

“Let Every Living Breathing Creature Praise God! Psalm 150”

Psalm 150

Today we wrap up our journey through the Psalms by turning our attention to the very last psalm, Psalm 150. As we think back over the last couple of months, I think it is safe to say, “What a long strange trip it has been!” One week we are taking a look at crying out to God in angry and frustration and then the very next week, we are calling God our shepherd, longing for his rod and his staff to comfort us.

Our journey through the psalms really has been a journey of faith this past summer and it wasn't an easy process along the way. We had our stops and starts. We've sang hymns that we had never sang before. And we discovered that there are really more psalms than just the ones we've memorized by hearth.

Yes, this summer, we have been on a winding road, a road where one minute, it seemed like the darkness was going to overtake us only to find ourselves resting beside cool waters. And since the beginning of June, since the beginning of this journey through the psalms, each week has been building up to this moment, to this final crescendo of the psalms. Sure this moment may seem like an ending, but as we take a look at psalm 150, we realize that it is really just another beginning.

So I invite you to turn in your pew bibles to Psalm 150 as we take a look at this wonderful ending of a beginning.

(Read Text)-Message Version

As we hear these wonderful words, we need to realize that through them we are being extended an invitation, an invitation to enter in, an invitation to live in the joy, love, and grace of the Kingdom of God right here and now. Through these wonderful words of life, we are being invited to join the unending song of praise that has been and is being lifted up to our God by all of creation, a song that has been going on since the beginning of time. Through these wonderful words of life, words of joy and happiness, we are being invited to praise God and dance! And what a wonderful invitation it is for us. And although it seems strange, this invitation is exactly what we need right now.

There is so much unease in our world right now. There is so much hate in our world that the song of creation's praise is being drowned out by moaning and crying. We need some joy right now. We need to praise God right now. We need to embrace God's invitation to be a part of the Kingdom of God here on earth right now for so many reasons, least of which is that we need to hear once again that God is in control.

I know it may seem odd to have psalm 150 as our Scripture today and I could tell you that we are taking a look at it simply because we've been on a

journey through the psalms and this is the last psalm but I think, no I know it is more than that.

I know that in the midst of our worries about war, in the midst of the crippling poverty found in our country right now, in the midst of all the hurt and anger in the world right now, this is exactly the Scripture and message we need to hear right now. We need to hear once again an invitation to praise our God. We need to hear that our God is in control. We need to hear that God has the last word. And that is exactly what we get today in this text.

From its first Hallelujah to its last, psalm 150 reminds us that even after reading all the psalms, the happy ones, the sad ones, the angry ones, the distraught ones, we are still creatures of our God and King. And we are invited to praise God. We praise God not because of what God has done for us. We praise God because of whom God is for us and to us. God has shown us grace. God has shown us mercy. God has shown us love. Psalm 150 invites us to praise God because the God that we know and continue to experience along our journeys of faith is faithful, steadfast, and loving to all generations. And we know that in the end, each and every time, no matter what life brings our way, we know that God will always be loving. We know that God will always be steadfast. We know that God will always be faithful. We know that God will always be here for us. We know that God will always be in control.

That's why we praise God with everything we've got: with trumpets, violins, tambourines, big bass drums, castanets, flutes, fiddles and mandolins. We praise God because we know that no matter how much we suffer, no matter how many times we doubt, no matter how angry we get at God, no matter how many times we ask in desperation, "Why me?", God is and will always be loving, always steadfast, always faithful. God is there and will always be there, walking beside, guiding us on this long strange trip that we call life. God will always be in control and will always have the last word.

And that's what we need to hear one more time. We need to hear that God is God, that God is in control. We need to hear that although the world may seem to be falling apart right now, God will always be our God, loving, steadfast, faithful. Our God is King of King and Lord of Lords. So let us praise God with all we've got!

Now please don't hear me say that as people of faith, just because we are called to praise God at all times, we go around thinking everything is sunshine and rainbows. And please don't hear me say that if we are people of God, then bad stuff does not or will never happen to us. That's not what I am saying and that's not what any of the psalms have taught us along the way on this journey. And realistically, it is not what we've experienced in life.

What I am saying is that we all know faith is a journey. It is full of the good, bad, ugly and breathtakingly beautiful. And we all know that this journey of faith, this journey of life can lead us to unexpected places, can bring up unexpected emotions and feelings, but we also know that ultimately it will bring us back home again. Our journey, no matter which direction we may go, will bring us home once more, home where we can add our voice to the choruses of praise that is being given to our God.

Honestly, that's why I did this sermon series on the psalms in the first place, to remind us once again, that no matter what life brings our way, the good, the bad, the ugly and the breathtakingly beautiful, God is always there for us. We may hear this message each week, but it is so easy to forget once we get out in the real world. That's why we need to lift up our praises to God. We need to lift them up as a constant and on-going way to offer our whole selves, mind, body, heart, and spirit to God. We need to lift them up, knowing that in spite of the negativity in this world, our praises are ways we can embrace our calling to live out our hope, our confidence in God's grace, in God's love and in God's peace each and every moment of our lives.

When I call us to praise God as people of faith, please don't hear me making light of the tensions we are feeling right now, tensions that are rising because we are wondering if our country will take military actions in Syria, tensions that are

rising because we wonder what the world is coming to nowadays. When I call us to praise God, I want us to realize that we are not, as one theologian put it, “slapping a word of praise” over whatever mess we are in at the moment to hide from it or ignore that it is happening. Far from it! We know, as we praise God, we are facing these tensions head on but now without fear, now without worry. All because we know our God, our God is who loving, our God is who steadfast, our God who is in control, our God who has the last word.

Psalm 150 is a joyous conclusion to the psalms. And yes it does tell us that our journeys, our prayers, our songs, will eventually end in praise, but it may take us a while to get there. We didn't just go from psalm 1 to psalm 150 without doing some reading in between, without doing some work in between and we certainly can't go from fear and worry to praise without doing some of the same hard work, without experiencing the whole wide range of human emotions found in between.

Yes, “It may take us weeks or years, decades even” before we may feel like we are ready to praise God with all our heart, mind, and soul. That's okay. God doesn't want empty forced praises. God wants our true joy in song and in thanksgiving. So until that moment, that moment, when we are ready to praise God with all we've got, we must hold onto the promise that someday, we will get there. That someday we will arrive at our Hallelujah moment! That's what our faith

journey is all about! Getting out of the darkness to our Hallelujah moment! And it doesn't happen overnight. It is a journey. It is a process.

So in the meantime, we need to remember that as we travel on our journeys of faith, as we travel through life, we need to persist in praying, we need to persist in laughter. We need to persist in crying. We need to persist in our doubts. We need to persist in our struggles. We need to persist in reading the book all the way through, and not just stopping because we didn't like something we read or stopping because we weren't able to get into it after reading only a few chapters. In life, on our journeys of faith, if we persist, eventually we will end up finding healing, finding wholeness, finding reconciliation. If we continue the journey and persist until the end, we will end up singing praises to our God. We will eventually end up shouting Hallelujah!

That's the beauty of psalm 150. It celebrates the present time and yet it anticipates the future melodies of praise that are yet to come. It lets us imagine as people of faith what it will really sound like on that day when all of God's creation, when every living, breathing creature praises God! The wonderful thing is that Psalm 150 gives expression to our hope in God. It gives voice to our confidence that God will have the last word. And it tells us that that word is a word of love, a word of grace, a word of peace. A word of Hallelujah!

That's why the psalmist begins it and ends it with Hallelujah, to remind us that in our beginning is our ending, and in our ending is our beginning. Faith is process. And it is a process bracketed by God. God was with us in the beginning. God is with us now. And God will be with us when we come to our end. That's why we praise God in all things and during all times. Because each and every time we praise God, we are reminded of this wonderful blessing.

As people of faith, we are called to live out each day our hope found in God. We are called to live out the principles of God's Kingdom here on earth, the principles of peace, the principles of compassion, the principles of love. As people of faith, each and every time, we sing out our praise to God, we are sharing our vision of God's peaceable Kingdom here on earth with all of God's creation. We are to shine the light of love and peace a little brighter each and every day.

And as we praise God, we tell this world that it will lose. We are telling this world that love wins. That life wins. That darkness will not overtake us.

We know that as we sing out our praises to God, we are not being naive or unrealistic. We are singing them as signs of hope. We are singing them as acts of courage. We are singing them as acts of faithfulness. We are singing them because, deep in our heart, we truly do believe that we shall overcome someday. And that with each act of praise lifted up to God, we are one step closer to bringing about

the reign of God here on earth for all of God's people, a reign of justice, a reign of compassion, a reign of peace.

So Praise God today and all days so that bombs will not have the last word.

Praise God so that chemical warfare will not have the last word.

Praise God so that violence will not have the last word.

Praise God so that hate will not have the last word.

Praise God today and all days because we know that regardless of what this world says and does, love will always win. Praise God because we know that our God is in control.

Let us Praise God with all we've got. Let us Praise God so that this world will know that the Kingdom of God, a kingdom of peace, and kingdom of love is here and available to all, no matter what. Praise God to let this world know that God has the last word.

Praise God. Hallelujah and Amen.