

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church
 "A Hymn of Praise"

Scripture: Psalm 100, John 1:14-17

Hymns: Joyful, joyful we adore you 410, This is my Father's world 328, Great is thy faithfulness 324, We bring the sacrifice of praise 1984, 10,000 reasons (Bless the Lord oh my soul) 2011, Praise the name of Jesus 1976, Lord, we praise you 1972
 June 11, 2017

Rev. Steve Filyk

[Scott] Bolzan was in the middle of his usual morning [work] routine...

On his way to get coffee,
 he stopped in the men's restroom,
 and it was there that he slipped
 on what he thinks was a puddle of cleaning oil.

"I remember my feet going above my head," said Bolzan.
 "That's the last actual memory that I can recall."

Bolzan awoke in the hospital...
 [He] said a beautiful woman was standing over him.

"I didn't know who anybody was...
 all I knew is that she was different," he said.
 Only later did he learn that she was his wife
 of more than 25 years.

"She came up to me and gave me a hug and a kiss,
 but I had no idea who this person was," said Bolzan.

Bolzan had suffered a blow to the back of his head
 and was treated for a severe concussion.
 After three days in the hospital,
 he was released and sent home.

The doctors told his family that he would be a little fuzzy
 but would recover within the week...

[Bolzan] remembered the disorientation that followed his accident.

"On the drive home, it was, again, anxiety," he said.

"I'm like, 'Where am I going,
 what is this going to bring me now?
 Where do we live, what do we do?'..."

On the outside he seemed fine.
 But what Bolzan didn't tell anyone
 was that everything seemed foreign.

He had no recollection -- of anything.
 Not his wife, not his children,
 not a single thing in their home...

But even more disturbing to Bolzan
 was that he had no clue who he was.ⁱ

Have you ever wondered what it would be like
 To forget who you are?
 To lose your identity?

Have you ever wondered whether you know who you really are?
 That is underneath all the different roles you play
 All the different hats you wear,
 Who you are at the core of your being?

Do you know who you are?
 Or are you, like Scott Bolzan,
 struck with amnesia?

PAUSE

Today we are starting a short summer series on the Psalms.

the Book of Psalms has been called the 'little Bible'.

Martin Luther said that
 "In it is comprehended most beautifully and briefly
 everything that is in the entire Bible..."

so that anyone who could not read the whole Bible
would have... almost an entire summary of it,
comprised in one little book.”ⁱⁱ

According to Luther the Book of Psalms
Is a ‘Coles Notes’ on the Bible.

And if you take your time to read through it
I think you’ll find this to be true.

As one commentator has noted:
“In the Psalms... you [will] find instruction
about what God is like
and how God deals with people and the world.

You [will] learn about the human predicament
and human possibilities...
You [will] learn about the conduct of life
and how that affects its outcome.

You will be taught trust
and the language of trust, prayer and praise.

Through this book God will give you
strength in adversity and gratitude in success,
penitence in guilt and thanksgiving in forgiveness.”ⁱⁱⁱ

The Book of Psalms...

As we begin our short summer series
We are starting with a psalm that is familiar.

“Psalm 100 is a hymn of praise;
in truth it might be called **the** hymn of praise,
because it is well known and loved
and because it follows the form... so precisely.

It is familiar in English
mostly due to the popularity
of William Kethe’s elegant metric paraphrase,
“All People That on Earth Do Dwell.”^{iv}

Please turn to #64 in your hymnal.
Let’s sing the first verse.

The hymn is four verses long and the psalm itself
is only five verses long.

But within it there are seven imperatives,
That is seven things we are asked to do.

Take a look at it.
Can we name them here? Let’s try it:
Make a joyful noise,
worship, come, know,
Enter, give thanks, bless.

For the purpose of our time today,
I’d like to focus on just two of those imperatives:
‘know’ and ‘worship’.

At the beginning of verse three the Psalmist calls us to ‘know’,
The psalm invites us to recognize and discern
To understand and to remember.

Well what is it that we are called to recognize and remember?

Two things: our relationship to God,
And the character of this God.

We are called to know that “he has made us,
And we are his;
We are his people,
And the sheep of his pasture.”

All to say that God has created us, God claims us,
 And like a good shepherd,
 God continues to care for us.

And so while your name may be Neil Johnson,
 Your deepest identity isn't your family name: son of John.

Your deepest identity isn't your vocation:
 manager of a parts warehouse.

Your deepest identity isn't your favorite pastime:
 Fly-fisherman.

Your deepest identity is that you are a child of God.
 Created by God.
 Called God's own.

This identity may feel odd, and ill-fitting,
 For someone with amnesia.

But recognizing and embracing this relationship
 Can be understood to be a very good thing.

For we are also told that:
 "the Lord is good;
 his steadfast love endures forever,
 his faithfulness to all generations."

Most of those identities we claim
 Have a limited shelf-life.
 Some day you will retire and lose that cherished job.
 Some day that favorite diversion
 will seem like too much work.

And those human relationships
 That we often regard as rock-solid?
 Loved ones will die and others
 Will leave us hanging.

But God promises to be faithful.
 Faithful through the generations.

The psalm invites us to 'know'
 to recognize and discern
 To understand and to remember
 That the Lord is good.
 And that we are God's people.

The call to 'know'
 Is more than just acknowledging
 That this may be in the realm of possibility.

"In the context of Psalm 100,
 the word ['know'] calls us to "internalize [this] fully"...
 to have it seep and soak into every cell of who we are."^v

What would it mean for our work,
 What would it mean for our relationships,
 What would it mean for our own peace of mind

What would it mean if in the marrow of our bones
 We know that we are God's people?
 The children of a good and faithful God?

I think this knowledge would transform our living.
 And that this transformation would be connected
 To that other imperative,
 That second imperative, I want to explore.

We are also called to "worship",
 To "worship the Lord with gladness".

What you may already know
 If you memorized this psalm
 In the King James Version

Is that “the verb in the first line of verse 2 is literally “serve,”
 The verb connotes both worship and obedience—
 terms that form the appropriate response to the divine king.”^{vi}

‘Worship’ or ‘serve’ the Lord with gladness.

Now it wouldn’t make much sense
 To walk the streets of downtown Kamloops
 inviting strangers to worship, to serve the Lord

when they have no idea, no comprehension
 of either the character of that God,
 or their relationship to that God.

But for those of us who know God’s character
 And grasp and understand
 That at the deepest core of our identity
 We are children of the great King,
 The call makes complete sense.
 Knowing that we are not collectively, the result of some cosmic accident
 Or individually the product of an evening with too much Merlot,
 but ultimately formed and claimed by the creator...

stirs forth gratitude in our souls.

Joy flows freely when we emerge from our amnesia
 And embrace our God-given identity.
 We want to worship, we seek to serve.

And so in the church you will find people
 Doing all sorts of things that are way beneath their pay-grade.
 All sort of activities for which they will receive few accolades.

They are doing this as a heartfelt response
 For all that they have been given,
 Not to receive any praise.

PAUSE

Methodist theologian and preacher, William Willimon, says that
 “To be a Christian means gradually, Sunday after Sunday,
 to be subsumed into another story,
 a different account of where we have come from
 and where we are going,
 a story that is called “gospel.”

You are properly called a “Christian”
 when it’s obvious that the story told in Scripture is your story,
 above all other stories that the world tries to impose on you,
 and that the God who is rendered in Scripture
 is the God who has got you.”^{vii}

In other words
 Here at church we are shaking off our amnesia
 And waking up to a deeper, truer reality.
 We are discovering our identity in the Lord.

So ‘know’ that he has made us,
 And we are his.
 Worship, serve the Lord.

Amen.

ⁱ Bob Woodruff & Melia Patria “Man With Amnesia Lost 46 Years in Workplace Slip” *ABC News* April 19, 2010 abcnews.go.com/Nightline/amnesia-man-hits-head-loses-memories/story?id=10396719

ⁱⁱ Walter Brueggemann and William H. Bellinger Jr. *Psalms* 1

ⁱⁱⁱ James L. Mays *Psalms* 15-16

^{iv} Rolf A. Jacobson “Psalm 100” *Psalms for Preaching and Worship* 265

^v Rolf A. Jacobson “Psalm 100” *Psalms for Preaching and Worship* 266

^{vi} Walter Brueggemann & William H. Bellinger, Jr. *Psalms* 428

^{vii} William Willimon *United Methodist Beliefs*, 3