

**"If the Foundations are Destroyed,  
What can the Righteous Do?"**

**Psalm 11**

12 September Anno Domini 2001

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
Emmett, Idaho  
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Grace, mercy and peace to you in the Name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

Dear Baptized,

The cowardly, calculated eruptions of evil in our nation yesterday morning have set off a string of emotions and reactions within us, both personally as individual citizens of the United States of America and nationally as E PLURIBUS UNUM has precipitated from within "We the People" and solidified us just as it did 60 years ago.

First came the report of the awful accident of a passenger jet crashing into one of the World Trade Center towers. We were shocked and, as we watched what appeared to be a tall, smoking chimney, we quickly began to wonder how this could have possibly happened. Then we were confronted with an image that has become and will remain graven upon our minds ... of a second hijacked jet slicing into the second World Trade Center tower. Our reactions were ones of stunned disbelief. Instantly we knew it was a terrorist attack, and one of a magnitude never before experienced in the land of the free and the home of the brave. Our thoughts went out to those poor people inside the jets and inside the towers ... people just like you and me who were traveling for one reason or another; friends, neighbors, relatives just going to work. Thousands of lives were lost in the twinkling of an eye; many more lives were changed in those devil-driven crashes. Compassion. Fear. Indignation. Anger.

Then the report came of a third jet slamming into the Pentagon ... the Pentagon, the military headquarters of the most powerful nation in the history of the world! Many more lost their lives and we knew that we would now never be the same. Shock gave way to outrage. Disbelief evolved into fuming anger. Patriotism rose like a phoenix from the ashes. Behold, the tower of a tolerance-driven nation was crumbling before our eyes as the searches began ... for those who were responsible and for those in the buildings. As the latter commenced, hundreds of firefighters, police and rescue workers, brave men and women, were crushed and died when the two towers collapsed.

Tears flowed down faces even as teeth began grinding and jaws became fixed in determination to find those responsible and make them pay. A fourth hijacked jet was still in the air. Cell phone conversations between family members reveal that, following their final good-bye calls, a determined resolution to thwart the hijacking was to be undertaken. While such action cost those people their lives, it also saved many, many lives of others who became beneficiaries of their supreme sacrifice. Today we still have whatever had been that terrorist's target for destruction, reportedly the White House. Even as our hearts ache for those who now grieve, our hearts swell with

admiration and gratitude for those, both civilian and military, both pilot and passenger, who have given their lives in the defense of their neighbor and their country.

Those are some of the forces, events and reasons why we have experienced the broad spectrums of emotions to date and why we are congregated this evening. Even now, as we face the hours at hand and the days ahead, our reactions and emotions ebb and flow as the nation considers just what it will do. Questions along that line have been asked since the first terrorist stood to take over the first jet and passengers realized what was taking place. "What shall I do? What will we do? What are we going to do?" Many of us within this nation have asked that question as well. "What ought we to do?" Those questions deserve an answer; indeed, must be answered, for to do nothing is unacceptable.

The question is one that the Christian needs to have answered and as always, but especially now, the Bible is the source. The question is of old and has been addressed in the Scriptures. Please listen to Psalm 11 and hear what the Word declares in response to the question ...

... "If the Foundations are Destroyed, What can the Righteous Do?"

In the LORD I take refuge; how can you say to me;

"Flee like a bird to the mountains;  
for lo, the wicked bend the bow,  
they have fitted their arrow to the string,  
to shoot in the dark at the upright in heart;  
if the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do"?

The LORD is in His holy Temple,  
the LORD's Throne is in heaven;  
His eyes behold,  
His eyelids test, the children of men.  
The LORD tests the righteous and the wicked,  
and His soul hates him that loves violence.  
On the wicked He will rain coals of fire and brimstone;  
a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup.  
For the LORD is righteous, He loves righteous deeds;  
the upright shall behold His face.

Thus far the Word of the LORD our God.

This is one of the psalms written by the Holy Spirit through the hand of David and it bespeaks a time when David was being hunted down by a determined enemy. So successful were the attacks upon David, that he had received the advice to flee. The situation was so tenuous that it appeared as if the enemies of David were in a position to inflict further immediate harm upon, or put to the sword, the LORD's anointed one, as well as those congregated with him. The counsel to flee is given even as the question is heard, "If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

David replies in faith and trust, "In the LORD I take refuge." In declaring this, he reveals that there is no place as safe as being in Presence of the LORD. This is the confession of confidence that God's

people have in a terrorist-plagued world. The message from the LORD to His people is, "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine" (Isaiah 43:1). This LORD is the God Who created the universe, including you and me, and still sustains it despite all the manifestations of wicked men among us. He has come into this world to die for the sins of all people and that includes the sins of those wretched terrorists. Jesus rose again in victory over sin, death and the devil ... He is the Redeemer of such a world as this. Therefore, we can join with the psalmist and all Christians and say confidently, "With the LORD on my side I do not fear, what can man do unto me?" (Psalm 118:6), that is, "the LORD is my helper, I will not be afraid; what can man do to me?" (Hebrews 13:6).

In reply to the question, "If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" David's faithful and confident reply of "Fear not" continues with an admonition: "In the LORD I take refuge; how can you say to me; 'Flee like a bird to the mountains'?" With the LORD as my Refuge, how can you say to me, "Run like a coward"? These timid counselors have given their rationale:

"Flee like a bird to the mountains;  
for lo, the wicked bend the bow,  
they have fitted their arrow to the string,  
to shoot in the dark at the upright in heart;  
if the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do"?

David says that there is plenty to do right here and right now since as our refuge is in the LORD and being a milksopping coward is not part of the Christian's vocation. We are called to remain faithful unto death and be give the crown of life (Revelation 2:10). Should it be that the Christian dies as a result of remaining steadfast in the Word and the work of the LORD, well so be it. "If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's" (Romans 14:9). Even if the Christian dies while attempting to kill a terrorist, then the Christian lives to the Lord for surely this is loving one's neighbor and in such actions we are reminded of the Sacrifice. "Why, one will hardly die for a righteous man - though perhaps for a good man one will dare even to die. But God shows His love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Romans 5:7-8).

"If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" Answer: fear not, take refuge in the Lord and be of good courage.

David continues with an answer that is especially needed today. Where was God when all of this was happening? Where in the world is God? Listen to the answer:

The LORD is in His holy Temple,  
the LORD's Throne is in heaven;  
His eyes behold,  
His eyelids test, the children of men.  
The LORD tests the righteous and the wicked,  
and His soul hates him that loves violence.  
On the wicked He will rain coals of fire and brimstone;  
a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup.  
For the LORD is righteous, He loves righteous deeds;  
the upright shall behold His face.

While it is not the will of God that any sin occur, especially what we witnessed yesterday, the LORD has permitted all of this to happen. However God is not to blame. This is a wake-up call to our nation. The moral decay is eating us up from within. What we are experiencing is what happens when the gap between the moral code of man and the moral law of God widens, namely, a catastrophe that God allows. We have been heading for September 11th for a long time.

For nearly a decade the armed forces have been gutted by a gutless people. Should we expect that such a show of weakness would not be tested by our enemies? So should we question and blame God? Our intelligence network, from spies to satellites, has been turned off by a complacent people. Should we expect that our enemies will not succeed in their terrorist activities if we are not being watchful at our posts? Should we seek to put God in the defendant's box and question Him about this? Our sustained, successful attempts to make "freedom" and "license" synonyms are not without consequence. Should we be surprised that, in the name entitlements and rights, this nation is found harboring, supplying and encouraging known enemies of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness? ... of aiding beasts who lack basic decency and any sort of common sense, by providing training and technology to the pilots who have done this? Should we blame God for this?

This is a wake-up call for the Church to reform; that is, to go back to the truth. Society's desire for the tyranny of tolerance has infiltrated Christendom and loving your neighbor has determined the sociological agenda for the Church - from the acceptance of homosexual behavior, to the trolling for prophetesses - from permitting cross-dressing in the pulpit, to the legislation of the Gospel in ecclesiastical handbooks - from replacing pastors of the Church with CEOs of an organization or leaders of a religious group, to reconciliation by compromising and denying the truth.

By nature, the Old Adam seeks the lazy way out, goes the easy road and justifies it on the basis of love by telling the "Gospel." With this present emphasis that plagues us, namely, of trying to get the Word out "before" getting the Word straight, is it any wonder that many pastors are not able to give a clear presentation of just exactly what the Gospel is ... that many men are being placed into the Ministry of Word and Sacrament without the proper preparation and opportunity for study?

As the gap widens between the man's religion and the theology of the cross, the closer a congregation comes to a Divine catastrophe. The former is Law and concerns the works of people; the latter is Gospel and centers on Christ crucified. "In this is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the expiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). The repeated neglect of God's gracious Word of His Son's sin-atonement Sacrifice and death-defeating Resurrection will result in a time when the LORD departs from the assembly. Consider the warning that the Crucified, Risen and Ascended Jesus gave to the Church at Ephesus, a congregation that had forsaken the love that once was theirs ...

"I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember then from what you have fallen, repent and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent" (Revelation 2:4-5).

What we are experiencing is also, and especially, a wake-up call for the Christian; the call of God to repent, that is, to be sorry for your sins and to look to Christ for the forgiveness that He wrought on Calvary's cross and that comes to His people in His means of grace, that is, by Word and Sacrament. Our hands are not clean in these matters of Church and State, and there are things that we have done

and not done ... words that we said and not said ... sins and transgressions that are all a part of the history of this nation that led up to yesterday. We have not encouraged our young men to join the military or study for the ministry. Your wake-up call to repentance is what Jesus was speaking when He said in the Gospel Reading:

"Or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, 'No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish'" (Luke 13:4-5).

"If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" Answer: fear not, take refuge in the Lord, be of good courage, hear the wake-up call, and receive God's gift of repentance.

"The LORD is in His holy Temple, the LORD's Throne is in heaven." God hears the petitions of His people. The LORD listens to and answers the prayers of His children. He hears the thanksgivings of His own, even those uttered in the midst of a catastrophe, and, one way or another, He delivers them. Therefore, at such a time as this, when the foundations of this world are being destroyed, the righteous pray. We thank God for this nation and that we have a Commander-in-Chief who, when his nation needed him, did not shirk his responsibilities and "flee like a bird to the mountains."

"If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?" Answer: exactly what you are doing this evening and what you will be doing this Sunday morning and every Sunday morning thereafter ... assembling yourself in the Presence of the LORD to hear His Word of forgiveness and to be assured of eternal life in a land of death, and to be certain of the Blood-bought salvation wrought by His Incarnate Son, and in response, to be a people of prayer and work.

Dear children, remember yesterday, 11 September in the Year of our Lord 2001.

Whenever, and for as long as, you see the burning Pentagon pictures, the collapsing towers on television, the image etched in your mind of a hijacked jet slicing into a tower, the unrecorded struggle on board the fourth jet, and the surreal scene of dust and rubble in the streets of New York City, remember this:

It was into such a world as this that God sent His Son and the reason was

- to give His Life where there was only man's death
- to rise from the dead on the third day and assure His own that they will all be together in Paradise one day.
- to grant the peace of God in a land of war
- to provide hope for eternity before the end of time

That message has been entrusted to us and we are called to share it among the nations, that all others might hear, know and believe what we hear, know and believe, namely, that we are forgiven in the Name of the Father and the (+) Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.