

Meditation for the Third Vespers in Advent

'Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord God is an everlasting rock.'

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We say these words so often, we Lutherans, 'fear, love, and trust.' These are the things we owe God. These are how we rightly relate to our Lord. These three together are Christian piety. And the dearest of these is trust.

In the Scriptures, the words for trust, for faith, for belief, are all the same word, for they all imply the same thing: holding onto what is not yet visible, knowing that it will be seen. Expecting what is not yet known, knowing that it will be known. For *faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not yet seen.*

Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom, Love shall never pass away, but faith, trust, is the one thing needful to us, who dwell in the blight of this world. We, who look upon these passing things, and are afraid, whether it is the conflicts of our society, the friction within our families, the hatred of ourselves. We look upon it all, and feel helpless. We look upon it all, and long for a deliverer.

We look every which way for our deliverance. Perhaps some politician shall be our salvation. Perhaps some new friend. Perhaps a self-help fashion. In many and various ways, we look to these worldly things, which promise to *deliver us from evil.* The Lord God Almighty scoffs, and speaks to us, His little children, that He may instruct us rightly, saying, *'Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him.'*

Yet how difficult it is to face the misery and chaos of this world with solemn

resolve, to have no fear in the face of so much madness, to not blink before the bite of its hatreds? How difficult it is to wait. We feel we need some tool in life with which to face the deluge, the flood of the world's troubles that every day face us. For some, it is a novel philosophy, which braces them for the suffering to come. For others, it is alcohol, the oldest of all coping mechanisms; or some other drug. Anything to make the angst, the pain cease.

And let none of us think that we have *overcome the world*. That we no longer experience the sorrow that fills it. Especially in our opulence, in our wealth, in this, the most prosperous nation on earth, we have found a hundred thousand ways to distract ourselves, to amuse ourselves, to free our minds from the obvious fact of a life grown sick. But take away your amusements, your hobbies, your cocktails, your diversions, and look with an honest eye upon your own soul, upon the soul of your suffering friend, your suffering parents, your suffering neighbor. What can you think besides, 'it hurts'?

It is no mystery why we seek out so many distractions in life. Whether playing games or watching shows or taking in a movie or eating a sumptuous meal or indulging in a decadent vacation. We do these things because if we did not, we would have to admit, it hurts. This world hurts, and no man, no thing, will save it from itself. No mortal will save us from ourselves.

No end of suffering is to be expected from this world, and for this reason, the Lord gently tells us '*wait patiently.*'

'Wait' He says. Wait, and see. Wait to see *that which is not yet seen*, and to be *assured of things hoped for*.

For what is it that we hope for, but solace? What do we wish to see, but peace? The Prophet speaks '*You keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.*' The Psalmist sings '*The meek shall inherit the land, and delight themselves in the abundance of peace.*'

Indeed, this peace that we cannot bring to ourselves is coming to us. This salvation that we cannot win for ourselves shall be *made flesh*. This solace, for which we all long, that quietness of heart that is so faint that we can barely imagine it ever existed, dwells within the womb of the sacred Virgin.

Mary, the Mother of God; hidden within her, where He cannot be seen; hidden there is our peace.

Within the holy halls of her body is hidden the Lord of all creation, come to us, into our world, into our sin, assuming our flesh, that He may be born among us, *soon and very soon, 'the way, the truth, and the life.'* That He might *bind in one the hearts of all mankind.* That there may no longer be endless strife and division and hatred. But that He may be *our King of Peace.*

Therefore, *'Trust in the Lord forever.'* And grant Him this last work of piety: kneel before Him in fear, for He is the *creator of the stars of night.* Kiss the Son in love, for He has come to deliver you from death. And look upon Him, casting away your worry, and hear Him, for He speaks to you, saying:

'Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.'

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Preached by Pastor Fields

Sermon Texts: Psalm 37:1-11; Isaiah 26:1-8; John 14:1-6.