

Halleluiah!

Psalm 150

Last week we heard Suzanna tell us her experience of the seeing angels and being told by them that Jesus has indeed risen! I use to feel that the celebration of Easter was a let-down because we talk about the good news of the resurrection on that one day and then we go about business as usual. But as I look at the church calendar I see we get to celebrate Easter for seven Sunday...in the same way that we observed Lent in preparation for the celebration of Easter morning. You see the season of Easter is a season for thanksgiving to God for what God has done for us in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ! So, in this season of thanksgiving, let us learn a little Hebrew. You know that phrase that we read: "Praise the Lord! In Hebrew it is Halleluiah. If we say it in American Sign Language it is...it is a time of celebration and thanksgiving. It is our highest praise to our God. It was Sandy Ryan who said the banner for 2016 should be one of "thanksgiving." And so we must be halleluiah people...people of thanks giving.

But you may think that you don't have anything to give thanks for. You don't have reasons to praise the Lord. The psalmist tells us to look around and remember all the moments, the hours and the days God has given us and give thanks that things are as well as they are with us.

In my journey through the Bible chronologically, I read about the people of Judah and Israel during the time of King Hezekiah. In the first month that he became king Hezekiah called together all the religious leaders of his land and asked them to prepare the temple for real worship. Unfortunately his fathers before him had not followed the commands of the Lord for true worship. In fact it was often the kings who were unfaithful and led the people to be unfaithful. For over

200 years there had been few faithful and obedient kings of Judah and Hezekiah was determined to break the cycle. In the second month of his reign he invited all of Judah and Israel to celebrate the Passover, which had not been celebrated in years. But he did not just invite his kingdom of Judah, but all the people of Israel, those who had seen themselves as a separate nation for over 200 years. They enjoyed the worship and celebration so much that they worshipped and celebrated for a whole week. And when that week was over they worshipped and celebrated another week. They discovered that worshipping God was a thing of joy, not a dull task! Now you may say you would give thanks if you got a two-week vacation also! Going to Jerusalem for the feast days was vacation for the people of their day.

I had an experience on yesterday that made me give thanks and say halleluiah. Isaac and I attended a memorial service. The gentleman we remembered at Jim Essen of Bethany Christian Church in Detroit. Jim was an artist. He lived into his 90s and a theater of people came to celebrate and worship God for the privilege of knowing Jim. But the preacher said something interesting. Jim's mother had died giving birth to him. I didn't know that fact, because Jim didn't spend his life saying "heartbroken is me!" He spent his life saying: "Praise God!" "I am blessed!" "Halleluiah!"

We can say like Jim and the psalmist in response to what God has done and who God is to us: "Halleluiah!"

Psalm 66:1-20 (NRSV)

¹ Make a joyful noise to God, all the earth; **"Halleluiah!"**

² sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise. **"Halleluiah!"**

³ Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! Because of your great power, your enemies cringe before you. **"Halleluiah!"**

⁴ All the earth worships you; they sing praises to you, sing praises to your name."

"Halleluiah!" *Selah*

⁵ Come and see what God has done: he is awesome in his deeds among mortals.

"Halleluiah!"

⁶ He turned the sea into dry land; they passed through the river on foot. There we rejoiced in him, **"Halleluiah!"**

⁷ who rules by his might forever, whose eyes keep watch on the nations— let the rebellious not exalt themselves. **"Halleluiah!"** *Selah*

⁸ Bless our God, O peoples, let the sound of his praise be heard, **"Halleluiah!"**

⁹ who has kept us among the living, and has not let our feet slip. **"Halleluiah!"**

¹⁰ For you, O God, have tested us; you have tried us as silver is tried.

"Halleluiah!"

¹¹ You brought us into the net; you laid burdens on our backs; **"Halleluiah!"**

¹² you let people ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water; yet you have brought us out to a spacious place. **"Halleluiah!"**

¹³ I will come into your house with burnt offerings; I will pay you my vows,

"Halleluiah!"

¹⁴ those that my lips uttered and my mouth promised when I was in trouble.

"Halleluiah!"

¹⁵ I will offer to you burnt offerings of fatlings, with the smoke of the sacrifice of rams; I will make an offering of bulls and goats. **"Halleluiah!"** *Selah*

¹⁶ Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what he has done for me.

"Halleluiah!"

¹⁷ I cried aloud to him, and he was extolled with my tongue. **"Halleluiah!"**

¹⁸ If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.

"Halleluiah!"

¹⁹ But truly God has listened; he has given heed to the words of my prayer.

“Halleluiah!”

²⁰ Blessed be God, because he has not rejected my prayer or removed his steadfast love from me. **“Halleluiah!”**

^{150:6} Let everything that breathes praise the LORD! Praise the LORD! **“Halleluiah!”**

This Psalm is an apt reading for this Second Sunday of Easter, a day on which we Christians continue to celebrate Christ's death and resurrection, the greatest of God's mighty deeds. **Mary E. Shields**

Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary - Feasting on the Word – Year C, Volume 2: Lent through Eastertide.