



Fourth Sunday after Trinity.

The Collect.

O GOD, the protector of all that trust in thee, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy; Increase and multiply upon us thy mercy; that, thou being our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things eternal. Grant this, O heavenly Father, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

The soaring majesty of the words of Martin Luther's, A Mighty Fortress, come to mind in the reading of this Collect:

*A mighty fortress is our God,
a bulwark never failing;
our helper he amid the flood
of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe
doth seek to work us woe;
his craft and power are great,
and armed with cruel hate,
on earth is not his equal.*

This hymn was composed at a time when the protection of God's powerful hand seemed most comforting to those, including Luther, who faced imminent or possible martyrdom. A classical hymn is no less than a prayer put to music. Its words are as immortal as the biblical truths that the hymn puts forth in rhythmic prose.

Is God your help and fortress. Does He preserve you in the moments of hurt and doubt, and prosper your hand in righteousness during times of prosperity? ***O GOD, the protector of all that trust in thee.*** We see, not only in this prayer, but in scripture itself, a thing condemned by the world but practiced by God. God profiles and discriminates in his dealings with His people. Those who do not trust in God may not claim the privilege of His protection. He seeks those who have the faith to trust in Him under any and all circumstances of life. Remember that there are only two families and classes among all the people of the earth - past, present, and future - the family of God, and the family of the Prince of Darkness. There is NO MIDDLE GROUND! Trust is all

important. We all tend to place our trust in SOMETHING - our friends, our job, our wealth, or our own hand. But trust misplaced is trust abandoned. Trust is so important to God that He places it in the very center verse of Holy Scripture: "*It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes.*" (Psalms 118:9) The national motto of our United States is "In God we Trust." We consider it of such importance that we place it on every coin minted by our government. Sadly, the motto is dead without the real trust that should back both our money and our motto.

When the storms and billows build upon the seas of your life, you may take courage in the Psalmists words of encouragement and strength: "*If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.*" (Psalms 139:9-10) If we have made our election in Christ sure, we may rely upon the promises found in Isaiah: "*Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.*" (Isaiah 43:1-2)

I went to visit the father of one of my young church family, a veteran seemingly at the point of death, just this past Saturday evening., The man's body was emaciated and he had a breathing tube in his throat and multiple IV's attached. He seems lifeless as he lay there struggling for every breath. I spoke softly to him and there was only a glimmer of understanding on his part. After reading the 91st Psalm to him, he suddenly opened his blue eyes, looked me in the face and grasped my hand. His tongue was swollen and protruding from his mouth. He could not speak though I sensed he had something to say. After a prayer for God's will to be worked in the body of this poor soul, I left under the impression that I may never see him again this side of Jordan Waters - but I did! The next evening, a relative of the man called to say that he had undergone a remarkable improvement. I visited him again on Monday to find the breathing tube removed and the man able to talk. I do not how much was due to my prayer, but I do know that the man had taken heart at the words of God in the 91st Psalm. He had heard words that he KNEW he could place his trust in - and he has revived to the astonishment of the hospital staff who had previously suggested taking the man off all life support. Even as the jaws of death enclose us, we have the privilege to call upon our Lord of all help.

". . . without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy." Apart from God there is NOTHING! There was only a void where the earth now stands, and even the void was created by the Word of God. There is NO LIFE apart from His loving provision. So there can be NO STRENGTH apart from God. He is the PRIME MOVER and SUSTAINER of all things. And can there be holiness apart from God. None whatsoever, for there are none righteous - no not ONE! There can be no holy thought, no holy ground, apart from a Holy God to provide it.

"Increase and multiply upon us thy mercy" God's mercy is as abundant as a gushing fountain. We can never reach a point when we believe we have had enough. It continually flows forth and bathes us in its resplendent waters of light. If we magnify our Lord, He will magnify His mercies upon us. ". . . that, thou being our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things eternal." Do we not pray to get through the fires of life un-scorched? In the burning building, as in the world of smoke and mirrors, we desperately seek the way that leads to safety. We may grope and stumble until the fires consume us because we have no Guide in the fires. But we do have a strong Guide and Ruler who is our King and

Sovereign. His eyes are forever on His own. He will go through the fires with us, sheltering us with His wings, and bring us, unscathed, to safety. But we must keep our hand, and our trust, in Him during the danger. Those things of the world may cause us to break hold of Christ and wonder into places that lead us to perish. Can we cast aside the false glitter and dim lights of this world and keep our focus fixed on that Light that never fails. If we are able to persevere to the last, we shall be saved to enjoy the splendor of Heaven.

How can our saving mercies be granted on behalf One who has already gained the Kingdom of His Father? How is Christ profited by our grant of mercy? "*Grant this, O heavenly Father, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.*" The very dying desire of Christ was that we might be saved. His ordeal of torture and earth was all for us. He purchased our salvation with His atoning death if we will only place our trust in that mighty Salvation! It is for the sake of His Son that God the Father will admit us into His Heaven as pure and righteous sons of God. Have you placed your absolute trust in Him, Friend?