

Manna Moments

Thursday, March 18, 2021

Scripture Psalm 146

- 1 Hallelujah!
Praise the Lord, O my soul!
- 2 I will praise the Lord as long as I live;
I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.
- 3 Put not your trust in rulers,
in mortals in whom there is no help.
- 4 When they breathe their last, they return to earth,
and in that day their thoughts perish.
- 5 Happy are they who have the God of Jacob for their help,
whose hope is in the Lord their God;
- 6 who made heaven and earth, the seas, and all that is in them;
who keeps promises forever;
- 7 who gives justice to those who are oppressed, and food to those who
hunger. The Lord sets the captive free.
- 8 The Lord opens the eyes of the blind; the Lord lifts up those who are bowed
down; the Lord loves the righteous.
- 9 The Lord cares for the stranger;
the Lord sustains the orphan and widow,
but frustrates the way of the wicked.
- 10 The Lord shall reign forever,
your God, O Zion, throughout all generations. Hallelujah!

Devotional

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"Hallelujah! Praise the Lord, O my soul!" I wonder how many times the words "Praise the Lord" appear in the Psalms. How often in hymns? The question that is on my mind as I begin to think about Psalm 146 is, "How do we 'Praise the Lord'?" Is it by saying or singing the words? Is it just for when things are going really well? What if we don't feel like it? As many of you know, I recently had to say an unexpected "goodbye" to my horse, Bella. We had been companions for almost 21 years. I have not felt very much like praising the Lord. I'm sure you have had these moments too.

Christopher Smart, an 18th century English poet, wrote a poem, "Jubilate Agno." In the early 1940's, in the midst of the Second World War, English composer, Benjamin Britten set sections from this poem in his small-sized cantata, "Rejoice in the Lamb."

Cont.



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I quote from one section:

For I will consider my cat, Geoffrey/ For he is the servant of the living God.
For at the first glance of the glory of God in the East/ He worships in his way.
For this is done by wreathing his body/ Seven times round with elegant quickness.

For he knows that God is his saviour./

For God has blessed him/ In the variety of his movements.
For there is nothing sweeter/ Than his peace when at rest.

Now here is the strange part and perhaps a clue:

For I am possessed of a cat,/ Surpassing in beauty,
From whom I take occasion / to bless Almighty God.

I'm thinking maybe Christopher Smart is suggesting that we praise God by living out of our createdness – by “being” – just as the cat does. However, we know that sweetness is not the only attribute of a cat's character. Christopher Smart, likewise. In his next section he begins, “Cat takes female mouse....” Our nature, too, is more than sweetness. We are sometimes sour, selfish, vindictive, or grief-filled, and we often do exhibit many other less stellar qualities, and these, too, are part of our createdness. What then do we say about praising the Lord? Maybe it's a good thing we are not the Creator? Hmm.

The Psalm writer calls on us to “Praise the Lord” not out of OUR good fortune, but because the Lord, who has kept and continues to keep his/her promises, who gives justice, who sets free, who lifts up, who loves, who sustains, who cares for all of the creation through thick and thin, includes us even in our out-of-sorts, fearful, nasty, or grief-filled free falls. This God is persistent! That is the GOOD NEWS of Psalm 146. Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! O my soul!

Prayer or Thought of the Day

How much happier would the peoples of the world be if we really believed that we all praise God through being who we are (without make-up), and that God loves all of us and each of us, warts and all, and will be there for us through thick and thin.

Notes: