

## Singing Our Faith 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time – October 22, 2017

Sunday's gospel contains the popular verse "*Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.*" The pharisees are angry with Jesus and his teachings, so they conspire and bring this petty challenge to him. Jesus' response tells us to act appropriately (Christ-like) in matters of the kingdom of the world and the Kingdom of God. Go ahead and pay your taxes, but God gets our willing hearts, ready for service.

There are a lot of different routes to take with this gospel passage. This week, the overall theme of **truth** is resonating with me. Against opposition, Jesus reveals the truth to the pharisees, which they are blind to because of their hard hearts. We hear this theme of truth in the first reading as well – "*I am the LORD and there is no other, there is no God besides me.*" The familiar hymn "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" (below) employs colorful descriptions of God fighting the devil for our sake – for the sake of truth. The first reading from Isaiah also proclaims "*It is I [God] who arm you,*" which partners well with the images of battle in the hymn.

A brief history of "A Mighty Fortress." This is one of the hallmark hymns of the Lutheran Church, with the melody and text being penned by Martin Luther himself. Despite his objections to the Catholic Church, Luther can be acclaimed for his desire to familiarize people with God's word by translating the Bible into the vernacular, and for encouraging worshippers' participation by introducing hymnody into the Lutheran service. There are over **seventy** English translations of this

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text! The translation in our current hymnal is different than previous hymnals. It is the most current translation used by the Lutherans, and is an accurate translation from the original German text.

While the text is cited to be based on Psalm 46, a quick review of that scripture reveals that Luther focused only on certain verses. The psalm talks of strife more poetically – *“Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, and the mountains quake with their surging.”* Luther’s elaborations on the psalm verses focus specifically on fighting Satan and his demons that lurk the world. In a world where the power of evil isn’t always recognized, this is a timely reminder that the power of Satan is real, and that humans aren’t equipped to battle him. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are our only true defenses.

I love the words of the final stanza – that God fights for us with “weapons of the Spirit.” The strong wording challenges us to think of our Baptism and Confirmation, and how the Holy Spirit dwells within us as a spiritual weapon to fight evil. The final words of the hymn assure us that even if evil persists on this earth, the promise of the Eternal Kingdom is ours! Amen!

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1. A might - y for - tress is our God,  
2. No strength of ours can match his might!  
3. Though hordes of dev - ils fill the land  
4. God's Word for - ev - er shall a - bide,



A sword and shield vic - to - rious, Who breaks the  
We would be lost, re - ject - ed. But now a  
All threat - 'ning to de - vour us, We trem - ble  
No thanks to foes, who fear it; For God, our



cruel op - pres - sor's rod And wins sal - va - tion  
cham - pion comes to fight, Whom God a - lone e -  
not, un - moved we stand; They can - not o - ver -  
Lord, fights by our side With weap - ons of the



glo - rious. The old sa - tan - ic foe  
lect - ed. You ask who this may be?  
pow'r us. Let this world's ty - rant rage;  
Spir - it. Were they to take our house,



Has sworn to work us woe! With craft and  
The Lord of hosts is he! Christ Je - sus,  
In bat - tle we'll en - gage! His might is  
Goods, hon - or, child, or spouse, Though life be



dread - ful might He arms him - self to fight.  
might - y Lord, God's on - ly Son, a - dored.  
doomed to fail; God's judge - ment must pre - vail!  
wrenched a - way, They can - not win the day.



On earth he has no e - qual.  
He holds the field vic - to - rious.  
One lit - tle word sub - dues him.  
The King - dom's ours for - ev - er!