

## SERMON FOR MIDWEEK OF LENT 3

### **SOON AND NEVER**

#### PSALM 41:5

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ! Amen. This sermon is adapted from the sermon provided in our Lenten Series this year, “Be Gracious to Me” and is based on Psalm 41. Tonight we focus on verse 5. David prayed in Psalm 41, verse 5 “My enemies say of me in malice, ‘When will he die, and his name perish?’”

1. King David had plenty of enemies. Recall that as punishment for his killing of Uriah and taking his wife Bathsheba, the Lord told David, through Nathan the prophet, that the sword would never depart from him during his life. David’s enemies are why he wrote those words. After he was anointed by Samuel, but before he finally attained the throne, David spent a long time being hunted by King Saul, who made himself David’s enemy. After David reached the throne, he was obliged to continue the war against Israel’s long-time enemy, the Philistines. Then there was David’s son Absalom, who staged a coup to remove his father forever from the throne. These are examples of the enemies who maliciously said of David, “When will he die, and his name perish?”

Given the opportunity, David could have provided good and faithful answers to both of those questions:

- \* “When will he die?” fumed his enemies. David could have rightly answered, “Whenever the Lord of hosts desires it. Maybe sooner, maybe later, but NOT a moment before I receive from the Lord every day written for me in His book.”
- \* The next question gets a one-word answer: “When will his name perish?” To that, David could say, “NEVER. My name shall NOT perish.” The Lord of hosts Himself promised to preserve and protect David’s name and memory forever. God had chosen David according to His own good pleasure, saying to the prophet Samuel, “You shall anoint for Me him whom I declare to you”. Later, the same God swore His eternal oath to David as found in 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel:

I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. . . . I will raise up your offspring after you . . . and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. . . . Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before Me. Contrast this to our Old Testament reading in Deuteronomy tonight where the Lord promised to wipe out our enemies and their name shall perish. Not so with David—or with us.

“My enemies say of me in malice, ‘When will he die, and his name perish?’”

The answer is :Soon, and NEVER:

David's answer comes quickly off the tongue, so confident was he in the word and promise of God. As David in Psalm 119 prayed to the Lord in another place, "This is my comfort in my affliction, that Your promise gives me life" and again, "Your promise is well tried, and Your servant loves it". David also declared in Psalm 18 to all who would listen, "The word of the LORD proves true" .

2. Jesus of Nazareth spoke through David in Psalm 41, saying, "My enemies say of Me in malice, 'When will He die, and His name perish?'" We know David is a prophet as Jesus tells us this in the New Testament. David's words in the psalms are actually the words of Jesus because all the scriptures, including the psalms, were written about Him who is our Lord: they "bear witness," said Jesus, "about Me" as we hear in John 5:39.

Like His father David, Jesus also had—and still has—plenty of enemies. Our Lord's most famous enemy is "that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world." Death is also an enemy of our Lord; --but death was defeated on the Cross when our Lord paid the price for the sins of the world and announced the accomplishment of that greatest of tasks when he stated "It is Finished" --and death shall be destroyed on the Final Day, the day of judgment. Jesus further accumulated many enemies during the days of His humiliation on earth; men who feared His incarnation, hated His preaching, could NOT abide His authority and conspired to see Him die.

Like His father David before Him, our Lord Jesus could likewise give good and faithful answers to the questions posed by His enemies:

\* To their question, “When will he die?” Jesus could rightly answer His enemies, “I shall die at exactly the right time; NOT a moment before and NOT a moment after that time decreed from eternity by My Father in heaven! You may rest assured, My enemy, that I shall indeed die. The Son of Man must ‘suffer many things . . . and be killed, and on the third day be raised’ (Matthew 16:21). But you, O enemy, you shall NOT take My life from Me. I voluntarily lay it down and voluntarily take it up again! ‘I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from My Father,’ and NOT from any enemy! ‘You would have no authority over Me at all unless it had been given you from above’. Nonetheless, I shall indeed soon die.”

\* As to the question asked in malice concerning Jesus about when His name will perish, our Lord’s answer is the same as David’s answer: NEVER. As we heard in our Gospel reading, “‘Father,’” prayed Jesus, “‘glorify Your name.’ Then a voice came from heaven: ‘I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again’”. Jesus IS the name of God, and His name is glorious!

\*\* The heavenly Father glorified His own, eternal, imperishable name when He placed that name upon Jesus of Nazareth, the child

“conceived by the Holy Spirit” and “born of the virgin Mary,” of whom the angel said, He “will be called holy—the Son of God” as we hear in Luke, Chapter 1.

\*\* The heavenly Father again glorified His name when His Son—His very name incarnate—was lifted up for the sins of the world, thus drawing all people to Himself (John 12:32).

\*\* The eternal name of God was yet again glorified in the resurrection of our Lord, when God “highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name” (Philippians 2:9), “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named” as we hear in Ephesians 1.

“My enemies say of [Jesus] in malice, ‘When will He die, and His name perish?’” Soon and inevitably, says the Lord, and NEVER: in the days of His humiliation, our Lord’s answers to His enemies’ questions were firm and unshakable, as David’s answers were before Him, so confident was the Christ in His Father’s love.

3. Like it or not, you and I also have plenty of enemies; the Small Catechism names them in the Third Petition of the Lord’s Prayer: “[1] the devil, [2] the world, and [3] our sinful nature, which do not want us to hallow God’s name or let His kingdom come.” You might have accumulated other enemies for yourself—enemies that you can name personally. Whomever

your additional enemies might be, they all fit squarely into that group of three. Perhaps you have never had anyone directly say to you, “I wish you were dead; I wish your memory would disappear,” but if you, or perhaps your children are on social media, then you have probably heard at least that much, if not more.

In the same way that Psalm 41 speaks of David and of our Christ, it likewise speaks of you and me. It speaks about you and me *because* it speaks about Jesus, and because we have been eternally united to Him in Baptism. Because of our baptismal connection to Jesus, and because of our participation in our father David’s confident faith, we are able to give the same confident and even quick and easy answer to our enemies that both David and Jesus confidently gave before you:

\* “When will he or she die?” We can answer our enemies by saying, “Soon enough—but NOT a moment too soon or a moment too late. My Lord’s ‘eyes saw my unformed substance; in [His] book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me’ (Psalm 139). Like the stars are in heaven, so are my days on earth: ‘Not one is missing’” (Isaiah 40). You, O enemy, can worry and fret about my death if you wish! I shall not!

Our Lord Jesus has promised, Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? (Luke 12).

\* Our enemies say of us in malice, “When will your name perish?” Our answer is “NEVER.”

“Rejoice that your names are written in heaven,” said the Lord. “You shall be delivered,” said the Lord, “along with everyone whose name was written before the foundation of the world in the book of the life of the Lamb who was slain”. As Hebrews 12 tells us, You are already part of “the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven.” You shall NOT be forgotten, and the memory of you shall NEVER cease.

Through your Baptism into Christ, the Lord of hosts has engraved you on the palms of His hands, as it says in Isaiah 49:16, and that is a sure and certain promise.

Now may the peace that passes all human understanding keep and guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.