“Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation. When his breath departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish.

BLESSSED IS HE WHOSE HELP IS THE GOD OF JACOB, WHOSE HOPE IS IN THE LORD HIS GOD”

(PS. 146:3–5).
There are very few moments in history when everyone can look back and remember exactly where they were and what they were doing. There have been sad and exciting events in our own personal lives that we remember, but there are very few moments when almost all citizens of our nation are impacted to such an extreme.

Perhaps for the older generations it was the “day that will live in infamy,” the attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941. For some, it was the moon landing or the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. For others, it was Sept. 11, 2001. Many of us can still remember what we were doing and where we were when we heard and saw the face of evil that day.

Watching in disbelief as the events unfolded and more information was released, we were glued to the TV and/or radio. Who would do such a thing? How devastating was it? Our emotions were all over the place; there was shock and disbelief, sadness and fear, anger and wanting revenge. Many who were not interested in military service before that day quit their jobs and signed up to serve in the armed forces. They wanted to be a part of Romans 13 and be the sword to punish evildoers who would take innocent lives.

First responders charged into burning buildings. Neighbors were helping neighbors. Pastors and chaplains were among the first responders, offering prayers and counsel, support and pastoral care. Many of our LCMS chaplains and our civilian pastors were mobilized to provide pastoral care to the families as well as the rescue workers and first responders. Chaplains were deployed with their units. Meanwhile, everyone was searching for an answer about how this could happen. Many of our congregations held prayer services and worship services throughout our nation. They offered prayers for the families, the workers, the first responders, the military, and even for their own peace and understanding amidst this horrible confusion and evil. People wondered: How do we make sense of this? Where should we put our trust and hope?

Some turned to the government or other humans for help and hope. They put their trust in princes to explain this evil and to deal with it. We still see the truthfulness of Psalm 146. It is a waste of time to put our trust in princes. Yet, we do it over and over again, thinking we can work it out ourselves or rely on friends or the government to solve our problems.

But for help against the evil of Dec. 7, 1941, and Sept. 11, 2001, we can’t go to princes or sons of man. As with all the other trials and tribulations we face, we need to go to Yahweh. We need to go to the true God — Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We go to praise the Lord, even in the midst of sadness and confusion. Psalm 146 reminds us of where our true help and hope comes from: Yahweh, the Lord God.

We are reminded daily that we continue to live in a sin-sick world, full of evil and pain, suffering and sadness. We still have battles raging in our lives. The battle against a deadly illness, the battle against the guilt and shame of a sin or addiction that continues to haunt you and beat you down, the battle of sadness over a broken relationship in your marriage or with your children, financial challenges. You are struggling with life, and you feel hopeless and helpless.

You have turned to “princes,” to the son of man, but you quickly find there is no salvation there. You find only more pain, suffering, guilt and hopelessness. You realize that those humans you put your trust in don’t have salvation, and when their breath departs, and they return to the earth … “on that very day his plans perish.”

Dear friends, you who have been redeemed by Yahweh, the God of Jacob, who sent His one and only Son into the world, is the Prince of Peace, the King of Kings, the Balm of Gilead, who was planted on the earth (tabernacled among us) and born for you. Jesus was born to fulfill the law for you. Jesus was born to conquer sin and death for you. He was born to die for you. Jesus was planted in the ground for you but raised again on the third day. Jesus, the Prince of Peace, lived, suffered, died and rose again — for you.

It is all too clear that we shouldn’t put our trust in princes, yet we do it repeatedly. We continue to look to ourselves for answers to self-medicate; we just want the pain to end. Or we use others to get happiness. The psalmist calls us to repent of that, to turn to Yahweh and praise Him with all our being. Turn to God, the Creator of heaven and earth and the sea and everything that is in it. We do believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, who sent His Son, Jesus, to be our Savior.

This Jesus, who was there at creation, also executes justice for the oppressed. He is our sacrifice. He declares us justified because of His death. This Jesus, who died on the cross and was raised again, feeds the hungry. He continues to feed you with all you need for body and soul. He provides you with physical food and also with spiritual food — to you who are hungry for forgiveness of your sins and peace that the world cannot give.

Jesus comes to you with His body and blood at the Eucharist and provides you with forgiveness, life and salvation. This Jesus sets prisoners free. He paid the price — not with worldly gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death. Dear friends, you are forgiven, you are free from guilt and sin.

You, who were born spiritually blind, have been given sight. The Holy Spirit has given you faith to see your salvation in Jesus Christ. To gaze upon the cross and know that there Jesus died for you. He lifts you up when you are down low. When you feel helpless and hopeless, Christ is there. He loves you and declares you righteous! He watches over you as a sojourner on this earth. You are but a pilgrim here; heaven is your home. He upholds you when you have lost a loved one. You are not alone. He has promised never to leave you nor forsake you.

Yahweh, your God, will reign forever. My friends, what a beautiful psalm we have before us today. It helps us bask in the glory of our God who has redeemed us. With this psalm in our heart and on our lips, we join the psalmist in praising the Lord with all our being.

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