

February 14, 2024
Ash Wednesday
St. Timothy Lutheran Church – Huber Heights, OH
Pastor Joel Sutton

Psalm 41:1–2

Mutual Consideration

(adapted from: “Be Gracious to Me” Resources for Lent and Easter Preaching and Worship, © 2023 Concordia Publishing House)

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Psalm 41 will be the focus of our Lenten meditation this year. We spoke it earlier in place of the Introit. Psalm 41 begins with David saying:

***Blessed is the one who considers the poor!
In the day of trouble the Lord delivers him;
the Lord protects him and keeps him alive;
he is called blessed in the land;
you do not give him up to the will of his enemies.*** (Psalm 41:1-2)

In verse one, the word “*consider*,” can also be translated as “*attend to*” or “*care for*” or “*give careful thought to one’s situation*.” (Saleska, Psalms 1–50, Concordia Commentary, 631) So when David says: “*Blessed is the one who considers...*,” he’s talking about someone who gives careful thought to another’s situation, and attends to them.

And who is this someone? Usually in the Psalms, when the psalmist says “*Blessed is the one...*” or “*Blessed is the man...*,” it’s connecting *blessedness* to our relationship with God, such as when the psalmist writes:

“Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity...” (Psalm 32:2)

“Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD...” (Psalm 33:12)

“Blessed is the man who makes the LORD his trust...” (Psalm 40:4)

But in verse one of our Psalm 41, David is connecting *blessedness* to the one who *considers* the poor. He uses singular nouns to make it personal. He doesn’t make a general statement that applies to everyone, like: “*Blessed is everyone who considers anyone who is poor.*” No. He wants us to think of the singular. He’s saying: “*Blessed is the one who considers the poor one.*” Or: “*Blessed is the individual who considers the poor individual.*” “*Blessed is the person who considers the poor person.*”

David’s use of the singular grammar draws the entire focus down to only two people. Two people as if they were staring at each other eye to eye. Just two people giving careful, attentive thought to the other person’s situation. And who are the two people? The two persons are you and Jesus.

Jesus is the poor man you shall be eternally blessed to consider, focus upon, and always bear in mind. That's why the Book of Hebrews talks about:

"looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith..." (Hebrews 12:2)

And at the same time, you are also the poor person whom Christ Jesus carefully considered, bore in mind, and attended to. For you and your salvation He:

... endured the cross, despising the shame..." (Hebrews 12:2)

Yeah, it sounds strange that you and Jesus are both the ***poor person***, and that both you and Jesus are the person ***who shall be blessed*** for considering the poor. Here's why this strange thing is true. In one way or another, all of God's psalms – including Psalm 41 – speak about Christ Jesus and His work of salvation on your behalf. Jesus told the Jewish religious leaders:

"... the Scriptures... bear witness about me." (John 5:39)

He said:

"... everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." (Luke 24:44)

And because the Psalms are about Jesus, they're also about you. When you were baptized, you were united with Christ. You put on Christ. (cf: Romans 6:5; Galatians 3:27–28) And just as sure as you're all one in Christ, it's not longer you who live but Christ who lives in you. (cf: Galatians 2:20) Jesus Himself says:

"... I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you." (John 14:20)

Just as a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, you and Christ are joined together as one flesh. (cf: Ephesians 5:31–32) St. Paul calls it a profound mystery how from the beginning God designed marriage to be a Gospel picture of Christ and the Church.

"What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." (Matthew 19:6)

In the washing of the water and the Word, Christ's perfection became yours, and your sins became His. (cf: 1 Peter 2:24) His strength became yours, and your weakness became His. (cf: 2 Corinthians 12:9) His life became yours, and your death became His. (Romans 6:4) It's a blessed exchange.

Your inseparable, eternal, baptismal unity with Christ is why ***Jesus*** is the ***poor man*** whom you are blessed to consider – and – why ***you*** are the ***poor person*** whom Jesus likewise considered. Psalm 41 speaks of mutual consideration: ***"Blessed is the one who considers the poor!"*** Just two people giving careful, attentive thought to the other person's situation... you and Jesus.

During His earthly ministry Jesus always considered the poor. That's why He gave Himself over to:

"... suffer many things ... be killed, and after three days rise again." (Mark 8:31)

Psalm 9 says:

"He does not forget the cry of the afflicted." (Psalm 9:12)

Psalm 24 says:

"The eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous and His ears toward their cry."
(Psalm 34:15)

... and:

“This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles.” (Psalm 34:6)

All these passages describe our Lord’s consideration toward you, His “**poor**” one.

Scriptures uses words such as pity, compassion, mercy, and grace to describe the nature of Christ Jesus’ consideration toward you. He is the **blessed One** who considers you, the **poor one**. In Psalm 41, David foretells of the great blessing and reward that Jesus received for doing the Father’s will, considering the poor and pouring out His soul to death. (cf: Isaiah 53:12) David writes:

***In the day of trouble the Lord delivers him;
the Lord protects him and keeps him alive;
he is called blessed in the land;
You do not give him up to the will of his enemies.*** (Psalm 41:1-2)

Those are the words of the resurrection. They are the words of eternal life. (cf: John 6:68) Because Jesus considered you and all mankind’s poverty, paying attention to you, focusing upon you, and thinking intently about your needs – because Jesus considered your poverty: ***“The Lord protects him and keeps him alive.”*** By:

“... rais[ing] him from the dead and [giving] him glory...” (1 Peter 1:21)

The resurrection also teaches that God the Father didn’t give Jesus up ***“to the will of His enemies.”*** But through His death and resurrection, Jesus won the eternal victory over every enemy. So, as David says, Jesus is blessed... and is called **blessed** in the land of eternal life because He ***“considers the poor.”***

And likewise, Jesus is the poor man whom you will be eternally **blessed** to consider, focus upon, and always bear in mind.

“... you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.” (2 Corinthians 8:9)

“Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but [during His earthly ministry] the Son of Man [had] nowhere to lay his head.” (Matthew 8:20)
“... [He] did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant...” (Philippians 2:6–7)

“Blessed is the one who considers the poor!” Scriptures describes the responsive nature of your consideration, your faithful paying attention toward Jesus using words such as faith, hope, and trust. In Psalm 20 David writes:

“Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.” (Psalm 20:7)

St. Paul says:

“... hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” (Romans 5:5)

He says:

“... the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20)

By faith in the One who considered your poverty, you will be counted among the ***blessed*** when you consider the poverty of Christ Jesus. That’s the promise of God, spoken through David in Psalm 41: Blessed are you who considers the poverty of Christ, whose poverty has made you rich in every way.

In the day of trouble the Lord delivers you;
the Lord protects you and keeps you alive;
You are called blessed in the land;
He does not give you up to the will of your enemies.

He will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. (cf: Philippians 1:6)

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understand, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,
Amen.