

ALL OF YOU PRAISE THE LORD

Hear again the Word of the Lord to His Church:

*YHWH causes to set prisoners free;
YHWH opens (the) eyes of blind men;
YHWH lifts up (those who are) bowed down;
YHWH loves righteous men;
YHWH watches over the sojourners;
(The) fatherless and (the) widow, He upholds,
but (the) way of wicked men He brings to ruin.¹*

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

Today marks the last Sunday of the “gesimas” and the last Sunday of their place as a transition semi-season between Epiphany and Lent. Fifty days from now, including Sundays, we will rejoice during the Feast of the Resurrection. But, until then, today is the last day for a while wherein the Church readings focus us on the joy of the congregation, and the rejoicing of believers in one of the two green seasons. It is the final Sunday of this first time of renewal and new growth in the Church Year. Three more seasons and three major feasts will be celebrated before these colors will again adorn the Church.

Today also marks the last three days of the Church’s singing Hallelujah and/or Alleluia (depending upon our use of Biblical Hebrew or Common Greek in the Lord’s services to us). Wednesday the Lord’s services begin our 40-day, not counting Sundays, Lenten fast. To help us remember anew why we, and all people, needed God to come in our flesh, each of us and all of us will be led deeper into sorrowing over our sins and into wanting to turn from with the removal of hymns, words, and Psalms which hold words such as today’s Propers (the readings and so forth that change from week-to-week):

*Praise YH,
praise YHWH, O my soul.*

¹ Psalm 146:7-9.

*I will praise YHWH as (long) as I am caused to be;
I will sing praises to my God as I have my being.²*

Those words begin the first of the five Hallelujah Psalms (in the Hebrew, six in the Greek) which end the Psalter. Those ending Psalms appear to have been used as part the liturgy of the Second Temple period (circa 538 BC – AD 67) during worship at non-High Feast times. If that history is accurate, then the “Praise the Lord” Psalm for today fits within the same framework. It is used as this season of joy over God’s incarnate Presence, His Epiphany, ends.

In fact, the five ending Hallelujah Psalms are recited, chanted or read at other times of the year. Psalm 146 appears again in the Trinity season on Sundays 12 and 15. Psalm 147 shows up on Easter 4. Psalm 149 appears on the Last Sunday of the Church Year, at the remembrance of the Holy Innocents and on All Saints’ Day. Part of Psalm 150 can make an appearance on Holy Trinity in the Verse of the Day.³ All of that teaching means that the ending Psalms of the Psalter are heard on almost 10 percent of the Sundays of the year. Among them, today’s Psalm is declared the majority of the time. It brings a fitting end to a season of joy, and makes a fine preparation for the time of repentance. To plant that thought into your heart, hear how the Psalm’s beginning chant can be tied to the central theme proclaimed by the God – in – our – flesh, Jesus, in today’s Gospel reading:

Behold, we continue to go up into Jerusalem. Then will be completed all the things having been written concerning Him by the prophets, about the Son of Man. For He will be handed over to the Gentiles; and He will be mocked; and He will be treated seditiously; and He will be spat upon; then scourging (Him) they will kill Him; but by the third (day) He will resurrect.⁴

Do you hear, and see by the Faith, as did the once-blind man whom Jesus saved by grace through faith, how praising YHWH and the death/resurrection of Jesus are tied together?

² Psalm 146:1-2.

³ Holy Innocents, All Saints’, and Holy Trinity are not counted among the High Feasts of the Early Church: Good Friday thru Easter; Ascension; Pentecost; Nativity; and Epiphany.

⁴ Luke 18:31-33.

Some errant Christian worship, even in Lutheran congregations, is focused more upon what we, as God's people, do than that which God is doing for us. Biblical Christian worship, on the other hand, centers God's people on His gifts first, and then our responses, including praise, second. It is no coincidence that the last five Psalms of the Psalter follow all the others. Before the words, *Praise YH*, are chanted, in both the Old and New Testament public services, come 144 other Psalms (as we number them) which hold the message of the Christ in Law and Gospel. Before *Praise YH* was spoken today, following the Feast of the Epiphany, seven different Psalms began each Sunday.

We have had a week of Psalms leading up to today's Hallelujah! From the first week's declaration of God's steadfast mercy, faithfulness, righteousness and peace in Christ Jesus, to last week's proclamation of a good day in the courts of Lord's House, the Holy Spirit has led us again to today's words of praise:

*All of you praise YH,
praise YHWH, O my soul.
I will praise YHWH as (long) as I live;
I will sing praises to my God as I have my being.⁵*

The manner in which we divided up today's Psalm enabled all of us to speak parts of those words. In a way, we reflected the intent of the composer. His first two words in the Hebrew call all the faithful to praise. His next four words call his own soul, his life to praise. He then moves on to declare that his praise will endure both as long as he lives in mortal flesh, and, into eternity.⁶ His is the praise which may be offered rightly by anyone who does not trust in anyone or anything but God, who keeps to the First Commandment and its meaning as we have learned to confess it: *We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.*⁷ With these words in the Psalm, that meaning is expressed, though, at first, in a negative manner:

*Put not your trust in princes,
in (a) son of Adam in whom (there) is no salvation.⁸*

⁵ Psalm 146:1-2.

⁶ Cf. Psalm 145:2.

⁷ Luther, M. (1991). *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation*. Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

⁸ Psalm 146:3.

*His breath departs,
he returns to his ground,
in that day his plans will perish.⁹*

After singing praise, after speaking back God's Word back to Him, we, you, with the Psalmist, declare why God alone is to receive the praise of the faithful. Not even the highest of God's creatures, man, nor even the rulers of men and women, are to be trusted and praised as is God. Through word play, "Adam and adamah" the composer of the Psalm refers us back to "In the Beginning," the first three chapters of the Book of Genesis. Even the mightiest of people must return to the ground from which our father Adam was formed. On the day of death, all the worldly plans in the mind of any person cease. That is true for all men, women, children and infants except Jesus.

Only the plans which are in line with the mind of God remain. Jesus, from incarnation to death and resurrection, kept His trust perfectly in God. He did not offer His praise to Satan when tempted, to King Herod, nor Pontius Pilate, nor even Caesar, though He honored their offices and vocations as long as they were in line with the thoughts, plans, and prophecies given by God. That thought leads us to the next section of this season's ending Psalm:

*Blessed (is he who has the) El of Jacob as his help,
whose hope (is placed) upon YHWH his El.¹⁰
Who made heavens and earth,
the seas and all which (are) in them,
the One causing to keep faith forever.¹¹
Who does justice for oppressed ones,
Who gives bread to hungry men.*

For you who have learned to listen for the Christ in the Psalms, there He is along with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Christ Jesus as Son of God had the Father and the Spirit as His help. Jesus fully placed His trust in them to get Him through trial, cross, death and resurrection, even when His Father would not hear His pleas to take away the

⁹ Psalm 146:4.

¹⁰ Psalm 146:5.

¹¹ Psalm 146:6.

cup of suffering. Jesus was eternally confident, even while in anguish in and account of our, your, sins. He looked to the One Who with Him and the Spirit are the Creator God. (There we have a recurring theme in the Epiphany/Gesima Psalms).

He is the One Who keeps faith forever – to His Father, and to all who may be named with His Name. Here today, in the Psalm, you have reminders of His faithfulness. As it has been placed in the Lord's Service to you, the Psalm also can be used to point you to the elements here which are proofs of the fulfillment of its fulfillment. God keeps faith forever with those who have Him as His help. How do you know that describes you?

Look to the Name which you bear. With the Water and the Word, your given name was added to the family-Name of God. As you bear God's Name, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you as His dear child, have His help. As a loving Father, He corrects you when you need it, grants you grace when you are turned from yours sins and keeps you firm in the Faith. This He does through the working of the Holy Spirit through the hearing of the Word of God. As your older Brother, He goes before you, defends you and guides you into all truth. Jesus does justice for you, as He did complete justice on the cross to bring you forgiveness for all your sins. Jesus does justice for you, as He fulfilled justice in His resurrection, declaring you right with our Father. The Son of God, Jesus, is the fulfillment of the Praise Psalm, and you know that because He not only, with the Father and the Spirit gives you all you *need* for this body and life, He grants you the Bread of Life to satisfy your spiritual hunger for forgiveness and strengthening to eternal life. Today's Praise Psalm continues by describing the attributes and gifts of Jesus:

*YHWH causes to set prisoners free;¹²
YHWH opens (the) eyes of blind men;
YHWH lifts up (the) ones bowed down;
YHWH loves righteous men;¹³
YHWH watches over the sojourners;
(the) fatherless and widow, He upholds;*

¹² Psalm 146:7.

¹³ Psalm 146:8.

but (the) way of wicked men He brings to ruin.¹⁴

In Jesus, the Son of God and Son of Man, all who were prisoners to sin, death and the grave have been given the gift of freedom. For that, you are free to give praise to YH. That some reject that reality is no proof that, in Christ, those living in the prison house of sin have not been set free. Those who wish to go back into captivity are free to do so. God allows people to resist His grace, mercy, forgiveness, and life eternal.

Jesus, Whom you heard today once opened the eyes of the blind man, opens your spiritual eyes to behold Him in the light of His truth. God reaches down from heaven to us who are burdened by our sins and oppressed by sin in the world. He comes to us, offering us forgiveness. In Divine Worship, God comes to us and we respond to Him in the Faith, the Faith of Jesus. God loves you whom He has declared righteous. He named you right with Him in Christ Jesus. That was given to you, as stated before, in His resurrection, in which you are a participant through Holy Baptism.

In Christ, through the Word, God watches over we who are of the Faith as we are sojourners in this fallen world. He remains with us through simple means, protecting us from eternal evil. He does that while preventing us from falling to that which might separate us from Him forever. He even determines to bring good from bad for those who trust in Him in Christ. His care of orphans and widows is revealed in His giving Himself to be Father to the fatherless, and Husband to the widow.

God, while we may not live to see each case, truly fulfills His Word to bring to ruin the way of evil men. They who trouble us now on account of their wicked desires will not be with us forever. There will come a day, the Last Day, when they will be eternally separated from us who believe in Jesus the Christ as our Savior. From all of that, the ending Song of the week for this season ends even as it began:

*He will reign, YHWH, forever,
your Elohe, O Zion, for generation to generation, praise YH.¹⁵*

¹⁴ Psalm 146:9.

¹⁵ Psalm 146:10.

The Psalmist calls God's people all to praise the Lord Whom he has declared. "All of you praise YH" begins and ends the Psalm, even as it prepares us to end this part of the year. We are reminded that the God of the text, the God of creation, is the God who is still with us now, and Who will be with us forever. The unending praises of God will continue in heaven even as they will soon be silent in our midst. Yet, we can be sure that in the end our text rings out with words that will sustain us in the Church until, 50 days from now, we will again sing out "Hallelujah." Then, when each of us shall have our last hour in this body of sin and death, our voices will join the unending chorus in the heavenly realms.

The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus

Quinquagesima (*Lutheran Service Book* one-year series)
Psalm 146; Isaiah 35:3-7; I Corinthians 13:1-13; Luke 18:31-43
March 2, 2014

Pastor Michael H. Merhouse

Soli Deo Gloria

*Hallelujah,
Halleli, O my soul, the YHWH.¹⁶*

*I will praise YHWH as I am caused to be,
I will sing praises to my God in my being.¹⁷*

*Put not your trust in princes,
in (a) son of Adam in whom (there) is no salvation.¹⁸
Departs his breath,
he returns to his ground,
in that day his plans will perish.¹⁹*

*Happy which El of Jacob is his help,
whose hope upon YHWH his El.²⁰
Who has been making heavens and earth,
the seas and all which (are) in them,
the One causing to keep faith forever.²¹
Who does justice for oppressed ones,
Who gives bread to hungry men.*

YHWH causes to set prisoners free;²²

YHWH opens eyes of blind men;

YHWH lifts up ones bowed down;

YHWH loves righteous men;²³

YHWH watches over the sojourners;

*Fatherless and widow, He upholds,
but way of wicked men He brings to ruin.²⁴*

*He will reign, YHWH, forever,
your Elohe, O Zion, for generation to generation, Hallelujah.²⁵*

¹⁶ Psalm 146:1.

¹⁷ Psalm 146:2.

¹⁸ Psalm 146:3.

¹⁹ Psalm 146:4.

²⁰ Psalm 146:5.

²¹ Psalm 146:6.

²² Psalm 146:7.

²³ Psalm 146:8.

²⁴ Psalm 146:9.

²⁵ Psalm 146:10.

All of you praise YH,
praise Him, O my soul, the YHWH.²⁶

I will praise YHWH as I live,
I will sing praises to my God in my yet- being.²⁷

Put not your trust in princes,
in (a) son of Adam in whom is no salvation.²⁸
His breath departs,
he returns to his ground,
in that day his plans will perish.²⁹

Blessed (is he who has the) El of Jacob as his help,
whose hope (is placed) upon YHWH his El.³⁰
Who made heavens and earth,
the seas and all which (are) in them,
the One causing to keep faith forever.³¹
Who does justice for oppressed ones,
Who gives bread to hungry men.

YHWH causes to set prisoners free;³²

YHWH opens eyes of blind men;

YHWH lifts up ones bowed down;

YHWH loves righteous men;³³

YHWH watches over the sojourners;

Fatherless and widow, He upholds,
but way of wicked men He brings to ruin.³⁴

YHWH will reign, forever,
your Elohe, O Zion, for generation to generation, all of you praise YH.

²⁶ Psalm 146:1.

²⁷ Psalm 146:2.

²⁸ Psalm 146:3.

²⁹ Psalm 146:4.

³⁰ Psalm 146:5.

³¹ Psalm 146:6.

³² Psalm 146:7.

³³ Psalm 146:8.

³⁴ Psalm 146:9.