

11 April 2017
Holy Tuesday

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Vienna, VA

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Text: Psalm 71:1-14 (John 12:20-36)

David most likely wrote the psalm we heard today when he was very old and didn't have many years, or even days, left. When you're faced with that reality, your perspective changes. When you're young and expect many days ahead of you, you think of all the possibilities that lie before you. When you're old and haven't many more days left, you think of all that lies behind you. Good things, and maybe some regrets, too.

David had his share of both. Great victories won, like his victory over Goliath. But also great sins fallen into, like the Bathsheba episode. But through it all, God was with him. Strengthening him and forgiving him. Being his refuge and also rescuing him. And, David prays, that God would be so also now as he faces his greatest and most daunting foe: death.

So as David remembers, he praises the Lord. He says that ***his praise is continually of the Lord***. That ***his mouth is filled with the Lord's praise***. And, he prays, that he will ***praise the Lord yet more and more*** - even after death. That his praise would not end, but go on. Praise, which means to confess all that the Lord has done for him. For praise is not cheering, it is confessing. Confessing God's strength in his victories, and confessing God's grace in his forgiveness. Confessing that God is his refuge, his strength, and his salvation.

And so, David said, ***I have been as a portent to many***. That means *a sign* to many. The people saw in David a sign of God's goodness and grace to Israel. A sign that God keeps His Word. A sign that God is faithful. And that will be true for David, even in death.

And that will be true for David's Son as well. The promised Son of David, given the name Jesus. He speaks of His death today, too. He has not many days left. But Jesus speaks kind of oddly. For in speaking of His death, He says that ***the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified***. We usually don't think of death as glorious, and we certainly don't think of crucifixion as glorious! But Jesus says it is so. This, His crucifixion and death, is His moment of glory.

Which reminds us of the man born blind we heard about a couple of weeks ago. Jesus said he was born that way so *that the works of God may be displayed in him* (John 9:3). And when Lazarus died, Jesus said: *this illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it* (John 11:4). Jesus would gloriously heal the man born blind. Jesus would gloriously raise Lazarus from the dead. And now Jesus himself would be glorified - by His death on the cross and His own resurrection

from the dead.

Death, normally, is not glorious. But sometimes it is. Such as when a soldier throws himself on a grenade and loses his life to save his platoon. Jesus' death is glorious because He throws down His life for us. To rescue us, to be our refuge, to be our rock and fortress against sin, death, and the devil. And Jesus was not a sign of God's goodness and grace - Jesus is God's goodness and grace. Jesus is God keeping His Word. Jesus is God's faithfulness.

So *the hour has come*, Jesus says. His whole life has been leading up to this. He has no regrets; He has done all things well. And this, too, He will do well. He will be *the grain of wheat that falls into the earth and dies*, in order to *bear much fruit*. So that we might live and grow in Him.

The words from John we heard tonight started with some Greeks wanting to see Jesus. It ended with these words: *and he hid himself from them*. It's not that Jesus didn't want the Greeks to see Him - it's that He wanted them to see Him in His glory: on the cross. And they would. And that's where He wants us to see Him as well. Young or old, Jew or Greek. For there is David's Lord. There is David's Son. There is David's hope and strength and praise. And ours as well.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.