

Vespers, Lent I
10 February 2008

**"The Son of Man is Our Lord,
the Incarnate, Crucified, Risen and Ascended Lord, Who
Takes Care of His Church through the Gospel."**

**"O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!
who hast set thy glory above the heavens."
Psalm 8:1**

Introduction

Why does David say, "O LORD, our Lord"? David says "our Lord" because God is now reconciled to us in Christ our Savior. For no longer is God our enemy because of our sin, but rather now our Lord whom we gladly embrace because He is our Savior.

This Blessed Knowledge of God has come to us because the Lord has made it known to His praise through all the earth in the Gospel.

Finally, Christ has ascended above the heavens and has placed all things under His Feet.¹ Christ, our Savior and *our* Lord is He who governs all human affairs. And our Lord governs all of human affairs for the sake of His beloved Church.

In this passage, then, we see that Christ is active in our salvation by the Cross through the Gospel and also in governing all human history for the sake of the Church. In this way our Lord cares for us and preserves us in saving faith unto the life everlasting and the resurrection of the body.

I. God is not *our* Lord after man's fall into sin.

A. Psalm 8 is a Messianic Psalm.

During this season of Lent, we will meditate on Psalm 8. Psalm 8 is a Messianic Psalm. A Messianic Psalm teaches us about the Person and Work of the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, to save men from their sins.

There are different kinds of psalms². There are psalms that teach (didactic psalms),

¹Psalm 110:1, Ephesians 1:22

psalms of comfort and psalms of petition (supplicatory). The Fountainhead of all psalms is Messianic psalms. The Messianic psalms teach and sing about the Person and Work of Christ for the salvation of sinners.³ And because the psalms are the church's hymn book, they have to flow from the Psalms about Christ, the Gospel, for only the Gospel teaches us to praise God aright.⁴

¹Of the general contents of the psalter, Luther writes: "It should be noted that the entire Psalter deals with five subjects; therefore we divide it into five parts. In the first place, some psalms prophesy of Christ and of the Church, or the saints, what would happen to them, etc.; and to this class belong all the psalms in which there are promises given to the pious and threats to the ungodly. In the second place, there is a number of doctrinal psalms, which teach us what we should do and what omit according to the Law of God; and to this class belong all the psalms which condemn the doctrine of men and extol the Word of God. In the third place, there are several psalms of consolation, which comfort the sorrowing and suffering saints, and, on the other hand, condemn and terrify the tyrants. .. In the fourth place, there are a few psalms of prayer, in which we pray to God and cry in all distress; and to this class belong all psalms which laments and mourn and cry over the enemies. In the fifth place, we have psalms of thanksgiving, in which we laud and praise God for His various benefits and His assistance; and to this class belong all psalms which praise God in His works, these being the finest and principle psalms. ... But we must know that the psalms cannot be just exactly and even divided into such part and verses, for sometimes two, three, and even all five divisions, as noted above, are found in one psalm, so that prophecy, doctrine, consolation, prayer, and thanksgiving are found together. But this division serves for the better understanding of the psalms and that we may the more easily learn and remember them." P.E. Kretzmann, *Popular Commentary of the Bible: The Old Testament: The Poetical and the Prophetical Books, Vol. II*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1924, pp. 59-60.

¹"Of special interest to us are the Messianic psalms, including Ps. 2, 8, 16, 22, 24, 40, 45, 47, 68, 72, 89, 93, 97, 110, 118; they refer to the Messiah, the promised Redeemer of the world, portraying more or less vividly and completely His person and work His birth, betrayal, agony, and death, His triumph over death, His ascension into heaven and enthronement at the right hand of God the Father Almighty." *ibid.* p. 59.

¹Our Lutheran Confessions declare that seeking the remission of sins from Christ is the highest worship: "Nothing greater could she ascribe to Christ. To seek from Him the *remission of sins* was truly to acknowledge the Messiah. This worship is the *highest worship* of Christ. Nothing greater could she ascribe to Christ." *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article III.33*, emphasis added.

As for the word "hymn", the English word hymn comes from the Greek word "hymnos". "Hymnos" is a song of praise to a god or hero. The God and Hero of the Christian faith is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Thus Christian hymnody sings the Praises of our God and Savior Jesus Christ for His Work to

B. Man's fall into sin alienates man from God.

Psalm 8 begins with the phrase, "O LORD, our Lord". Phrases like "O LORD, our Lord" we all too often take for granted. Thinking like sinners and not Christians, we naturally assume God is our Lord *by right*. But God is our Lord not by right, but by God's Good Graces toward sinners in the Gospel.

Our right to call our God and Creator Lord we threw away in the Garden of Eden when Adam broke God's Word and departed from God's Good-Willed (Benevolent) Lordship. Adam and Eve no longer warmed to their Great Provider, Protector and Lord, but now they fled from Him in fear and dread:

And the LORD God called unto Adam, and saith unto him, "Where art thou?" And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.⁵

Adam now feared God because no longer was his Creator His Lord, his Caretaker, and Great Benefactor, but his greatest enemy⁶. There can be no greater calamity to befall man than to have his Creator and Lord now his enemy. Breaking God's Word orphans us as God's people and makes God no longer our God, as God told rebellious Israel:

Then said God, "Call his name Lo-ammi: for ye are not My people, and I will not be your God."⁷

Because of man's fall into sin, God is no longer *our* God nor *our* Lord.

II. God is *Our* Lord in Christ.

A. Christ becomes Our Lord on the Cross.

This little phrase "O LORD, Our Lord," then is not a phrase formed by the law, that is to say

Redeem us from our sins.

5Genesis 3:9-10.

6"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." **Romans 5:10**

7Hosea 1:9

by our created right, for we abandoned our created right in the Garden of Eden. Now our former glory only rises up to haunt us with the specter of the condemnation of glory lost and paradise forever in our past. For now our former glory only condemns us for what caused it to be former and past, our sin. Sin caused man's glory to depart, to fade and to disappear altogether into the darkness of eternal dread, fear, death, and damnation. For the law now condemns us because of our sin and drives us away from God, as we have seen with Adam in the Garden of Eden.

From whence, then, comes this expression, "O LORD, Our Lord"? This expression comes from the Gospel which forgives our sins and thereby draws us back to God. The phrase "O LORD, Our Lord," then is not a phrase formed by the Law, but rather by the Gospel. The phrase "O LORD, our Lord" is formed by passages like this one:

"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"⁸

Remarkably, in the Messiah's cry of being forsaken, He still calls God *His* God. Why? Because even though Christ was truly forsaken because the sins of the world were reckoned to Him for our sakes, nevertheless, God remained His God because Christ was still keeping the First Commandment for us while He was bearing the world's sins. Jesus keeping the commandments for us is called His *Active Obedience*, namely His fulfilling all the commandments and all righteousness for us who have not kept the commandments and are unrighteousness. Luther writes of Jesus' *Active Obedience*⁹:

He satisfied the Law; He fulfilled the Law perfectly, for He loved God with all His heart, and with all His soul, and with all His mind, and He loved His neighbor as Himself. Therefore, when the Law comes and accuses you of not having kept it, bid it go to Christ. Say: There is the Man who has kept it; to Him I cling; He fulfilled it for me and gave His fulfillment to me. Thus the law is silenced.¹⁰

Jesus, in the midst of His *Passive Obedience*¹¹, i.e. His agony of body and soul while suffering

8Psalm 22:1.

9"As my *Priest*, Christ *fulfilled the Law* in my stead perfectly (active obedience), *sacrificed Himself* for me (passive obedience), and still *intercedes* (pleads) for me with His heavenly Father." *Catechism*, question 132 B

10Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. II, p. 375

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God's wrath and eternal damnation for the breaking of God's commandments by all men, was also serving all men by keeping God's First Commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me", while God was rejecting and punishing Him for the sins of men. In this way, Jesus removes that which alienated God from us and makes God once again our Lord.

Moreover, Jesus on the Cross was doing His Father's will. So the Father says of Jesus:

I will be His Father, and He shall be My Son. When He is Reckoned iniquitous, I will chasten Him with the Rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But My Mercy shall not depart away from Him. ...¹²

The Father's mercy did not depart from Christ even though God truly forsook Him because Jesus was doing precisely the will of God by suffering for the sins of men.

Thus this simple phrase, "O LORD, Our Lord" is profound beyond measure, being born of the greatest mystery: *The Passion of Christ*.

B. Christ's continues to Work for sinners after His resurrection from the dead at the Right Hand of God and through the Gospel.

Because Christ was doing the Father's work for sinners, His mercy did not depart from Him nor did He abandon His soul in hell. Jesus says in Psalm 16:

For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.¹³

Likewise St. Peter states:

Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. ... Men *and* brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne....¹⁴

12II Samauel 7:14-15

13Psalm 16:10

14Acts 2:27, 29-30

St. Paul says:

And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, *now* no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Wherefore he saith also in another *psalm*, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption. Be it known unto you therefore, men *and* brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins....¹⁵

David, therefore, says here in Psalm 8:

O LORD, Our Lord, how excellent is Thy Name in all the earth....¹⁶

First of all, certainly David would not call upon Christ if Christ were not risen from the dead. But Christ did rise from the dead. For Christ Himself, after His Great Passion on the Cross, His suffering the agony and torments of body and soul, says:

I will declare Thy Name unto My brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee.¹⁷

Christ, therefore, in Psalm 22, speaks of His resurrection because He speaks of His preaching the Gospel in the midst of the Great Congregation, namely in the midst of the Church. Were Christ not risen from the dead, He could not preach in the midst of the congregation.

And Christ preaches in the midst of the Great Congregation, the Church, through the Gospel. For David says Christ's Name is regarded as excellent in all the earth¹⁸. To praise Christ is to call upon Him for the forgiveness of sins and thereby salvation through the Gospel. Jesus says:

Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day: And repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name

15Acts 13:34-38

16Psalm 8:2

17Psalm 22:22

18Psalm 8:1

among all nations beginning at Jerusalem.¹⁹

St. Paul writes:

Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. ... And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ....²⁰

Again, St. Paul writes:

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! ... So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.²¹

The Lutheran Church states:

The woman came with the opinion concerning Christ that with Him the remission of sins should be sought. This worship is the highest worship of Christ. Nothing greater could she ascribe to Christ. To seek from Him the remission of sins was truly to acknowledge the Messiah. Now, thus to think of Christ, thus to worship Him, thus to embrace Him, is truly to believe.²²

Luther writes:

[David] turns to the King and addresses Him, as though he wanted to say: “Before Thy coming to earth, O King, Thou art praised and thanked only in the tiny narrow corner of Judea and in Jerusalem. But after Thy coming there will be more ringing and singing, thanking and praising, not in the narrow corner of Judea alone, but in all

19St. Luke 24:46-47

20Ephesians 4:8, 11-12

21Romans 10:13-15, 17

22The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article III.33

the lands under heaven, throughout the world.” By this he prophesies and proclaims at the very beginning of this psalm that through this coming King God will be praised and worshiped throughout the world.²³

And not only does this verse one of Psalm 8 speak of the Incarnate, Crucified, and Resurrected Lord, but also of the Ascended Lord:

O LORD, Our Lord, how excellent is Thy Name in all the earth, who hast set Thy Glory above the heavens.²⁴

God's Glory is to become man and to Redeem sinners. Now this Glory is Ascended to the Right Hand of God *not in order to abandon us, but that our Redeemer govern all things for our benefit.* So we read in another psalm:

The Lord said unto My Lord, "Sit Thou at My Right Hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool."²⁵

What enemies? The enemies are: sin, death, the world and the Devil. The Ascended Christ has conquered all these for us. So St. Paul writes:

And what is the exceeding greatness of His Power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His Mighty Power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His Own Right Hand in heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under His Feet, and gave Him to be Head over all things to the Church, which is His Body, the Fullness of Him that filleth all in all.²⁶

The risen and ascended Christ, then, is not idle, but continues to care for His Church through the preaching of the Gospel and also through ruling all events, institutions, and nations on earth, for the sake of building up His Church through the Gospel.

²³Luther's Works, Vol. 12, p. 99

²⁴Psalm 8:1

²⁵Psalm 110:1

²⁶Ephesians 1:19-23

Conclusion

How can one verse in Psalm 8 give us such a wealth of material -- and we've only just begun? There is so much more here because this verse, in the little phrase "O LORD, our Lord" speaks of Christ.

And when you speak of Christ, you have grabbed hold of the entire Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, you've grabbed hold of all Eternity, of Heaven, of Resurrection from the dead, life everlasting and more.

In this one verse we have more than enough to meditate upon our entire life and forever. But God in His Grace gives us even more verses to enrich and nourish unto life everlasting.

Amen