

Jan. 1, 2016

Lesson 5

Praising God the Creator: Psalm 33: 1-9

Context:

Throughout the month of January, we will look at different Psalms that give us a glimpse at the wide expression of emotions that come in our relationship with God. As you go through the Psalms, you will find that there are so many that can name any feeling or experience that you have felt in your life and relationship with God. There are Psalms of praise, joy, anger, gratitude, sadness, and even pain. They remind us that our relationship with God is an ongoing one in which we find ourselves at different points of our journey.

The one we visit today comes from Psalm 33. This Psalm is one that focuses on the praise of God for the creative power of God's Word and the marveling at God who is the great Creator. The composition of the Psalm draws in multiple elements that make it flow very well: the beginning is a call for all to shout to the Lord with praise with instrument and song. All that we have been given are to be given back to God with shouts. The next part moves us into praise of God because of all the things that the Lord represents: the word that is right, the desire for righteousness and justice, and the love that fills the earth because of God. We read that God's design was made by God's words: the skies, the stars, the oceans, the seas, the whole earth, and all the people who stand in awe of what was created. All because God spoke and things were made present.

The Psalm starts with human action in response to God and then moves to acknowledge all that has been created because of God. It is a Psalm that reminds us that our praise is to be given to God and that God is the one to whom all things derive their origin.

Application:

In many ways, this Psalm is a liturgical order of worship if we read line by line and hear what the words state. We hear about giving thanks, singing, and marveling at the words of God.

In the beginning of the Psalm, we read that all people are to give thanks to God for all that God has done. When I read this passage, I immediately thought of the Great Thanksgiving that we say when we receive Holy Communion. We begin the liturgy acknowledging the greatness of God and thanks for all that God has done. We remember the story of God throughout history and can recall all the times that God has shown us that we have never been abandoned. As God continues to do great things, we are reminded to give back to God with praise and thanksgiving.

It is one of the reasons I love presiding over Holy Communion and receiving Holy Communion in different churches and different places. The liturgy connects us to God and reminds us that we are to always give thanks and praise. Whether it is at a well prepared worship service in a historic, ornate church or at camp service where we are in God's beautiful outdoors, we are reminded that God has given life in all sorts of spaces and we should have moments to marvel in those times.

Another element of Psalm 33 is the focus on singing. We hear that those

gathered are to give thanks to God with song and with instruments. While I myself have never been particularly musically inclined, I do have an appreciation for hymns and for how music conveys Word as well. Growing up I always enjoyed Sundays where we would sing extra hymns and hear about their history. When John Wesley began the Methodist revival in the Anglican church, one of his main focuses included singing. His brother Charles was known for taking bar hymns and setting words that people could understand.

This passage reminds us that we are called to give back in worship whether that be through playing an instrument or singing songs to the best of our ability. We are also reminded that worship is imperative to our calling as people of faith. When we worship, we acknowledge that the true Lord of our lives is God and God is the one to whom we should give thanks.

The last part of the passage that we read includes how God has used words to create the world we live in. God created the earth and the people that reside there. How powerful a reminder of what words can do. God used them to create, to make good things. For us, I think we are to be reminded of the power of words. Words can build things up, but they can just as easily tear things down and destroy. Just think of the last time someone built you up. What did it mean to hear: "Good job," or "Nice try?" Put that in juxtaposition with words that break down: "You're dumb," or "You have no potential." Words can inspire or they can damage. With God, we see that words are meant to give life, to create awe and wonder. Words can heal or hurt. And God uses words to create and inspire. What words will you use in your life?