

† November 2013 †

Psalm 106:1-5, 47-48

Praise the LORD!

¹ Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.

² Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD? Who can declare all His praise?

³ Blessed are those who keep justice, and he who does righteousness at all times!

⁴ Remember me, O LORD, with the favor You have toward Your people. Oh, visit me with Your salvation,

⁵ That I may see the benefit of Your chosen ones, that I may rejoice in the gladness of Your nation, that I may glory with Your inheritance.

⁴⁷ Save us, O LORD our God,
And gather us from among the Gentiles, to give thanks to Your holy name, to triumph in Your praise.

⁴⁸ Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting!

And let all the people say, "Amen!"

Praise the LORD!

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Lobe Den Herren, Den Mächtigen

The following hymn was written by Joachim Neander, 1650-80, and translated in the 19th century by Catharine Winkworth.

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty
The King of creation!
O my soul, praise Him,
For He is thy Health and Salvation!
Join the full throng:
Wake, harp and psalter and song;
Sound forth in glad adoration!

2 Praise to the Lord, who o'er all things
So wondrously reigneth,
Who, as on wings of an eagle,
Uplifteth, sustaineth.
Hast thou not seen
How thy desires all have been
Granted in what He ordaineth?

3 Praise to the Lord,

Who hath fearfully, wondrously, made thee;
Health hath vouchsafed and,
When heedlessly falling, hath stayed thee.
What need or grief
Ever hath failed of relief? —
Wings of His mercy did shade thee.

4 Praise to the Lord,
Who doth prosper thy work and defend thee,
Who from the heavens
The streams of His mercy doth send thee.
Ponder anew
What the Almighty can do,
Who with His love doth befriend thee.

5 Praise to the Lord!
Oh, let all that is in me adore Him!
All that hath life and breath,
Come now with praises before Him!
Let the AMEN
Sound from His people again;
Gladly for aye we adore Him. Amen.

When we praise God, we praise him for what he has done. God created us and sustains us. He created us to be his people – to sing his praises and to receive with joy what he loves to give us. Of course, since God first created us, we and our whole human race have fallen into sin and corruption. No longer do we recognize him as our gracious Father – at least not by nature.

That is why all our praises of God necessarily take into consideration what God has done to restore us to himself. By our sin, we became a corrupt people. But by the call of his gospel, we become his own special people – called out of darkness and into his marvelous light (John 12:46, 1 Peter 2:9). Only when we embrace by faith what Christ has done to deliver us from our sin are we able to praise God as he intended us to do when he first created us.

Certainly God upholds all people. He blesses even those who do not give him thanks – who think lightly the cost of God's love for sinners who deserve none of their daily bread. What makes us God's people is not that we get stuff from him (this is but a meager measurement of God's love for us), but that we have Jesus, who is the true flesh and blood God who tends to our greatest need (Christ is the true measure of God's love!). What makes us God's people is that we have been baptized into the death and resurrection of Jesus. He makes all our praises true.

In days of old, God fed his special people. He cared for their needs with the utmost concern – even to the extent that he miraculously rained down bread from the sky. But the manna they ate was not what made them his people. It was the promise of Christ that made them his people. And it still is. Jesus said to the Jewish people in his day: ***“This (speaking of himself) is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever.”*** This is an invitation to believe.

The Psalm that I have printed on the other side relates the deeds of God through the Book of Exodus, as Moses led God’s rebellious people (I encourage you to read it and see if you can pick out the references). But God continued to show mercy. Time and again they would take for granted God’s tremendous care and providence. And time and again, God would mercifully invite them to see what he could do to save them. He saved them for the sake of the promise he made to them. That promise was Christ.

When we praise God, we are always praising the LORD God of Israel. We are praising him who kept his promise. We are praising him who befriends us for the sake of his mercy. He makes us his people by returning us again and again to the waters that drowned our enemies. And by placing his name on us, he invites us to claim his work as our own. He does. He saves. We believe. We receive. And so the highest praise that we can render to our God is to say Amen to what he has taught us!

— Pastor John Preus