

**Psalm 36:5-9 (2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after the Epiphany—Series C)**

**“God’s Faithfulness to Us in Christ”**

**Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Enfield CT**

**January 16, 2022**

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

Our text is from Psalm 36, used for the Introit today.

<sup>5</sup>O Yahweh, in the heavens is your faithfulness. Your truthfulness is up to the clouds.

<sup>6</sup>Your righteousness is like the mountains of God. Your justice—a great deep.

Man and beast you save, O Yahweh.

<sup>7</sup>How precious is your faithfulness, O God, and the children of men—in the shade of your wings they take refuge.

<sup>8</sup>They are saturated with the fat of your house, and the river of your delights you give them to drink.

<sup>9</sup>For with you is the fountain of life. In your light we see light.

Who doesn’t enjoy the deliciousness of good food and drink? I don’t know anyone who would say “no” to their favorite meal. God also likes delicious food and drink because He often uses it as a metaphor for His blessings that He freely gives. In Psalm 23, for example, David rejoices, “You **prepare a table** before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my **cup overflows**” (Psa. 23:5 ESV). In Psalm 34:8, again David exults, “Oh, **taste** and see that Yahweh is good!” And in Psalm 63, David once more celebrates, “My soul will be satisfied as with **fat and rich food**, and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips” (Psa. 63:5 ESV).

God, through the prophet Isaiah, also spoke about His blessings using the metaphor of good food and drink. Isaiah 25:6, “On this mountain Yahweh of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.” The invitation goes out in Isaiah 55, “Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk

without money and without price. . . . Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food" (Is. 55:1–2 ESV).

As we turn our attention to Psalm 36 today, we see that in verse 8 God's salvation is described as delicious food and drink for "the children of men": "They are saturated with the fat of your house, and the river of your delights you give them to drink." Think here of an abundance of the good things. We're not talking cube steak. More like a nice porterhouse or filet mignon. God blesses people with the good stuff, like the good wine—the best wine—that Jesus provided in His first miracle at Cana of Galilee. And how the master of the feast rejoiced over that wine when he spoke to the bridegroom, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now" (John 2:10 ESV). So not only do we receive and experience God's blessings of love and mercy, but we also celebrate with joy His gifts to us, the children of men.

But this isn't the way that David begins this psalm. He starts with a completely different thought—an utterance of Transgression about the wicked man. "There is no fear of God before his eyes. For he flatters himself in his own eyes that his iniquity cannot be found out and hated. The words of his mouth are trouble and deceit; he has ceased to act wisely and do good. He plots trouble while on his bed; he sets himself in a way that is not good; he does not reject evil" (Psa. 36:1–4 ESV).

How strange that we hear the voice of Transgression opening this psalm! But as the Rev. Dr. Tim Saleska admits, this is not an unfamiliar voice. Transgression often whispers to you and me from deep within our hearts. The tempter, the accuser, thrives in us as a private

voice. We know that transgression, sin, death, and the devil are all active powers working to enslave us, powers too powerful for us to escape from on our own.<sup>1</sup>

Transgression here in Psalm 36 suggests that the wicked aren't listening to God's truth. The wicked person is literally "dead of God" and "not before His eyes." Rather, in his own eyes the wicked person flatters himself or herself, only seeing the self. The wicked person is so self-absorbed that he can't even discover his own sin so as to hate it. He doesn't see anything wrong in how he lives. And he can't see it because he can only see himself. So if the wicked have no fear of God, if they do not believe that there is a God who is going to hold them accountable for their actions, then their morals, values, truths, and standards are not imposed on them from above, from God. Rather, the wicked creates his or her own morals, values, and standards. In their hearts and minds there is no God to whom they are accountable. Yet the reality that even Transgression reminds us of is that our "free" decisions put us at odds with the almighty God.<sup>2</sup>

Now it is at this point that Psalm 36 turns its attention away from the cramped heart of the wicked, the sinner, to the sweeping expanse of God's love. "O Yahweh, in the heavens is your faithfulness. Your truthfulness is up to the clouds. Your righteousness is like the mountains of God. Your justice—a great deep." Here is the one, true God who saves both man and beast. After all, He is the Creator of all. And He is the Preserver. God has "given" and "still takes care of" His creation (*Small Catechism*). His faithfulness is such that people

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<sup>1</sup> Timothy Saleska, *Psalms 1-50*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia, 2020), 574.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 575.

can find “shade” and “refuge” in Him. God is a place of safety and surety from all the temptations of the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh. Psalm 46:1, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” Psalm 91:4, “He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge.” And the lament of Jesus over the people of Jerusalem illustrates God’s intent to care for people, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!” (Matt. 23:37 ESV).

As unwilling and as unfaithful as we sinners are, God is always willing and always faithful to us. The faithfulness of God “in the heavens” became a place where His faithfulness can be found by those who seek it. “In your light we see light.” “In [the Word] was life, and the life was the light of men. . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:4, 14 ESV). Jesus Christ is the Word of God made flesh and the faithfulness of God incarnate. Jesus identifies Himself this way in Revelation 1, “Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth” (Rev. 1:5 ESV). And in the wonderful descriptive language of chapter 19, “Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True” (Rev. 19:11 ESV).

God’s faithfulness is found in Jesus Christ. Jesus, using language that reminds us of Psalm 36, proclaims, “I am the bread of life; I am the light of the world; I am the way and the truth and the life.” Jesus invites us to see Him as the One who provides refuge and saturates us with the “fatness” of the Lord’s house and gives us a “river of delights,” for Jesus

Himself is the “fountain of life” and the “light” in which “we see light.” In Jesus, God draws out His “faithfulness” and “righteousness” for us all as we look with faith upon the Faithful One nailed to a cross.

There at Calvary we see the Lord’s faithfulness to the children of men in the gift of the once-for-all atoning sacrifice for the sins, the transgressions, of all the wicked. Your sins and mine were carried by the Savior in His body on the cross so that we might receive His righteousness along with the forgiveness of our sins. Using the metaphor, Jesus stretched out His wings to give us a place of refuge where we are covered with the faithfulness of God.

Through Jesus’ death and resurrection, we are given forgiveness, eternal life, and rescue from death and the devil as God’s blessings to us in His Son. Our faithful God so richly blesses us in Christ according to His grace with salvation—a truly delicious feast that will have no end. For one day, we will be together with God and the whole Christian church in glory in the new heavens and earth! On the day of Christ’s Second Advent, the Lord will make the feast pictured in Isaiah 25, that “feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.” But there is so much more to the Lord’s faithfulness to us. On that day the Lord Christ “will swallow up . . . death forever; and the Lord Yahweh will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Yahweh has spoken. It will be said on that day, ‘Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is Yahweh; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation” (Is. 25:6–9 ESV).

How can we not rejoice now in the blessing of salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord! What a banquet feast of joy and celebration we have to look forward to! We will be saturated

with the good things of God's new creation, and we will drink from the river of the Lord's delights forevermore. For with Jesus is the fountain of life. In the light Christ we see the light of everlasting life. "He who calls you is faithful. He will surely do it" (1 Thess. 5:24). Amen.