

The Right Hand

Reading the Psalms with Luther

Although my extensive education is deeply steeped on the Bible, I had never spent much time in the Psalter. I thought of it as just an archaic devotional book for the ancient Hebrew faith, and of only mild interest to Christianity. Raised initially in a very moderate Baptist stream, and later United Methodist professionally and vocationally by choice, I had only a rudimentary knowledge of Martin Luther and his place in history, but no exposure to his great mind and faith.

My early encounters with the Lutheran churches were not congenial or promising, because I found them to be somewhat tribal and almost xenophobic. I have been very ecumenical all of my life, but I never felt that they saw me as a brother in the faith. I was leery of encountering Luther and held him off “at arm’s length.”

But fortunately, in seminary, I was required to take a class on a world theologian, and circumstantially only Dietrich Bonhoeffer was available to me at that time. For many reasons, that encounter has turned out to be very consequential in my life. My “checkered” vocational career has brought me gladly to Lutheranism!

Since coming to Grace some 15+ years ago, I have been deeply immersed in the Lutheran faith. My most precious possession has been Luther’s passion for the Psalter. It was part of his daily devotional text, and it has become mine. I chant a psalm every morning, and I am completing my third circuit through the Psalter. Luther considered it to be a mini-Bible, and he related it throughout to Christ. Next week, I will bring you a psalm I think speaks directly to us. Look for it!

“May God keep us from complacency, and may we press on to know Him more deeply and obey Him more fully.” More next week! In Deo speramus.

Rev. Gary Hanson, Elder
Stewardship Chair