**Morning Devotion for Tuesday, April 21, 2020**

**“The Judge Is Your Father”**

**Welcome to Morning Devotion at Trinity Lutheran Church.**

**Our words from Scripture this morning are from the seventh Psalm , which is one of the “complaint songs” of King David. His complaint, according to his own prescript to this lyric, is that a certain man named Cush of the tribe of Benjamin (the same tribe as King Saul, who was trying to kill David) has brought an army to hunt down David and kill him, although David is innocent of any rebellion and has acted with integrity toward Saul. This song has been used by God’s people as a prayer for refuge against any enemy, physical or spiritual, that pursues us with evil intent.**

***O Lord my God, in You do I take refuge; save me from all my pursuers and deliver me, lest like a lion they tear my soul apart, rending it in pieces, with none to deliver. . .let the evil of the wicked come to an end, and may You establish the righteous—You who test minds and hearts, O righteous God! My shield is with God, who saves the upright in heart. God is a righteous judge, and a God who feels indignation every day.. . .I will give to the Lord the thanks due to His righteousness, and I will sing praise to the name of the Lord, the Most High.*** Psalm 7:1-2, 9-11, 17

**Martin Luther defined well in his Catechisms and other writings the powerful trinity of enemies we face daily—the devil, the fallen world culture, and our own sinful natures. They *pursue* us like predators, and like a *lion* they are more than we on our own strength can handle. They are dangerous and deadly because when they catch us, they are likely to *tear us apart and leave us in pieces*. From such powerful enemies bent on hunting us down for our destruction, we need a defender, a deliverer, and as David teaches us, that *shield* is our God. God is more than the soldier of valor who fights for us and rescues us. He is also the Judge of this earth and of humanity. Every day, David says, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, God feels “*indignation*.” That is a doctrinal truth about God. He is a righteous Judge, and His righteousness hates sin, evil, death, and satanic work. Where He sees it, every day, 24-7, His righteous anger wars against it, delivering His people, putting out the fires, and saving us again and again. For all this, along with King David and with Dr. Luther—who both as great leaders in God’s plan suffered immense temptation from hell; who both lived most of their days in danger from worldly enemies bent on murdering them; who both brought upon themselves suffering because of their own sins—we, too, take refuge in our God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have forgiveness of sins and protection from this world and the underworld. With them, we also give thanks to the Lord for this undeserved help and salvation.**

**In his book More Than A Carpenter Josh McDowell relates a true incident that took place in a local California courtroom. A nineteen-year old girl was stopped for speeding and ticketed. She was assigned a court date before a judge. Both defendant and jurist had the same last name, but it was such a common name, those assigning the case thought nothing of it. The girl was terrified and looked for any**

**legitimate excuse that might postpone or get her case moved. Yet she told not her mother and stepfather, nor the attorney assigned to stand next to her at her appearance, not even her best friend and confidant, not anyone.**

**Her dreaded day came and she stood before the Judge. He was known as a harsh and legalistic judge who upheld the letter of the law strictly. As her name and the charge were read, he didn’t even look up at her. In a strong voice he asked, “How do you plead, guilty or not guilty?” Shaking, the young woman replied, “Guilty, your honor.” Still not looking up, he yelled, “Speak up!” “Guilty,” she repeated in just a bit stronger voice. And yet, not raising his head to even look at her then, this Judge, whom she knew well would not only not give her a break, but would make sure she faced the most severe consequence he could levy, brought down his gavel hard. (His bailiff thought to himself that even this Judge seemed to hammer down with more force than his usual loud bang.) “Maximum fine, you choose, $100.00 today, or if you can’t pay, ten days in jail.”**

**But what happened next had never happened in this courtroom before. The judge stood up, stripped off his robe, walked out of the bench and came down to the defendant’s table, took out his wallet and removed a $100.00 bill, gave it to the guilty party, and said, “I am going to pay the fine; I will absorb the consequence for you.”**

**You see, the Judge was her real father. When she was just a little girl, her mother had taken her away from him to go and live with another man. She had been separated from him all these years, and deception and lies about him had always persuaded her to have nothing to do with him. But he never quit sending more than required support; he never quit loving her. Yet now the first time he is with her in years, she has broken the law, she was a defendant in his court; and he was a good and just, a fair and impartial judge. He couldn’t say to her, “Because I love you so much and have longed for a restored relationship with you, I’ll let you off the hook and leave you free to go.” She was guilty, and if he had done that, he would no longer be a good, fair, impartial, and just judge. But he was willing after the verdict, to take off his judicial robe, to come down to her from his judgment seat, to represent her, and to pay the penalty on her behalf.**

**That’s what God did for us at the cross on Good Friday. He judged the One who had no sin and no guilt in the place of us. In that righteous judgment His just anger was satisfied and the sentence was carried out, the verdict met and penalty paid. And on Easter morning when the Son of God was resurrected in His Body, He took us by the hand, and pronounced us innocent. He removed our guilt and led us away from the darkness, deception, and power of sin and death to a new life with him.**

[Thank you for joining us this morning, and may God bless you and your loved ones this day]