

God Is With Us

‘Not even pastors can find the joy of the Resurrection in themselves seven days a week, 24 hours a day. Martin Luther was no exception. On one of his grumpy days, his wife Katie wore black. He asked her why. “God is dead!” Luther replied, “No, God is NOT dead. He’s very much alive”. Then Katie came back with this squelcher: “Then why don’t you act like it, Martin?”

Yes, indeed, God is with us. Whether we feel like it or not. And this is such a reassurance, such a promise. If only we felt His presence more often! But, then again, if we truly felt His presence bubbling up within us all the time, well, would we not start to take it for granted? To the point where we would begin to not notice it anymore because it was always there? To the point that we might forget entirely what His presence actually feels like. To the point that God would begin to feel very distant. In which case, the pertinent question becomes: “If God seems too far away, which one of you moved?”

The fact is, in God’s infinite wisdom, our faith is required for us to live and move and have our being. He’s made us so perfectly that it’s all too tempting for us, in our asinine pride, to fool ourselves into thinking that we can do things all by ourselves. The fact is, we can do nothing apart from Him. If we are not con-

nected to the Vine, which is Christ Jesus our Savior, then we will inevitably shrivel up and die, literally. But this is, generally speaking, exactly what satan ended up doing. And folks, he's running out of gas!! That devil's gone on for quite a long spell, and he's using all of the spiritual life he's got left within him to mess up the wondrous creation God has fashioned, most of all, God's highest creations—humanity. All of us are exposed to some degree of the devil's hatred and wrath. Topping his priority list are God's chosen ones, including us. But he's sorely hindered as to what he can do to us because, simply, God is with us! God's promises surround us, as perhaps most eloquently expressed in Psalm 91. Make sure you bookmark Psalm 91 in your Bible so you can quickly find it and reenergize your faith when your feelings turn grumpy and depressed like Martin Luther's did on occasion.

The days we're living in right now look especially bleak. The threats seemingly rise higher and higher and more menacing every day that passes. The devil and his forces of evil aren't making their last stand just quite yet, but the days are truly growing short for his illegitimate usurpation of man's and God's authority in the direct administration of this earth are rapidly coming to an end. He's well aware of God's word, and the prophecies that tell of the sudden collapse of his evil empire on this earth when at the seeming pinnacle of its power and "glory". Thus he's working feverishly to build up his supposed imperial kingdom on earth, sweeping into it as many nations, peoples, institutions and orga-

nizations as possible before his ultimate end approaches when Lord Jesus, King of Kings and Lord of Lords suddenly returns and with **A** word of His power and authority, instantly deposes and reverses all evil has managed to construct over the millennia. In a way, its end might even seem anticlimactic because the devil's end will come so quickly, with so little commotion. In quietness and calmness, divine peace will suddenly flood the entire earth, like the abrupt quiet calm when Lord Jesus spoke to the winds and waves on the Sea of Galilee and instantly, all was quiet and serene! So shall it be when our Lord returns in all His glory, with His saints to reign and rule on this earth for a thousand years!

But at this minute, we are assailed by a seeming tsunami of lies and deception that never ceases. Wave upon wave of lies is attempting to assault all that remains that is still good and righteous and Godly. Wars of varying intensity in Ukraine, the Middle East, Sudan, Nigeria, Myanmar, Tibet have been going on for so long that many hardly notice them any more. Then there are the cold wars, which in some sense may be far more deadly in the long run than the hot conflicts around the globe. Whether we realize it or not, we here in the United States are fighting a civil war. Godly Christian civilization has been beaten down by a seemingly unstoppable advance of evil in the form of lawless tyrannical authoritarianism, aided, abetted and instigated by none other than the "father" of evil, the devil himself. Thus, it is a continuing war that has always been, but is now turning ever hotter as the spiri-

tual casualties pile up, with more and more people, particularly innocent children whose lives are either snuffed out before they're even born, or cruelly twisted into gross caricatures of what the beautiful lives God had destined for them to live as they are trafficked in sweatshop toil or sexual slavery. But the devil is not content with just sinking his claws in the babes and children.

Adults are always in his sights as well. In a multitude of ways he seeks to pervert us into ever grosser sin. With lie after bait and switch after deceptive and alluring half truths, his aim to corrupt all that is still good and wholesome of God's original creation is manifesting at this minute, in Missouri, in an unprecedented number of evil ballot measures. We're familiar with Amendment 3, that deceptively "liberates" all "reproductive health care" decisions from any governmental oversight whatsoever, despite the lies its advocates spew forth. Then there's Amendment 2, which would legalize sports betting. As much as people, mostly men like to bet on things, betting, gambling, is a sin. And as today's Gospel lesson from Mark vividly reminds us, sin sends us to "hell, the place of unquenchable fire. ... where the maggots never die and the fire never goes out!" Amendment 5 is yet another gambling measure which would allow yet another casino boat, this time on the Osage River, in the Lake of the Ozarks recreational area. These all must be defeated. Do we want righteousness which brings God's blessings? Or do we want people to sinfully gamble away their hard-earned wages on the lies of

quick riches? Do we want to store up for ourselves the world's wealth and promises of safety and security? Or would we rather bank on the eternally-guaranteed, ironclad promises of God Who is faithful and true and Who never changes, ever, ever?

We must needs thwart any of these proposed measures from making headway in our state, and causing us even more depravity and dependency on evil that we've already been suffering because of the legalization of gambling. We, among many other misled states' citizenry, authorized the lottery back in 1984. And then gambling boats in 1993. Remember the promises of the windfalls to fund education, increase teacher salaries, etc., etc.? Huh. Where did all that money go? And now we're being bombarded with the same promises regurgitated yet again that they'll fund our impoverished school systems statewide, ad infinitum. All those promises are not worth one hill of beans! Don't be fooled!!

And then there's the legalization of marijuana just two years ago! How many more people have succumbed to addiction and gone on to harder drugs, and ultimately died from overdoses, while in the process funneling money to Central American drug cartels and Chinese Communist chemical factories? How many people have ended up prostituting themselves to pay for their habits? How many more have been killed in shootings when they ran out of places to rob and steal with nothing else left to pawn?

Each of us can vote "no" on these evil amendments. Hopefully all of us are praying diligently for the defeat of Amendment 3

as we've been provided with helps, handouts, and guides to fervently beseech God to help us. But it's not the only one that needs our earnest prayers and no votes. Pray against Amendments 2 and 5 that they will also fail. It seems much like David vs. Goliath battles when out-of-state interests are pouring millions and millions of dollars into getting these evil measures passed, and simultaneously, to unseat one of the most righteous, Godly senators currently serving in D.C., Josh Hawley, a brother in Christ. Pray for his reelection victory, that it be massive and an unmistakable rebuke to the deceiving, lying democrats and RINOs whose TV ads are chock full of lies spoken with demon-influenced straight faces! Folks, it's never been this bad!! So vote and help family members who need to vote absentee. Read your Bible, pray and vote. Read Bible, pray, vote. Rinse and repeat.

If we will trust God, as Daniel and his friends did in Babylon. Torn away from all they had known in Judah, separated from family and friends, forced into the service of a wicked, pagan king, they had every reason to question God and bemoan their lot. Yet they refused to sin against God. And God proved, yet again and again, that He was with them, regardless of their circumstances. God honored their honoring of Him, and for all their lives, caused their bodies to be healthy despite the little they ate. God blessed them in their situation, making their lives in captivity to an evil king a blessing to the world, blessings even to us right here and right now. Despite appearances, God is with us!! Never forget!

