

Text: 1Sam. 16:14-23

I. N. I.

Sermon #1959

You regularly pray: *"Thy kingdom come."* Have you ever considered how this petition has much to do with Pentecost? Luther explains it this way: *"The kingdom of God comes when our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and live godly lives here in time and hereafter in eternity."* It is the Holy Spirit's work among us to bring God's kingdom to us.

We live, work and play in our earthly kingdom, but the outcome of such lives is death. What a miserable existence; it is darkened by our sinful condition with such black things as pain, sorrow, sickness, loss, failures and sin! We would have every reason to despair and give up. But there is that other Kingdom, the Kingdom of life, which comes to us in the appealing hues of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

To be citizens of God's holy Kingdom, even as we struggle in the kingdom of this dark world, is truly a delight upon which to meditate. The Spirit, poured out on this day to the Church of all ages, brings this glorious Kingdom to you, so that you might live in the light of God's love for you in His Son and enjoy the peace the world can never give to you. God's Kingdom has graciously come to you. You are at peace with God forever. Rise in joy to sing Hymn #399.

Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and a harmful spirit from the LORD tormented him. And Saul's servants said to him, "Behold now, a harmful spirit from God is tormenting you. Let our lord now command your servants who are before you to seek out a man who is skillful in playing the lyre, and when the harmful spirit from God is upon you, he will play it, and you will be well." So Saul said to his servants, "Provide for me a man who can play well and bring him to me." One of the young men answered, "Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, who is skillful in playing, a man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a man of good presence, and the LORD is with him." Therefore Saul sent messengers to Jesse and said, "Send me David your son, who is with the sheep." And Jesse took a donkey laden with bread and a skin of wine and a young goat and sent them by David his son to Saul. And David came to Saul and entered his service. And Saul loved him greatly, and he became his armor-bearer. And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, "Let David remain in my service, for he has found favor in my sight." And whenever the harmful spirit from God was upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hand. So Saul was refreshed and was well, and the harmful spirit departed from him.

Thy kingdom come! Thine let it be In time and through eternity!
O let Thy Holy Spirit dwell With us, to rule and guide us well;
From Satan's mighty pow'r and rage
Preserve Thy Church from age to age. Amen. (ELH #383 v. 3)

In Christ Jesus, who when He left the upper room with His disciples for the Garden of Gethsemane - entering the lowest time of His humiliation, sang a hymn with them, dear fellow redeemed:

In our festal Gospel Jesus promises the sending of the Spirit on Pentecost and connects it with the peace He alone can give. It has nothing to do with the peace found in the world. Peace in this world is delusional, since its ruler is Satan. Our peace in the world can so easily be disrupted by such things as crime, accidents, diagnoses, epidemics, terrorist attacks, riots, looting etc. The peace of the Spirit is real and eternal. Our text puts before us the contrast between what the Spirit offers and the spirit of this world works. So we take note: **God's Helpful Spirit Bestows Peace, Harmful Spirits Torment.**

I

When God led Samuel to choose Saul as Israel's king, we find Saul to be a shy, reserved and humble appearing person. But divinely wrought success went to his head and he assumed more and more a bold boastful personality. As he wandered away from the Lord, he was given a harmful spirit, which tormented him.

What does it mean to be tormented by an evil spirit? It means losing peace spiritually. Perhaps some of you, maybe even many of you have had times when your conscience has been plagued with uncertainties spiritually, wondering if you can even call yourself a faithful follower of Christ. You think of your past sins or current schemes for ongoing sin. You seek to justify your sin, which God clearly forbids but you think you have figured out a way to excuse it.

When Saul was told specifically to kill everything of Israel's enemy, the Amalekites, he instead spared the best of the livestock. When confronted by Samuel, Saul claimed that he had preserved them for sacrifice to the Lord. It was a lie, but even if that were his motive, it would not sanctify disobeying the Lord. Only a sinner could imagine that disobeying God is actually true worship of Him!

It is a frightening to think that the Spirit of should depart from us and to fall into the hands of the living God alone. Seeking to justify our unrighteousness is a hopeless and tormenting pursuit. The devil, the unbelieving world and our own sinful flesh encourage us to do it often, just as Saul was led down that path. Thankfully you and I can still see the work of God's Spirit among us, leading us to repent, calling sin what it is, namely an offense against the Holy God, and leading us to trust the One who came to save us.

II

We come upon a phenomenon in our text that gives us pause. We read how the playing of a lyre caused Saul to be refreshed and [became] well, and the harmful spirit departed from him. You and I know from experience that music can be a calming and soothing medium for ourselves to be sure. But this account of Saul and David gives the role of music for us human beings a bit more significance.

Perhaps it is our text that caused Luther to make these observations, beyond just his personal experience: *“The devil, the originator of sorrowful anxieties and restless troubles, flees before the sound of music almost as much as before the Word of God ... Music is a gift and grace of God, not an invention of men. Thus it drives out the devil and makes people cheerful. Then one forgets all wrath, impurity, and other devices. Beautiful music is the art of the prophets that can calm the agitations of the soul; it is one of the most magnificent and delightful presents God has given us. ... Satan hates music: he knows how it drives the evil spirit out of us.”*

We know David was inspired to write most of the Psalms, the hymnbook of the Old Testament Church. They were written to be sung, so we know David connected music primarily with words that recounted the steadfast love God has for us, His people.

You know there are the many different melodies of our hymns that can be heard by you and the very words come to your remembrance and they are soothing and peaceful to hear. Our hearts are lifted up with the promises of God’s love and faithfulness.

David did not strum some seedy tunes on his lyre for Saul conjuring up raunchy moods that would be found in rowdy places of drunkenness or houses of ill repute. David played music for King Saul that would have him return to his pious years of his youth.

When Saul, by the advice of his servants sought a person who could perform this task for Saul, this was how David was described: “a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, who is skillful in playing, a man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a man of good presence, and the LORD is with him.” Later, God would observe of David, that he was a man after His own heart. To be a man of God means that the Spirit of God possesses him.

The Apostle John cautioned the readers of his first letter not to believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God. Many false prophets have gone out into the world to deceive many. John then wrote these blessed words: “Little Children, you are from God have overcome [the false spirits], for He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world ... We are from God. Whoever

knows God listens to [him and the other Apostles]. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error."

Music is not a means of God's grace, but music connected with the Word of God employs the powerfully effective means of the Gospel, which the Spirit of God uses to bring peace to the hearer, like Saul. Is it any wonder why our divine services use this God-given medium of music as the Spirit works mightily among us even today? The Apostle Paul in his letter to the Ephesians connects the Spirit's working with music when he wrote: "be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

We are led by the Spirit to lift up our voices to sing of the works of salvation God's Son has accomplished for us, with the result that all our sins are forgiven and we are dressed in His everlasting righteousness. Music associated with the Gospel of our salvation in Christ is more than mood music played on elevators or in anxious filled waiting rooms. The Spirit of God brings peace to our tormented souls, truly helpful to us indeed. Celebrate today this miraculous working of the Spirit among us. Be refreshed! The spirits of torment must flee, for the Spirit in you is greater than they. For Jesus' sake you are at peace with God forevermore. Amen.