



FROM THE PASTOR

Psalm 31: 1-6, 19-24

¹In you, O LORD, do I take refuge;
let me never be put to shame;
in your righteousness deliver me!

²Incline your ear to me;
rescue me speedily!

Be a rock of refuge for me,
a strong fortress to save me!

³For you are my rock and my fortress;
and for your name's sake you lead me and guide me;

⁴you take me out of the net they have hidden for me,
for you are my refuge.

⁵Into your hand I commit my spirit;
you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God.

⁶I hate¹ those who pay regard to worthless idols,
but I trust in the LORD.

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<sup>19</sup>Oh, how abundant is your goodness,  
which you have stored up for those who fear you  
and worked for those who take refuge in you,  
in the sight of the children of mankind!

<sup>20</sup>In the cover of your presence you hide them  
from the plots of men;  
you store them in your shelter  
from the strife of tongues.

<sup>21</sup>Blessed be the LORD,  
for he has wondrously shown his steadfast love to me  
when I was in a besieged city.

<sup>22</sup>I had said in my alarm,  
"I am cut off from your sight."  
But you heard the voice of my pleas for mercy  
when I cried to you for help.

<sup>23</sup>Love the LORD, all you his saints!  
The LORD preserves the faithful  
but abundantly repays the one who acts in pride.

<sup>24</sup>Be strong, and let your heart take courage,  
all you who wait for the LORD!

Our psalm today is one of the many psalms that is a little too long to print out in its entirety for the purpose of this brief meditation. But that should not keep you from looking at the whole psalm in your own Bible. I didn't omit words because they were not worthwhile but simply for the sake of space. It begins with a beautiful description of the steadfastness of God.

**<sup>1</sup> In you, O LORD, do I take refuge; let me never be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me!**  
**<sup>2</sup> Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily! Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me!**  
**<sup>3</sup> For you are my rock and my fortress; and for your name's sake you lead me and guide me;**  
**<sup>4</sup> you take me out of the net they have hidden for me, for you are my refuge.**

The description of God as a rock or fortress is very familiar to us. I can illustrate it quite simply by two very well known hymns from our hymnal. The first is number 623, "Rock of Ages," by Augustus M. Toplady:

*Rock of Ages, cleft for me,  
let me hide myself in thee;  
Let the water and the blood,  
from thy riven side which flowed,  
Be of sin the double cure;  
cleanse me from its guilt and power.*

The second example, so very important to us, is number 503, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," by Martin Luther:

*A mighty fortress is our God,  
A sword and shield victorious;  
He breaks the cruel oppressor's rod  
And wins salvation glorious.*

Psalm 31 is full of God's praise and uses many different words to describe God's constancy and protection: rock, fortress, refuge, cover of your presence and shelter.



Even our Lord Jesus on the cross used the same words as in this psalm: "***Into your hand I commit my spirit***". The Holy Spirit calls us, also, to commit our spirits to him. The psalm tells us why: "***you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God.***"

In spite of the appearances of difficulty, struggle and misfortune in life, we can see God at work behind and through it all. "***Blessed be the LORD, for he has wondrously shown his steadfast love to me when I was in a besieged city.***"

So often, the world around me seems to be precisely that—a besieged city. It is besieged by self-preoccupation, self-righteousness and self-indulgence. And, just as a city under siege grows short of supplies, we seem to be growing short of love of God and neighbor. But as long as you have Jesus, you will never run out of love. As we read in the book of Lamentations (3:22-24): '***The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him."***'

In Christ's service,  
*Pastor Brian Shirey*

### *Post Scripts:*

Our lessons for this Sunday, October 4, the Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost, are:

First Reading: Isaiah 5:1-7

Psalm 80:7-19

Second Reading: Philippians 3:4b-14

Gospel: Matthew 21:33-46

- † We began to worship in Centennial Hall before the leaves were on the trees this spring. The leaves are beginning to turn colors and soon will fall and we are still in Centennial Hall. Three more weeks and our paraments will be changing colors: Red for Reformation Sunday, White for All Saints and Christ the King Sundays, and blue for Advent. It looks very certain that we shall see these color changes in Centennial Hall. We could, if the danger from COVID-19 would suddenly end, slip back into our sanctuary and back into our normal functioning, but that seems unlikely for a while. As I have said so often, thank you for your patience and your faithfulness. Thank you to all who cannot be in Centennial Hall on Sunday morning, but decorate it with your thoughts and especially your prayers!
- † I will be on vacation for two weeks in October (8-22). So there will be two weeks in October when these little articles will not appear on our website. Again, thank you for your patience.