



## Mount Olive Devotion

Fifth Week of Pentecost (June 29 – July 3, 2020)

### Monday

Psalm 8:1-5

- <sup>1</sup> O LORD, our Sovereign,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!  
You have set your glory above the heavens.
- <sup>2</sup> Out of the mouths of babes and infants  
you have founded a bulwark because of your foes,  
to silence the enemy and the avenger.
- <sup>3</sup> When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars that you have established;
- <sup>4</sup> what are human beings that you are mindful of them,  
mortals that you care for them?
- <sup>5</sup> Yet you have made them a little lower than God  
and crowned them with glory and honor.

Verse 2 of this psalm puts forth a statement that any parent or grandparent can attest to. Babes and infants often teach us things about God. From the moment we hear of a birth to come, to the birth itself, to watching that child grow, we are in the presence of a miracle. Where was this person when as yet they were not? From what realm does their genetic makeup, their personality, their uniqueness come? Each person is a miracle and a mystery, known fully only to God. And in verses 4 and 5 we are reminded of the incredible notion that God is “mindful” of each one of us. That, in itself, is mind-boggling. How can God be mindful of every one of the billions of people who are now living, who will live, or who have ever lived? And yet somehow God is able to do that. It is no wonder that the psalmist begins with phrase, “How majestic is your name in all the earth.”

### Prayer

Creating and Sustaining God, we stand in awe of your majesty. We stand in awe of the greatness of your wisdom, your power, and love. We cannot fathom your knowledge of us, nor how it is that you have created us, yet we trust that both are true. Grant us deep gratitude each day for the life you have given us. Grant us also deep gratitude for the life around us – the people, the environment, the tasks, the callings we all have – and help us live each day in praise of you. In your strong name, we pray. AMEN.

## Tuesday

Psalm 34:1-10

- <sup>1</sup> I will bless the LORD at all times;  
his praise shall continually be in my mouth.
- <sup>2</sup> My soul makes its boast in the LORD;  
let the humble hear and be glad.
- <sup>3</sup> O magnify the LORD with me,  
and let us exalt his name together.
- <sup>4</sup> I sought the LORD, and he answered me,  
and delivered me from all my fears.
- <sup>5</sup> Look to him, and be radiant;  
so your faces shall never be ashamed.
- <sup>6</sup> This poor soul cried, and was heard by the LORD,  
and was saved from every trouble.
- <sup>7</sup> The angel of the LORD encamps  
around those who fear him, and delivers them.
- <sup>8</sup> O taste and see that the LORD is good;  
happy are those who take refuge in him.
- <sup>9</sup> O fear the LORD, you his holy ones,  
for those who fear him have no want.
- <sup>10</sup> The young lions suffer want and hunger,  
but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.

There are many times in our lives as believers that it seems our prayers go unanswered: people for whom we have prayed, die; children with which we wish to be reconciled, remain distant; friends who live with addictions, continue in bondage. But there are times when our prayers *do* seem to be answered in the way we had hoped. It is those times that the writer of Psalm 34 is remembering, and it is important for us to recognize that yes, we have those times too. Like the psalmist we have “sought the Lord” and he has answered and delivered us from all our fears. Perhaps a successful surgery is an example of that. We too have been the “poor soul” who has cried out and been heard by the Lord, and “saved from every trouble.” Perhaps an unexpected turnaround in our finances or employment situation is an occasion of this sort. In many and various ways we have been and continue to be those who “take refuge” in the Lord. We rejoice that “those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.”

## Prayer

Thank you, Gracious One, for delivering us from our fears through the death and resurrection of Christ. Thank you for walking with us through the valley of the shadow of death. Thank you for being with us in every circumstance, on sunny days, cloudy ones, and even stormy days that threaten to blow us away. Continue to be present with us, Loving God, that we might walk in faith and joy all our days. In your name we pray. AMEN.

## Wednesday

### Psalm 100

- <sup>1</sup> Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth.  
<sup>2</sup> Worship the LORD with gladness;  
    come into his presence with singing.  
<sup>3</sup> Know that the LORD is God.  
    It is he that made us, and we are his;  
    we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.  
<sup>4</sup> Enter his gates with thanksgiving,  
    and his courts with praise.  
    Give thanks to him, bless his name.  
<sup>5</sup> For the LORD is good;  
    his steadfast love endures forever,  
    and his faithfulness to all generations.

The psalmist mixes metaphors in this psalm. We are both God's people and God's sheep. So the ones that enter God's gates with thanksgiving, are they people or sheep? And those who come into the Lord's presence with singing, which ones are they? A sheep chorus? Now there's a concert I doubt many would want to attend. Joyful noises? If you've ever heard sheep bleat, you know they make lots of noise, but it's hard to tell if it's joyful. All this silliness is only to continue the tone of this psalm, which is sheer (shear?) delight. We are joyful because we know who we are. We belong to God. We are cared for by God. We are precious to God. That's the bottom line. And belonging to God is good because this Sovereign One, whether Shepherd or Ruler, is good, for God's "steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations." Praise the Lord!

### Prayer

We praise you, O God for your marvelous goodness. Evil cannot abide with you, O God. Corruption has no part in your reign. In every conceivable way you are good, O God, and how we rejoice in this. Grant us true faith in you, Faithful One, that we might live all our days in praise of you. AMEN.

## Thursday

I Chronicles 29:10-13

<sup>10</sup>Then David blessed the LORD in the presence of all the assembly; David said: “Blessed are you, O LORD, the God of our ancestor Israel, forever and ever. <sup>11</sup>Yours, O LORD, are the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and on the earth is yours; yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all. <sup>12</sup>Riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might; and it is in your hand to make great and to give strength to all. <sup>13</sup>And now, our God, we give thanks to you and praise your glorious name.

The history books of the people of Israel aren't well-known to many Christians. This short piece from the end of First Chronicles comes from a section where King David is having a capital campaign to build the great temple. David already knows that it is not his to build – that task will fall to his son, Solomon – but David's task is to raise the money needed for construction. And so David gives a great offering, and then invites the leaders of Israel to do the same. When the leaders give generously, the chronicler says that “the people rejoiced because [their leaders] had given willingly, for with single mind they had offered freely to the Lord.” And finally the king rejoices as well, and offers this prayer of blessing. Notice from whence “riches and honor” come, according to David. *They come from God.* In other words, no matter how much we give, we are only giving from that which was first given to us. How good it is to be reminded of this.

## Prayer

We praise you, O God, for giving us all things. Indeed, all that we have is a gift from you. We confess that we often take your gifts for granted or forget altogether that they come from your generous hand. Forgive us, Lord. Grant that we might live gratefully all our days. In Jesus' name, we pray. AMEN.

## Friday

II Corinthians 1:18-22

<sup>18</sup> As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been “Yes and No.” <sup>19</sup> For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not “Yes and No”; but in him it is always “Yes.” <sup>20</sup> For in him every one of God’s promises is a “Yes.” For this reason it is through him that we say the “Amen,” to the glory of God. <sup>21</sup> But it is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us, <sup>22</sup> by putting his seal on us and giving us his Spirit in our hearts as a first installment.

How important it is to remember these words of the apostle Paul’s, that “in [Christ] every one of God’s promises is a ‘Yes.’” Yes, you are forgiven. Yes, you have received the Holy Spirit. Yes, you people of God are the Body of Christ in the world. Yes, you have been given the task of bearing Christ’s life-giving word to all people. Yes, you are healed and whole because of the work of Christ. And on and on it goes. And because God says yes to us in Jesus, it behooves us to bear this affirmation to others. To people of color who have wondered if they too are loved by God, we must say, “Yes, you are loved more than you know.” To people who live in poverty who have wondered if God even cares or knows about them, we must say, “Yes, even the hairs of your head are numbered.” To any who live in fear because of abuse or prejudice and wonder if God hears their prayers, we must say, “Yes. God hears you. Jesus says, ‘Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.’” The answer to any in peril or distress or living under oppression is always the same, “Yes, yes, yes! You are my children and my love for you is strong. I am coming for you.”

## Prayer

In Christ, you have said “Yes” to the world, O God. In Christ, you continue to say yes to the world. Your body – the Church – is now called to be that voice of ‘yes’, embracing all who seek love, wisdom, shelter, and grace. Grant that your people might always be that voice of affirmation. Through Christ, we pray. AMEN.