

GOD'S ALIEN WORK. GOD'S LOVING WORK.

Our sermon for this fourth Sunday of the Resurrection Season is taken from our Psalm. Hear again the theme text proclaimed from Word of the Lord:

*YHWH (is) taking pleasure in the ones fearing Him;
the ones hoping for His mercy (steadfast love, loving-kindness).¹*

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

Today the Church has again heard that God takes pleasure in people who have no other gods than the triune God. That makes this a First Commandment Sunday. That theme was set in our ears by the Psalm of the Day, reinforced in the words of the Collect prayer and built upon by the other Propers (changeable readings of the Day).

Now, a few of you may have some expectation that this sermon will include a tribute to mothers. A way to tie this ancient Jubilate Sunday readings to this secular Mother's Day may be to remind us that the Fourth Commandment leads us to acting out on earth the fulfillment of the First. The Feast of "St. Mother's Day" can be used to point out that all the baptized have one Mother, the Church. That is a third Article of the Creed reality. Our Mother we may honor each Lord's Day as we are moved by the Holy Spirit to follow the meaning of the Third Commandment. (If you don't remember the scriptural teachings found in the *Small Catechism*, they begin on page 321 of your copy of *Lutheran Service Book*. That, your Mother the Church has placed before you, that you might rightly say, chant, and sing to your Father in heaven. It is an earthly truth that that which we say or sing becomes that which we believe). Enough on that topic; and on to reflection on this Sunday of rejoicing and exulting in God, as our Psalm begins afresh:

*Hallelujah! For (it is) good to sing to our Elohe;
for gracious it is, seemly, (a) song of praise!²*

¹ *Psalm 147:11.*

Hallelujah! “Praise the I AM,” is how the Psalm begins. That call reflects exultation proclaimed by the historic Introit for today from Psalm 99 LXX (100 MT). While we have not heard from the Introit Psalms for several years, their weekly themes carry through the rest of the readings. By receiving God’s Word through the Psalm of the Day we get to hear more verses than if we just chanted the Introits. It’s OK – they are all about Jesus the Christ, so the more Jesus you get in the readings of the day, the better for you, your Mother the Church declares!

*Praise the Lord! For (it is) good to sing to our Elohe;
for gracious it is, seemly, (a) song of praise!*³

The Psalm calls God’s people to praise God, and then tells them, you, why such praise is fitting. Those words were likely composed as the once-destroyed Jewish Temple and its walls were restored. Through them, God’s people, who were grateful to Him for turning from His wrath at their sins, and the punishment such brought upon them are told it is good for them to sing to God.

You may have noted that the praise called for in the text is to benefit the ones who are singing. Such Psalmnic⁴ teaching turns on its head a works-centered contemporary “Christian” maxim that our praise is for God! People actually seem to think, because they appear to have been taught, that worship is something we do for God! The Psalm, then, drives us who will hear the Word in its context to the realization that singing to our God is actually gracious and seemly for us: it is for our sakes we sing praise to the I AM.

Jubilate Sunday thus represents a counter-contemporary Church culture call. God’s Word teaches that a people who have been chastised on account of their sins, (not a pop-Christian theme), which in recorded history included having their

² *Psalm* 147:1.

³ *Psalm* 147:1.

⁴ Yes, I made up the word...

Mother the Church destroyed, God's repentant children can benefit from the praise they offer when their Father restores their Mother the Church! They, you, learn that it is good and right that you offer back to God from His Word (the Book of Isaiah, for one, appears to lie behind the development of today's Psalm). All of that means that those who sing, say, or chant God's Word in the Faith actually receive good from Him in their audible proclamation of that Word. Our Mother's song of exultation goes on:

*YHWH (is) building up Jerusalem;
He gathers (the) outcasts of Israel.
He heals those of broken heart;
and binds up their wounds for them.⁵*

Those words, as indicated earlier, have an initial starting point in human history. That was about 180 years after God's people's unrepented sins brought upon them the fall of the Southern Kingdom, Judah. Their grandparents had witnessed the destruction of the Temple. They had experienced deportation from the Holy Land, which had become defiled as non-Jews were imported live in their houses and tend their fields and flocks.

Near the beginning of the 4th century BC, a few of the repentant scattered people of God were permitted by their human ruler to return to Judah and Jerusalem. That remnant had set to building the walls and gates of Jerusalem. All the while, they were under constant persecution from the non-Jews who had then inhabited the once-Holy Land. In time, as they looked on all God had let them do to restore their Mother the Church in the Temple, they were called to sing praises to God. After all their hard work, they make melody to God, and sing:

*He is determining (the) number (of the) stars;
to all of them He gives names.⁶*

⁵ Psalm 147:2-3.

⁶ Psalm 147:4.

Those are words to be sung by those who believe that God restores our Mother the Church after He has disciplined her on account of our sins. They are a recognition that God is the Creator Who restores His creation when He works repentance in us and turns us to new life.

The ancient Israelites, when they sang this day's Psalm of exultation, gazed upon their restored city walls, Temple, and homes. They sang that they had actually seen God's providence for them in the greater creation. They were moved to lift their eyes from that which they had been moved do. In looking away from their work, they beheld our Creator's glory in the stars of the heavens.

They had learned that the God of Creation is not an absent God. He is active in His creation, even when He seems absent to sinners. God even is declared as naming all the stars of the heavens. (Think: our desert nights, away from the artificial lights of the city, up here where the sky is filled with light). Naming is the ultimate biblical act of declaring something or someone's true nature.

From that you may understand that as God knows the nature of the stars to give them appropriate names, He knows your nature. He took that nature onto Himself, in the Christ becoming one with you. He knew your nature so well that He went to the extreme of having all your sins placed upon Him. He died in them, for you!

Then, in the great exchange, He placed His nature into you through His Word. He washed your sins away. He gave you a baptismal Name: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The God Who names the humanly innumerable stars of the universe, has named you! That eternal truth worked out in you, for you, and through you enables you to sing out with the ancients who had received back their Mother the Church:

Great is our Adonai, and in power abundant;

for His understanding there is no measure.⁷

As God's people sing their praises, they are led by His Word to recall just Who this God is. They, you, learn anew, from your songs of jubilation to God that He is God Almighty. You declare His inscrutable omniscience. That is, you remind yourselves that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit has thoughts of grace and mercy even for those, who, though beneficiaries of His Covenants – circumcision in the Old, and Baptism in the New – sin and cause even our Mother the Church to fall corporately into sin. As we learn anew, sing, chant and speak of God's greatness, power and understanding and He continues to move sinners like you and me, and us, to repentance that He may graciously forgive us, we are moved by the Word of God to rejoice and sing:

*YHWH (is) lifting up (the) downtrodden;
He (is) causing to cast evil men upon (the) earth.⁸*

When God's people, when you, recognize your sin, and the punishment that comes is just, even when it means that churches must fall, you are ready to behold God's exalting those pressed down. You behold, in God's binding evil to earth and preventing it from entering heaven's realms, that God is just. In God's justice in punishing evildoers, you behold His alien work. In beholding God's lifting up repentant sinners through His grace, mercy and loving-kindness, you are moved to rejoice as in this Psalm verse:

*Sing to YHWH with thanksgiving;
sing melody to your Elohe with (the) lyre.⁹*

Those words are a call to those who behold God in His Law punishing sinners that they will turn from their sins and hunger for His Gospel. They are for you

⁷ *Psalm 147:5.*

⁸ *Psalm 147:6.*

⁹ *Psalm 147:7.*

who have heard and believe His Good News, that your sins have been removed, washed clean from you in the blood of the Christ. Those who are able to receive good from their thanksgiving song, offered in the melody of grace through the instruments used to God's glory in the Church, who need more reminders – daily – of His grace, then may receive assurance of that in the next few verses. They declare God's loving-kindness as it is displayed through His sustaining His creation for the benefits of His creatures – from the lowest to the highest – redeemed, repentant, and forgiven humans. That they, that you, believe this Psalm is for you to receive benefit from is summed up in today's theme verse:

*YHWH (is) taking pleasure in the ones fearing Him;
the ones hoping for His mercy (steadfast love, loving-kindness).¹⁰*

Those words declare the loving nature of God that He displays to those who, when they consider their own power, strength, knowledge, and gifts as compared to the Creator, Giver and Sustainer of those who turn to Him in humble trust. In believing and owning the concluding words of this day's Psalm of jubilation you learn to know how impotent all your power is when compared to God's omnipotence. In the Truth, you confess that you believe your all-powerful God is watching over you, working all things to your ultimate good and glory.

That the Christ knew, believed, and lived in our flesh. He who prophesied His own passion and death, the fallen world's joy at it and His disciples' sorrow on account of it, fulfilled His own words in time. When all had been finished, as a result of Jesus perfectly living the Word of God, including fearing God in this hope of His steadfast love even unto His horrible death on the cross, God showed His mercy for Jesus.

In showing mercy to Him, God showed His mercy for you. In that, the

¹⁰ Psalm 147:11.

words of today's Psalm regarding those in whom God is pleased are fulfilled. For, just as Christ's death shed the blood paid the price for your sin, so His resurrection declares you right with God. That means, as you remain in Christ, this day's Psalm is fulfilled in you. Christ is risen!

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

Resurrection IV (*LSB One-Year Series*)

Psalm 147:1-11; Lamentations 3:22-33; I Peter 2:11-20; John 16:16-22

May 11, 2014

Pastor Michael A. Morehouse

Soli Deo Gloria

TRANSLATION, SECOND DRAFT

*All of you praise YH;
for (it is) good (to) sing melody to our Elohe,
for it is gracious, (a) seemly song of praise.¹¹*

*Building up Jerusalem (is) YHWH;
outcasts of Israel He gathers.¹²*

*He heals those of broken heart;
and binds up for them their wounds.¹³*

*He is determining (the) number (of the) stars;
to all of them names He cries.¹⁴*

*Great is our Adonai, and in power abundant;
for His understanding there is no measure.¹⁵*

*Lifting up (the) downtrodden (is) YHWH;
He (is) causing to cast evil men upon (the) earth.¹⁶*

*Sing to YHWH with thanksgiving;
sing melody to your Elohe with (the) lyre.¹⁷*

*He (Who is) causing to cover (the) heavens with clouds;
He (Who is) causing to prepare for (the) earth rain;
He (Who is) causing to make grow (on) the hills grass.¹⁸*

*He (is) giving for (the) beasts their food;
For (the) sons of ravens when they cry.¹⁹*

*Not in strength of the horse will He delight;
not in (the) legs of the man will He be pleased.²⁰*

*YHWH (is) taking pleasure in the ones fearing Him;
the ones hoping for His mercy (steadfast love, loving-kindness).²¹*

¹¹ Psalm 147:1.

¹² Psalm 147:2.

¹³ Psalm 147:3.

¹⁴ Psalm 147:4.

¹⁵ Psalm 147:5.

¹⁶ Psalm 147:6.

¹⁷ Psalm 147:7.

¹⁸ Psalm 147:8.

¹⁹ Psalm 147:9.

²⁰ Psalm 147:10.

²¹ Psalm 147:11.