



# Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

Watertown, WI

## **“Dwelling in Safety”**

*Psalm 4:8*

Rev. David K. Groth

*“In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety” (Psalm 4:8).*

Second Sunday in Lent  
February 24, 2013

### **Collect of the Day**

O God, You see that of ourselves we have no strength. By Your mighty power defend us from all adversities that may happen to the body and from all evil thoughts that may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

Guns are flying off the shelves these days . . . and ammunition. It seems manufacturers cannot keep up with the demand. In a NY Times article, the owner of Gus's Guns in Green Bay said his inventory was almost cleaned out. Most of the interest was in the AR-15 Assault Rifle, the weapon used to kill 20 children and 6 adults in Newtown, Connecticut. He said there was nearly a fist fight over the last one he had on the shelf. Another gun dealer in Des Moines said, "If I had 1,000 AR-15's, I could sell them in a week." Just out of curiosity, while at Farm and Fleet this last week, I walked over to the gun department and sure enough, there were several shelves that were completely empty of ammunition, and a sign saying that due to high demand, the manufacturers cannot promise additional stock at this time. Most of the ammo they had left was for skeet shooting.

Panic rooms and safe rooms are also seeing brisk sales. These are cocoons of concrete and steel designed to protect you from tornadoes and intruders. They are built to be bullet proof, bomb proof, fire proof and also to frustrate intruders who have power saws and blow torches.

Good Shepherd is also stepping up its security. Of course it's not legal to have a gun in this building, nor would I want to. But in my office, I do keep a garden hoe next to the bookshelf . . . it's for the weeds in summer, but it's also

there just in case anyone gets any ideas. All entrances are now locked during the day, and the main entrance has a security camera. If you want to get in, you have to ring the buzzer, and when you hear the little thump, that means the door is now unlocked. None of us likes it much. We would rather have the church and school wide open to parents and parishioners and even for the stranger, but that's simply no longer an option.

We have also begun practicing "Code Red" drills in the school, which means there's an intruder. All internal doors are locked. All lights turned off. All windows covered. All voices hushed. And the hallways are empty save the principal checking for compliance and some guy carrying around a garden hoe.

As human beings we want, maybe even need, a sense of safety and security. And so we invest in firearms and safe rooms, Volvos and steel doors. We install security systems to our homes and set up neighborhood watch programs and breed Pit Bulls. A sense of security is important to us. In Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the baseline needs are for food, water, shelter and clothing. Once these lower-level needs have been met, then we can move on to the next level of needs on the pyramid, which are for security, and not until we have that sense of security, taught Maslow, will we be able to move on to the higher levels of self-esteem and confidence and a sense of achievement. But I believe that sensation of being secure is usually misleading. Attaining true security is like trying to catch smoke with your bare hands.

The world is fallen. Because of our sin, it's not working like God created it to work. Therefore, there is much that can go wrong. You can drive a

Volvo or Suburban slow on the icy roads, but cannot control how fast that semi is coming toward you. You can get a conceal/carry permit, but so can the guy who hates you. We can lock the doors here, but all that will really do is slow down an intruder and buy us a little time. You can amass great quantities of money, and still suffer a debilitating stroke, or see your savings vanish due to economic collapse, or inflation or fraud. Any sense of security on this earth is, to a degree, a false sense of security. There's simply too much that can go wrong.

Even if you've taken all the measures you can think of, surrounding yourself with layers of security as if you were the President of the United States . . . still you will be insecure, because no security system is perfect. The greatest breach in security results in death, and that's a breach each of us will experience, for the wages of sin is death. Death always has a way of poking holes in our security systems.

The author of our psalm today is David. Some calamity has befallen the nation, and it seems people have turned from the Lord in disgust and disappointment and have turned to the gods of the nations, from whom they hope to receive better. Many believe this calamity David refers to was the revolt of David's son Absalom, who organized a coup against his father, and from whom David is running for his life.

The psalm begins straight off with a complaint. "Answer me when I call" David demands. "Be gracious to me and hear my prayer!" he pleads.

Then he turns his attention to those who have turned away from God. "How long will you love delusions and seek false gods?" (v.2 NIV).

Then David exhorts the people not to give themselves over to their anger. "In your anger do not

sin; when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent.”

Finally, the psalm ends with a strong, beautiful confession of trust and faith. “I will lie down and sleep in peace; for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.” Did you hear it? “You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.” That is, there is no security outside of the Lord. He alone is the source of true security and peace. Because of him, even when everything seems to be falling apart, because of the Lord, we can lie down and sleep in peace, as David did.

Time and again, I’ve observed this. Do you remember Dorothy Biorn? She died back in 2005. Days before her death, I was visiting with her in the hospital. She had all kinds of bands on her wrist, one of which said, “DNR” (Do Not Resuscitate). I asked her what she thought about when she looked at that band, and without hesitation she smiled and said, “It’s a happy reminder that soon I’m going home.” If you had been there, you would have known this wasn’t some kind of religious bravado to impress the pastor. No, it was a genuine confession of trust and of faith, a faith that gave her a deep sense of peace even when everything else was becoming unglued. On the day of the Lord’s choosing, Dorothy lied down and slept in peace.

Revelation 12:11 says of the early Christians, “they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.” They knew with the Lord, they were safe. They knew the Lord was really their only sense of security, their fortress, their rock. They knew the only place they could really hide from sin, death and the devil was not in the catacombs, but rather under the shelter of his wings.

Conversely, all those shelves at Farm & Fleet emptied of high caliber ammunition . . . could it be

that's a sign that some have forgotten how to trust in the Lord? Could it be we put too much confidence in our own strength, our own security plans, and not enough in the Lord's? When David wrote, "I will lie down and sleep in peace", it wasn't because he had a Glock 9mm on the bed stand. "I will lie down and sleep in peace, *for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.*" It's not wrong to own a gun. It's not wrong to defend yourself and your family. But please, keep it locked and out of the hands of children. There are gun safes that you can open in seconds if you need to. And if you have a gun, don't put too much confidence in it. You're going to need more security than any gun can provide.

Do you remember in the waning days of WW II how Hitler sought refuge in his bunker? It was deep underground, with many meters of reinforced concrete above his head. For the 1940's, it was the state of the art as far as bunkers go. But in the end, did it protect him? No, it couldn't protect him from everything, not sin, nor death, nor the devil. There isn't enough reinforced concrete in the world to keep some intruders out. And there are some stalkers the police simply cannot arrest, and some enemies cannot be felled with an assault rifle, nor even a garden hoe. For some, only the blood of the Lamb will do; only trusting in God's grace will suffice. Isaiah wrote, "You will keep in perfect peace him . . . who trusts in you" (Is. 26:3).

Running for his life, and then hiding out in the wilderness like a rabbit, David writes, "I will lie down; I will sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety."

We have come to think of peace as the absence of war. But that's no peace. In Hebrew,

peace, *shalom*, implies a right relationship with God. And isn't that what the Lord won for David and for you and me on the cross? He won perfect security for us by giving up any semblance of security for himself. "Put your sword away" he told Peter. And though he had legions of angels at his disposal, angels who I suspect were just itching to come down and set things right, yet he never gave them the nod. No defenses whatsoever. People could even spit on him. Then, stretched out on the cross, nearly naked, his flesh torn to shreds, our sin in, with, under and on him, he dies so that we can have forgiveness and peace with God and salvation. That's true security. That's true peace. And that's why, not just David, but you and I can lie down and sleep in peace, for the Lord alone makes us dwell in safety. Amen.

BUSINESS NAME  
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