

Sermon Text: Psalm 73 (verses taken from CW)
Sermon Theme: Surely, It is God Who Saves Me!

For the past two weeks, we have looked at two different parables of Jesus. In the first parable, Jesus taught us about the urgency to repent of our sins. Each one of us has been given a “time of grace”, a time to come to know Jesus as our Savior, by the power of God’s Word; a time that they Holy Spirit uses to lead us away from sin and to living a life that brings all praise and glory to our Savior-God. In last week’s parable, Jesus taught you and me about the amazing grace of our heavenly Father. It is the love of our Savior-God that leads you and me to rejoice each time someone repents of their sins. God’s Word that we want to focus on today leads you and me to join with the Psalm writer, and say, “Surely, it is God who saves me!” If you haven’t already done so, I would invite you to open your hymnals to page 94. There you will find verses from Psalm 73 printed for you. These are not all the verses from Psalm 73, but they are the verses we will look at together today. I invite you to join with me in reading the four verses from Psalm 73 as they are printed for us on page 94. Together we read:

**I am always with you, O LORD; you hold me by my right hand.
You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory.
Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you.
My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.**

This is the Word of the Lord.

When we see a loved one who is suffering, or when we ourselves are going through a difficult time, we are tempted to think or maybe even say out loud, “How could a loving God allow something like this to happen?” Far too often many people, that includes you and me at times, are quick to blame God for the troubles in life. At times, we are far too slow to give our Savior-God the praise and thanks he alone deserves for the many blessings that we do enjoy as we live out our days here on this earth. God’s Word before us begins by reminding you and me that we are never alone. We read, “I am always with you, O LORD; you hold me by my right hand.” David was led by God the Holy Spirit to write the same thought in Psalm 139, “Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.”

These words of David in Psalm 139 bring a thought to mind: why would David, why would anyone, want to flee from the presence of God? Why would David, who knows the one and only true God, want to run away from him? Remember the actions of Adam and Eve after they fell into sin? After they broke God’s command, and ate the fruit from the tree they were commanded not to eat from, they ran away from God. When the Lord God called out to Adam, “Where are you?” Adam responded, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid...so I hid.” Immediately after falling in to sin, notice how the relationship between God and mankind had changed. Adam knew that a sinful human being has no right to stand in the presence of the holy and just God. Because of the sin that Adam and Eve passed down to us, because of the sins that we commit, left on our own you and I would have to react the same way as Adam and Eve, the same way as David, and try to run away from the Lord. The holy and just God says that in order to be in his presence, you and I have to be perfect. But just a few moments ago, you and I came before the Lord’s throne and confessed: “Almighty God, our Maker and Redeemer, we poor sinners confess to you that we are by nature sinful and unclean and that we have sinned against you by thought, word, and deed.”

Now at this point, I would ask you to pay close attention to the words of Psalm 73, “I am always with you, O LORD; you hold me by my right hand.” Notice who it is that is holding you and me in his right hand. It is the LORD. The one and only true God is not only a holy and just God, but he is also the God of love. The LORD is the God of mercy. The LORD is the God of compassion. The LORD is the God of forgiveness. It is the LORD who sent us Jesus to live as our

perfect substitute. In his love and compassion, Jesus willingly went to the cross where he gave up his body and shed his blood as the payment price for all sins. The glorious resurrection of our Savior, Jesus, is God the Father's stamp of approval on all that his Son did to win your forgiveness and mine. Because of the Savior-God's great love for you and me, we are able to continue with these words as we confess our sins, "O most merciful God, you have given your only-begotten Son to die for us. Have mercy on us, and for his sake forgive all our sins. By your Holy Spirit increase in us true knowledge of you, so that by your grace, we may come to everlasting life, through Jesus Christ, our Lord." And the Good News that is proclaimed is that "Almighty God, our heavenly Father, has had mercy on us and has given his only Son to die for us and for his sake forgives us all our sins. To all who believe in his name he gives the right to become children of God and has promised them his Holy Spirit." Because of Jesus, you and I are children of our Father in heaven. Because of Jesus, you and I are able to say, "Surely, it is God who saves me!"

Now, it is in thankfulness for this wonderful gift of free forgiveness of all of our sins, that you and I desire to live a life of thanks and praise to the God who saves us. Our prayer is that the LORD God would give to each one of us the strength to live according to his will. As we read in the words of Psalm 73, "You guide me with your counsel...God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."

Finally, because Jesus is our living Lord and Savior, we rejoice in these words of Psalm 73, "You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." It is a fact that unless our Lord returns first, one day your heart and my heart will fail. It will stop beating. Our lifeless body will be placed in a grave. Our flesh will turn to dust. The thought of death is a scary thought for many people. But the child of God is able to say about their death, "afterward you will take me into glory." Far greater than any of the riches or pleasures of this world is the perfect joy of heaven. At the time of death, the soul of a believer immediately goes home to the side of our living Savior. When Jesus returns in all his glory, the bodies that were placed in their graves will be raised up. The bodies of all believers will be made perfect. Then soul and body will live forever together in the glory of heaven. Because of Jesus, our victorious and living Savior, you and I are able to say, "Surely it is God who saves me!" Surely it is the Savior-God who comforts and encourages you and me with these words from the great Resurrection Chapter of the Bible. It is in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 that we read, "Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory.' 'Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."

On St. Patrick's Day this past week, we heard people talking about the "Luck of the Irish." As we think about our place in heaven, you and I don't have to say, "I hope I am lucky enough to get into heaven." Rather, you and I are able to be sure that we have a place in heaven because God the Father sent you his one and only Son, Jesus, to be your Savior. How can you be sure that your sins are forgiven? It is not because you have done something to pay the price for your sins, but because Jesus Christ, as your perfect substitute, shed his blood for you. Until that day that Jesus calls you home to his side in heaven, how can you, as a child of God, live a life that is pleasing in the sight of our Lord God? It is not because deep down all people are good people. Rather, it is because the Lord God empowers you with his almighty Word to live for him. How is it possible that all of this is true? Because, "Surely, it is God who saves me!" Amen.