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Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

A few weeks ago, I had the opportunity of leading the morning devotion for my introductory Homiletics course. As you may suspect, this is the class where I learn the basics of writing and delivering a sermon. With the devastating news of yet another mass school shooting (the Feb. 14th Parkland, FL school shooting) in mind, I walked my classmates through a devotion on Psalm 63. This Psalm was written by David, who was in the process of running for his life from his adversary, King Saul. Saul saw David as a threat to his position as the King of Israel, and as a result, Saul pursued to take David's life.

While David's context does not match the families and victims of the recent school shooting, I am convinced that similar feelings, emotions, and questions are shared. David cried out from the depth of his heart for God to protect him. It is evident in the early verses that David was worn out by the calamities and hardships of this moment in his life. However, David was persistent in his trust that God will come through. David had unwavering faith in God's power. In verse seven, David proclaims that his help comes from God and he has found protection under God's wing. While he ran for his life, David clung to God's mighty, powerful right hand.

So, what does that mean for the victims of the mass shooting in Florida? What does that mean for our nation? What does that mean for Christians, including us? It means that we can cling to God in our moments of despair and confusion, when innocent children are gunned down and our country implodes in a political uproar. We can find refuge from the powers of death, the devil and our sinful nature under God's mighty wing. While it seems like the enemy is winning, we know that we have won in Christ. He is the one and only God that has come to dwell among us, amidst the evil world and the destructive powers of the devil. In Jesus we have been saved and taken under his wing, even when the world falls apart. For in the fold of the Good Shepherd we are given peace, rest, and comfort the world can never give.

Seminary life continues to be a joyful experience for me. As I write this letter, we are entering the last week before the midpoint of the semester. At the midpoint in the semester, classes are cancelled and the workload is reduced for a week. This week is called "reading week", which gives us seminarians an opportunity to catch up on readings from various classes, to explore new topics that were raised in classes, and to complete projects that may be assigned. It is also a good 'break' that allows us to take a step back from our work and to soak more in God's

Word and his creation that surrounds us in St. Louis. To say the least, I am very much looking forward to reading week. Holy Week is also coming up the week after reading week. The plan is to take a small vacation to spend with Kari and my family for Good Friday and Easter.

Kari continues to stay busy with her student teaching experiences. She recently finished up her time in Kindergarten in Lincoln, and just finished her first week at Zion Lutheran in St. Charles (Harvester). She is thoroughly enjoying her days in a preschool classroom there, and is counting down the days until graduation in May. We are both very thankful to be a short 30 minute drive apart, and the time we are able to spend together on the weekends, to explore more of the St. Louis area and to hang out with Seminary friends and classmates. It is hard to believe that we are also within three months days of our wedding in June; the wonderful spring weather here in St. Louis tells us that it is not that far away. Woohoo!

I would also like to say 'thank you' for all of the prayers, love, and support that you continue to show Kari and I during this time. Our lives are busy and can be exhausting, but we both know that God is preparing and forming us for a life of ministry in his Kingdom. We are incredibly excited for this stage in our lives and all the different ways that He daily provides for us. While there are days that are full of challenges and changes, we cling to Christ and follow in the path that he leads us on.

May God continue to keep you under his wing, as Lent draws to a close and we anticipate rejoicing in his death and resurrection.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ryan Maser". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Ryan Maser