They surrounded me on every side, and there was no one to help me; I looked for human help; and there was none. (Ecclesiasticus 51:7)

Then I remembered your mercy, O Lord, and your kindness from of old, that you deliver those who wait for you and save them from the hand of their enemies. (Ecclesiasticus 51:8)

for you have been my protector and helper and have delivered my body from destruction and from the snare of a slanderous tongue, from lips that utter lies. (Ecclesiasticus 51:2)

When the flesh is out of danger, says Luther, it regards faith as something altogether insignificant, It chooses showy and tedious works and tortures itself with these. But as for you, look at Noah, who was surrounded by water on all sides and was all but overwhelmed by it. It is not works that preserve him, but solely his reliance on the mercy of God, to which the Word of the promise kept calling him. (AE 2:103)

St. Tiburtius was beheaded for the faith in the year 286.
His father, Chromatius, was the prefect of Rome, and had spent much of his rule condemning and executing Christians. But the Lord came to seek and to save the lost, He loves His enemies and prays for those who persecute him. He who saved St. Paul on the Damascus road, came also to Chromatius through the preaching of St. Polycarp. And so the hater of Christ, became a love of Christ, him and his whole household, including his only child, Tiburtius.

So now the prefect who had before hunted and sought to expose the Church, worked to hide it and preserve it. His home became a safe haven for anxious and targeted Christians, including his own son, Tiburtius. But the shadow of the Cross always lies close at hand for the saints of Christ, and so in time, Tiburtius is also betrayed and delivered into the hands of sinful men.

There before another prefect, he made the good confession, he looked not for human help, but for the Lord’s mercy. So also, he demonstrated the faith by walking across a bed of hot coals, and came to the other side unharmed. But the persecutors of Christ were unmoved, and instead, they called this feat magic, and beheaded him on the spot. We must learn to expect nothing less than these kinds of things. For the true faith is confessed yet the world cries foul. The light of the Cross shines bright into a darkened place, and yet men call it magic, evil, and swing for your head. So it is for the Church on this side of glory. And so it is that we must learn to expect these kinds of things.

Like St. Lawrence, we must learn to confess that we are stewards, not masters, and not lords. We commend ourselves into the Lord’s care each day, and so unto to the Lord’s purposes. But it is always His work, His glory, and will to determine how such things will be used and how they’ll be received. It is not for the Christian to figure these things out. Indeed, that’s not in your hands. It’s not the point.

St. Polycarp preaches the Gospel to Chromatius, the Word is heard, and the whole household is baptized. St. Tiburtius confesses the faith, shows the glory of the new creation, and is beheaded by his captors with haste. To the world these two events look entirely different, one successful and the other a failure, but not so with the Lord. The Lord is glorified, His will is done, His kingdom comes through the faithful confession and preaching of His saints.

It may be that your neighbor will hear you out, that your confession of the faith will gain a hearing and even ground. And it may not. It may be that the world labels you a racist and a bigot, a fool and an idiot. So be it. Let us not rest in tedious works, in things that the world loves, let us rest in the mercy of God, let us be secure in the ark. For that is your life for the days ahead. Not frivolous works, not the righteousness of self, but the quiet faith to wait upon the Lord, the sure confidence of a conscience captive to His Word. Yes, from that, flows every good thing. Wait in the ark. The Lord will answer. He will provide.