

Scripture

Psalm 145: 1-2, 13-21

Bob Scott

This is one of many psalms of praise, yet it is unique in the breadth and depth of its proclamation. The repetition of 'bless/extol your name forever and ever' states the purpose of the psalm. It praises the name of the Lord by reciting the attributes and actions that comprise the character of God. The first half of the psalm speaks of God's providence to all, the second half of God's help to those who belong to God.

¹I will extol you, my God and King,
and bless your name forever and ever.

²Every day I will bless you
and praise your name forever and ever.

¹³Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and your dominion endures throughout all generations.

The LORD is faithful in all his words
and gracious in all his deeds.

¹⁴The LORD upholds all who are falling
and raises up all who are bowed down.

¹⁵The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food in due season.

¹⁶You open your hand,
satisfying the desire of every living thing.

¹⁷The LORD is just in all his ways
and kind in all his doings.

¹⁸The LORD is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth.

¹⁹He fulfills the desire of all who fear him;
he also hears their cry and saves them.

²⁰The LORD watches over all who love him,
but all the wicked he will destroy.

²¹My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD,
and all flesh will bless his holy name forever and ever.

Luke 12:22-31

This passage has many of the same lessons as the Sermon on the Mount. In its larger context Luke presents Jesus' warnings about covetousness and anxiety; and calls for disciples to trust in God and live a humble and generous life. Today's reading focuses on anxiety and trust.

²²He said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. ²³For life is more than food and the body more than clothing. ²⁴Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! ²⁵And which of you by worrying can add a single hour to your span of life? ²⁶If then you are not able to do so small a thing as that, why do you worry about the rest? ²⁷Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. ²⁸But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, you of little faith! ²⁹And do not keep seeking what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. ³⁰For it is the nations of the world that seek all these things, and your Father knows that you need them.

³¹Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

"Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Sermon

Worried?

Worry, stew, fret, brood, fuss, ferment, restless, foreboding, unsettled, disconcerted, agitated, troubled. Do you identify with any of these words? I would say that all of us have been seriously worried at some time or another. It's totally understandable. The world has lots of reasons to worry – global warming, droughts, fires, floods, covid (still) and monkey pox, gun violence and war, the economy, the insurrection, the nullifying of abortion rights, voter suppression... and so much more. They are all good reasons to be worried. Then add to that our personal concerns for our health, our families, our finances, and more. As well as our concerns for our church – its mission, its members, its money. Who's not to worry!

Yet, today we hear clearly from Jesus, in very strong terms - Don't stew, fret, brood, fuss...Do not worry. Yeah, right, Jesus. We may think that Jesus is telling us just to kick back and let life roll. But he is not. His words don't mean we are not to care, not to be concerned or attend to life's challenges. What it does mean is that we are not to be consumed by them. Which is not easy to do. When Jesus tells

us not to fret, he doesn't even get into the global concerns of his day – the oppression of Rome and civil unrest, the concerns for religious and cultural purity, the staggering inequalities in their society. Rather, Jesus keeps his call personal and basic – he points to food and clothes, and not even shelter!

But more important than the command to 'not worry' is the why which lies behind it. Why not worry? Well, because of God – God's character, God's purpose, God's care. It's all a matter of perspective. The world is big and I am small. That's a good reason to worry. And to that reality Jesus replies – 'And God is bigger. God is greater and kinder than all the world, and more invested than we perceive. Then Jesus points us to the very things that we so easily ignore. Birds – ravens, wildflowers and grasses. God creates, God cares, God sees, God provides. And God, who values and cares for the smallest of things, values you even more.

Worry, Jesus says, doesn't help, it doesn't add a day to your lives, in fact, it takes life from the days we do have. Worry doesn't help – God does. It's all about perspective. Who or what do you attend to? What do you believe and who do you trust? Instead of stewing and pursuing this world's 'goods' we are to be invested in God's reign and righteousness. And, Jesus says, when that is happening all else will come.

It's a good word, a hopeful word. And a word we so often resist. Often our eyes see things differently. We see, too often, as the world sees, and so we value what the world values and pursue what the world pursues. We have all been raised and trained and given over to humanity's 'world view'. But Jesus calls us to the hard work of 'seeing life from God's view'. It's all about perspective.

That shift in our world view is not easy, for sure, it means unlearning, rethinking, 'metanoia' - repenting, reorienting and reordering our lives in God's light and life. It is a process of seeking, continually, daily, for God's kingdom and righteousness, God's presence, God's purpose, God's guidance; and living out that 'reign' of righteousness by living rightly – by God's evaluation.

It is hard work to move into God's ways, to live in and by God's reign. But there is a sure promise from Jesus, and from all the Scriptures. God rejoices to give that reign to us, here and now, as we are able to embrace it. That is a pledge from God – we will have God's help, God's blessing, God's power, and purpose and life. And with that kingdom life all we need God will provide, that is the way it is, just as we say every Sunday – thy kingdom come...and give us this day... Those are not two things, but one. Imagine a world of God's reign of peace – is there poverty, is there

conflict, is there abuse, or is there a care for all people, all things, to thrive? We know the answer, we know the hope. And that is something we can bet our life on.

It's a perspective I long to take hold of, not just sometimes, on good days, but every day, and in every situation. I guess it's still something I'm seeking. How about you?

Amen.

***Hymn** “God’s Eye is On the Sparrow” NCH 475

Joys and Concerns

Prayers of the People

Loving God, thank you for your grace and goodness to us all the days of our lives. Thank you for blessings we have known and have yet to receive from your hands. We thank you for the grace of Christ and the power of your Spirit, who continually leads us in the way of your kingdom. We are awed that you call us as servants of your realm and so we come seeking to live by your promise in confident trust and steadfast obedience.

We pray for your church and for this congregation. Keep us mindful of your goodness in these difficult times and lead us in your purpose to be a blessing in our community and throughout the world. We pray, for our world and all its leaders. Grant them wisdom and mercy as they uphold your goodness and justice for all peoples. We pray also for all who need your care today. Grant your healing to the ill, your comfort to the sorrowful, and your provision to the needy. We especially lift up... and we thank you for...

We praise you, Glorious God, for the immeasurable depths of your goodness towards us, through Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray...

The Lord’s Prayer

Choral Response

Remember Me

Offering

Invitation: We have been entrusted with more than our share of the world's resources. Above all, we have received good news of God's loving care for all of creation and for every person. Through our offerings, we respond to the call to share God's realm of righteousness and peace with the world. Let us give in faith.

Offertory Music "Hymns of Adoration", arr. Phillip Keveren

Doxology

Prayer: We give, O God, because we are grateful for your abundant goodness. We give to praise you for your mercy and grace. We give in answer to your call. Here we give ourselves and our resources, responding to the hunger and thirst of all your children, so that all people may know your abundant blessings. Use them to your glory. Amen.

* **Hymn** "O God in Whom All Life Begins" NCH 401

***Common Commission**

Let us go forth into the world in peace, being of good courage, holding fast to that which is good, rendering to no one evil for evil, strengthening the faint-hearted, supporting the weak, helping the afflicted, honoring all persons, loving and serving the Lord, and rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

*** Benediction**

Go now into the world

And may all God's blessings overflow to you;
then you will have everything you need,
enough to give to every good work. 2 Corinthians 9:8, adj.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Amen.

Postlude "O That Will Be Glory," by Charles Gabriel

music provided by Chris Harris and Lynne Walker