



the News, then put your phone down or shut off the TV or close out your browser, and get your hymnal out. That's what you can do right now, and actually be effective. You can actually make a difference. Pray the Litany as we will do today in place of the Prayer of the Church. Pray that God lead Putin to repentance. Pray that the persecution of Russian citizens protesting the war may stop. Pray that the rest of Europe and the world make wise decisions in these coming days. Obviously pray for everyone in Ukraine. The list goes on – you have so much more power than you realize, because you pray to a God who actually can make the big changes that you and I can't. And as Christians, when we pray in faith, God hears and will answer them in His way and in His time. And He's answering some prayers already. Who knows what greater disaster would already have happened if it were not for God who takes care of His creation! We confess this in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Commandment, "You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God." The way to not misuse God's name is to call upon it in faith in every trouble, prayer, praise, and giving thanks. In the Large Catechism Luther writes better than I ever could, saying, "Indeed, many terrible and shocking disasters would fall upon us if God did not preserve us by our calling upon God's name. I have tried it myself. I learned by experience that often sudden great suffering was immediately averted and removed by calling on God. To confuse the devil, I say, we should always have this holy name in our mouth, so that the devil may not be able to injure us as he wishes" (LC I, 72).

Faith alone.

Get your hymnals out at home, pray the Litany, and conclude it with the Lord's Prayer. In the petition, "Thy will be done", we have this great confidence and comfort: "the devil's will and purpose and all our enemies shall and must fail and come to nothing, no matter how proud, secure, and powerful they know themselves to be. For if their will were not broken and hindered, God's kingdom could not remain on earth nor His name be hallowed" (LC III, 70). God always wins, even if His victories here on earth sometimes look like losses by human standards.

After God essentially asks Samuel, "Why are you still pouting over Saul", He simply says, "**Fill your horn with oil, and go. I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons**" (1 Sam 16:1). The best way to combat complacency, apathy, and despair is to be set to work. So God sends Samuel to work. He commissions him, "Go!" But like anyone who wants to resist God's Call, like Jonah who flees in the opposite direction of Nineveh and gets on a ship sailing west, Samuel comes up with an excuse, which is the basis for the sermon today: "**How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me**" (1 Sam 16:2).

Now, I called this an excuse. But it *is* a pretty good one, isn't it? At least by human standards, the sitting king, Saul, still had all the power to do whatever he wanted. And as any king would do to someone who espouses to take his place – by human standards – he would put an end to their reign before it even begins. Samuel had legitimate concerns. If he's the one anointing Saul's replacement, he'd be on the chopping block! This is not a "I didn't do my homework because my dog ate it" excuse. ...But it remains an excuse because Samuel tries to justify a reason to disobey God's command. God says, "Go", and Samuel doesn't want to. He fears for his life more than he fears God's wrath towards sin. Though his concerns are real, the one who trusts God must ask himself, "God has given me a duty to do. And I will do it, trusting that God will take care of me, and achieve HIS purpose! So what if Saul kills me?"

Faith alone.

What does God say to Samuel's concern about his life? Does God say, "It will be OK, Samuel?" Does God say, "Don't worry, you will be fine." ...God does not even respond to his concern! He ignores it! The LORD simply replies, "**Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD'**" (1 Sam 16:2). The LORD sends him to work and gives him the instructions.

Heifers, by the way, were always used in peace offerings. Peace offerings were made to "acknowledge God's grace towards His people" (TLSB note Lev Ch. 3). The elders of Bethlehem asked Samuel as he arrived if he came peaceably. The heifer accompanying him should have sufficed to answer, but he nevertheless says, "**Peaceably**" (1 Sam 16:5). The peace with which Samuel came to Jesse's house was peace for him, too! The sacrifice acknowledged God's grace towards all His people

You need to trust that same peace. For our peace offering came once and for all with Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Faith alone.

God has given you work to do. Today it's praying for your neighbors in need throughout the world. Next week, it could be taking up arms like the citizens of Ukraine. I don't know. God knows. Don't be afraid. Do the works God has given you to do. When you do the tasks God has given to you to do, not lamenting over the past, you are making a difference. A lot of small seemingly insignificant differences are the ways you and I can actually effect change. But, of course, as Christians, we confess it is God effecting the change through us.

And so what if the Sauls of this world threaten or take our life? We have God's Word and God's command. We have the works He has given us to do, and the promises He has given us to believe. If or when we find ourselves in anything but peace, remember you have peace with God because of Christ. And even if that is the only peace you have, that is a peace which is way more certain and way more lasting than any façade of peace here on earth.

In our Gospel reading, Jesus explained to His disciples that He was about to accomplish His Father's will in Jerusalem by dying on the cross and rising three days later, but **“they understood none of these things” (Lk 18:34)**. You do. You know how the story begins and ends. It begins with the resurrection of Christ's body, and it ends with the resurrection of yours. So believe that He accomplished it for you. He made peace with God for you. He earned the forgiveness of sins for you. Do the work He has given to you, and trust He who will preserve your coming in and going out, now and forevermore. Faith alone receives the forgiveness of sins. Faith alone receives eternal life and salvation. In Jesus' name, Amen.