

First Sunday After Pentecost - Holy Trinity Sunday

May 30, 2010

Amazing Grace Lutheran Church - Pastor Chip Wilke

Psalm 150

Praise the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens. Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness. Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, praise him with tambourine and dancing, praise him with the strings and flute, praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD. (NIV)

Hallelujah! Hallelujah! This is a word we use, or use a variation of, many, many times in church because it is scattered throughout our liturgies and hymns. Do you children know what this word means? Do we know why we sing or say the word *hallelujah*? Hallelujah is a Hebrew expression that the NIV simply translates: “*Praise the Lord.*” Today, in our psalm, we are told where the Lord should be praised, why He should be praised, how He should be praised, and who should praise Him. This morning, on this Holy Trinity Sunday, I want us to consider this truth: **All that our Triune God left for us is the Hallelujah!**

What do I mean that all that our Lord left for you and me is to praise Him? First, we might recall what is in this great book of the Bible called Psalms. Psalms is sometimes referred to as a miniature Bible. The Psalms summarize the great works of the Lord from creation to redemption. They give us a review of some of the history of how God cares for and protects His people and the psalms express all the feelings and experiences God’s people will ever have. How would you close such a book? What would be a proper ending to the Psalms that describe in many details the Lord, His great deeds, and His goodness to us? How about Psalm 150? ***Praise the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens. Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness. Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, praise him with tambourine and dancing, praise him with the strings and flute, praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD.***

How fitting these words also are for us this Sunday as we enter what we call the non-festival half of the church year! What did we just witness and hear once again over the last six months about what our Triune God has done for us? We celebrated how God promised and then delivered a Savior born for us in Bethlehem. Yes, God became flesh and made His dwelling among us. Our eyes were pointed to Christ, our perfect substitute, come to take our place under the law. In Him, God provided you and I the holiness we need to be in a relationship with Him. We focused on how our Triune God made the ultimate sacrifice to take away the sin that stood between the Creator and all people. He sent Jesus to the cross. A Savior was given, His blood was shed, God’s Son was forsaken, Jesus’ life was taken - to pay for our sin. We watched as Jesus suffered & died the death penalty we deserved.

But then we celebrated when our Savior rose as promised and assured us our sins are forgiven and that our graves will one day be as empty as His. With salvation secured we stood, with eyes of faith, by those disciples as our Lord ascended back to His heavenly throne where He still rules and reigns on our behalf. Last week, the last Sunday of the festival part of the church year, we witnessed how the Lord made good on His promise to send the Holy Spirit in power on Pentecost. We marvel at how He still sends His Holy Spirit to us through His Word and Sacraments.

So what has our Triune God done for us? He has done it all. God has created us and given us all that we are and all that we have. But He did not stop there! God has redeemed us. He bought us back from sin, death, and devil, and He paid the price with His own blood so that we could be His own. But God did not stop there! God has come to us through water and the Word and through the good news of salvation and has opened our hearts to believe. He has filled us with joy and peace. He has open our minds so that we understand the Scriptures. He has sanctified us. And God will not stop here! He keeps working on us and protects us and cares for us through His Word of truth until we will be with Him in heaven.

Now do you see what I mean when I ask what is left for us? Do you see what I am saying when I proclaim that all our Triune God has left for us is the hallelujah? Do you see why the psalmist writes? ***“Praise the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens. Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness. Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, praise him with tambourine and dancing, praise him with the strings and flute, praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD.*”**

We are simply told to say hallelujah. This word comes from a Hebrew root *halal* and means to be sincerely and deeply thankful for the superior quality and great acts of the one who is the object of praise. That’s all our great God left for us - to respond with praise. We are to praise God in His sanctuary. We are to praise God for everything He is and does. We are to praise Him with our very best - with our hearts and voices - with music and celebration. Israel’s worship included a full range of musical instruments and on festive occasions dance was a part of the religious celebration. The trumpet or literally horns were used by the priests, the harp, lutes, and cymbals were used by the Levites in charge of the temple and worship, and other instruments were used more by the laity. In other words, God wants all to praise Him. ***Let everything that has breath praise the LORD.***

That’s all our Triune God has left for us. This is what God has made possible for all people to do through Christ. We don’t have to atone for sin nor could we have paid for a single one. We don’t have to achieve heaven nor was it possible for us. But God loved us even when we were unlovable. God saved us even though we did not deserve it. All that is left is for us is to say hallelujah. All that is left for us is to praise the LORD - the God of free and faithful love.

How hard is this? The way we act and live sometimes it would appear that God is asking for too much from us, wouldn’t it? We struggle to set aside just one hour every week to praise Him or any time at all for regular Bible study. When we come to this sanctuary with our praise, we are not always here giving God our best. The way we talk doesn’t always reflect the powerful acts God has done on our behalf. The way we live

doesn't always represent what we know about the Lord's surpassing greatness. We don't always declare the praises of Him, who called us out of darkness into His wonderful light, by doing all we can to tell others about Jesus as Savior. How we use our time, talents, and treasures too often reveals that our praise is directed elsewhere and not to our Triune God who is most worthy of praise.

So what do we do when we recognize how woefully short our praise has fallen? I pray we confess those sins and turn again to the Savior who washes all our sins away. Then get back into His Word where we see who God is and why He is worthy of our praise. Read psalms 1-149, and then Psalm 150 will start to make sense. In fact, don't just read the miniature Bible but read all of God's Word and study it faithfully. There you will see the LORD, the Triune God, the great three-in-one, reveal Himself to you. See once again how the Lord is your Creator - the God who made you and gives you all things; how He is your Redeemer - the God who purchased and won you by giving up His own life; and how He is your Sanctifier - the God who has set you apart and makes you holy.

Next week we return to the summer schedule and away from our normal Bible study and Sunday School routines. The tendency is for our worship numbers to decline, and there are many temptations to take a break from God's Word. Yet, I will guarantee you that sin, the devil and this world will not be taking the summer off. So my prayer is that we continue to praise the Lord by being faithful in our worship and study of His Word. When we are in God's Word faithfully our eyes are opened to see His mighty acts and His surpassing greatness. When we focus on His Word and see how great our LORD is and the great things He has and continues to do for us - the hallelujahs can't help but flow from our lips and be evident in our lives. After all, when it comes to our salvation, that is all our Triune God has left for us is to - Praise the LORD! Amen.