

Proverbs 30:4-6^[1]
The LORD is the creator
& sustainer of all things.
5th Sunday after Pentecost
Supplementary Lectionary Series "B,"
Old Testament

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Grace WELS Durand MI
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LWMS

⁴ Who has gone up to heaven and come down?
Who has gathered up the wind in his hands?
Who has wrapped up the waters in his cloak?
Who has established all the ends of the earth?
What is his Name, and the Name of his Son?
If (surely, doubtless) you know!

⁵ "Every Word of God is flawless;
he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.

⁶ Do not add to his Words,
or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar."

HOLD TO GOD'S FLAWLESS WORD
I. HE IS YOUR CREATOR
II. HE IS YOUR SHIELD
III. HE IS YOUR REFUGE

In the Name of Jesus, who came down from heaven to save us and has ascended back into heaven, Dear Fellow-Redeemed,

In the verses that begin this Chapter Thirty of Proverbs, the author, Agur son of Jakeh, laments the fact that he is absolutely ignorant and unknowing. His ignorance and lack of knowledge concern God – the essence of God. Who can understand God? Who can fathom who and what God is? God has revealed himself in his Son, Jesus, but who can understand and fathom Jesus, who is at the same time both God and man? Agur cannot understand this. You and I cannot understand this. But, what you and I and Agur do have is God's faithful and flawless and perfect Word.

We have God's faithful and flawless Word. His Word is perfect and without error (cf. John 17:17). God's Word is sufficient for us and reveals for us what we need for our faith and salvation and life. So these words of Agur in Proverbs Thirty encourage us: HOLD TO GOD'S FLAWLESS WORD. HOLD TO GOD'S

^[1] *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984. All Scripture references are taken from this translation unless noted otherwise.

FLAWLESS WORD ... I. HE IS YOUR CREATOR; II. HE IS YOUR SHIELD;
III. HE IS YOUR REFUGE.

HOLD TO GOD'S FLAWLESS WORD
I. HE IS YOUR CREATOR

Agur writes,

***⁴ Who has gone up to heaven and come down?
Who has gathered up the wind in his hands?
Who has wrapped up the waters in his cloak?
Who has established all the ends of the earth? (30:4).***

Agur had certainly not done any of these things. Agur did not have a ladder to heaven on which he could climb up and then back down. Agur could not grasp the wind in his hands. Agur could not place the waters of the sea, lakes and rivers into the pocket of his cloak. Agur did not establish the ends of the earth or the limits of the universe. There is only One who did all of these things and that One is God.

Agur says, "What is his Name, and the Name of his Son? If (surely, doubtless) you know!" (30:4ef). In the last part of this first verse of our text, however, Agur does indicate that he has some knowledge about God the Holy One (cf. 30:3). He asks for the Name of the Creator of all things and the Name of his Son. Agur knows about God and about God's Son, Jesus. God and his Son, Jesus, are known from the flawless Word of God – from the Scriptures.

APPROPRIATION

When it comes to knowing the real essence of God, you and I are as ignorant and stupid as was Agur, the writer of these verses. You and I have not seen God. You and I do not have any power or ability that even comes close to God's power and ability. You and I do not have the capability of going up to heaven and coming back down again; we cannot catch the wind in our hands – try it, see if you can catch in your hand the little bit of breeze that is blowing here in church. You and I certainly cannot put the waters of the earth – the sea, lakes and rivers – into our pockets like we would put some loose change. We have not created the ends of the earth or given being and limits to the universe. There is only One who has done all these things and that is God. But, like Agur, through God's flawless Word, he has revealed to us something of his power and might for us.

Moses writes for us in Genesis Chapter One, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1; Hebrew, **Ār,a;h; taewÒ**)

μyIm'V;h' tae μyhil; aÔ ar;B; tyviareB]^[2]. The Hebrew is noteworthy here because instead of beginning with a verb, as is usually the case for Hebrew sentences, this sentence begins with a noun and a preposition before the noun, “in the beginning” [tyviareB] “In the beginning” what? “In the beginning, God” [μyhil; aÔ ... tyviareB] God was in the beginning. In the beginning, God already existed. God was in the beginning – when the beginning started, God already was. Now, regarding this “Son” to whom Agur refers, the Scriptures also say the same thing!

John writes in his Gospel, “In the beginning was the Word” (John 1:1a). John uses the same word order and the same truth about which Moses wrote. “In the beginning was the Word” (Greek: jEn ajrch`/ h\n oJ lovgo"^[3]). Later, John identifies who this “Word” is. He says, “The Word was God” (qeo;" h\n oJ lovgo"); and, John states, “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14a) (oJ lovgo" sa;rx ejgevneto kai; ejskhvwnsen ejn hJmi`n). The Word, who became flesh and dwelled or lived among us, is Jesus. This is the Son of God to whom Agur refers in our text: “What is his Name, and the Name of his Son?” (30:4e).

So, how do you know who this God is and what the Name of his Son is? You know this only by the perfect and flawless Word of God. Therefore, you will desire to hold to God’s flawless Word.

God tells us in this Word,

² ... in these last days he [God] has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. ³ The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful Word (Hebrews 1:2b,3).

St. Paul writes to the Colossians, “in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form” (Colossians 2:9); and,

¹⁵ He [God’s Son, Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or

^[2] Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft Stuttgart) 1990.

^[3] Aland, Kurt, Black, Matthew, Martini, Carlo M., Metzger, Bruce M., and Wikgren, Allen, *The Greek New Testament*, (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft Stuttgart) 1983.

authorities; all things were created by him and for him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together (Colossians 1:15-17).

The Apostle Paul joins Agur in crediting Jesus with being the creator and sustainer of all things. How do we know that Agur is referring to Jesus when he speaks of God's Son? We have the perfect and flawless Word of God. Hold to God's flawless Word.

There are direct benefits to believers in Jesus as they hold to God's flawless Word.

HOLD TO GOD'S FLAWLESS WORD II. HE IS YOUR SHIELD

Agur writes, "Every Word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him" (30:5). God is the shield for believers in Jesus. Believers know this and should recognize this from their daily experience as well as from the promises of God in his flawless Word.

God keeps harm and danger away from believers. In his flawless Word, God says,

**³ Surely he [the LORD God Almighty]
will save you from the fowler's snare
and from the deadly pestilence.
⁴ He will cover you with his feathers,
and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.
⁵ You will not fear the terror of night,
nor the arrow that flies by day,
⁶ nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness,
nor the plague that destroys at midday** (Psalm
91:3-6).

The LORD God Almighty proved his ability, determination and willingness to be the shield of believers as witnessed in the Scriptures. For example, it was the LORD God Almighty, who preserved Daniel when he was thrown into the lions' den (cf. Daniel 6). It was the LORD God Almighty, who preserved the lives of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego when they were thrown into the fiery furnace (Daniel 3). These examples also show that when believers in Jesus find themselves in danger or in harm's way, the LORD God Almighty delivers them. And, if the LORD God does not directly deliver believers from harm and danger in this life, then the LORD God gives believers strength, courage and patience to endure.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had no guarantee from God that he would deliver them from death in the fiery furnace. But God gave them courage to speak boldly to King Nebuchadnezzar,

17 “If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O King. 18 But even if he does not, we want you to know, O King, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up” (Daniel 3:17,18).

The LORD God gave these three believers – Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego – the courage to confess their faith in spite of the danger posed to their lives. God also makes everything serve the good of believers.

When Joseph, one of the sons of Jacob, was sold into slavery by his brothers, Joseph eventually became the vice-regent of Egypt – second only to the Pharaoh himself. Through Joseph, God preserved the lives of the Egyptians and of Joseph’s brothers and families through seven years of famine. Joseph told his brothers, “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives” (Genesis 50:20). St. Paul summarizes this truth when he writes, “We know that for those who love God all things work together for good” (Romans 8:28; see Greek). Finally, God is a shield for believers in Jesus when he takes them to heaven.

Jesus assured the dying but repentant thief on the cross, “Today, you will be with me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43). This repentant thief had made the LORD Jesus his shield by faith. This faith was in the flawless Word of God – the flawless Word of Jesus.

APPROPRIATION

By faith in Jesus, the LORD God Almighty is also your shield. The LORD God shields you especially from the assaults and accusations of Satan.

Satan is The Accuser. Satan rightly accuses you and me of sin. God’s Word convinces you and me that we are sinners. St. Paul wrote to the Romans, “through the Law we become conscious of sin” (Romans 3:20b). Satan uses the Law of God to convict us and to tell us that we are damned sinners headed for hell. But, the flawless Word of God assures us that all of our sins have been forgiven.

The flawless Word of God is a shield against the assaults of Satan. God tells us in his Word, “The blood of Jesus, [God’s] Son, purifies us from all sin” (1 John 1:7b). God assures us, “Jesus Christ, the Righteous One ... is the Atoning Sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:1b,2). Since Jesus “is the Atoning Sacrifice for the sins of the whole world,” Jesus is also then our “Atoning Sacrifice.”

Jesus is our Sacrifice of Atonement with God. Through Jesus' suffering and death on the cross, God has reconciled himself to us and to the world (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:19). By faith in Jesus – a faith created in our hearts by the flawless Word of God – by faith in Jesus, we grasp and benefit from this atoning work of Jesus and have God as our shield.

Finally, God is not only our shield but also our refuge.

HOLD TO GOD'S FLAWLESS WORD III. HE IS YOUR REFUGE

Once again, Agur writes in these verses from Proverbs, "Every Word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him" (30:5c). God is the refuge of those who trust in him and in his flawless Word. You heard such words of encouragement before in Psalm Ninety-One,

**³ Surely he [the LORD God]
will save you from the fowler's snare
and from the deadly pestilence.
⁴ He will cover you with his feathers,
and under his wings you will find refuge
(Psalm 91:3,4a)**

You sang about those truths earlier in our worship in Psalm 46^[4]:

**¹ God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.
² Therefore we will not fear,
though the earth give way
and the mountains fall
into the heart of the sea,
³ though its waters roar and foam
and the mountains quake with their surging
(Psalm 46:1-3).**

The believer in Jesus takes cover and refuge behind and in Jesus. The believer knows that he cannot be or find a refuge for himself or in himself. If the believer were to try to do this, then he would be adding to the Word of God, against which Agur speaks.

^[4] Psalm 46, page 84, *Christian Worship – A Lutheran Hymnal – Authorized by the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing Company, 1993).

Agur says, “Do not add to his Words [the Words of the LORD God], or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar” (cf. 30:6). When might a believer be tempted to add or subtract from God’s Word? (cf. Deuteronomy 4:2; Revelation 22:18,19).

It is part of the sinful nature also of believers in this life to try to justify themselves. It is part of one’s sinful nature to attempt to defend oneself, to take refuge in oneself, when confronted with sin. What St. Paul says about the Gentiles is true of every one, both Jew and Gentile. Paul says,

¹⁴ (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the Law, do by nature things required by the Law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the Law, ¹⁵ since they show that the requirements of the Law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them) (Romans 2:14,15).

The words that draw our attention here are in the last part of the last sentence. Consciences bear witness, thoughts accuse and defend – excuse, justify – to add or subtract from God’s Word. Such self-justification usually comes in three forms.

The first and most common form of self-justification comes in comparison. “I sinned, but I am not as bad as ...” (you fill in the blanks). Then there is the self-justification that comes by a hope or promise to do better. “I sinned, but I will try to do better in the future.” Along with this is the self-justification to try to do more good deeds than bad deeds by which to balance things out and justify oneself. “I sinned, but I will do ‘thus and so’ to make it right.” All such approaches make God out to be a liar, for God declares through St. Paul, “by observing the Law no one will be justified” (Galatians 2:16c).

The instances referred to previously are all attempts to justify oneself by observing the Law – by good deeds in accordance with the Law – “I’m not as bad as” “I will do better.” “I will balance the sin I have done by doing good things.” All of this adds to God’s Word and makes God out to be a liar, when in reality, we attempt to justify ourselves, we are the liars. No one can justify himself or herself. Such a person will be rebuked harshly. “Do not add to [God’s] Words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar” (30:6). Moreover, the attempt to take refuge in one’s own deeds – self-justification – removes from a person God as his refuge.

APPROPRIATION

When you and I remove our focus from the flawless Word of God, we are calling God a liar, when, in reality, we become the liars and set ourselves up for God’s rebuke and condemnation. God’s flawless Word tells us that he is our Creator, Preserver, Protector, Redeemer and Sanctifier. Our very faith in Jesus as our Savior, is the result of God’s flawless Word, for through God’s Word, specifically,

the Gospel of Jesus, the Holy Spirit creates and strengthens faith in Jesus in our hearts. By faith in Jesus, we take our refuge in Jesus.

Jesus is our refuge. Jesus is our refuge when things go poorly for us in this world. Jesus is our refuge when Satan whispers in our ear and accuses us. Our consciences accuse and bother us; Jesus is our refuge. Jesus is our refuge when death approaches, and we remember all of our sins and misdeeds. Jesus is our refuge as we remember from his flawless Word, his cross and resurrection. Jesus' flawless Word assures us that all of our sins have been forgiven and that we have eternal life with him in heaven.

CONCLUSION

***⁴ Who has gone up to heaven and come down?
Who has gathered up the wind in his hands?
Who has wrapped up the waters in his cloak?
Who has established all the ends of the earth? (30:4a-d).***

No one of us have. No one has except God and his Son, Jesus. By the work of the Holy Spirit in his flawless Word, we know and believe that Jesus is our Savior and Deliverer; Jesus is our Shield and our Refuge. We have this assurance and faith through God's flawless Word alone. Amen.
