

God's Loving Kindness

Psalm 89:1-4, 15-18

The writer of our scripture makes it clear that he and we have much to sing and shout about – God's steadfast loving kindness – love that should be written about and sung about on a regular basis. It should not only be song about now, but a song that is passed down to generations to come! Not only does the writer believe that God is faithful, but he believe we can count on God's love as we count on seeing the heavens each day and the stars each night in their places. In the same way God promised David a kingdom, so God has established a relationship with God's people and we can sing of his loving kindness:

We are happy and can sing of God's loving kindness because we walk in God's light!

We are happy and can sing of God's loving kindness because we are witnesses to God's goodness, God's blessing, God's righteousness, God's faithfulness, and God's mercy!

We are happy and can sing of God's loving kindness because we know God gives us strength for our journey!

We are happy and can sing of God's loving kindness because we know of God's protection!

Our scripture is a hymn of praise of God's loving kindness and faithfulness!

My question to each of us is: How have you experienced God's loving kindness this year? *Turn to your neighbor and just share for a moment about the things that God has done for you.*

Another psalmist said "God's steadfast love endures forever," and this is used in worship throughout the Christian church. The sentiment, however, is not expressed only in the psalms. The concept of steadfast love or loving-kindness (*hesed*) is present in much of the Hebrew Scriptures. It is almost exclusively a characteristic of God—*hesed* is found more than four hundred times in the Hebrew Scriptures. It is translated in a variety of ways including "mercy," "great kindness," and "faithfulness," but in general, these definitions fail to reach the depth of the real meaning of *hesed*. The word signifies deep loyalty or devotion, care and concern for all people, and might be best expressed as loving-kindness.

Often connected to 2 Samuel 7 and to David's desire to build a house for the ark of the covenant, our psalm can be heard as a companion to David's prayer. It may also bring to mind David's dancing before the ark in triumph as he brought it into the city of Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:12-16).

This psalm was likely used as part of special festivals. As one of the royal psalms, it would have been used for particularly important state events such as a coronation. It points specifically to the closeness of the relationship between David and God, and God is lifted up and praised, so that listeners were reminded of the covenant that was meant to last for "all generations." In our scripture, we as believers are reminded of the constancy of God's love and our call to worship God.

For us the idea of God's loving kindness, *hesed* is overwhelming. We cannot fathom such loving-kindness as coming from God. We liken it to the love of a parent for a child, but human parents struggle, not necessarily with loving their children, but certainly with the constancy and faithfulness that is often tested. Especially now, in a world that seemingly changes moment by moment, the idea of the steadfastness, the deep commitment of this love is nearly inconceivable. The praise of God's faithfulness to God's chosen people is shared from generation to

generation, and the culture of worship by God's people is even more firmly established.

In the latter verses, we are encouraged to yield to God's sovereignty and to rejoice in the loving-kindness found there. Even in the midst of lifting up David and his kingship, we are reminded that David was not king without God, and that those who recognize the sovereignty of God are rewarded. For Christians, this understanding brings to mind the life and teachings of Jesus, as well as the call to live a life in accordance with God's will. Just as the life, lineage, and kingship of David point us to the sovereignty of Jesus as the Christ, so Psalm 89 supports the Messiah in the same way.

For many of us, the idea of the sovereignty of God is a simple matter; others reject the language of kingship as too hierarchical. The kingship of God, however, seems to set most human hierarchy on its head. When God selected David as king, God chose the least likely candidate. David, either as shepherd or as king, was not the kind of leader who looked good on camera or spoke like the greatest of orators. Instead, he was simply God's chosen one—the one who seemed the most unlikely at the time, yet who played an integral role in the larger story.

That larger story subverts the human idea of what kingship is and reminds us that it is God's infinite generosity and loving-kindness, *hesed*, that allows us to live and move and have our being. The vision of that larger story supersedes time and removes us believers from the needs and constraints of time. The psalmist began by saying, "I will sing of your steadfast love, O LORD, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations."

These words were not only written for those who may have sung the liturgy in the temple, but also remind us that God's great loving-kindness, *hesed*, will continue toward all those who will walk in the light for ages to come. **Kate**

Colussy-Estes

The Christian community and the world will stop for a moment on tomorrow and thank God for the one who God send to show his loving kindness to all humankind. Let us sing of his loving kindness and share our joy will the world!

Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary - Feasting on the Word – Year A, Volume 3: Pentecost and Season After Pentecost 1 (Propers 3-16).