“Praise”

Psalm 150

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One synonym for worship is the word ‘praise.’ Thus, when we gather for worship here in the sanctuary or down by the riverside or on the mountain top or at any location; we are gathered to praise God. Worship can and does include many other features, but the basic understanding of worship is captured by the word ‘praise.’

Last Sunday, we all learned a new song whose refrain sings, “Praise ye the Lord, Hallelujah; Praise ye the Lord Hallelujah; praise ye the Lord, Hallelujah; Praise ye the Lord.”

On every Sunday morning, we surrender our offerings and then we sing a doxology which is another word for a praise hymn. We sing: “Praise God from whom all blessings flow, Praise God all creatures here below, Praise God above ye heavenly host, Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost.”

Often, one or more of the hymns we sing from the New Century Hymnal is a praise hymn. One of my personal favorites is #558. “O how glorious, full of wonder, is your name o’er all the earth. God, who wrought creation’s splendor, bringing suns and stars to birth! Rapt in reverence we adore you, marveling at your mystic ways. Humbly now we bow before you, lifting up our hearts in praise.”

There is something in our bones, something in our heart of hearts that stirs us to an attitude of praise. Some of us express our praise quietly, silently. Others sing our praise out loud from the mountain top!

I am picturing Julie Andrews singing, “The hills are alive with the sound of music.” My college roommate played that song from “The Sound of Music” on his record player more often than I care to remember! It still rings in my ear! Praise is not restricted to music. We praise God with our actions and our deeds! We praise God with every kind of instrument. We praise God with every thought of gratitude.

Before there was a New Century Hymnal or a Pilgrim Hymnal or a Methodist hymnal or a Baptist hymnal, there was a Bible hymnal. We call it the Book of Psalms. One hundred fifty psalms are collected in this ancient hymnal. They were sung by choirs and by congregations long before any of them were written down. Some of the psalms are songs of lament; some are songs for ordinations and coronations. But mostly, they are songs of praise! Listen:

“How majestic is thy name in all the earth!”

“For it was you who formed my inward parts.”

“Praise the Lord from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps.”

“Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.”

The psalms of praise crescendo until the grand finale at Psalm 150. I would call Psalm 150 a hymn of lavish praise! It reminds me of our own Joyful Noise Band! It calls for the congregation to use every instrument imaginable to praise God. Trumpet sound, lute and harp, tambourine. Loud clashing cymbals, strings and pipe, every instrument known to humankind! If the Psalm writer were composing a praise song for today, the list would include piano and organ, clarinet and saxophone!

Indeed, the joy of our new Austin organ is the way this instrument empowers our praise! This is what our new organ is all about: inspiring us in worship to keep on praising God from who all blessings flow! Personally speaking, when I’m praising God, that’s when I’m living in the greatest of hope! Amen!