

*"But now listen, Jacob, my servant, Israel, whom I have chosen. This is what the LORD says-- he who made you, who formed you in the womb, and who will help you: **Do not be afraid, Jacob, my servant, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. They will spring up like grass in a meadow, like poplar trees by flowing streams.** Some will say, 'I belong to the LORD'; others will call themselves by the name of Jacob; still others will write on their hand, 'The LORD's,' and will take the name Israel. "This is what the LORD says-- Israel's King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: **I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God.** Who then is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and lay out before me what has happened since I established my ancient people, and what is yet to come-- yes, let them foretell what will come. **Do not tremble, do not be afraid.** Did I not proclaim this and foretell it long ago? You are my witnesses. **Is there any God besides me? No, there is no other Rock; I know not one.**" (Isa 44:1-8 NIV)*

Dear friends of our Lord Jesus Christ: It's Whit Monday – the 2nd day of the Pentecost Holidays and the Church celebrates the ongoing victory and glorious reign of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He not only conquered sin, death and devil for us and our salvation, but also kept his promises to send the comforter – the Holy Spirit – the advocate of the destitute and forsaken, the reminder of all that Christ had done and taught, the helper, the very Lord and giver of Life! It's a holiday the world doesn't understand and can't cash in on, but it's a holiday of great joy and celebration for the Church worldwide – not only here at the Seminary, where a student was baptized or in Steglitz Berlin where it was 15 Iranians– but all over the world, because God is faithful and keeps his promises and does all to comfort his people just as he had prophesied of old through Isaiah (after all it is he, this Holy Spirit – the one living God three divine persons in one holy and blessed unity - who spoke through the prophets as the Nicene creed confesses contra Slenczka jr and all modern Arians and half-cooked Harnackian heretics) and we heard again from Rev Daniel Preus in his commencement address in CTS Ft.Wayne just this Friday: **Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.** (Isa 40:1 KJV)

But now listen! Read the passage again.

Do not be afraid, Jacob... Do not tremble, do not be afraid. He says that to us in this world, who are afraid and have many reasons to tremble, be anxious and even give up and despair – if there was no God and if he would not be on our side and if he would not be the source of our salvation, our rock and our redeemer – but there is the living God and he is on our side: He is our salvation, our rock and our redeemer!

That's why all the trouble of the world is just not as it would be without him. We face these together and with the care of the living God!

- Xenophobia – Tribalism – civil war, strife and bloodshed. Discrimination, persecution and martyrdom.
- Desperate situations back home – poverty – illness, suffering and death – or is it the might and power of godless tyrants, terrorists and despotic regimes across the world.
- Failure, mishap, corruption, decline, destruction and ruin – in our lives and that of the church.
- Remember Israel: Destroyed, Banished and in exile – far away from home, from the temple, from God too?

This very God – the living one, the one, who suffered all and carried the sins of the whole world unto the cross, endured death and overcame the portals of hell and bound the devil and rose victoriously from the bottomless pit – the Lord and Saviour of all and the whole world - he now lets his people hear: But now listen! Don't be afraid, do not tremble, do not be afraid... For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. They will spring up like grass in a meadow, like poplar trees by flowing streams.

You know the desert. You know how it flowers and blooms if the rains come. Well, the living God is going to pour out his fruitful rains of Spirit and holy power on the barren lands, he's going to let the church flourish and let her spring up like grass in a meadow and poplar trees by flowing streams. It's the Lord and he says so.

He did that on Pentecost – and just behold the difference he made: Scared, afraid and hidden away behind shut doors & windows – and then the pouring rain – the outpouring of the HS – divine power from on high – and suddenly they are no longer afraid, but preach the Word of God with confidence and conviction. 3k are baptised that day! No longer afraid of

even the high and mighty – when before they were afraid of the rustling of leaves in the wind, the little girl at the burning fire, the pointing fingers and the flaying whips and sticks and thorns. Now they bravely stand up for Jesus and confess: We must obey God more than men! 5k are baptise and then God adds more than we can count – millions – a crowd that nobody can count standing before the throne of the lamb: Rejoicing in his victory and his redemption and his salvation + For he is God and he alone – there is an other beside him – He our rock and our redeemer.

You might not know, what a barren, parched land Germany was before the Reformation – and during the Reformation (Just read those visitation notes of Melanchthon) and after the Reformation – 30 years of most terrible war even in the time of most blessed Orthodoxy. Very similar to that of Africa really – this dark continent with its very heart of darkness: TIA. This is Africa: “God left this place a long time ago...” (Danny Archer in Blood Diamond) Isn’t it most wonderful how God spread his kingdom throughout the African lands so that today it is blossoming and blooming with baptized people worshipping him across the whole continent. Who would have thought it? It’s not a path of destruction as that of ISSis, but rather one of peace and prosperity, of love for owns enemies and prayer for those, who persecute, harm and kill us: Father, forgive them for they know not, what they are doing. God is right in the midst of it. Right in the middle of Africa. Just think of brother Benson up in E.Uganda and so many others. You should never doubt it – because he says: *But now listen, Jacob, my servant, Israel, whom I have chosen. This is what the LORD says-- he who made you, who formed you in the womb, and who will help you: Do not be afraid, Jacob, my servant, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. ...* And isn’t it true too in Africa: Some will say, 'I belong to the LORD'; others will call themselves by the name of Jacob; still others will write on their hand, 'The LORD's,' and will take the name Israel. *"This is what the LORD says-- Israel's King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God."* The ancestors are gone. History. They couldn’t help – and they can’t help. For without or against the triune God – we can do nothing! All depends entirely on God willing!

The strange thing is that God does this extraordinary work of salvation and redemption of his holy Christian Church, his faithful people, his called and elected, his beloved and chosen ones in all calamity and trouble – not by taking us out of this world and all its

misery/suffering, but rather by saving us right there in the midst of it all – under the cross and subject to all calamity and trouble. Wonderful miracles and wonders – changing us, who can't believe into ardent believers of his goodness and truth – right in the midst of all darkness and gloom he lets his light shine and grants blessed life so that we sing his praises and trust his goodness. So that at the very grave of our most beloved and dear ones, where we look into the gloomy and dark pit of death – there we are encouraged to sing by the Lord our Comforter: "I know that my redeemer lives... " (LSB 461) and "Jesus lives the victory's won. Death no longer can appal me. Jesus lives. Death's reign is done!" (LSB 490) and "On Christ's ascension I now build the hope of my ascension..." (LSB 492)

I am the vine – you are the branches – and in me you will bring forth much & plentiful fruit. That's true at Pentecost and ever since in the Holy Christian Church. Amen.

LSB 834,1-4