

June 21, 2020

Pre-service

Opening Address

Hymn "Amazing Grace" LSB 744

1 Amazing grace—how sweet the sound—
 That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost but now am found,
 Was blind but now I see!

2 The Lord has promised good to me,
 His Word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be
 As long as life endures.

3 Through many dangers, toils, and snares
 I have already come;
His grace has brought me safe thus far,
 His grace will lead me home.

4 Yes, when this flesh and heart shall fail
 And mortal life shall cease,
Amazing grace shall then prevail
 In heaven's joy and peace.

5 When we've been there ten thousand years,
 Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
 Than when we'd first begun.

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The Invocation: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Confession: If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Let us then confess our sins to God our Father. Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We justly deserve Your present and eternal punishment. For the sake of Your son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.

The Absolution: In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for His sake, God forgives us all our sins. To those who believe in Jesus Christ, He gives the power to become the children of God and bestows on them the Holy Spirit. May the Lord, who has begun this good work in us, bring it to completion in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayer of the Day: Let us pray...through Jesus Christ, Your Son, Our Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

The Old Testament Reading is written in the book of Jeremiah, chapter 20, verses 7-13.

O LORD, you have deceived me,

and I was deceived;

you are stronger than I,

and you have prevailed.

I have become a laughingstock all the day;

everyone mocks me.

⁸ For whenever I speak, I cry out,

I shout, "Violence and destruction!"

For the word of the LORD has become for me

a reproach and derision all day long.

⁹ If I say, "I will not mention him,

or speak any more in his name,"

there is in my heart as it were a burning fire

shut up in my bones,

and I am weary with holding it in,

and I cannot.

¹⁰ For I hear many whispering.

Terror is on every side!

"Denounce him! Let us denounce him!"

say all my close friends,

watching for my fall.

"Perhaps he will be deceived;

then we can overcome him

and take our revenge on him."

¹¹ But the LORD is with me as a dread warrior;

therefore my persecutors will stumble;

they will not overcome me.

They will be greatly shamed,

for they will not succeed.

Their eternal dishonor

will never be forgotten.

¹² O LORD of hosts, who tests the righteous,

who sees the heart and the mind,^[a]

let me see your vengeance upon them,

for to you have I committed my cause.

¹³ Sing to the LORD;
praise the LORD!
For he has delivered the life of the needy
from the hand of evildoers.

Psalm 91

91 He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High
will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.
² I will say^[a] to the LORD, “My refuge and my fortress,
my God, in whom I trust.”
³ For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler
and from the deadly pestilence.
⁴ He will cover you with his pinions,
and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.
⁵ You will not fear the terror of the night,
nor the arrow that flies by day,
⁶ nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness,
nor the destruction that wastes at noonday.
⁷ A thousand may fall at your side,
ten thousand at your right hand,
but it will not come near you.
⁸ You will only look with your eyes
and see the recompense of the wicked.
⁹ Because you have made the LORD your dwelling place—
the Most High, who is my refuge^[b]—
¹⁰ no evil shall be allowed to befall you,
no plague come near your tent.
¹¹ For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways.
¹² On their hands they will bear you up,
lest you strike your foot against a stone.
¹³ You will tread on the lion and the adder;
the young lion and the serpent you will trample underfoot.
¹⁴ “Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him;
I will protect him, because he knows my name.
¹⁵ When he calls to me, I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble;
I will rescue him and honor him.
¹⁶ With long life I will satisfy him
and show him my salvation.”

The Epistle Reading is written in the book of Romans, chapter 6, verses 12-23.

¹² Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. ¹³ Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for

righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

¹⁵ What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! ¹⁶ Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves,^[a] you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷ But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸ and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹ I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.

²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹ But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. ²² But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Holy Gospel is according to St. Matthew chapter 10, verses 5 and 21-33.

These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, “²¹ Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, ²² and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

²³ When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

²⁴ “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant^[a] above his master. ²⁵ It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign^[b] those of his household.

²⁶ “So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. ²⁷ What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. ²⁸ And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.^[c] ²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?^[d] And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰ But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. ³² So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, ³³ but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.

Apostles' Creed: I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

Hymn "On Eagles' Wings" LSB 727

1. You who dwell in the shelter of the Lord,
Who abide in His shadow for life,
Say to the Lord: "My refuge,
My rock in whom I trust!" Refrain

refrain: And He will raise you up on eagles' wings,
Bear you on the breath of dawn,
Make you to shine like the sun,
And hold you in the palm of His hand.

2. The snare of the fowler will never capture you,
And famine will bring you no fear;
Under His wings your refuge,
His faithfulness your shield. Refrain

3. You need not fear the terror of the night,
Nor the arrow that flies by day;
Though thousands fall about you,
Near you it shall not come. Refrain

4. For to His angels He's given a command
To guard you in all of your ways;
Upon their hands they will bear you up,
Lest you dash your foot against a stone. Refrain

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The Sermon

Our Shelter in Change

Psalm 91

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

Things can change rather quickly. Last July, when we were at the Synodical Convention of the LCMS in Tampa, Pastor Lee and I witnessed sudden change first hand. It was a hot, sunny day, and during a break we walked from the convention center to a restaurant for lunch. Since we were in a hurry to get back to the convention soon, we didn't want to go back to the hotel to grab our umbrellas. Having grown up on the Gulf Coast, I should have known better, but there was no cloud in the sky on this day. I figured we were fine. Things changed really quickly though.

As we finished up our meal on the patio, the floodgates of all heaven broke loose upon us. If you have never travelled to the Gulf Coast but plan to do so, just remember things change rather quickly with the weather there, and you might need to find some shelter fast when they do.

But Gulf Coast weather is not the only thing that can change suddenly and bring a storm upon us. One day everything is going well, and the next the doctor gives us bad news. One day we are making plans for the coming month, and then the next day, we go into lockdown because of a new virus. One day we're thinking how much we enjoy life in our state, and then the next a

police officer murders a man, setting in motion a chain of events that changes things for everyone. One day, we are enjoying life with a loved one, and the next they are gone.

We need a shelter, a resting place, a refuge from the sudden storms that surprise us. We need something that we can rely on, something in which we can trust. We know that we cannot make it through the storms of this life on our own.

The Psalmist tells us to turn to the Lord:

“say to the Lord, “My refuge and my fortress,
my God, in whom I trust.”¹

The Psalmist proclaims to us what the Lord does **for us** and urges us to put our trust in Him as our refuge in life’s storms. The Psalmist says that when we trust in God, that God rescues us and “covers us with His wings.”²

Everyone trusts in something for protection and refuge. Some people trust in their wealth, good financial decisions, or possessions. Others trust in their own wisdom. Still others trust in life philosophies or false religions. And sometimes, we trust in these things too. All of these things that turn to in trouble are false gods.

Martin Luther says that “a god” is anything that we trust above everything else; anything that we run to in times of trouble. To have “a god,” says Luther,” is to have something in which the heart entirely trusts.”³ And when we are honest with ourselves, each of us has our own pet false “god.”

Our “god” may be our financial treasures. Our “god” may be our life experience and confidence that we have “seen it all” and will get through **this**. Our “god” may be a political ideology. It might be our favorite media sources or commentators. It might be an unshakeable belief the human race is getting better and better. Or it might be the idea that we are the only people on Earth who see things rightly, a confidence in ourselves that we are right and the rest of the world is wrong.

Our false “god” might even be an inaccurate picture of the one true God. It might be God as a cosmic Santa Claus, who gives us what we want if we are good. It might be a god who justifies our own ideas and prejudices while condemning those of others. Our false “god” might even be a well-intentioned belief in “the will of God” that we fall back on anytime something bad happens. “Oh, this bad event happened; oh, this person died; it must be God’s will.”

That view of God, brothers and sisters, is not faith in the Triune God of the Bible. It is an idol, a false god!

We each have **something**, a possession, a person, or an idea, that are our false gods. Whatever we turn to, wherever we run in trouble, whatever we make our shelter in the storms of life, **that** is our false god. **That** is our idol!

The God portrayed here by the Psalmist is different. The Psalmist shows us the almighty God who has acted on behalf of His people. The Psalmist says that God’s “faithfulness is a shield and buckler.” Faithfulness to **what**?

Not faithfulness to vague notions of “God’s will.”

Not faithfulness to our own ideas about God.

Faithfulness to God’s **promise**!

The Psalmist’s confession of faith is based on God’s promise to be a merciful and loving God. **This** God is not an abstract idea or mute idol. **This** God is the God who delivered His

¹ Ps. 91:2 (ESV).

² Ps. 91:3 (ESV).

³ LC I:10, in *Concordia*, 489.

people from Egyptian slavery. The words in verses 5-6 of this Psalm recall God's preserving of the children of Israel from the killing of the Egyptian firstborn.

"You will not fear the terror of the night,
nor the arrow that flies by day,
nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness..."⁴

God kept His people safe through the "terror of night," and God promises to keep His people safe now and in the future. The Psalmist confesses his faith—and urges us to confess ours—in the God who has promised Himself to His people. **This** God is no vague concept or idol, **this** God is a **personal, active** God who demonstrates His love for His people by keeping His promise to take care of them, be with them, and lead them into the promised land.

In this Psalm, God makes promises also to us. God makes promises to us, who trust in Him, who have our faith in Him, who have made the Lord our dwelling place—the Most High, our refuge. God says to us:

"no evil shall be allowed to befall you,
no plague come near your tent."⁵

Because we trust in the Lord, these promises are **for us**. The Psalmist says so right here. He says that these promises are for those who **make the Lord their refuge**. When we trust in **the Lord**, when we **run to the Lord** in trouble instead of to our false idols, when the Lord is our refuge and shelter, these promises are ours!

By faith we receive the promises from God that He will keep us safe through the storms of life, that He will **protect us from "deadly pestilence," from evil, from disaster**. **By faith**, we are promised that God will shelter us from life's storms and **prevent evil and sickness** from taking us. He promises that "it will not come near your tent."

But wait, how can this be?

Aren't we in the midst of deadly pestilence right now?

We have friends, neighbors, and loved ones, who have died from COVID-19, cancer, and every other kind of illnesses. We have ourselves been taken by sicknesses, struggle with depression, and grapple with anxiety. In the midst of all of **these** storms of life, the promises in this Psalm seem like a pretty shoddy shelter. It feels like God's refuge has some pretty serious leaks in it!

But our Lord didn't just give these promises and leave us to figure out things for ourselves, nor was He content just to make a quick shelter to keep us safe from one or two dangers or diseases. Instead, Our Lord insists on making a refuge for us that would last for all eternity, and to keep **that** promise, He would enter into the storm **Himself**!

By becoming human **for us**, being crucified **for us**, and being raised from the dead **for us**. Our God, Jesus Christ, made the **ultimate** shelter for us.

Our God isn't just our umbrella through a passing thunderstorm; He is our eternal protection from all **sickness, from death, from the powers of evil**, and even from **God's own wrath** against our trust in our **false** ideas about Him. To keep **this** promise, to build **this** shelter for us, our God Jesus Christ went to the cross and experienced the full-on hurricane of God's wrath against our sin and all evil. He went through the absolute cyclone of eternal death and hell, so that we would **not** have to go through it. To keep His promise, our Lord took all of the storms of our life and our death upon Himself, and in so doing, He has made His cross into the greatest shelter of all.

⁴ Ps. 91:5-6a (ESV).

⁵ Ps. 91:10b (ESV).

Beneath the cross, you and I find the fulfillment of the promises of Psalm 91. Under the arms of Jesus' cross, you and I "abide in the shadow of the Almighty." Beneath the cross, you and I are sheltered by our Lord. Beneath the outstretched arms of the dying Christ, you and I are covered by His wings.

That is why we don't have to fear, because the wings under which we are sheltered are the arms of our crucified God! Trust in ourselves, our own ideologies, or our own mistaken notions about God and His will do not provide shelter from the storms of life and death, but the refuge of built by Jesus, the **God who died for us on the cross**, does. Sickness may strike us, but it will not last. Death may separate us from our loved ones, but it will not last, for our God, Jesus Christ, has made us an eternal shelter under his wings, under the shadow of His cross. **This** shelter, **this** refuge will last.

And for us, who shelter beneath His cross, our Lord has one more promise of shelter. St. John relays this promise in Revelation:

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place^[a] of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people,^[b] and God himself will be with them as their God.^[c] ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

This is the **ultimate** shelter and refuge! The ultimate shelter is not just a protection from a virus or keeping us safe through riots and unrest. The ultimate shelter is not just a temporary refuge to get us through the **present** storms of this life. The **ultimate** shelter is the **eternal** refuge of the new heaven and new earth that our God has promised us, a refuge where disease, unrest, evil, and even death itself will **never** touch us; **a refuge with no pandemics**; a refuge where we will dwell in safety with our departed loved ones and all the saints forever and ever.

Our Lord Jesus Christ who died and rose for you, will keep you sheltered in His grace, until that time when He returns and takes us into His eternal refuge, Amen.

Prayer of the Church

O merciful Father, hear Your people as they pray in the name of Jesus on behalf of all manner and conditions of people.

Brief silence

Faithful God, when we are fearful of our enemies and weary of the struggle, You have been our shield and our strength. Grant to us the full measure of Your grace to sustain us against all who are against us, and help us to endure the trials and temptations of this mortal life and be faithful unto death. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer**.

Faithful God, with Your favor upon us, we pray You to help us in our fight against temptation and sin. Help us to live holy and righteous lives by the power of Your Spirit, and keep us from surrendering ourselves to the slavery from which Christ has set us free. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer**.

Faithful God, with the witness of the saints before us and the courage of Your Holy Spirit within us, we pray You to help us to maintain the faithful confession and to contend for the faith in our own age as did those who confessed Christ at Augsburg. Give to all the churches of the Augsburg Confession unity of doctrine and harmony of life together under the cross of Christ. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Faithful God, we remember those who serve us in Jesus' name. Bless the leaders of our Synod, all pastors and teachers, and all church workers, that they may be faithful in their calling and honor Christ with an obedient life. Raise up those who will follow in their steps and serve Your Kingdom in the years to come. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Faithful God, give grace to those being baptized, to the catechumens in their instruction, and to all the places where Your people gather to learn Your Word. Equip us to live out the promise of our baptismal life under Your grace, and guide us to love our neighbors as You have loved us. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Faithful God, give healing and strength to the sick and all afflicted in body or mind, and grant to those who struggle the gift of peace of mind and heart. Hear us especially for those who have requested our prayers [*including _____*] and those whom we name in our hearts now. Restore our nation and the world in health and livelihood, and preserve us from pestilence and fear. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Faithful God, give courage to those near life's end and comfort those who mourn [*especially _____*]. As we recall the saints who trusted in You in life and who died in Christ, encourage us by the witness of Your grace and their faith, so that when Christ comes in His glory we may be found faithful and delivered with them into the glory of Your eternal presence. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Faithful God, by Your Word and table You continue to feed and nourish Your people with all that will sustain our lives and faith. Help us to receive these gifts with faith and with repentance. Bring us to that day when all earthly divisions will cease and, united in faith, we shall be one people before Your altar. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Faithful God, sanctify us as Your people and make us bold to confess You on earth. When this earthly life is ended and we stand before You on high, grant us to hear the Savior's acknowledgment that we are His and He is ours forever. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

All these things, Father, and everything else for which we need, we pray You to grant us for the sake of our Savior Jesus Christ, who died and rose and lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer: Let us pray the prayer Jesus has taught us to pray: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

The Benediction: The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious unto you. The Lord look on You with His favor and give you peace. Amen.

Final Hymn "Children of the Heavenly Father" LSB 725

1 Children of the heav'nly Father
Safely in His bosom gather;
Nestling bird nor star in heaven
Such a refuge e'er was given.

2 God His own doth tend and nourish;
In His holy courts they flourish.
From all evil things He spares them;
In His mighty arms He bears them.

3 Neither life nor death shall ever
From the Lord His children sever;
Unto them His grace He showeth,
And their sorrows all He knoweth.

4 Though He giveth or He taketh,
God His children ne'er forsaketh;
His the loving purpose solely
To preserve them pure and holy.

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Closing Address and Announcements

Postlude "Tell the World"