

Kirkwall Presbyterian Church September 12, 2021 –Monika Berezcki-Farkas

Reading: Psalm 150

Praise the Lord! Hallelujah!

Many years ago, when I served in Windsor, a lady in the congregation whose background was Baptist, said to me: I come to this church and love it. But I miss something. When we hear something good, when we are moved by the word, we cannot shout HALLELUJAH! Maybe it's true that Presbyterians are the frozen chosen.

I knew what she meant. We don't say Hallelujah or lift our hands to the sky while we pray or sing. But is there a handbook for how we should worship God? Is there any reason why we do or don't do things? Maybe it is a cultural thing. We know about those African churches where people dance during worship. I can recall when Sunday school children danced during the children's hymns and people didn't know how to react.

Today we have a special Sunday. We finish our series about the Psalms with Psalm 150 and also this is the Sunday when we have our first Sunday school. We haven't had Sunday school since March 2020. This is a special Sunday. We praise God for the children and teachers. Praise Him and wait for Him to reveal himself to us. And from Psalm 150, we learn how to worship God.

Psalm 150 is the last one in the book of Psalms. If you remember, the first one was about how to walk with God, even if the path is narrow. Psalm 150 like many other psalms is about praising God. In 6 verses the word 'praise' is repeated 13 times. So yes, it's easy to realize that the message today is about praising God: where, why, how and who. Where should we praise God? Why should we praise Him? How should we praise Him and who should praise Him?

The best way to understand this Psalm is if we go verse by verse.

Let's see the first one: praise the Lord. Praise the Lord ...

First, we have to praise God. Our worship has to be centred around God and not around us. We are here to praise God. He is worthy of our praise. And this common exhortation is for all of us, not only me, the pastor should praise God, but all of us who gathered here. This is our worship of God.

Where should we praise Him? The first verse also talks about the sanctuary and the heavens. We are here in the sanctuary. We have to praise God here. But back when the Psalm was written, the sanctuary meant the temple in Jerusalem. Then we learnt recently when we dealt with Psalm 22 that when Jesus died on the cross, the curtain of the temple was torn. Behind the curtain was the inner sanctuary where only the high priest could go, but with Jesus' death, we don't need priests to go to God. We can talk to Him.

But where else in the Bible can we learn about the temple? Do you remember the story when Jesus cleared the temple? He said to the Jews: Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days. John 2:19.

Friends, Jesus was talking about His body. We have to praise Him in his risen body. And the good news is that the believers are part of His body. Paul specifically talks about the church as the body of Christ.

We also have to remember I Corinthians 6:19 that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Now, if we look at verse 1 one more time. It says praise him in his sanctuary and heavens. We could go back to the creation story: In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Those words mean God created everything. So where should we worship God? The answer is everywhere.

Is it that easy to worship God everywhere? Are there challenging places where we don't know how to praise God? Of course, just recall hospital waiting rooms, funeral homes, etc.

Praising God everywhere is only possible when you know who your God is. If you have ever experienced how great our God is, you will know that even in a challenging situation, it is possible to praise the Lord.

Why? That is actually our next question. Why should we praise Him after all? Verse 2 says: because of his acts of power and for his surpassing greatness.

Remember the great things he has done! Remember the Bible stories about how he called his people, how the Israelites became his children. How he saved them from Egypt. Remember the creation story. Remember the miracles of Jesus. Then look back at your life and see His mighty power in your life, how he called and protected you. How he has shown love and mercy to you. This is what he has done.

Then look at his surpassing greatness, look at who God is. Because we praise Him for all the things he has done but also for who He is: Almighty King, Eternal loving Father, the Great I am, the beginning and the end. Read your Bible and try to collect the names of God.

Then let's look at our next question, how can we praise God? And we can read about many instruments in Psalm 150. Some say that these instruments were used in the temple by different groups. But the question is not really what kind of instruments we can use during our worship, since the organ is not mentioned, but why and how we use what we use. I remember that in the 18th century, many churches got rid of their organs and didn't use any instruments at all. They wanted to protect their faith, even from music. Then the organ came back and now we know about worship bands that play guitar and drums, etc. When we praise God from our hearts, we can use all kinds of instruments. We can even dance to God if we are moved. But remember, when we sing or play instruments or dance, we do all that for Him not to show others how great we are.

Our last question is, who praises God? Vs6: Let every ...

Every creature that has breath should praise God. Why? Because those living creatures got their breath from God. When they open their mouths, they should sing their praises to God. I know we could go into details about the animals, birds, etc. how they can praise God. But this question is for me and you. Can you praise Him everywhere because of the great things He has done for you? Because of His great love in Jesus Christ toward us? Can you praise Him with all that you are?

When we praise God, we get peace. Do you know why? Because we were created to praise Him, we got that breath to open our mouths and be able to sing to Him.

I have to tell you it bothers me when I hear people saying Oh my God, or Oh my gosh. And I wonder whether they really know their God. If we are called to praise Him, why do we want to say these expressions with the same breath?

Or the other question I often hear: can a Christian cuss\curse? And oh how many times we say, oh that's not a sin, that's like nothing. It's not against God.

But let's look at this question again in this way: Can a believer, a follower of Jesus Christ say Oh my God?

I know the answer for myself, that I don't want to use His name in vain. I know the great things my God has done for me in Jesus Christ. With my mouth, I want to praise Him and want to do my best not to use his name in vain.

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord friends! Praise the Lord everywhere because He is good to us. Amen.