

MUTUAL CONSIDERATION

PSALM 41:1–2

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ! Amen. We prayed Psalm 41 in place of the Introit for the Day. Psalm 41 will be the focus of our attention for the entire season of Lent. David said in the opening words of that psalm,

Blessed is the one who considers the poor!

In the day of trouble the LORD delivers him;

the LORD protects him and keeps him alive;

he is called blessed in the land;

You do not give him up to the will of his enemies.

Those words from David are like a man who painted a portrait of his friend, and then the two switched places, and his friend painted a portrait of him. Here is what I mean:

1. “Blessed is the one who considers the poor!” David’s word, “considers,” can also be translated as “pays attention” or “focuses upon” or “thinks about intently.” When you paint someone’s portrait,

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you must first look intently upon that person, studying his or her features very closely. When David said, "Blessed is the one who considers," he was talking about someone who gives careful, attentive thought to something.

David also spoke in the singular, not in the plural: "Blessed is the ONE who considers the poor [ONE]"; "Blessed is the INDIVIDUAL who considers the poor INDIVIDUAL"; "Blessed is the PERSON who considers the poor PERSON."

Those singulars are important. Someone could argue that David was generalizing or making a sweeping statement that applies to everyone. However, David could have easily said, "Blessed is everyone who considers anyone who is poor." David did NOT say that. David wrote in the singular on purpose. He wanted us to think in singular on purpose. "Blessed is the ONE who considers the poor [ONE]." Those words boil the entire world down to only two people. Who are those two people? You are one of them, and Jesus is the other. You and Jesus are like a person who painted a portrait of a

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friend and then switched places so the friend could paint a portrait of the person.

* Jesus is the poor man you shall be eternally blessed to consider, focus upon, and always bear in mind. That is why the Book of Hebrews talks about “looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2).

* You also are the poor person whom Christ Jesus, our Lord, carefully considered, bore in mind, acted on behalf of, and was declared blessed because of those actions. As Jesus said in the Book of Revelation, “I know your tribulation and your poverty” (Revelation 2:9).

2. I know it sounds strange that you and Jesus are both the poor person, and that both of you are the person who shall be blessed for considering the poor. Here is why that strange thing is true:

* In one way or another, all of God’s psalms—including Psalm 41—talk about our Lord and His work of salvation on our behalf (Luke 24:44).

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* Because the Psalms are about Jesus, they are also about you. You are, after all, the baptized of Christ. When you were baptized, you entered into Christ's holy body (Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 1:30) just as surely as He entered yours (John 14:20; Galatians 2:20). You and your Christ are now joined together as one flesh (Ephesians 5:31–32).

* Here's what happened at your Baptism:

** Your Lord's perfection became yours, and your sins became His (1 Peter 2:24); His strength became yours, and your weakness became His (2 Corinthians 12:9); His life became yours, and your death became His (Romans 6:4). A blessed exchange!

** The words of the Scriptures that speak about you became applicable to Jesus, and the words that speak about Jesus became applicable to you because you are "partakers of the divine nature," as Peter said in tonight's Epistle (2 Peter 1:4).

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*Your inseparable, eternal, baptismal unity with Christ is why Jesus is the poor man whom you shall be blessed to consider AND why you are the poor person whom Jesus likewise considered. Psalm 41 speaks of mutual consideration: "Blessed is the one who considers the poor!"

3a. Why did Jesus give Himself over to "suffer many things . . . be killed, and after three days rise again"? (Mark 8:31). Jesus did so because He always "considers the poor." It is elsewhere written, "He does not forget the cry of the afflicted" (Psalm 9:12); "The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous and His ears toward their cry" (Psalm 34:15); and "This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him and saved him out of all his troubles" (Psalm 34:6). All these passages describe our Lord's consideration toward you, His "poor" one.

What key words do the Scriptures use to describe the nature of our Lord's consideration toward you? They use such words as *pity*, *compassion*, *mercy*, and *grace*.

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So Jesus is the blessed man who considers the poor one. In Psalm 41, David prophesied the great blessing and reward that Jesus received precisely because He “considers the poor” one and “poured out His soul to death” (Isaiah 53:12):

Those are the words of the resurrection; they are “the words of eternal life” (John 6:68).

Thus, Jesus is indeed blessed precisely because He “considers the poor.”

3b. Now switch places with Jesus and paint a portrait of your friend Jesus, as it were: Jesus is the poor man whom you shall be eternally blessed to consider, focus upon, and always bear in mind. “You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor” (2 Corinthians 8:9). “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but [during the days of His humiliation] the Son of Man [had] nowhere to lay His head” (Matthew 8:20). He borrowed a bed at His birth (Luke 2:7) and borrowed a bed at His death (Matthew 27:59–60). He “did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied Himself” (Philippians 2:6–7).

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“Blessed is the one who considers the poor!” What key words do the Scriptures use to describe the nature of your consideration of Jesus? They use such words as *faith*, *hope*, and *trust*.

So you will be counted among the blessed when you consider the poverty of your Lord Jesus, just as surely as Jesus Himself was blessed because He considered your poverty. That is the promise of God, spoken through David in Psalm 41: Blessed are you who consider the poverty of your Christ, whose poverty has made you rich in every way.

Therefore, in the resurrection of all flesh on the Last Day, the Lord your God shall make it so.

AMEN