

## Session Two: Tuesday, September 26: 10:30 until 11:45

25<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time

1. <sup>TNK</sup> **Psalm 145:1** A song of praise. Of David.

I will extol You, my God and king, and bless Your name forever and ever.

<sup>2</sup> Every day will I bless You and praise Your name forever and ever.

<sup>3</sup> Great is the LORD and much acclaimed; His greatness cannot be fathomed.

<sup>4</sup> One generation shall laud Your works to another and declare Your mighty acts.

<sup>5</sup> The glorious majesty of Your splendor and Your wondrous acts will I recite.

<sup>6</sup> Men shall talk of the might of Your awesome deeds, and I will recount Your greatness.

<sup>7</sup> They shall celebrate Your abundant goodness, and sing joyously of Your beneficence.

<sup>8</sup> The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in kindness.

<sup>9</sup> The LORD is good to all, and His mercy is upon all His works.

<sup>10</sup> All Your works shall praise You, O LORD, and Your faithful ones shall bless You.

<sup>11</sup> They shall talk of the majesty of Your kingship, and speak of Your might,

<sup>12</sup> to make His mighty acts known among men and the majestic glory of His kingship.

<sup>13</sup> Your kingship is an eternal kingship; Your dominion is for all generations.

<sup>14</sup> The LORD supports all who stumble, and makes all who are bent stand straight.

<sup>15</sup> The eyes of all look to You expectantly, and You give them their food when it is due.

<sup>16</sup> You give it openhandedly, feeding every creature to its heart's content.

<sup>17</sup> The LORD is beneficent in all His ways and faithful in all His works.

<sup>18</sup> The LORD is near to all who call Him, to all who call Him with sincerity.

<sup>19</sup> He fulfills the wishes of those who fear Him; He hears their cry and delivers them.

<sup>20</sup> The LORD watches over all who love Him, but all the wicked He will destroy.

<sup>21</sup> My mouth shall utter the praise of the LORD, and all creatures shall bless His holy name forever and ever.



**Plan:** In order to save time, please use for **tools** the attached comments, and bring to bear also your own **questions** and insights about the **Sunday lectionary arrangement**.

We have here an acrostic poem, the choice of the speaker or singer to allocate the opening word of each line to successive letters of the *aleph-bet*. That **floorplan** choice means that other ways of structuring the verses will be subordinated to the need for the first word of each unit to move through the order. But a **help from Hebrew** as we start: Part of the capacity of Hebrew words to begin (so their first letter) is related to person acting in the particular verb in question (so the subject of the verb). Hebrew builds into one word the subject, the action verb itself, and often its object, compounding into one what English (and some other languages) separate into distinct units; it also sometimes includes as the one-word the conjunction and/but (same word in Hebrew, so the interpreter has to decide: and? but?). These inbuilt pronouns (he, she, I, we, you) all start predictably with their reliable letters of the *aleph-bet*, and so the acrostic challenge is not quite the same as it is in English. Hebrew is somewhat more flexible about word order than is English, which allows the poet to place at the front of a sentence the word whose initial letter s/he needs. I will print each line separately, so that the pattern can be seen (and leave the Hebrew, which otherwise prints from Microsoft Word as gobbledegook!). After a brief Davidic superscription:

The poem starts (v. 1: *aleph*): I will extol, with the aleph being the equivalent of “I.” God is called king as well as deity, and the speaker vows to praise God’s name (meaning God’s self) without limit of time (which for moderns sounds like “forever,” which is not quite the same as saying without limit.

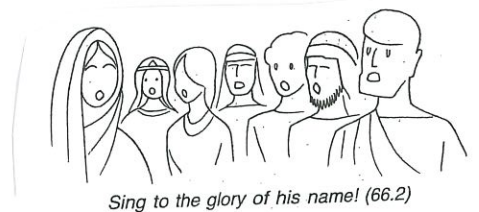
On every day (v.2) , with the preposition (*bet*) hooked right on to the noun, reinforcing the idea that the singer says I won’t quit on this project of praising God.

Great (*ghimel*) is YHWH includes a reason for the lavish promise of continuous praise, as well as starting with the third letter of the aleph bet (v. 3).

Generation (*daleth*) to generation will take up the praise, the singer continues, building this first central idea well into the start of the chain of letters needed.

A *hendiadys* (the **literary device** where two words combine to suggest slightly more than the sum of their parts): The glorious majesty of your splendor (v. 5) will be extolled (starting with the letter *he*) intensifies the initial idea here, joining up with God’s mighty deeds which the poet also promises to recite.

Here the speaker uses the single letter *wav* (v. 6) which is a conjunction, meaning and or but, to say that others will recite some things and the speaker will manage others.





And remembrance (*zayin*) of your goodness will be the subject of testimony (v. 7). Recall, once the initial letter is in place, the singer can offer a *parallel* line with any letters to make the same point.

Gracious and compassionate (יְרַחֵם יְיָ) is God, the word grace beginning with a *heth*, the formula of slow to anger—literally long of nose, with the nose envisioned as a sort of stove heating up, or in this case *not* a slow heat) but/and abounding in kindness filling out the line (8).

The adjective *tob*, starting with a *tet*, professes God as good (v. 9) and merciful.

And praised is God by all his works (starting with a *yodh*, as suits a third person masculine plural subject, the works that do the praising), joined as they are by humans who also add their adulation (v. 10).

God's glory (*kabod*, starting with a *kaph*) will be praised (v. 11). . .

So that can be made known/to make known, with the single-letter preposition *lamed* attached right to its verb does the next job needed (v. 12).

The word kingship, starting with a *mem*, features in both the previous and the next verse (v. 13), again adumbrating the features of God that are deserving of praise. This may be a moment to note that there is really only one content point being made: God is being praised for all the things God is and does. If the acrostic challenge is not appreciated, this psalm would risk not being much respected in terms of its poetic skill!

On to v. 14: A supporter (starting with a *nun*) is YHWH of all in need of such.

And the eyes (starting with Hebrew *ayin*) of all who want such support are fixed on the provider of it (v. 15), on the hand of the one distributing food, which specifies one type of support and sustenance.

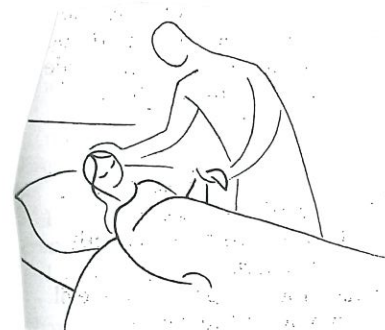
Opening of hand (initial *pe*) adds to the description of the giver of food in the previous line, here (v. 16) sketching more fully the deity who cares for hungry creatures.

Just (צַדִּיק) with its initial *tsade* is God (v. 17), and faithful.

Near (starting with the letter *qof*, v. 18) is YHWH, available to all who call.

The desire (רָצוֹן), starting with the letter *resh* (v. 19) of those who fear him he fills—this verse showing more clearly than some the contortion needed to get the first word to be the one needed.

Guardian of those who love him is YHWH, the letter *sin* (actually in standard Hebrew this letter having two forms, sounded as s and sh) moves us into v. 20.



And finally, the praise of YHWH (Hebrew feminine nouns liking for their initial letter the last letter of the aleph-bet, *tav*), completes the poem as the speaker repeats the promise made early and sustained throughout the poem: to bless and praise God.

If we were to sum this up in a classic way: Who? Humans praise God, for what God is and has done. When? Continuously. How? With every instrument and motivation possible. Why? Because of deep relationality. Where? Throughout the universe. Impact? A deepening of the bond.

Questions you have for the psalm?

How it is refracted in the lectionary and how it refracts the other readings; how our experience refracts it and it refracts our experience;



## 2. Twenty-sixth Sunday of ordinary time

- <sup>TNK</sup> **Psalm 25:1** Of David. O LORD, I set my hope on You;
- <sup>2</sup> my God, in You I trust; may I not be disappointed, may my enemies not exult over me.
- <sup>3</sup> O let none who look to You be disappointed; let the faithless be disappointed, empty-handed.
- <sup>4</sup> Let me know Your paths, O LORD; teach me Your ways; <sup>5</sup> guide me in Your true way and teach me, for You are God, my deliverer; it is You I look to at all times.
- <sup>6</sup> O LORD, be mindful of Your compassion and Your faithfulness; they are old as time.
- <sup>7</sup> Be not mindful of my youthful sins and transgressions; in keeping with Your faithfulness consider what is in my favor, as befits Your goodness, O LORD.
- <sup>8</sup> Good and upright is the LORD; therefore He shows sinners the way.
- <sup>9</sup> He guides the lowly in the right path, and teaches the lowly His way.
- <sup>10</sup> All the LORD's paths are steadfast love for those who keep the decrees of His covenant.
- <sup>11</sup> As befits Your name, O LORD, pardon my iniquity though it be great.
- <sup>12</sup> Whoever fears the LORD, he shall be shown what path to choose.
- <sup>13</sup> He shall live a happy life, and his children shall inherit the land.
- <sup>14</sup> The counsel of the LORD is for those who fear Him; to them He makes known His covenant.
- <sup>15</sup> My eyes are ever toward the LORD, for He will loose my feet from the net.
- <sup>16</sup> Turn to me, have mercy on me, for I am alone and afflicted.
- <sup>17</sup> My deep distress increases; deliver me from my straits.
- <sup>18</sup> Look at my affliction and suffering, and forgive all my sins.
- <sup>19</sup> See how numerous my enemies are, and how unjustly they hate me!
- <sup>20</sup> Protect me and save me; let me not be disappointed, for I have sought refuge in You.
- <sup>21</sup> May integrity and uprightness watch over me, for I look to You.
- <sup>22</sup> O God, redeem Israel from all its distress.



**Plan:** Our **tools** for this one: In terms of **floorplan and strategy**, we have another acrostic and so understand that the speaker's challenge is to make the aleph-bet work. Having just seen that close up in our previous Psalm, let's move on to other things. In terms of **imagery**, one the basic ones here is God's guidance of us along a reliable path; how does that work for you? Another image is the sense of eyes/seeing as knowing; we and God (we say) see with eyes, but how else do our bodies know? In terms of **theology/spirituality**, we hear of God's compassion; how does that work? Does it help us/Christians to fill out God's compassion with that of Jesus? The word integrity comes up near the end of the poem, meaning what? A new tools (for us) is



to *re recalculate the punitive* and rethink what we *classify as disaster*, that is, to recognize that what seemed negative might later seem a gift; anything there? And our other two: bring to bear also your own **questions**

and insights about the **Sunday lectionary arrangement.**



"Praise the Lord!" (149)