

So, what do we do to escape God's anger over our sin? The answer may surprise you, but it's nothing, absolutely nothing. God makes that clear, when he says, *"No king is saved by the size of his army; no warrior escapes by his great strength. A horse is a vain hope for deliverance; despite all its great strength it cannot save."* We're no match for God when he flexes his mighty muscles. What good was America's military might in the face of Hurricane Katrina or Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico? What good are our computers, our cell phones, and our Kindles in preventing us from getting cancer? There's no human answer to God's anger that burns against us because of our sin. No, the answer isn't to be found within us, but outside of us, in God himself, and in what he has accomplished for us in Jesus Christ.

To look at God in any way outside of Christ will bring us no rest and no relief, and certainly no reconciliation with God. Without Jesus we can only see God as an angry judge. Without Jesus filtering the burning heat of God's wrath against us, it's like trying to look at a solar eclipse without wearing the special glasses that allow us to do so. *"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we are saved" (Ac 4:12.)*

Fellow redeemed, in Jesus God has provided all we need to stand in his presence without fear. So, when you feel as if God is out to get you, when you figure that God is no friend to you, look at him through the cross of Jesus, and you will clearly see his love, his compassion, and his care for you. That's what David is telling us, when he says, *"But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love, to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine. We wait in hope for the LORD; he is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. May your unfailing love be with us, LORD, even as we put our hope in you."* Yes, God's eye is always on us—not to destroy us but to save us, and to give us rest and relief. Another reason for us to sing a new song to the Lord, a song of gratitude for his watchfulness.

As I look back over this psalm today and apply Martin Luther's Garland of Four Strands, I thank my God for the great truths he teaches me in this psalm. I'm grateful for his truthfulness in keeping his promises, his controlling influence in the world, and his watchfulness over my life. I confess how slow I am to believe all that God says and promises in his Word and take it to heart. And I pray that God will open the eyes of my heart to see how completely he has forgiven me, and that with every fiber of my being I will sing to him a new song, a song that is filled with gratitude. Amen.

**Psalm 33** – *Rest for the Stressed: Gratitude* – 221, 443, 439  
08/19/18 – Pastor David M. Kuehl – St. Paul's, Muskego, WI

A while back, having a Friday with nothing on my schedule, I called my brother, Mark, out in Watertown and said, "Let's meet for lunch at Zwiig's Grill," a popular hamburger joint in town. As I drove around before lunch, revisiting all the haunts where I grew up, listening to my Simon and Garfunkel Greatest Hits CD, I was just balling. The songs brought back one childhood memory after another. When I finally met Mark at noon, he asked, "David, what's wrong? Your eyes are all bloodshot." The answer, obviously, was nothing. The familiar sounds of the music of my past had soothed me, made me feel melancholy, had given my heart and my mind a type of "reminiscing rest."

When it comes to worshipping God, do we ever feel like we've sung the same songs so often that they've become stale? If so, then today's text speaks to us. David, the master musician, teaches us to:

### **Sing to the Lord a New Song**

- 1. Grateful for God's truthfulness**
- 2. Grateful for God's influence**
- 3. Grateful for God's watchfulness**

1. To be honest, David isn't going to teach us new words or a new melody. What makes this song "new" is our attitude in singing it. Contrary to what some would have us believe, the reason our songs might be stale is not because the music is bad or the words boring; it's because we're not really thinking about what we're singing or to whom we're singing it. So, David begins by saying, *"Sing joyfully to the LORD, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him. Sing to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy. For the Word of the LORD is right and true; he is faithful in all he does."*

When do you most feel like singing? Isn't it when things are going well—when the sun's shining, when you get a bonus at work, when you ace a test, or when she says "yes" to going out with you? But that's not the reason David gives for singing to the Lord. We praise him because his words are right and true and because he's faithful in his every word and action. That's what sets our heart at rest and puts a song on our lips, even when the sun isn't shining, when things aren't going well at work or at school, or when she won't go out with me.

Consider Jesus' words in our Gospel today: *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light"* (Mt 11:28-30). Jesus is putting himself on the spot here. Can he deliver? Can he really give rest to our souls? Can he be trusted?

Jesus had once stood before the Jewish authorities and made the incredible claim, *"Destroy this temple,"* this body, *"and I will raise it again in three days"* (Jn 2:19). Now, anyone who makes a claim like that is one of three things. He's a liar, a lunatic, or the Lord. Can Jesus be trusted? On Easter Sunday, Scripture says, *"The angel said to the women, 'He isn't here; he's risen, just as he said'"* (Mt 28:6). Jesus is no liar, and he is no lunatic; he is the Lord. Not only can he be trusted, but he can be trusted fully. God says, *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding"* (Pr 3:5).

Jesus' words are right and true, and he is faithful in all he does. It's no wonder, then, that David says, *"The earth is full of his unfailing love."* There isn't a place on this earth where God's love is absent or lacking. God's love is just as present in a dreary ER waiting room as it is when we're healthy and feeling fine. It's just as valid when the judge announces that the divorce is final as it is when we're surrounded by our family on Christmas Eve. It's just as much with our teachers when they're meeting with the parents of a difficult student as it is when that student gets an A on an assignment. God's love is not dependent on life's circumstances. It surrounds us no matter where we are in life, whether we're facing disease, depression, debt, or death. And so, every morning and every night, whether it's raining or shining, good news or bad, we have reason to sing a new song to the Lord, a song of gratitude for God's truthfulness.

But can we really believe that God will do everything he says? Yes, we can. In fact, David says that another reason to sing a new song to the Lord is because we are grateful for his influence.

2. David writes, *"By the word of the LORD were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth. For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm."* God's Word isn't only truthful; it's powerful. When God created the world, he simply spoke, and everything came into existence. If we plan to build something, we have to envision it, draw up blueprints, raise money, and then hire someone to build it. Not so with God. God simply spoke. He said, *"Let there be"* (Gn 1:3), and there was.

But so much has gone wrong with God's creation, hasn't it? The animals he created to live together in peace now tear each other to pieces. The people he created to live together in harmony and love fight and scrape and tear each other apart. Doesn't God care? Can't he do anything about it? Of course, he can, and he does. God is very active in his control of what goes on down here on earth. David says, *"The LORD foils the plans of the nations; he thwarts the purposes of the peoples. But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations."*

Hitler had great plans to rule the world, but God's plans said otherwise. The Soviets believed that they could stamp out religion in Russia, but God's plans said otherwise. The Communists in China outlawed Christianity for centuries, but God's plans said otherwise. Vietnam has long been a land of false gods and false worship, but God's plans said otherwise. If God handles these global threats to his kingdom, there's no threat to his name that he cannot handle. We need not panic when we hear about all the unrest and violence in the world. God is directing all the events of history for his grand and glorious purpose. That truth puts a new song on our lips, a song of gratitude that our God is in control.

But it's not just the kingdoms of the world that God is keeping an eye on. David says, *"From heaven the LORD looks down and sees all mankind; from his dwelling place he watches all who live on earth—he who forms the hearts of all, who considers everything they do."* God's eye is on us, too.

3. Do we find that a bit unnerving? Do we like it when a clerk follows us around as we browse at a store? When someone hovers over us like that, don't we feel that our personal space is being violated? God not only hovers over us, watching everything we do, he sees much deeper than that. He sees the thoughts and attitudes of our heart. He knows that we keep to the speed limit, not because we honor him by doing so, but because we don't want to get hit with a big fine. He knows that we came to church today, not because we were eager to hear his Word, but because we felt obligated to do so. He knows that we helped with the dishes last night, not because we love to serve, but because we didn't want to lose out on our allowance. God doesn't just see us; he sees through us. His eye is always on us, and he knows what makes us tick and what motivates us. That ought to scare the bejeebers out of us because, if God knows what lies beneath and behind my words and actions, I'm in big trouble. I've sinned against the Sinless. I've angered the Almighty, and I have no excuse.