

Psalm 145:10-18
All creation praises God

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Once again, we find ourselves unable to gather in our church buildings for worship. Even though we're not in church today singing praise to God, God is still praised. And even if we were in church, we probably wouldn't be singing, but God would still be praised. When Jesus entered Jerusalem on what we now call Palm Sunday, the crowds greeted him with great joy, praising God for all the deeds of power that they had seen. And so the Pharisees said to him, "Teacher, order your disciples to stop". Jesus answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out."

(Luke 19:39-40, NRSV)

Even if all the disciples were silenced and no longer praising God, the stones would shout out.

We see something similar in the prophet Isaiah, where he speaks of the mountains and hills and trees of the field also praising God. Isaiah 55:12 says, "You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands." We get even more in Psalm 148. A long list of created things praising their Creator—the sun, moon, stars, heavens, water, sky, fire, hail, snow, clouds, mountains, hills, fruit trees, animals, and people. And in our text today, the Psalmist declares, "All of your works will thank you, Lord."

(Psalm 145:10a, NLT)

This Psalm had started out as just a personal song of praise to God.

If you go back and read from verse one, it says things like, "I will bless you", "I will praise you", "I will declare your greatness". But in verse ten, where we read from today, it goes big. "All of your works will thank you, Lord, and your faithful followers will praise you." A song of praise from just one individual doesn't do justice to the width and breadth and depth of the Father's love for his creation. The whole creation should rightly praise God for who he is and what he has done. The physical world made by God declares his glory by being what he designed it to be. Here, Psalm 145 invites the believer to praise God in ways that acknowledge God's rule and reign over the entire universe, and God's unique care for those who seek him.

This is the last psalm ascribed to King David, and it uses lots of kingly language. "They will speak of the glory of your kingdom." "They will tell about your mighty deeds and about the majesty and glory of your reign." Now lots of kings and other rulers get praised by their subjects. But unlike every earthly kingdom, God's kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. This immediately puts it into a completely different category.

Many earthly kingdoms have fallen, their rulers long gone and no longer praised. But God is eternal and so should be our praises. Even David himself, as the most revered king of Israel, does not compare to our heavenly Father. God as our heavenly king is faithful in a way that no king of Israel ever was. God's kingdom of righteousness endures forever.

For the people of Israel, who used this psalm in worship, this was a crucial message. When they were humiliated and defeated by the Babylonians, it points them to find a hope and a future in the heavenly King rather than in a mortal in whom there is no help. For people of every age, it proclaims that the Lord God helps the fallen and lifts those bent beneath their loads. This was the duty of every king, but so often they were the ones placing heavy loads upon their subjects. But the Lord is righteous in everything he does. He is close to all who call on him. God is concerned for the lowly and downcast. God always keeps his promises. He is always gracious and filled with kindness.

We cannot find such righteousness anywhere else. Although quite often we do go looking. We seek help from everywhere else but God. We don't call on him in truth. We don't speak of the glory of his kingdom. We don't tell about his mighty deeds. At least not anywhere near as much as God deserves. Thankfully the creation continues to praise the creator even when we drop the ball.

But the scriptures are quite clear. Those who have come to know the Lord God as their king are to make him known to the world. And the world needs this. The rocks cry out in praise to God and still people ignore him. St Paul says in Romans chapter one that humans have chosen to worship imposter gods of their own making rather than give thanks to their Creator. They have seen the creation, seen everything God has made, seen how it all testifies to the creator, and in their wickedness have suppressed the truth. Instead of worshipping the Lord God who reigns as king forever over all things, they worshipped idols that apparently only cared about their local area.

But the psalm for today calls us back to the truth. There is only one true God. He is righteous in everything he does. He supplies the needs of his creation. He helps those weighed down with heavy burdens. And he wants us to call on him. No other god can do that. People turn to so many other things as if they were gods, but it does them no good. They might not call them gods or recognise that that's what they're doing.

Luther in his large catechism had this to say:

A god means that from which we are to expect all good and in which we are to take refuge in all distress. So, to have a God is nothing other than trusting and believing him with the heart. I have often said that the confidence and faith of the heart alone make both God and an idol. If your faith and trust is right, then your god is also true. On the other hand, if your trust is false and wrong, then you do not have the true God. For these two belong together, faith and God. Now, I say that whatever you set your heart on and put your trust in is truly your god.

Now, this doesn't discount earthly seeking earthly help, but recognises that God is the only true source of life and faith. And God provides for us through means. Through parents who raise us, through a church community that passes on the faith, through society that produces all the goods needed for daily living. And God uses us as the means to provide for others.

So, if someone isn't properly provided for, we can certainly pray that God would help them. But we should also be looking at ourselves, at our role, our vocation. Are we the ones in this particular situation that God is using to provide for those in need? Sometimes this is really easy. If you're a parent, and your child is hungry, it's probably your job to see to that. But you can't feed every hungry child in the world. You can support the work of relief agencies, and in that way play your little part. But you can't go to such extremes trying to help everyone out there, that it means ignoring the neighbour in need right there in front of you.

And as you do help, God's mighty acts unfold right there and then through you. Just like the physical world made by God declares his glory by being what he designed it to be, you declare God's glory by being who God made you to be. There is no greater witness to the love and mercy of God our Father. We might be a bit restricted from this in our lockdown but there are still plenty of ways we can join all creation in praising God.

So I pray that you do find ways to praise God, and that the Holy Spirit would open your eyes to see how you can serve a neighbour in need. And may you join in the witness of all creation, praising God for all his works and testifying to the glory of his everlasting kingdom. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all human understanding, keep your hearts and minds safe in Christ Jesus. Amen.