

January 8, 2023  
Epiphany/Communion

Psalm 29

“Sing The Faith: Tell it Like it Is”

Today we are going to start a sermon series entitled, “Sing the Faith.” This comes from the fact that the book of Psalms – which we think of as being poetic – is actually a hymnal. The Psalms were sung. The tunes, have of course, been lost. But look in the Glory to God Hymnal and you will find quite a number of songs based on the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm.

The Psalms have been important in the history of our tradition. In part this is rooted in the insight that *the word of God* is a strong place from which to get language for singing *to the glory of God*. We don’t need to be exclusive about that to see that it has real possibilities.

Today’s Psalm is unusual. *Its approach is rare and the way* it seeks to reach us is also unique. To begin with, the psalm is not addressed to the congregation or the faithful – but to a *heavenly court of beings*. This seems odd. If the beings are in the presence of God, they wouldn’t need to be told to offer God ascriptions of praise. And what are humans doing telling the heavenly host what to do? One of the scholars I read in preparation for this week says the purpose is to *reassure us* that when we gather in our place and time – we know we are on solid ground offering our praise to God because *our praise matches that which is given in heaven*. Our worship is the good and right response to the presence of God.

Did you notice the repeated theme of the “*The voice of the Lord*” throughout the Psalm? In prophetic literature we hear a lot about *the word* of the lord. But today’s text is unusual and probably borrowed from another culture to express something important. The voice of the Lord in our Psalm **actuates power**. It makes things happen. Creation is impacted by God’s voice. And couldn’t we say, as those made in the image of God – our voices also impact creation? Our voices make things – for better or for worse – happen in the world. It is a daunting responsibility to have inherited this power from God who made us.

In the time this Psalm was written it was taken for granted that *a thunderstorm* was an appropriate place to look for the display of the power of God. And it is still true, no matter how much meteorology demystifies the dynamics of storms. If

we are caught out in a storm – it is *awe inspiring* and can bring us to fear rooted in the knowledge that *we do not have power to overcome the storm*. We are meant to ***feel this Psalm*** as much as understand it. Our sense of awe and wonder is being appealed to as much or more than our reason.

Let's recreate some of the setting and experience of this Psalm this morning. We'll start over here in this section and ask you to begin snapping your fingers – or tapping one hand into the other. After they get going, we will move to the middle section and join in doing the same thing. Finally, the third section will begin. As the third section begins, the first section will begin to rub your hands together...with enthusiasm...then the middle section and finally the third section. After everyone is rubbing hands feel free to bring the power of the storm to greater noise by adding thunder by slapping your thighs and/or stamping your feet on the ground. Then, those who wish can add the sound of wind to the mix. Blow gently but firmly to move the air. When we really get going, we will pound harder, snap fastest, and hear the howl of the wind. Then we will slow everything down to let the storm move on. Snap slowly, rub your hands gently softly let the wind fall away. Here we go...

There is something about the experience of the presence of God which leads us to the heart of what this Psalm is after – and that is doxology – glorifying God. The question for us really is – “*Do we have room in our lives for doxology?*” So much of human life is feeling cheated, criticizing others, and believing the challenges of the day will not be overcome. Doxology is crucial for rescuing our ability to live as God's children with joy and persistence: To see the bigger picture – get drawn out of ourselves and focus our hope on the one who is more than any circumstance.

We are having a party after church to celebrate Epiphany – the last day of Christmas and the time we celebrate the light of Christ coming into the world. It is an important moment as we affirm that the power of God is not simply found in the overwhelming force of nature – but in the quiet of a child born in a surprising family who brings the light of God into the world.

It is a happy part of our life of faith that we are called – with humility and grace – to speak of the glory of God, celebrate with doxology, and tell it like it is.