

**Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
Watertown, WI**

“Trapped”

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“I will say of the LORD, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’ Surely he will save you from the fowler’s snare and from the deadly pestilence.” (Psalm 91:2-3).

In 1984, the UW Badger Football team actually made a post-season bowl appearance. I was in the UW Band so I got to go too. In those years, it wasn’t for the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, or the Citrus Bowl in Orlando. No, I had never even heard of this bowl before . . . they called it the “Hall of Fame Bowl” . . . in Birmingham, AL. We didn’t fly; they stuffed us into slow moving buses. I was in bus number 3, reserved for Tubas and Euphoniums. Have you ever been on a 16-hour bus trip with tuba players? I wouldn’t recommend it; they are a breed unto themselves. It was ok at first but by the time we got to Janesville some of us wanted out, and by Bloomington, Illinois, many of us felt trapped. In fact, it became a refrain. “Trapped like rats” we said. We got to Birmingham, played a couple of pep rallies, played the game, watched the Badgers lose in the rain to Kentucky, and then got back onto bus 3, a rat trap on wheels.

Have you ever felt trapped? A few of you, I know, feel trapped in your career, your job. At first, the work was rewarding, but over the years it began to wear you out and drag you down. Too soon to retire and not many other options: you’re trapped.

Some feel trapped in a relationship. At first it was delightful, thrilling even. Now . . . not so much. You’ve tried counseling, and it helped, but you’ve since fallen back into entrenched, unhealthy patterns and a deep malaise. Trapped.

Maybe it’s alcoholism. At first, you could control it; now it’s controlling you. You’re breaking your own rules, drinking earlier, drinking alone, drinking secretly, not counting any more. Trapped.

Or maybe it’s your grown child who’s addicted. You’ve learned you can no longer trust anything she says, only what she does, and what she does is keep going back to the wrong crowd to get another fix. It feels there’s nothing you can do but watch as she falls pulling you and your grandchildren along for the ride. Trapped.

Or maybe it’s your body, which was so reliable for so long, but now everything’s going kaput. There’s still so much you want to do, but you’re trapped inside a body that simply will not cooperate.

And aren’t we all feeling trapped by COVID, trapped behind masks, trapped inside your home, unable to be with those you love or do those things you like. Trapped.

What a good time then to hear again the ancient promise of our Lord. From Ps. 91, “The Lord will deliver you from the snare of the fowler.” It’s not an empty promise. This is who the Lord is and what He does. “The Lord will deliver you from the snare of the fowler.”

Remember how he freed his people who were trapped in Egyptian slavery? Pharaoh did everything he could to keep them in bondage, but the Lord brought them out of bondage.

Soon, they were trapped again, with the Dead Sea in front and from behind the Egyptian army bearing down on them. Parting the sea, He freed them from that trap.

“The Lord will deliver you from the snare of the fowler.” That’s who He is . . . the Great Redeemer and Deliverer who frees his people.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were thrown into a blazing furnace. But there was a fourth man in there with them. King Nebuchadnezzar said “the fourth looks like a son of the gods” (he was close) and the other three, who were trapped, came out unscathed, without so much as a single hair being singed (Dan. 3).

The disciples were trapped in a little boat in the middle of great big storm until Jesus said “quiet, be still!”

A man was trapped by a demon until Jesus said, “Come out of him!” The ten were trapped by leprosy. Bartimaeus was trapped by blindness. Lazarus was trapped by death until Jesus said, “Lazarus, come out!” Saul was trapped in the rat race of works of righteousness, until Jesus turned him into Paul.

God keeps releasing those who are trapped, freeing those held captive. That’s what He does; that’s who He is. Right now, He is saving you from the fowler’s snare.

From the trap of sin. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” From the trap of the death. “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” From the trap of the devil. “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that you may have life and have it to the full.”

Is it any trouble for the one who forgave tax collectors and prostitutes to forgive you? Is it any trouble for the one who awakened Jairus’s daughter from the sleep of death to awaken you? Is it any trouble for the one who expelled a multitude of demons from Legion to free you from the devil’s lies and accusations?

God is still in the business of setting us free from the traps. Jesus the Son of God went willingly and knowingly to the vineyard to be trapped and bound and tossed out and executed. Death could not keep its hold on him, so it won’t be able to keep its hold on you either.

Remember when Jesus unrolled the Isaiah scroll and announced, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me . . . to proclaim . . . liberty to the captives. . . and to set free those who are oppressed” (Lk. 4). That’s who He is and what He does, and He will also save you from the fowler’s snare.

Usually He’ll use people to help with that . . . marriage counselors, rehab units, medical researchers, pastors, friends. Usually He frees us in ordinary ways, for example by giving you a body that will usually heal itself, and by giving you doctors, OTs, PTs, dentists to help when needed. And when they can no longer help, he won’t let you just lie there and suffer interminably. He will give you a blessed and timely end to this life so that He can give you the life he always intended for you; a life free from entrapment in any form.

So hear again His promise for you this day. “He will save you from the fowler’s snare.”