

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church
 "A Call to Worship"

Scripture: Psalm 150, John 4:21-26

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty 321, Hallelujah 294, When in our music God
 is glorified 439 or Let all things now living 338, Praise: Praise the Lord with
 the sound of trumpet 466

July 23, 2017

Rev. Steve Filyk

Today's sermon is a bit different.

I will begin with a few stories

They have been designed to get you thinking.

So listen and then let your mind wander

As the Spirit leads you.

I will follow this up

With a bit of a summary.

Something a little more didactic

For those needing something more concrete.

Story #1

It had been a tough week.

They were behind on a construction project,

And he didn't like to be late.

So he asked his crew to extend their weekday hours.

And he asked them to come in on Saturday.

He was always the first and the last to leave the jobsite.

Doing the math he realized

He worked well over 80 hours the past week.

But despite all this hard work

He still woke up early on Sunday.

His aching muscles wouldn't let him sleep in.

While everyone was still sawing logs

He got up and turned on the coffee.

Flipping through a pile of papers

He caught up on the past week's news.

Half an hour later

his wife walked bleary-eyed into the kitchen.

"Honey, you're up so early.

You need more sleep" she whispered.

He nodded.

Pointed to his back.

And took another gulp of coffee.

"Well I think today should be a home day" she declared softly,

as she leaned over his chair

and wrapped her arms around him.

"The kids have had a busy week too.

I need to get some groceries.

...We can go to church next week."

He nodded.

She was right—they needed a break.

But he knew the family calendar.

They had would be out of town the next couple
 weekends.

They wouldn't be at worship for a month!

He took another gulp of coffee

And she headed back to bed.

He picked up his phone,

And started scanning

through the missed texts and emails.

"This week is Holy Communion" an email from the church read.

That notice caught him.

He imagined what the service would be like that morning...
 The elders gathering at the front
 thimbles of grape juice,
 and tiny crackers distributed down the aisles.

The congregation responding together:
 "It is right to give God thanks and praise."

"It is RIGHT to give God thanks and praise."

By now he could hear the shower running.
 He looked at his watch.
 They still had an hour to get to worship.

He headed down the hallway to wake the kids up.

STORY #2

Grandma was doing her best
 To hold things together.

In only a few days
 Their greatest hopes
 Had turned into their worst nightmare.

Her daughter's newborn.
 Her first grandchild
 Was in an isolation in the intensive care unit.

That frail little body
 Was surrounded by machines,
 and invaded by tubes,
 As the doctors struggled to keep her alive.

The baby's mother was a mess.
 Still recovering from the C-section.
 She had not slept
 And was barely eating.

But the poor baby,
 that poor baby.

The doctors had done their best.
 It was now a waiting game.

Would her little body would rally
 and kick the infection?
 The somber look on staff faces
 Told them there was little hope.

That evening as the baby's temperature soared
 And her breathing slowed,
 the hospital chaplain stopped in to see them.

After listening to their story,
 she asked:
 "Can I pray with you?"

Grandma and her daughter chimed in together:
 "Yes. Of course. Please do."

"Gracious Lord" she prayed
 "Give strength to baby Elizabeth.
 Guide her doctors and nurses.
 Be with her mom and her grandma.

Strengthen them and encourage them, we pray.
 For we ask this in Jesus' name."

With the 'amen' this pray was added
 to the endless stream of prayers
 muttered by mom and grandma.

Floating up to heaven this pray joined
 The swirling mass of prayers
 offered by family, friends, and neighbors.

After the chaplain left
 They were both exhausted.
 Grandma leaned back in her chair and fell asleep.

The next thing she knew
 Was that light was streaming through the window.
 It was suddenly morning.

Her daughter shaking her.
 And a big smile was on her face.

"The fever's broken.
 The doctors don't know what has happened...
 Elizabeth opened her eyes this morning."
 her daughter declared.

They burst into tears
 And hugged each other tightly.
 With joy in her heart grandma repeated softly:
 "Thank you, thank you, thank you".

STORY #3

They were together Sunday night for dinner.
 As per usual they gossiped about their respective churches.
 The good, the bad, and the ugly.
 As usual per they ended up talking about worship.

One couple was part of a praise band.
 He played guitar and she helped with vocals.

The other couple sang in their church's choir.
 That choir put on special music at Christmas and Easter
 The rest of the year,
 they taught the congregation NEW hymns.

While the couples had different preferences
 when it came to worship style
 They all agreed that worship was important;
 That it really was the center their faith.

Keith, the husband who played guitar in the church band,
 said "Some think it's the power of music!"

"But I've played in various bands over the years,
 and it's not just that we are making music,
 but that we're praising God."

His wife Helen agreed with him.
 "You know how many jobs I've had.
 All the different types of 'work' I've done:
 Secretary, cashier, small business owner.

I've done a lot of things over the years.
 But there is something about worshipping God,
 Whether at church or out in the garden,
 that just fills me and gives me peace,
 that just feels like home."

"And" Keith added
 "there is something about worshipping God TOGETHER.
 Young and old.
 People singing harmony
 and people singing off-key.

It just feels right."

They all nodded.
 And it was quiet for a moment.

Then Helen started humming an old Gospel tune.
 One by one the others joined with her.
 Then they all broke into singing.
 The mini-worship service around the dinner table
 went on for over half an hour.

PAUSE.

Three stories that gather around the topic of worship.
 I also have three points connected to Psalm 150.

Worship is Commanded

We sometimes think that for followers of Jesus
 Worship is well, optional.
 That it is something we do
 when we have the time or inclination,
 when everything lines up just right.

But when Jesus was asked what was the first
 And best thing we should be doing,
 His response was this:
 “Love the Lord your God with all your heart
 and with all your soul and with all your
 mind.”ⁱ

So that we couldn’t simply evade this calling,
 by putting off today what could be done next week,
 A special day was established to keep God first.

What is the fourth commandment?
 “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy”.ⁱⁱ

Our Psalmist is much more invitational than demanding,
 But we can also hear his call as a command:

“Praise the Lord.
 Praise God is his sanctuary;
 Praise him in his mighty heavens.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Worship is our Grateful Response

Most of us know what it is like
 To come face-to-face with disaster.
 And many of us know what it is like
 To be pulled back from the edge of the cliff.

In faith we ask for help.
 And when God delivers
 we want, we need to express our gratitude.

In his letter to the church at Colossae,
 Paul encourages the community:

“Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly
 as you teach and admonish one another
 with all wisdom through psalms, hymns,
 and songs from the Spirit,
 singing to God with gratitude in your
 hearts.”^{iv}

‘singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.’
 The Psalmist commends us to
 “Praise the Lord...
 Praise him for his acts of power;
 Praise him for his surpassing greatness.”^v

Worship provides the opportunity to show gratitude
 For all that God has done for us.

Worship is our Best End

Does joining into worship ever ‘just feel right’?
 Does praising God with hymns or choruses
 Ever feel for you ‘like home’?

The ‘Shorter Catechism’
 Of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*
 Invites us to consider our final end and greatest purpose:

What is the chief and highest end of humanity?

Is it to graduate magna cum laude?
 To marry well and raise a family?
 To land a good job and buy a big house on the hill?

No, it according to the *Westminster Confession of Faith*
 it is to glorify God, and fully enjoy God forever.^{vi}

Our more recent confession of faith, *Living Faith*,
 Teaches us that “We have no higher calling
 Than to offer the worship that belongs to God
 Day by day, Sunday by Sunday.”^{vii}

All to say that what we are doing right now,
 Is the most important thing
 We will be doing this week!

ⁱ Matthew 5:37 NIV

ⁱⁱ Exodus 20:8 NIV

ⁱⁱⁱ Psalm 150:1 NIV

^{iv} Colossians 3:16 NIV

^v Psalm 150:1-2 NIV

The Psalmist doesn’t try to teach us or persuade us
 But simply calls us all together
 “earth and heaven, musician and dancer,
 human and non-human—
 to praise [our] Creator.”^{viii}

So whatever the reason for your presence here this morning.
 Whether it is out of obedience,
 Or out of gratitude,
 Or a realisation that this,
 this is the best thing you can be doing...

“Praise the Lord...
 Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet,
 praise him with the harp and lyre,

praise him with timbrel and dancing,
 praise him with the strings and pipe,
 praise him with the clash of cymbals,
 praise him with resounding cymbals.

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.
 Praise the Lord.”^{ix}

^{vi} Question 1 in my paraphrase.

^{vii} *Living Faith* 7.3.1

^{viii} Brent A. Strawn “Psalm 150” *Psalms for Preaching and Worship* 379

^{ix} Psalm 150:1, 3-6