

God Gives a Fresh Heart

Psalm 145: 1-5, 17-21 (The Message)

I lift you high in praise, my God, O my King!

and I'll bless your name into eternity.

² I'll bless you every day,

and keep it up from now to eternity.

³ GOD is magnificent; he can never be praised enough.

There are no boundaries to his greatness.

⁴ Generation after generation stands in awe of your work;

each one tells stories of your mighty acts.

¹⁷ Everything GOD does is right—

the trademark on all his works is love.

¹⁸ GOD's there, listening for all who pray,

for all who pray and mean it.

¹⁹ He does what's best for those who fear him—

hears them call out, and saves them.

²⁰ GOD sticks by all who love him,

but it's all over for those who don't.

²¹ My mouth is filled with GOD's praise.

Let everything living bless him,

bless his holy name from now to eternity!

2 Thessalonians 2:13-17 (The Message).

¹³⁻¹⁴ Meanwhile, we've got our hands full continually thanking God for you, our good friends—so loved by God! God picked you out as his from the very start. Think of it: included in God's original plan of salvation by the bond of faith in the living truth. This is the life of the Spirit he invited you to through the Message we delivered, in which you get in on the glory of our Master, Jesus Christ.

¹⁵⁻¹⁷ So, friends, take a firm stand, feet on the ground and head high. Keep a tight grip on what you were taught, whether in personal conversation or by our letter. May Jesus himself and God our Father, who reached out in love and surprised you with gifts of unending help and confidence, put a fresh heart in you, invigorate your work, enliven your speech.

God Gives a Fresh Heart!

2 Thessalonians 2: 1-5, 13-17

Deacon Bonnie LeValley November 10, 2019 Psalm 145: 1-5, 17-21

Dear, those early Christian communities desired to follow closely to the teachings of Christ. Amidst the anxiety and persecution of their day they continued to look for signs of the Day of the Lord or the second coming of Christ. There were many false teachers proclaiming the day had come and they had missed it. They were in a panic. For thousands of years people have spent an extraordinary amount of time worrying about what will happen in the end of all time. For many of us we remember the preparation made in 1999 when the Y2k bug would wreak havoc in computers that had not been programmed for 2000. I believe a religious community bought land on the shores of Lake Ontario where God would come and take them home in the rapture. Someone made a lot of money off of survival kits of canned goods and water just in case. It may have seemed like the end was imminent, but the world continued after 1999 and does so even to this day nearly 20 years later.

Today our anxious living seems the norm with the increased occurrences of natural disasters and superstorms. Climate change and raging wildfires bring with a question, “Are we near the end?” Whatever draws us to contemplate the end of the world, the Day of the Lord, the second coming of Christ – that theme is consistent throughout the Bible and all of time.

This anxious worry was what the writer of Thessalonians was addressing, because of the false teachings that were rattling the community of faith. He was trying to put to rest that the Day of the Lord had not arrived and tried to reassure them that certain signs had not happened yet. Paul lays out an understanding so that the people can return to living their life calmly and faithfully. What should they do in the time of waiting? How do they live in the mean time? Do we pack supplies away and hide until the Lord comes to us? Do you wait by the shores of Lake Ontario and pray? Do we quit working to just sit and wait?

Our lesson is clear! We do none of these things. We must tend to our souls and live and help others to glimpse dimly a prelude of God’s kingdom on earth. We

take a firm stand, feet on the ground and head held high. IN God's plan of salvation a bond of faith was set by a living truth, a life born of the Spirit through the message of Jesus Christ. The days are surely coming we know, but in the meantime we are called to live in peace, love and harmony.

We will experience times of devastation and loss for sure, yet we serve a God who is with us in life, in death, in life beyond death. As for the day of the Lord, Augustine shared, "So what is this day which the Lord has made? Live good lives and you will be this day yourselves." And what is good? Micah 6:8 *"He has told you, O mortal. What is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?"* We offer ourselves to the sanctifying work of The Holy Spirit so that we can become more alive in Christ. To wait for Jesus is to meet Jesus in the eyes the ears, and the faces of others who cross our path each day.

Tomorrow, November 11 is Veterans Day, originally "Armistice Day." On the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month (i.e., November 11, 1918, exactly 101 years ago this Monday), the truce was declared that ended World War I, then known as "The Great War" and "the war to end all wars."

"Armistice" is from the Latin *arma* ("arms") and *sistere* ("stand still"). The United States Congress declared that the date "should be commemorated with thanksgiving and prayer and exercises designed to perpetuate peace through good will and mutual understanding between nations." A day of *exercises designed to perpetuate peace through good will and mutual understanding between nations*: for all of us to find ways, large and small, to build bridges across lines of difference, suspicion, or hostility, in our neighborhoods, our country, and among the nations of the world. As we wait for the Day of the Lord we work toward peace, you remember when the lion will lay down with the lamb. There is work to be done!

As we wait we seek God's Coming we seek to meet Jesus and to be Jesus disciples in our living. How else will we survive these days? There examples of God's goodness all around us if we have eyes to see and ears to hear.

My sister Amy sent us a text this week regarding just such a kindness a God moment in her life that happened just last Thursday. She writes, "I got a flat on my way to work today, Thursday. I was sitting on the highway in the pouring rain. Abou, (her husband) came to help her but just as he was trying to jack the car up

their car jack broke. As she goes to call AAA nearly in tears, a guy shows up from nowhere with a State Farm truck. He changes their tire and even puts air in their spare tire. When I asked him how much his work would be the guy says, “Nothing, mam.” I asked for his name and his information because I never carry cash, and he asked me if I believed in God. Amy said yes. He told me his name was on the card he had given her. Tell your story and say a prayer. Pay it forward. I cried.

Where have you met Jesus in the eyes, the ears and the faces of others who have crossed your path in life? Take a moment and share with someone near you about such an incident and I will call us back together in a few minutes.

(Sharing)

We have our hands full as we continually thank God for those who are the hands, ears, eyes and feet of God; those who continually share the love of God with us and others! Gratitude and encouragement are the antidotes to this fear based living. The author of 2nd Thessalonians as well as the Psalmist offers up thanksgiving for the faith of people and their receptivity to the Good News.

The psalmist speaks of passing on the praise of God from one generation to the next. One of the greatest gifts of the Christian faith is to know that we belong to a story that began long before us and will continue long after we are gone. It’s like sitting in KeyBank Center or Rich Stadium participating in the “wave.” The wave of our faith never ends – praise upon praise from one generation to the next. This is what we are called to offer through our living and we are then required to share our witness with the world. The life of Christ’s followers is one that has faith that will sustain an eternal wave of endless praise.

There are moments in life when we struggle to lift our voices in praise. Doubts creep in, fear rise unexpectedly, and darkness becomes an unwelcome friend. One week ago was just one of those moments for me. As we read each name and the bell was rung, my heart was heavy with a great sense of loss in my life and the fellowship of this congregation. Throughout the week several folks have shared this same sentiment. It was a difficult morning. After remembering, stories were shared of delight and joy. The oral tradition of long ago wove the word of God into the memories of people until it became a ready word upon their lips and a comfort to our hearts.

With God's stories memorized and recited, it is easier to remember God's word when faith seems just beyond our grasp. Our praise to our God, is sometimes the loudest, the most authentic, when it rises from a place of struggle. When we struggle the psalmist says, "I lift you high in praise, my God, O my King! And I'll bless your name into eternity. I'll bless you every day and keep it up from now to eternity!"

God is near and God is just! God is as close to us as our very breath. As we trust God's nearness, we can trust God's actions to be orient our living toward truth, justice and love. Orienting our lives toward justice and God's truth creates a way of living in us that arises from our soul, our very center, the place where we unite with God in God's own goodness.

We sing praises to God and honor God with the way we live our life. Resting in the truth that we are part of God's creation part of a large ongoing story – we can release our worries and focus on God's kingdom where others needs is met. We know the divine embrace of God's love which is great enough for all. In that truth, we stand firm and hold fast to God's unending help. In that truth we have confidence that God will give us a fresh heart, refreshed and strengthened "in every good work and word," May God use us in making all things new, until we see God face to face. Amen.