

Sermon

Faithful Stamina

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Bacon Memorial Presbyterian Church

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Our two scriptures today are difficult to preach together. Our Psalm, Psalm 145, is a song of praise. It speaks directly to God in words of adoration and amazement.

“ I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; his greatness is unsearchable”.

This is an acrostic psalm meaning that the lines begin with successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Acrostic psalms aim for comprehensiveness, and this psalm thoroughly canvases all the reasons for giving praise to God. God is described as the king whose reign is universal in both space and time. God’s kingship is defined by both power and goodness; God does mighty acts, both in creating the world and then delivering gods people from harm and God also provides food and protection to those in need.

The Psalmist is filled with this joy to praise God. When is the last time you felt that much joy that you *wanted* to praise God? Now I’ve heard us praise God in this room, in this sanctuary and I’ve heard you praise God in our conversations so I know that you do it But it often is something I hear because something has happened good in our lives. I am no exception.

How does this sound.. Question: how was the surgery? Answer: It went very well all is well no cancer. Oh praise the Lord thank goodness. God is so great to have delivered a good outcome.

Our psalm says God's greatness is unsearchable suggesting that there is a praise worthiness in God that cannot be reduced to God' acts on our behalf but resides simply in God's being God.

God's greatness is because God created this beautiful planet we live in, God is great because God is at the center of everything --center of all creation and he gave us each other, he gave us love, so many gifts-- fresh food to eat, water to drink and so much of it that there's plenty to go around. But we reserve our praise only when something exceptional is given to us-- at least sometimes we do.

In 2 Thessalonians Paul talks a little bit about the end of this world. "As to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we beg you brothers and sisters not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by spirit or by word or by letter as though from us to the effect that the day of the Lord is already here. Let no one deceive you in any way For that day will come unless the rebellion comes first in the lawless one is revealed the one destined for destruction." And Paul goes on to say but we must always give thanks to God for you brothers and sisters beloved by the Lord because God shows you as the first fruits for salvation through sanctification by the spirit and through belief in the truth."

Apocalyptic scripture is difficult to wrap our heads around. Especially for those of us who feel that we have a pretty good or pretty OK life here on earth. Everybody feels that way, right?. Do I think if I went up to a homeless man or woman who had been living homeless for say 10 years on and off if I warned them that the end of the world is coming unless you change your ways and that Jesus is going to come and end the world as we know it I suspect they might say good -- it's about time.

Cults and other clergy over the years have said it's time – the world will end on such and such a date...They might convince their following for example that the world will end on December 15, 2030I figured it out through clues in the Bible. And the people who believe in this clergy follow that teaching and they prepare their lives for the end of the world, Some of them ramp up credit card debt, some of them sell all their belongings, break ties with family, some have even committed suicide sadly....and as we know they or their families have been disappointed on December **16**, 2030 when that does not happen. We may laugh at their naivety but there's something about the idea that God will step in to end the world that continues to draw us in. . Today some see signs of the end in global warming or potential nuclear war. If you're determined signs are not hard to find. So what is the appeal of wanting to know when the end is coming? Some just want to seem smarter than everyone else, some want to believe they're part of the elite that will then be in the front line with God but whatever draws us to contemplate the end of the world, the day of the Lord, the second coming of Christ, we have to think about the logic of it. God is in charge of the world, yet Gods people are so often the target of injustice,

derision, and persecution – which does not speak well for God. How can this happen? Should there not be a time for payback? Is there not a time when God will rise up and say **enough!** Yes. Someday it will happen. Evil will lose its power in the world. Sin and injustice, sickness and despair, even death itself will come to an end. That is a promise.

So how do we live for that tomorrow? Do we put on your long white robe and sit on a hill and wait? In the early church that was the case. They quit working and moved to full-time waiting. But Paul tries to tell them it might be a long wait. And we're also told there's another way to look at it. What if the Day of the Lord has already come. We ask ourselves if heaven is like and heaven is perfect why are we in such a big mess?. We need a roll up our sleeves and we need to get to work not sit around and wait?

Way back when there was a full eclipse before people really understood the science of it and leaders were heard running around saying this is it is the end of the world because they didn't understand what was happening... I can imagine it must've been quite scary for them. The world's going to end ...what shall we do? One insightful man replied, "let us be found doing our duty". God wants to find us doing our work on the day of the Lord. When that day does come and God no longer limits Gods power in the world when evil is finally banished God wants to find us at work for those things that are dear to the heart of God.

The trick of it is to develop a faithful stamina. To be able to keep going even when things seem bleak, even when things seem overwhelming, even when we try and evil still seems to persistently get our goat.

Faithful stamina...let's go back to our Psalm. When we enter into praise of God, we enter into a movement that is more powerful than us. But it requires also a commitment. That no matter what is happening I will praise God because God is not responsible for the evil or the oppression. God has given us all we need--- to survive on a beautiful planet that changes into glorious colors that refreshes itself every year that has bright sunshine that keeps us warm trees to give us shade I mean everything we need and beyond...yet we blame God for the evil we blame God for the darkness. So this psalm is a reminder, a reset, that when we enter into that praise we enter into a movement and we say that God is the first and last word of our own lives. There are certainly times in our lives when praising God is far from what we feel inclined to do. There may be times of hardship when the words of lament seem closer to the truth of our experience. However the words of Psalm 145 are given to us to praise so as to reshape us toward a different orientation, one in which praise is fundamental no matter what may be going on in our lives.

The words change our awareness so that we begin to notice the power and the goodness of God in our lives. The ways in which God has provided for us has been close to us, and has fulfilled our desires and our needs. In this way we begin to discover the truth that in our own lives too, praise necessarily has the first and last word. Not only because of all that God has

done for us, but also simply because God is God ...there are no truer words we can speak than words of praise.

Amen