

God Is Our Salvation!

¹ In that day you will say: "I will praise you, LORD. Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me. ² Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD himself, is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation." ³ With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. ⁴ In that day you will say: "Give praise to the LORD, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted. ⁵ Sing to the LORD, for he has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world. ⁶ Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you."

Last year they remade a classic musical, *West Side Story*. I haven't seen the new one, but I remember seeing the 1961 version. In it two love struck teenagers longed for a place where they can be together without being threatened by the gang war between the Jets and the Sharks. They sang a wonderful duet about a somewhere, a time and place where there will be peace and quiet.

We all long for a somewhere, a place, a time for peace and quiet. Well that day has come. **In that day you will say,**" it says in our Old Testament reading. Well that day is today. And what will we say? The Lord is our salvation. May we say that. May we share it.

I. The Lord is our Salvation. We know this.

It is hard to be happy when someone is angry with you. Think of that foolish younger son in our gospel reading. He demanded his share of his inheritance. Basically, he said he couldn't wait to get out of his father's home. His father graciously gave it to him. That must have hurt, emotionally and economically. Imagine if half of your farm's assets were gone tomorrow. And then to make it worse, he didn't take his share and invest it wisely or buy another farm, he spent it all on wine and women.

Was that son happy? For a while, maybe, but not in the long run. He sat there slopping hogs. He realized how good he had it living under his dad's roof, living under his dad's love. There was a problem. He knew he did not deserve his father's love. He knew he earned and deserved his father's anger.

If I see one weed, I pull it. If I see a whole patch of weeds, I would spray Round-Up, till it and start all over. When you spray Round-Up, the weed doesn't die right away. The next day it starts turning brown and starts to shrivel. Like a weed, we see the world shriveling up. Why? Ephesians 5 tells us, **God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient.** Death, pain, decay, destruction, these are not natural occurrences. People die because God says they return to dust. God has sprayed the world and we see the world slowly dying because his judgment coming on it. We see the Lord's anger.

And we see why. God didn't spray a beautiful rose bush. He sprayed weeds. His anger is a result of sin. And we can see it even in the mirror, the mirror of the Law. Look. How many unclean thoughts do we have, unkind words, promises broken? And then there is that twinge, that twist of guilt that says God is not happy, and he isn't. We see and feel God's anger.

But do you see something else? We also see God's patience. He has every reason to destroy the world like in the days of Noah or like Sodom and Gomorrah. But he hasn't. He is giving us time, but for what? ¹ **In that day you will say: "I will praise you, LORD. Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me. ² Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD himself, is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation."** ³ **With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.** Go back to that foolish brother we met earlier. He went back expecting a father's anger. But what did he find? A love that longed to have his son back, a love that forgave him. Right then and there he made him his son again. And they celebrated with a massive party.

The only hope you or I or anyone has is if the Lord doesn't treat us as our sins deserve. And that is what we have in our Lord. **Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me.** Note that it says that God was angry with us. He was. But God turns his anger away from us. Parents, you know what I mean. Your baby is teething. Suddenly he or she chomps down on your finger and it hurts, it really hurts. If you love your child, you don't throw him or her on the floor to stop the pain. Though we see and feel God's anger, he doesn't throw us to the ground. Instead he turns that anger away from us. But where? On his own Son. In the chapter before God told his people how he would raise up a branch from the stump of Jesse. That branch is Jesus. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us and then that Son took the anger we deserve. That is why Isaiah chapters later could write that we are healed because of his wounds. Amazingly, Jesus wanted the same thing. I mean, if one child does something wrong and you smack his brother, the brother would say, "What's up with that?" But Jesus said, "Your will and not my will."

And this salvation can and will strengthen you and comfort you. ² **Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD himself, is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation."** ³ **With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.** Go back to our gospel reading. The foolish brother came home. His father forgave him and took him back. They celebrated at night. What about the morning after, and the morning after that. You can imagine the comfort and joy that son experienced, waking up in his own comfortable bed, feeling the ring on his finger.

So you got up and got into your car this morning. There is a reason you drove here to church and not the cabin up north or the mall. You came here to feel that ring on your finger. You came here to draw water from the wells of salvation. Wells were a big deal for the Israelites. They needed water. Of course, they would dig cisterns to capture rain water, but that kind of water would start tasting funny after a while. Wells go deep into the ground. They tap into underground springs that have been purified through limestone and what not. They always taste refreshing.

You came here to draw water, not stale water from a cistern, but fresh, purified water of salvation from God's well. You find God's Word here which assures you that God has turned his anger away from you. We have Holy Communion that gives us the very body and blood of Christ which absorbed God's anger to save you. You see the water of baptism which washes away your sin.

They say we need to drink up to 6-8 glasses of water a day. They say that we spend most of the day dehydrated without knowing it because we don't drink enough. If that is true about H₂O water, how much more is that true for the spiritual water of life. Even if you are spending a few minutes each day in the Word, think of how that will refresh you. We still struggle in a world that is under God's anger and is full of death and decay and all sorts of trouble. Now imagine what it means to know that your past and present is forgiven and your future is guaranteed. I am always encouraged by Paul and Silas, whipped, scourged, beaten and thrown in jail. At midnight the prisoners and jailer heard them praying and singing hymns. The Holy Spirit didn't write down those hymns for us, but I am sure it was something like our text for today, "²**Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD himself, is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation.**" Don't walk around dehydrated. Come and drink often from the well of salvation.

II. The Lord is my salvation. Let others know this.

Yes, Paul and Silas sang those hymns. They needed to be reminded of the Lord's salvation which gave them strength. But note that they sang aloud so the others heard them. This message of God's salvation is too precious to keep to ourselves. ⁴**In that day you will say: "Give praise to the LORD, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted. ⁵Sing to the LORD, for he has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world. ⁶Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you."**

Many years ago, my dad's Aunt Pauline fell and broke her hip, and my mother went to visit her in the hospital. That visit affected my mother. She found Aunt Pauline sitting up in bed smiling. My mother asked why she was so happy and Aunt Pauline said, "I am going to be with Jesus." She died that evening. Can you guess why Aunt Pauline was so happy? How about these words from our text, ²**Surely God is my salvation?** That explains why. Why did that have an effect on my mother, so much so that she told me? And why do I still remember that after almost forty years? What affect does that have on you now that I told you?

Now imagine what it means to come here and sing the hymns, not as solos, but as a congregation, to come and stand with each other at the communion rail, or to talk in the narthex. Now imagine when you are having a good day, and someone asks you, someone at work, the neighborhood, waiting in line, at the game, and you tell them about all the reasons you are happy. But then you include, "Most of all, the Lord is my salvation." Now imagine if someone sees you are still happy after breaking a hip, or a bad day, and they ask, and you answer, "The Lord is my salvation and I am not afraid."

When I was a kid, I thought the mere mention of Jesus' name at a funeral would stop people from crying. I was confused when that didn't happen. Then I learned something. Yes, they are strengthened and happy because of Christ, but that doesn't mean that the pain goes away. Jesus cried at Lazarus' funeral even though he knew he was going to raise him back to life in a few minutes. And if that is true with grief, I think it is true in many other ways. It is a struggle to live in a broken and sinful world. It weighs us down. But Christ gives us a reason to be happy even on the worse of days. **Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me.** ²**Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid.** Amen.