

Week Three
Praising God
Psalms of Praise and Thanksgiving

Preliminary Remarks

- Last week we discussed a group of psalms called communal and individual laments. This week we investigate psalms of praise and thanksgiving.
- It may seem that these two kinds of psalms are so different that they have little in common, but in fact, they need each other. Psalms of lament lead to praise and thanksgiving, and psalms of praise and thanksgiving occur after we have experienced God's mercy and salvation.
- While we know how to thank God and ask God for favors, we often find it difficult to simply praise God. The psalms of praise provide us with words to praise the Lord.

Psalm 8

- This brief psalm is filled with wonder and awe at the beauty of creation and the role God has appointed for human beings in creation. The psalmist looks at the expanse of creation and is filled with wonder that God has such concern for human beings.
- This psalm reminds us of our need to care for God's creation over which we hold the sacred duty of stewardship.
- Who is speaking? The church is filled with wonder at God's creation that has found its climax in Christ.
- What does the Psalm say about God? God has a plan for creation in which humanity plays central role that finds its goal in Christ.

Psalm 33

- The psalm begins with an invitation to sing "a new song" to the Lord (vv. 1-3)
- The psalm provides a first reason to sing a new song to the Lord: by the word of the Lord all things came into being (vv. 4-9)
- The psalm provides a second reason: God has a plan for humanity that is working itself out in history (vv. 10-15)
- The psalm provides a third reason: humans are not saved by our own power (vv. 16-19)

- The psalm concludes with trust in the Lord (vv. 20-22)
- Who is speaking? Here we hear the voice of the body of Christ praise and thank God for the work of salvation it has experienced in Christ.
- What does the psalm say about God? God has a plan for our salvation.

Psalms 136

- Psalm 136 is an historical litany in which the community of faith responds to God's mighty deeds in creation and history: "for his mercy endures forever."
- The first part of the psalm praises God for God's work of creation (vv. 1-9)
- The second part of the psalm recounts God's deeds in rescuing Israel from Egypt (vv. 10-15).
- The third part of the psalm recounts how God led Israel through the wilderness to the promised land (16-26)
- Who is speaking? The original speaker is surely the people of Israel. In the light of the paschal mystery, however, we sing the psalm in thanksgiving for the salvation God has wrought in Christ who led us through the waters of baptism into the promised land of a heavenly inheritance
- What does the psalm say about God? By recalling all God has done in creation and history, the psalm assures us that God's mercy in Christ will endure forever. It will not end.

Psalms 146—150

- These psalms, which conclude the Psalter, are called "Alleluia Psalm" because they begin with the word Alleluia, "Praise *Yhwh*"
- They teach us that the purpose of our lives is to praise the Lord.
- The "Lord" is *Yhwh*, the God of Israel. But since *Yhwh* is a sacred name, it could not be spoken and so was replaced by "Lord" (*Adoni*, which is translated *Kyrios* in Greek).
- In the Letter to the Philippians, St. Paul tells us that Jesus was given the name above every other name, *Kyrios*, Lord.
- This means that Jesus has been given God's own name.
- Because Jesus has been given the name Lord, he can also be addressed as Lord. In the light of the paschal mystery, we pray these psalms as address to the "Lord" God (*Yhwh*) and to the "Lord" Jesus.
- Psalm 146 Praise the Lord, the creator who redeems the oppressed
- Psalm 147 Jerusalem, praise the Lord who heals the broken hearted.

- Psalm 148 Let all the whole of creation praise the Lord.
- Psalm 149 Let the People of God sing a “new song” to the Lord.
- Psalm 150 In every way and in every place, praise the Lord.

For the Week Ahead

The Church prays the following Psalms at Evening Prayer. Pray them on the day assigned *in the voice of Christ and his church*.

Sunday

1. Psalm 110 At his resurrection, Christ is exalted at God’s right hand.
2. Psalm 114 The church celebrates its deliverance in Christ

Monday

1. Psalm 11 Christ takes refuge in God in his time of distress
2. Psalm 15 Who can stand in God’s presence?

Tuesday

1. Psalm 20 The church prays for the victory of Christ her Messiah
2. Psalm 21 The church celebrates the victory of Christ her Messiah

Wednesday

1. Psalm 27 The Lord is Christ’s light and salvation (vv. 1-3)
2. Psalm 27 Christ seeks to be in the presence of the Lord (vv. 4-14)

Thursday

1. Psalm 30 Christ praises God for saving him
2. Psalm 32 Blessed are those whose sins are forgiven

Friday

1. Psalm 41 Jesus in the midst of his passion asks for healing
2. Psalm 46 The church proclaims that God is its refuge and strength

Saturday

1. Psalm 34 Christ will bless and glorify the Lord
2. Psalm 117 The church calls all the nations to praise God