7-26-20, The Holy Way

Sermon on Psalm 105:1—11

1. Introduction
2. This is an imperatival psalm. It is a psalm which directs the reader to do particular things.
3. This psalm reflects God’s continual faithfulness to the covenants God has made with God’s people.
4. Prayer
5. The text
6. (v. 1—4) **Praise God**
7. (v. 1) Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done. [So we are told to praise God and to tell people what God has done.]
8. (v. 2) Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts. [This time the direction is more specific. We are to sing, and, in singing, tell who God is and what God has done and continues to do.]
9. (v. 3a) Glory in his holy name. [We are to rejoice in what God’s name and nature mean to us.]
10. (v. 3b) Let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice
11. (v. 4) Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always.
12. (v. 5 & 6) **Remember God** Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgements he pronounced, you his servants, the descendants of Abraham, his chosen ones, the children of Jacob. [The Psalmist directs worshippers to remember and rejoice in their particular and special relationship with God.]
13. (v. 7—11) **This is who God is**
14. (v. 7) He is the Lord our God; his judgements are in all the earth. [We cannot look anywhere without seeing the glory and the power of God.]
15. (v. 8 & 9) He remembers his covenant forever
16. The promise he made, for a thousand generations,
17. The covenant he made with Abraham
18. The oath he swore to Isaac
19. (v. 10 & 11) He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree, to Israel as an everlasting covenant: “to you I will give the land of Canaan as the portion you will inherit.” [Some of my brothers and sisters see this and similar passages as stating the requirement that all who love God must accept the policies and practices of the modern political entity of Israel, including all of that nation’s geographical claims. I think my siblings are mistaken in this. I do think that there is a chosen people of God, and I think that chosen people includes those who follow Jesus, as well as everyone else whom God, in God’s sovereignty and grace, chooses to include in that chosen people. I regard Israel as a nation in the same way that I regard Portugal or Finland or Nigeria: a nation like any other. Sisters and brothers in Christ can disagree on this issue. My hope is that we will be able to disagree with humility and kindness and grace.]
20. What shall we take away from this text today?

One very obvious thing we take away is that we are to praise God. We are to worship God, sing to God, pray to God, give our time and our money to God.

So, what does that look like in our lives? Is that a Sunday thing? Is that a thing we put in our calendars so we don’t forget? Is that a compartment of our lives that we visit from time to time? This psalm makes clear that none of those conceptions will do.

Praising God and remembering God, which is the second point of the psalm, is less an act and more of a lifestyle. Praising God is looking at the morning sun and being grateful for another day. Praising God is giving a smile to someone who seems to need one. Praising God is making sure that there is food and shelter for everybody, not just for some. And praising God is working with others to replace unjust systems with other systems that provide equity for all.

And why should we bother with this? A lot of it is hard work. A lot of it takes us out of our comfort zone. A lot of it requires us to listen to other people who sometimes challenge our understanding of how things work. Why should we subject ourselves to that, especially if we’re comfortable and satisfied with the way things are?

The simple answer to that is that we are children of God and that, as a component and a result of that relationship, the difficulty of others is our difficulty, the pain of others is our pain, and the hopelessness of others is our concern. God has been continually faithful to us. And that’s not thanks to anything we ourselves have done. We are invited and allowed and blessed to be the agents of God’s faithfulness to others.

So, my sisters and brothers, I invite you to praise God. I invite you to pray, to sing, to attend to the proclamation of God’s word. And I invite you to embrace your role in the Kingdom of God. As I’ve said before, God is calling you, at this moment in the history of The Holy Way. God invites you to see things with new clarity, and to act on that new clarity.

Will you look at the world, your world, with new eyes? Will you look back at the important points in your life with a fresh perspective? I can point to a number of times in my own life when I received the benefit of the doubt simply because of the color of my skin. When I ended my second year of college on academic suspension, I went looking for a job with a copper-mining company. Four hours after I arrived, I was hired. This was a company with a work force which was almost exclusively Hispanic and Anglo. There were exactly 0 African-American employees at that time. And so, I got the job I needed. I learned discipline and I earned enough money to go back to school on my own money and not my family’s. But, if I had been Black, instead of White, and in the same circumstances, what do you think my employment chances would have been?

The fact that I have worked hard and played by the rules doesn’t change the fact that I have often, if not consistently, received a head start against Hispanic and Black young men who were just as hard-working and just as willing to follow the rules.

When I die, I want the playing field to be more level than it is today. I’m working to learn about the ways I can be a part of that. This is a long journey that I’m on, one that will extend well beyond my time serving you here at The Holy Way.

Will you walk with me through this part of the journey? Will you seek to understand what the playing field looks like from another perspective? Will you commit yourself to working for equity and justice, even if it means taking a serious look at yourself? And will you do this work, all of it, in the context of praising God, who has loved us and cared for us and claimed us as children? Will you? May it be so. Amen