

## PSALM 146

<sup>1</sup> Praise the LORD!

Praise the LORD, O my soul!

<sup>2</sup> I will praise the LORD as long as I live;  
I will sing praises to my God all my life long.

<sup>3</sup> Do not put your trust in princes,  
in mortals, in whom there is no help.

<sup>4</sup> When their breath departs, they return to the earth;  
on that very day their plans perish.

<sup>5</sup> Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob,  
whose hope is in the LORD their God,

<sup>6</sup> who made heaven and earth,  
the sea, and all that is in them;  
who keeps faith for ever;

<sup>7</sup> who executes justice for the oppressed;  
who gives food to the hungry.

The LORD sets the prisoners free;

<sup>8</sup> the LORD opens the eyes of the blind.

The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down;  
the LORD loves the righteous.

<sup>9</sup> The LORD watches over refugees;

God upholds the orphan and the widow,  
but the way of the wicked God brings to ruin.

<sup>10</sup> The LORD will reign for ever,  
your God, O Zion, for all generations.

Praise the LORD!

Like Psalm 145, this psalm and the remaining psalms in the psalter are all psalms of praise. We praise God with our words and songs of worship, our prayers, our scripture readings and meditations. We also praise God with the joy we receive when we take in the wonders of creation, and the refreshment we receive when we are cared for by family & friends.

But this psalm also suggests another way to praise God: our actions, our way of life, the commitments we make, the justice we pursue and the relationships we form. How so, you may ask?

Well, v.3 and following tells us not to put our trust in princes (those with power) rather than in God. Trusting God is the way to a truly “Happy” life (and by happy the psalmist does not mean a life without trouble or hardship, but rather a life fulfilled with true meaning and purpose where it matters).

OK, but here’s the thing. Princes have hands and legs and concrete power in the world to make things happen. But God? This psalm makes all kinds of concrete claims as to why God is to be trusted above those in power. God is one “who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets prisoners free (those imprisoned for political reasons by a colonial regime of which Hebrews were subject); the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed (and ground) down... The Lord watches over refugees; God upholds the orphan and the widow...” But how does God do this? Where is the evidence? Do we wait for something to happen to those in power and then say “aha! See, God brought them down because of their wickedness!”? Do we wait for those good things to happen to people in need and those who fall into desperate situations and then say: “see, God answers prayer”?

Or, is another way to read this psalm as an invitation to “image God” (Genesis 1:27) in how we live with our hands, feet, voice and heart? Is our heart on the side of those with power because they can provide us with privilege, security and safety? Or do we image God by risking and extending ourselves to feed the hungry, stand up and protest for justice, pray for those unjustly imprisoned in places we cannot have any reach, lift up those brought down by discouragement, depression or illness, and support the vulnerable refugees, widows and orphans (refugees, widows and orphans represent the most needy and vulnerable in our world)?

We can’t be there for everyone. In fact, we can’t be there for the vast majority of people. But we can be there for someone. The biblical term for “neighbour” (the one we are called to love as ourselves) is literally: “the person next to you.” It’s

the person who comes knocking on your door, the person you bump into, the person whose situation represents something of what is not right or fair in our world. How can my being there for one other person, one other family, one other situation, also reflect my praise of God and my trust in God and God's call on my life?

This psalm may use language that suggests the psalmist is a passive spectator of life hoping God will magically wave a wand and make the world a better place against those who hold power and use and abuse the world as their playground. But, what if the psalmist is using the kind of language of praise to empower us to rise up and image the God whose light we were created to shine ourselves?

PRAYER: We pray to you in our trouble, O God, and we pray to you about the troubles in our world. We hope in our prayer that something will happen and that you may act to change things, heal things, renew things and uphold things. And yet, you reply back to us by calling us to become your voice, your hands, your feet, and your heart turned through prayer into some engagement, commitment and action. If we are overwhelmed by the enormity of the world's grief, O God, remind us that we are yours today and tomorrow no matter what. Open up ways for us, even small ways, we can become your light, even as we already reflect your light in ways we often don't recognize. Thank you for committing yourself to us and for believing in us, O God. We are yours now and forever. Amen.