

JUNE 2021 DEVOTIONS

Sunday, June 6, 2021

Psalm 102:1-13, 22 (NRSV) - Bless the Lord

*Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless his holy name.*

*Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and do not forget all his benefits
who forgives all your iniquity,
who heals all your diseases,
who redeems your life from the Pit,
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,
who satisfies you with good as long as you live
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.*

*The Lord works vindication
and justice for all who are oppressed.*

*He made known his ways to Moses,
his acts to the people of Israel.*

*The Lord is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love*

*He will not always accuse,
nor will he keep his anger forever.*

*He does not deal with us according to our sins,
nor repay us according to our iniquities.*

*For as the heavens are high above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward those who
fear him;*

*as far as the east is from the west,
so far he removes our transgressions from us.*

*As a father has compassion for his children,
so the Lord has compassion for those who fear him.*

God should and must be central in our lives, in our very being. *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.* God comes first. Our lives should not be determined by our personal needs, desires and aspirations, because

we belong to God. Our understanding of who we are, how we live out our lives depends upon how we relate and respond with our Creator. Nothing about us is hidden. Our hearts, minds and souls are known by God.

Theologian George Stroup said that in the Bible, human life is lived out *before the face and in the sight of God*. In our contemporary culture, some might argue that although we believe in the existence of God, do we truly sense that our lives are indeed lived out before our Creator? Do we think that our thoughts and motivations are known only to ourselves, or to those we might chose to reveal?

Who is God that our souls are called to bless? This is the creator of all that has been, is, and will be. We are servants of the Word, not masters of the Word. This is YAHWEH, God of the Old Testament, who chose to reveal God-self to us then, and continues to this day. We bless the Lord, who has already so richly blessed us.

Questions to Ponder

- How am I blessing God in my daily life?

Prayer

Holy God. Thank you for blessing our lives. Lead us to serve you in ways so that we may be a blessing to you as well. Amen.

Sunday, June 6, 2021 -

Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18 NRSV - Belonging

O Lord, you have searched me and known me.

You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away.

You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways.

Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely.

You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it.

For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.

My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.

Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.

In your book were written all the days that were formed for me, when none of them as yet existed.

How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! I try to count them—they are more than the sand; I come to the end—I am still with you.

This psalm speaks of the intimate relationship with our Creator. Here we find security in a relationship where we are well known, comprehended and understood - nothing is hidden. Our needs are anticipated, our desires foreseen. We are safe, and we belong. Our lives are shared with God. We love, and are loved. We are valued. We rejoice because we know this will never change. God will never abandon us.

However, at times we might find the intimacy of our relationships difficult to maintain. We may feel guilt for what we have or haven't done, unworthy or defective when facing the One and others who care deeply for us. It can become so overwhelming, that we push back or try to hide from God and

others, lest we might be judged by them. We avoid the possibility that their response might be forgiveness and mercy.

The psalmist is without doubt or fears, secure in his relationship with God. Any doubts or fears are blotted out by God's presence, and unlimited care and concern.

I am still with you. Nothing can ever separate us from the love and care of God.

Questions to Ponder

- Have you ever tried to hide from God or others? What made you return? What made you feel again that you belong in that relationship?

Prayer

Creator God. You know us better than we can ever know ourselves. We give thanks that even when we try to hide from you, you are still there. Amen.

Sunday, June 20, 2021

Psalm 130 NRSV - Trusting in God!

*Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice!
Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!
If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand?
But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered.
I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope my soul waits for
the Lord more than those who watch for the morning more than those who
watch for the morning.
O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and
with him is great power to redeem. It is he who will redeem Israel from all
its iniquities.*

Psalm 130 is one of 15 Psalms among a collection of Psalms known as the *Songs of Ascent*. These psalms were sung as people traveled to the temple in Jerusalem (an uphill walk to a city surrounded by mountains) and helped to prepare their hearts and minds to encounter God at the festivals as prescribed in the Torah. Years later the Christian church bundled six of these Psalms together, and they were known as the *Penitential Psalms*. Similar pilgrimage journeys were taken, and during medieval times were commonly used in the sacrament of penance. Throughout Christian history these *Penitential Psalms* have been used as a pathway toward grace.

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice! Haven't we all found ourselves at different times in our lives crying to God? - Will there be enough money to pay the rent this month? Can we afford to buy a new car even though our current vehicle is constantly being repaired? Why do I myself increasingly arguing with my spouse. Life can be difficult and overwhelming at times, and it's natural to cry out to God. Turning to God can help to bring light to some of the shadows of darkness that life challenges can bring.

We like the psalmist can cry out, confident and trusting that God will hear and respond. Whether difficult circumstances are in or out of our control, we need God's help. As necessary we can ask for forgiveness and mercy, and faithfully wait for God's response.

Question to Ponder

- Like the psalmist, when life becomes overwhelming, am I willing to cry out, and then wait for God's response?

Prayer

From the very depths of our souls, Holy One, we turn to you - sometimes in joy, sometimes in despair, knowing you can shed light on the darkness in our lives, knowing you are present, knowing you will respond. Amen.

Sunday, June 27, 2021

Psalm 92:1-4, 12-15 NRSV - A Song for the Sabbath Day

It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to your name, O Most High; to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night, to the music of the lute and the harp, to the melody of the lyre. For you, O Lord, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy.

The righteous flourish like the palm tree, and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. They are planted in the house of the Lord; they flourish in the courts of our God. In old age they still produce fruit; they are always green and full of sap, showing that the Lord is upright; he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.

The first four verses are the acts of worship - giving thanks, joyfully singing praises, declaring the steadfast love and faithfulness of God. Verses 12-15 are about the choir - happy and thankful for God's work in our lives. Every Sunday is like Thanksgiving, and a little Easter. Holy Communion is a Thanksgiving meal.

In worship we can renew and strengthen our faith, hear the Gospel message and plant it in our hearts and minds. We can begin the new week feeling empowered to walk with God in the work of creation. Young and old alike can find possibilities and opportunities to grow and thrive.

Psalm 92 is an example of how worship in Christian communities can look, can be inviting to others. Everyone is centered in and focussed on the God of all Creation - the integral part of liturgy and sermons. Close your eyes for a moment, and imagine the worship described in this Psalm.

Question to Ponder

- How does North worship? How do we give thanks, sing praises, declare God's love and faithfulness?

Prayer

All praise and thanks to you God for opportunities and possibilities to worship in our church communities as we prepare our hearts and minds for a new week to walk with God in the work of creation. Amen.

Sunday, June 13, 2021

Sunday, June 20, 2021

Sunday, June 27, 2021