture of God acting on behalf of sinners the psalm writer gives us! God is like a warrior rolling up His sleeves so that all people can see His powerful muscles. He shows off His muscles and uses them, not in punishment and condemnation, but in grace and

mercy, in lovingkindness and faithfulness to His promises. God saves us from sin, death, and hell.

Psalm 98:2, "Yahweh has made known His salvation." Salvation is the Hebrew word *yeshuah*. It is the root word for the name Jeshua, "*Yahweh saves*," which in English is the name Jesus. If you'll permit me the liberty of a wordplay, is it not right to read verse 2 this way? "Yahweh has made known His Jesus." Acts 4:11-12, "This Jesus . . . has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

We can sing a new song of joy and praise to God because we are no longer under His wrath and punishment. We have been saved from sin, death, and hell because God has given to us His One-of-a-Kind Son, Jesus of Nazareth. It was Jesus who stood in our place and has turned away God's anger from us because of our sins. Jesus put Himself in harm's way. He went to the most dangerous place in the world—to the cross of death—for the sins of the world so that He could restore us to God our Father. Jesus endured the hatred of the world, the chaos of sin, and a violent death to save you and me from such a fate. He stood there for us so that we might stand secure by grace through faith in Him.²

Our Father in heaven did a wondrous thing for us fallen creatures in giving us His Son Jesus. His right hand and holy arm worked salvation for us as Jesus' hands were nailed to the cross, His arms stretched out in death to pay for our sins in full and to win our peace with God. His righteousness is now credited to us. Our sins forgiven by the shedding of His blood. Jesus has snatched us from the peril of our sins, from the fear of death, and from the

² Ibid., 193.

condemnation of hell. Jesus has restored us to the Father. We are no longer at war with Him. We are His adopted sons and daughters through Jesus who is our salvation.

This is the message of the Season of Christmas. God our Father gifted to us Jesus, salvation itself, through His perfect life, death, and resurrection. God's lovingkindness and His faithfulness to His promises is fulfilled. His salvation in Christ is proclaimed so that all the ends of the earth may see the Lord's salvation from sin and death, so that the eyes of all the nations might look upon the righteousness of Jesus that He gives to them in the forgiveness of their sins.

By faith we do see the Lord's salvation, Jesus. In the Gospel and the Sacraments of Christ, we receive salvation in the forgiveness of sins and the life everlasting. We are able to sing to the Lord new songs of praise and joy despite what things still happen to us in this moral life. Yes, we walk in danger all the way, but that's only part of the picture. The hymnwriter concludes:

I walk with Jesus all the way,
His guidance never fails me;
Within His wounds I find a stay
When Satan's pow'r assails me;
And by His footsteps led,
My path I safely tread.
No evil leads my soul astray;
I walk with Jesus all the way.

Amen.