

February 21, 2024  
Lent Midweek 1  
St. Timothy Lutheran Church – Huber Heights, OH  
Pastor Joel Sutton

Psalm 41:3

### SUSTAINED IN SICKNESS

(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.

Last week, we began our Lenten journey, focusing on Psalm 41, and mediating on how God is gracious to us just as He was to His servant David. You spoke the words of Psalm 41 earlier in our Psalmody. Those words, David’s words, not only apply to David, but they also apply to you and me as well. In the psalm, David is sick and is suffering at the hands of enemies who want his throne and his life. So he comforts himself by trusting in the promises God has made him. In God’s hidden wisdom, He allows suffering in David’s life and in yours, that you cast off all your false idols and cling to the promises He has made you and trust in Him alone.

Last week, in the first two verses of Psalm 41, we heard about our mutual consideration with Jesus. In one way or another, all of God’s psalms speak about Christ Jesus and His work of salvation on your behalf. (cf: Luke 24:44) He told the Jewish religious leaders:

**“... the Scriptures... bear witness about [Him].”** (John 5:39)

And because the Psalms are about Jesus, they’re also about you. When you were baptized, you were united with Christ. You are in Christ – and – it’s no longer you who live but Christ who lives in you – joined together by God. (cf: Romans 6:5; Galatians 2:20, 3:27–28) So in the first two verse of Psalm 41, because of your eternal, inseparable, baptismal unity with Christ Jesus, **Jesus** is the **poor man** in the whom you are blessed to consider – and – **you** are the blessed **poor person** whom Jesus likewise considered, enduring the cross and despising the shame. (cf: Hebrews 12:2)

As we move on to verse 3, David writes:

**“The LORD sustains him on his sickbed; in his illness you restore him to full health.”** (Psalm 41:3)

Writing from his sickbed, David is overwhelmed with illness and the consequences of his sin. His enemies are taunting him, and his friends have abandoned him because they believe he’s being punished by God for his sin. But David doesn’t whine and complain. He doesn’t place the blame on God or anyone else. He not only calls upon the Lord, but he also trusts in the Lord to forgive him of his sin, save him from his enemies, and completely restore his health.

David's words are your words. Not that you're lying in your sickbed but every day you live figuratively in your death bed. You and I cannot escape the harsh reality that we're plagued with the disease of sin and its deadly consequences. You know your body is wearing out. You feel the aches and pains. If you haven't endured the diagnosis of diabetes, heart disease, or cancer, you know someone who has. Perhaps you know what it's like to sit at the bedside of a loved one as they breathed their final breath. It's a helpless feeling of worry and doubt. Or maybe you know the stabbing pain of being betrayed by a loved one and the bitterness and spite that you carried for far too long.

Unfortunately, on this side of heaven, these are the burdens you carry due to the sickness and malady of your sin. Imagine how unbearable that weight would become if you had to carry the burden alone. Imagine if you could never unload the burden, pain, trouble, and struggle associated with sin. Imagine if you had to carry the guilt and shame of what you have done and left undone for the rest of your life. Thanks be to God that in Christ Jesus, you're sustained in your sick bed and in your death bed. In Christ, you are restored to life.

Dear Christian, repent. Repent of your lack of faith in God and your anger toward Him in times of turmoil, sickness, and death. Repent of the sinful things you have done and the good works you have left undone. Repent of the bitterness and spite that you carry against those who've sinned against you. Repent, receive your Lord's forgiveness, and cling to your baptismal promises of full restoration to life and eternal salvation.

In the first two verses of Psalm 41, because of your eternal, inseparable, baptismal unity with Christ Jesus, *Jesus* is the *poor man* in the whom you are blessed to consider – and – *you* are the *poor person* whom Jesus likewise considered. In verse three, Jesus is the one whom God the Father sustained on a sickbed, and so are you.

Another way of translating the word “*sustain*” in our text is “*uphold*” or “*support*.” (BDB, 703) The Lord God upholds and supports Jesus on His sickbed. Now, it is true that the Gospel writers never recorded anything about Jesus suffering an illness... the flu, bronchitis, or even striking His “*foot against a stone*.” (cf: Matthew 4:6) But on the sickbed of Calvary's cross, the Father upheld and supported our Lord Jesus Christ as He carried the poison, sickness, and total weight of each one of your sins, my sins, and the sins of the whole world.

**“For [y]our sake [God] made [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him [you] might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Corinthians 5:21)**

On the cross:

**“[Jesus] has borne [y]our griefs and carried [y]our sorrows... [He was] ... stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.” (Isaiah 53:4)**

**... for you.** Jesus was upheld on the sickbed of the cross by God the Father, and although, for that brief moment in time when the Father turned His back on the Son because of our sin – He never abandoned Him. (cf: Matthew 27:46)

Jesus was next placed in another sickbed of sorts when He was laid in a borrowed tomb, but even there, He was sustained by His Father in heaven. His body never saw decay. (cf: Acts 2:31) During His three-day rest in the tomb, Jesus descended into hell and claimed victory over the powers of sin, death, and the devil for you and the whole world. While the devil will do his best

to afflict you with sickness and pain, and you will indeed suffer the temporal effects of your own sin, Jesus has won the victory. Death and the grave is never the final resting place for those who die in Christ Jesus. At His return on the Last Day you'll be restored to total health – set free from all sin, sorrow, and pain, because of Christ Jesus' work of salvation for you: His suffering and sacrifice, His death, His rest in the tomb, and His being raised from the dead.

Because Psalm 41 is about Jesus, it's also about you, dear baptized believer in Christ. The Lord sustains, upholds, and supports His adopted children in Christ on their sickbed, in each Christian's sickness and sin, and restores them to full health. He sustains and upholds you in the proclamation of His Word, in your baptismal promises, and in His very body and blood in His Holy Supper. He sustains you in times of sickness and health, in times of plenty and want, in times of struggle and peace. And He will come to you on the Last Day to restore you to full and total health, changing your sick and lowly body to be like His glorious body, in eternity forever. (cf: 1 Corinthians 15:53; Philippians 3:20–21)

Until that day comes, cling to the Word of Christ for He has the words of eternal life. (cf: John 6:68) Take comfort and trust in His promises that although you are sinfully sick and suffering in your sickbed at the hands of your enemy the devil, the Lord sustains you on your sickbed and in your illness. He forgives you and restores to full health for the sake of Christ Jesus suffered on the sickbed of the cross for you.

Amen.

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