



# Spirit Breathed, Spirit Blowing

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# Luther's *Small Catechism*

## The Third Article: On Being Made Holy

- I believe that by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my LORD or come to him, but the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, made me holy, and kept me in the true faith . . .

Note 56 about translation: on “being made holy” rather than “sanctification:” to “preserve the linguistic connection between the Holy Spirit and the Spirit’s activity.”

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- ▶ . . . just as the Spirit calls, gathers , enlightens, and makes holy the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one common, true faith.

*The Book of Concord*, ed. by Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert, (Fortress Press: 2000), 355-356.



# In-Spirations of Scripture and Tradition



## Spirit Breathed

-  In what ways has the Spirit inspired Scripture and Tradition?
-  How has the Spirit inspired us through them?



## Spirit Blowing

-  In what ways is the Spirit inspiring them?
-  How is the Spirit inspiring us through them?

# Today's Sessions

## ➤ 3. The Spirit and the Psalms

- In what ways has the Spirit inspired the Psalms?
- How is the Spirit inspiring us through the Psalms?

## ➤ 4. The Spirit and the Nicene Creed

- In what ways has the Spirit inspired the Nicene Creed?
- How is the Spirit inspiring us through the Nicene Creed?



# The Psalms:

- Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Psalms
  - Westminster John Knox
  - The Vision
  - General Editors: Amy Plantinga Pauw and the late William Placher
  - My co-conspirator: Don Saliers
  
- My conversation partner: Martin Luther

# Letter to Katherine von Bora Luther

Eisleben, February 10, 1546

- “To the holy lady, full of worries, Mrs. Katherine Luther, Doctor, the lady of Zölsdorf at Wittenberg, my gracious, dear housewife:
- Grace and Peace in Christ! Most holy Frau Doctor! I thank you for your great worry that robs you of sleep. . . .
- Is this the way you learned your Catechism and the faith? Pray, and let God worry. You have certainly not been commanded to worry about me or about yourself. ‘Cast your burden on the Lord, and God will sustain you,’ as is written in Psalm 55, and many more passages.”

TAL, 4: 472-473



## Luther on the Holy Spirit and the Psalms

- “The Psalter puts everything that is in the entire Bible most beautifully and briefly; it is truly a fine enchiridion or handbook. It seems that the Holy Spirit wanted to take the trouble to compile a short Bible and example book of all Christendom or of all saints, so that whoever could not read the whole Bible would have here almost an entire summary of it, comprised in one little book.”

TAL 6: 208



# Luther's 1528 Preface to the Psalter: A Remarkable Contrast

<b>The Legends of the Saints</b>	<b>The Psalter</b>
--"makes much ado about the works of the saints"	--presents "the words of the saints"
--saints are "half-dead"	--offers access to "real, thoroughly living saints"
--saints are "speechless"	--presents "the best of their speech, that which they used when they spoke with God in great earnestness and on the most important matters"




## Reading and Praying Psalms with Luther

“A human heart is like a ship on a wild sea, driven by storm winds from the four corners of the world. Here it is struck with fear and worry about coming disaster; there comes grief and sorrow because of present evil. Here it floats on hope and anticipated good fortune; there blows confidence and joy in present blessings. These storm winds teach us to speak earnestly, to open the heart and pour out what lies at the bottom of it. The person who is stuck in fear and need speaks of misfortune very differently than the one who floats on joy.”

TAL 6:209



# Form: A Shape for Lament

- I. Address God; invocation.
  - II. Describe Grievance
  - III. State Trust in God
  - IV. Call God to Act
  - V. Lamenters' Promise
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## Returning to Psalm 55

- “Cast your burden on the LORD, and God will sustain you.” 55:22.
- In what ways is does this psalm present us with one whose is speaking with God in “great earnestness and on the most important matters?”
- Does this psalm offer access to “real, thoroughly living saints?”


# Psalm 55:


1—3 (NRSV)

To the leader: with stringed instruments.

A Maskil of David.

- 1 Give ear to my prayer, O God;  
do not hide yourself from my supplication,
- 2 Attend to me, and answer me;  
I am troubled in my complaint.  
I am distraught
- 3 by the noise of the enemy,  
because of the clamor of the wicked.  
For they bring trouble upon me,  
and in anger they cherish enmity against me.

- 
- 4 My heart is in anguish within me,  
the terrors of death have fallen upon me.
- 5 Fear and trembling come upon me,  
and horror overwhelms me.
- 6 And I say, "O that I had wings like a dove!  
I would fly away and be at rest;
- 7 Truly, I would flee far away;  
I would lodge in the wilderness;       *Selah*
- 8 I would hurry to find shelter for myself  
from the raging wind and tempest."

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- 9 Confuse, O Lord, confound their speech;  
for I see violence and strife in the city.
- 10 Day and night they go around it  
on its walls,  
and iniquity and trouble are within it;
- 11 ruin is in its midst;  
oppression and fraud  
do not depart from its marketplace.

12 It is not enemies who taunt me—

I could bear that;

It is not adversaries who deal insolently with me—

I could hide from them.

13 But it is you, my equal,

my companion, my familiar friend,

14 With whom I kept pleasant company;


we walked in the house of God with the throng.

15 Let death come upon them;


let them go down alive into Sheol;

for evil is in their homes and in their hearts.




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- 16 But I call upon God,  
and the LORD will save me.
- 17 Evening and morning and at noon  
I utter my complaint and moan,  
and he will hear my voice.
- 18 He will redeem me unharmed  
from the battle that I wage,  
for many are arrayed against me.
- 19 God, who is enthroned from of old,  
will hear, and will humble them—  
because they do not change,  
and do not fear God.

*Selah*



20 My companion laid hands on a friend  
and violated a covenant with me  
21 with speech smoother than butter,  
but with a heart set on war;  
with words that were softer than oil,  
but in fact were drawn swords.



22 Cast your burden on the LORD,  
and he will sustain you;  
He will never permit  
the righteous to be moved.

23 But you, O God, will cast them down  
into the lowest pit;  
the bloodthirsty and treacherous  
shall not live out half their days.  
But I will trust in you.



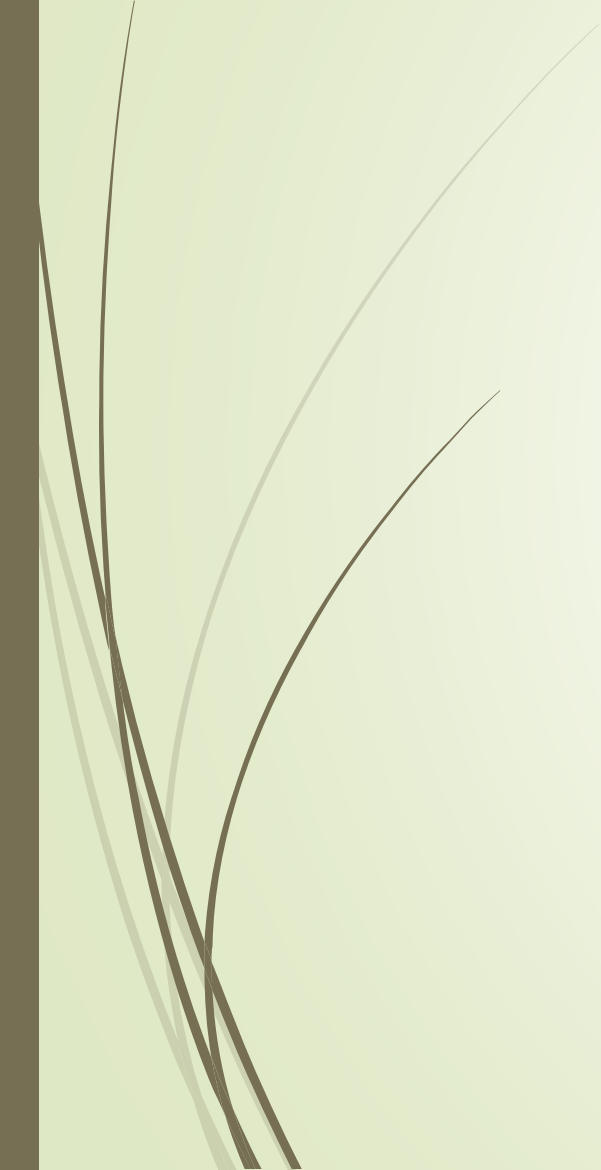
# “O God, Hear My Prayer: Psalm 55 and Violence Against Women” by U. Bail

- ▶ Ulrike Bail, PhD. Psalm scholar. Adjunct professor of German Studies and Protestant Theology at Tübingen University.
- ▶ In 1998 essay, Bail asked “whether the structure of the language” . . . can give space to the specific experience of violence suffered by women.”
  - ▶ Reads the prayer of the psalm as being spoken by a woman
  - ▶ Points to contrasts between city and desert; enemies and companions
  - ▶ Views v. 23 as perpetrator’s mockery
  - ▶ Proposes an alternate superscription: “A Woman’s Lament: Speaking Against Silence” p. 244



# En-Couraging Resources

- Epigraph: Thursdays in Black
- A. ELCA Resources
- B. Gender Violence
- C. USA and Global Occasions relevant to Gender Justice
- D. <https://resources.elca.org/gender-justice-and-womens-empowerment/domestic-violence-awareness-month-insert>





## Further Reflections: Psalm 55

1. How does it shape your experience of this text to imagine it being sung by a woman who has suffered violence at the hand of one she describes as “my equal, my companion, my familiar friend”?
2. What do you make of the possibilities that reworking the voice of the psalmist in this way?
3. How might the genre of superscriptions give permission to read psalms in ways that give voice to contemporary lamentations?





# Psalm 131 (NRSV)


A Song of Ascents.

- 1 O LORD, my heart is not lifted up,  
my eyes are not raised too high;  
I do not occupy myself with things  
too great and too marvelous for me.
- 2 But I have calmed and quieted my soul,  
like a weaned child with its mother;  
my soul is like the weaned child that  
is with me.<sup>a</sup>
- 3 O Israel, hope in the LORD  
from this time on and forevermore.

<sup>a</sup> Or *my soul within me is like a weaned child.*



## Further Reflections: Psalm 131

1. How does it shape your experience of this text to imagine it being sung by a woman as she walked to a festival?
  2. What do you make of its imagery of God as a mother who has weaned her child so successfully?
  3. What do you make of its image of the singers as being calm in the lap of such a mother?
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# Psalm 88

- 1 O LORD, God of my salvation,  
when, at night, I cry out in your  
presence,
- 2 let my prayer come before you;  
incline your ear to my cry.



# Psalm 88

- 3 For my soul is full of troubles,  
and my life draws near to Sheol.
- 4 I am counted among those who go down  
to the Pit;  
I am like those who have no help,
- 5 like those forsaken among the dead,  
like the slain that lie in the grave,  
like those whom you remember no more,  
for they are cut off from your hand.
- 6 You have put me in the depths of the Pit,  
in the regions dark and deep.
- 7 Your wrath lies heavy upon me,  
and you overwhelm me with all your  
waves. *Selah*



## Psalm 88

8 You have caused my companions to shun  
me;

You have made me a thing of horror to  
them.

I am shut in so that I cannot escape;

9 my eye grows dim with sorrow.

Every day I call on you, O LORD;

I spread out my hands to you.

10 Do you work wonders for the dead?

Do the shades rise up to praise you? *Selah*


11 Is your steadfast love declared in the  
grave,

or your faithfulness in Abaddon?

12 Are your wonders known in the  
darkness,

or your saving help in the land of  
forgetfulness?

# Psalm 88

- 
- 13 But I, O LORD, cry out to you;  
in the morning my prayer comes  
before you.
- 14 O Lord, why do you cast me off?  
Why do you hide your face from me?
- 15 Wretched and close to death from my  
youth up,  
I suffer your terrors; I am desperate. <sup>a</sup>
- 16 Your wrath has swept over me;  
your dread assaults destroy me.
- 17 They surround me like a flood all day  
long;  
from all sides they close in on me.
- 18 You have caused friend and neighbor to  
shun me;  
my companions are in darkness.

<sup>a</sup>Meaning of Heb uncertain