

## 613 “The Shadow of Thy Wings”

The outcome of the US Presidential election was not nearly as close as predicted, and the victor was not the candidate that most of the pollsters, pundits and “influencers” had expected or had probably desired. We can note in passing our Christian need to “put not our trust” in the “princes” of the opinion-forming classes! – “[It is] better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man” – no matter how powerful or loquacious this “man” and his pals may be! (from Psalm 118.8-9, KJV). Far better indeed to trust in the LORD, to pray that His will may be done in all matters, and then to wait and see.

Donald Trump is, like the rest of us, a sinful man, whose various flaws are much vaunted due to his global prominence (Romans 3.23). Yet there is evidently more to him than his negative traits might suggest. His mother was born into a God-fearing family in the Outer Hebrides, who then emigrated to New York in 1930. Her son Donald, mixed in with all else going in his life, seems to have gained from her, and perhaps from others too, some sense of his ultimate accountability before Almighty God. This could explain his cautious approach to controversial social issues of the day, notably over abortion, and, during his first presidential term, his appointing Bible-believing Christians to his inner circle who informed and encouraged his strong pro-Israel stance.

So we do have grounds for believing that his election victory is indeed a result of “the Lord’s will having been done”, as we prayed for in our Reflection last week. At the same time we can see that his election provokes considerable trepidation within the United States and beyond, especially with regard to the conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East.

When faced with trepidation in whatever form, God’s covenant people have always been bidden “to trust in the Lord”, expressed often within God’s Word with the imagery of “wings”, be these wings of creatures, of angelic beings, or of the Lord Himself. Thus for example we read of the Lord’s words to Moses on Mount Sinai – “Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and [how] I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself (Exodus 19.4, KJV); and again, from Isaiah 40.31, those “that wait upon the LORD ... shall mount up with wings as eagles ...”. Here are wings of strength, safety and escape. Later we read that the two cherubim in the Most Holy Place “shall stretch forth [their] wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings” (from Exodus 25.20;

26.31-35). Here are over-arching wings representing God's grace, authority and protection.

In the Book of Ruth, we learn of the young widow Ruth the Moabitess pledging to Naomi her mother-in-law - "thy people [shall be] my people; and thy God my God" (from 1.16). Soon after, wealthy Boaz praises, comforts and blesses Ruth, for he has heard of her self-denying devotion to Naomi: "The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust" (2.12). Here are wings of divine welcome, acceptance, protection, provision - and then, after an anxious few hours, of abundant blessing also! (3.10-13,18; 4.9-17).

Now to the Psalms – "Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings ... the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings ... yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until [these] calamities be overpast ... I will trust in the covert of thy wings ... in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice ... He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust ..." (From Psalms 17.8 / 36.7b / 57.1b / 61.4b / 63.7b / 91.4a). Now we too, being sheltered under God's gracious wings in Christ, know that we are kept eternally safe, come what may. What a comfort, and what a blessing.

Before his betrayal, the Lord Jesus lamented – "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem ... how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathereth her chickens under [her] wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate" (from Matthew 23.38). Sure enough, the time duly came when Jerusalem suffered terribly for her refusal to accept the shelter of "the wings of her Messiah" – and of course, she still does suffer (eg., Luke 21.6,24 / Acts 6.8-14 / Psalm 122.6-9); but, praise God, not for much longer (Romans Chapter 11).

Yes indeed, the Lord is clearly at work in these tumultuous times, with Israel and the Jews retaining a key place in His plans. We pray earnestly for President-Elect Trump, for wisdom, restraint of speech and deed, and for courage when he needs it. Above all may he respond to the salvation-call of Christ, accepting Christ as the Lord of his own life, and thus coming to dwell truly under "the shadow of God's wings".

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