## Sermon on Psalm 150 – Praise the Lord!

"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."

The story is told about a visitor who showed up for church one Sunday. He was moved by something the pastor said in his sermon so with a loud voice he shouted, "Praise the Lord." Hearing it, a well-meaning member leaned over and tapped him on the shoulder saying, "Sir, we don't 'praise the Lord' here." To which another member leaned over and said, "oh yes we do, but only according to page 15 of the hymnal."

How do you praise the Lord? Why do you praise the Lord? In our text for today, the psalmist tells us to *Praise The Lord! I. For His mighty acts. Praise The Lord! II. For His surpassing greatness.* The book of Psalms was sort of like the hymnal of God's Old Testament people. Psalm 150 serves as an excellent finale to this God-inspired hymnal. It begins and ends with the words "Praise the Lord" which in the Hebrew language is "Hallelujah."

The fact that we can praise the Lord in the first place is something to praise the Lord for. Because by nature we were dead in our transgressions and sins. Unwilling to praise him. Unable to please him because God's Word tells us, "without faith it is impossible to please God."

We know the things in our lives that aren't pleasing to God. Sinful thoughts, sinful words, sinful actions. In the book of James we're told that although the tongue is a small part of the body, it makes great boasts. It's like a small spark that can set the world on fire. James writes, "out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be."

Brothers and sisters who use their mouths to sing God's praises in church on the weekends shouldn't use those same mouths to curse, swear, lie, and deceive during the week. Brothers and sisters who use their mouths to say good things about God shouldn't use those same mouths to say bad things about others. In the book of Galatians Paul writes, "if you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other. So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature." Gratifying the desires of the sinful nature doesn't bring praise to God. It can ultimately bring God's wrath and punishment in hell, where there will be no songs of praise to God, only weeping and gnashing of teeth for all eternity. Something God doesn't want for anyone which is why he sent Jesus to be our Savior. On the night of his birth, in the shepherd's fields outside of Bethlehem, the angels sang, "glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests." In Jesus, our Immanuel, God himself had come to save his people. Jesus always used his mouth to speak well of others. Jesus used his mouth to proclaim the message, "repent and believe the good news." He made the most of every opportunity to share that good news with those around him. But many people didn't like hearing that he was the only way to heaven. So they made fun of him. They accused him of blasphemy. They stirred up the crowds to cry out for his crucifixion. Beaten and abused and nailed to a cross, he didn't call down curses on them. Rather he spoke words of love and forgiveness. And with his dying breath, he gave us the assurance that all was finished. All of our sins had been forgiven and his perfect righteousness was ours. Rising from the grave on Easter Sunday morning, he gives us the sure hope of the same. The promise that one day we will be with him and all believers in heaven.

Until that day comes, he gives us some good ways to use our mouths. In fact, God wants us to use everything we have and everything we are to declare his praises. In our text, the psalmist not only tells us who should praise the Lord but also where and how we should praise the Lord. Who should praise the Lord? The psalmist writes, "let everything that has breath praise the Lord." Where should we praise the Lord? The psalmist writes, "praise God in his sanctuary. Praise him in his mighty heavens." Our worship emphasis for this weekend focuses on the Saints Triumphant. While living here on earth, we belong to the Church Militant because we do battle with the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh. The Church Triumphant of heaven no longer battles with these things. In heaven there is no war, no pain or suffering, no sickness or sadness. In heaven, God's children use their mouth to sing God's praises. Something God wants his children here on earth doing as well.

Sad to say that doesn't always happen because of sin. Sinful people with sinful natures with sinful pride. It's okay to have strong opinions about what you do and don't like as long as those opinions don't contradict God's Word. Which brings us to our next question. How are we to praise the Lord? The psalmist writes, "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." Did you notice how the psalmist mentions eight different kinds of musical instruments. Wind, strings, and percussion. Did you notice how he even includes dancing? During my trip to the Holy Land this past week, I had opportunities to see Jewish people worshipping with music and dancing. It put a smile on my face as I saw the joy in their hearts. At the same time it made me sad because for the most part the Jews don't believe in Jesus as their Savior. May our prayer continue to be that the Holy Spirit would open their eyes to see that Jesus is the Messiah and their Savior too.

It's interesting how the words of our psalm were written nearly three thousand years ago, but they might seem like cutting edge in some circles today. Strings, harp and lyre? I don't know about that. Sounds like a guitar. The clash of cymbals? Sounds like a drum set. Dancing? Don't go there! Even though in the Old Testament, the prophet Samuel does by writing, "David, wearing a linen ephod, danced before the Lord with all his might." We're free to have feelings about what we do and don't like, but all of our feelings have to be subject to God's Word. Some things are called adiaphora, things neither commanded nor forbidden by God. Paul writes, "everything is permissible - but not everything is beneficial... whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God." That's what we have to keep in mind when it comes to matters of adiaphora. Does it glorify God? And, is it done out of love for those around us? Our Lutheran Confessions state, "if things are done from a selfish motive, without regard for the glory of God and the welfare of our neighbor, even such indifferent things are displeasing to God." The Apostle Paul even went as far as saying, wrote, "if what I eat causes my brother to sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall." Such was the love Paul had for God and for those around him. Putting their needs before his own. Becoming all things to all men so that by all possible means he might win some for Christ. May God instill such attitudes in our hearts!

It was Christmas Eve in the small town of Oberndorf, Austria. St. Nicholas Church would be without its pipe organ that evening because it couldn't be fixed before Christmas. How would God's people sing their hymns of praise to the newborn Savior? Pastor Joseph Mohr had an idea. He composed a hymn and gave it to his organist Franz Gruber. That evening his hymn would be sung with the accompaniment of a guitar. You probably know the name of the hymn. "Silent Night! Holy Night." Christmas without it would be like Easter without "I Know that My Redeemer Lives."

The psalmist tells everyone to praise the Lord with all sorts of instruments devoted to his praise. After all, as another psalmist writes, "the earth is the Lord's and everything in it." The praises of God's Old Testament people were joyful. They really knew how to celebrate the great things God had done for them. Wedding receptions didn't last for hours, they lasted for days. I recently came across a paper written by a WELS pastor that reminded me of some of the things God's people will want to keep in mind when it comes to their worship.

- 1 Let the gospel predominate. Let Jesus be seen in everything we say and do.
- 2 Let the experience of the church be honored. Don't ignore the worship history of God's people throughout the ages.
- 3 Let the people participate. Encourage and engage them to bring Him their worship and praise.
- 4 Let God's best gifts be used. Truly it's nothing but the best for Jesus because Jesus has given us nothing but His best.

May our worship here on earth continue to reflect that until in heaven it's experienced fully and eternally as believers gather around his throne to sing, "Hallelujah...Praise the Lord!"

Amen.