

+ Lesson Introductions + 12th Sunday after Pentecost: 2013 Hymn Festival + 11 August 2013 +

+ Part I: Praise God the Father +

Psalm 103:1-12 – *“Praise the LORD, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name.”* Why would David be so eager to praise the Lord with every fiber of his being? Why would David be so eager to sing songs and hymns of praise to the God of heaven and earth? If you read through the Psalm before us, David provides reason after reason after reason. He praises God for his mighty power and his bountiful goodness. He praises God for his gracious mercy and his compassionate forgiveness. After reading a Psalm like this, you can't help, but praise our God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Why do we praise God the Father? With David, let us *“forget not all his benefits”*! With great power and wisdom, he created us and gave us life. With gracious loving-kindness, God our Father provides for all of our physical needs from the clothes on our backs to the food on our tables to every physical ability and sense, but he does even more. He is a holy God, who hates sin and all who commit sin, but yet he is also a compassionate and merciful God, who removes the guilt of our sin *“as far as the east is from the west”* through his Son Jesus Christ. What greater reason do we have to *“praise the Lord, the almighty”* with every fiber of our being? To him be the glory!

Hear now a reading from Psalm 103 – Hymn: CW 234 – Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

+ Part II: Praise God the Son +

Matthew 27:33-54; 28:1-7 – If compassionate love and gracious mercy are the primary reasons why we praise God the Father, then why do we praise God the Son—our Savior, Jesus Christ? See what Jesus came to do and what he accomplished for you and for me. See *“the Word become flesh, and make his dwelling among us”* as God himself becomes a human being like you and me, yet without sin. See him grow up through infancy and childhood and adolescence and finally adulthood, where we see him eventually make the long, difficult journey to hill called Golgotha and a cross. See the impossibly dark stains of your sins washed clean in the blood of Christ. See in Christ, God's grace, God's love in action for you. See how much God loves you not just in paying the full price for your sins, when you deserved God's wrath, but see him enter your tomb and after three days, conquer your death with his glorious resurrection. It's all for you. It's all for me. To him be the glory!

Hear now a reading from Matthew 27 and 28 – Hymn: CW 106:1,3,4 – Come to Calvary's Holy Mountain

Romans 8:31-39 – We're not quite done with our reasons for praising God the Son. You see, just as the Father so graciously blesses us each day by providing not only all that we need for this life, but also all that we need for the life to come, Christ Jesus blesses us each day not only with forgiveness, but something more. So what's going on in your life? What's troubling your heart? What's weighing on your mind? What looms in the shadows of your past or in the shadows of your future? What threatens to overwhelm and overtake you? Is it money problems or job concerns? Is it marriage problems or family strife or worries about the kids? Is it health concerns for a loved one or in your own life? Is it the increasing difficulty to live out and talk about your Christian faith in public? Is it guilt for past sins or present sins of weakness? Is it worry or fear? Yet, that's where the Son of God makes all the difference in the world. *“In Christ alone, my hope is found.”* Yes, hope in the midst of despair and worry and fear and trouble. He is *“my light, my strength, my song”*. How is it that you can sing praises even in the darkness of this sinful life and amidst the shadows of death? How is it that you can be strong amidst weakness? It's because Christ alone, who took on flesh and conquered death, holds you in the palm of his almighty hand, and nothing will ever be able to separate you from his love. To him be the glory!

We read and sing responsively a reading from Romans 8 with CWS 752 – In Christ Alone

Philippians 2:5-11 – Jesus has given us so many reasons to praise him as God the Son. We could spend our lifetimes trying to be like King David as we list the praiseworthy deeds of our God, but in a sense, isn't that what the life of a Christian is all about—devoting every day, every moment to praising the God who saved us? So how do you respond to the unfathomable grace of our amazing Savior? How do you respond to the God incarnate, man divine, the Lord of all? How do you respond to the One who made himself nothing though he was God, the One who even became obedient to an excruciating death on a cross not for himself, but for you? You respond with thanks, not just from lips, but with life. You respond with praise, not just words, but action. You join the everlasting song of all believers in heaven and on earth praising God and singing, “*All hail the power of Jesus' name! Let angels prostrate fall; Bring forth the royal diadem and crown him Lord of all!*” To him be the glory!

Hear now a reading from Philippians 2 – Hymn: CW 370:1-4 – All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name

+ Part III: Praise God the Holy Spirit +

2 Thessalonians 2:13-15 – We've considered just a few of the countless reasons to praise God the Father and God the Son, but we dare not forget to praise God the Holy Spirit. In fact, you and I wouldn't be able to praise God at all (or at least offer acceptable praises to him) if not for the work of the Holy Spirit. On our own, you and I are poor, miserable sinners who have nothing of merit, nothing of worth to offer to God for our salvation. Try as we might, it'll never happen. You and I don't even have the ability to decide to follow Jesus. We're dead in sin, and by dead, I mean as spiritually dead as a corpse is physically dead. To make matters worse, we're actually hostile to God and so blinded by sin that we couldn't possibly find our way to follow him. Yet the Holy Spirit comes to us through the Gospel and calls us through the good news of God's grace in Christ. He shatters the darkness of unbelief with the Gospel's glorious light. He restores to life our dead hearts. He transforms us with the Gospel from dead enemies to beloved children of God. Because of the work of the Holy Spirit, you and I get to “*share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ*”. To God the Holy Spirit be the glory!

Hear now a reading from 2 Thessalonians 2 – Hymn: CW 397:1,2,4,5 – Just As I Am, Without One Plea

Ephesians 6:10-18 – Did you ever realize that when the Holy Spirit brings you to faith and makes you a part of Christ's Church, you're entering a war? It's not a war with armies of flesh and blood, but a war with the spiritual forces of darkness who are trying to destroy your faith, to make you a traitor and another citizen of hell. However, you don't go into this war unarmed and unprepared. No, the Holy Spirit provides you the tools to withstand every attack and to keep moving forward with “*the sword of the Spirit*”—the Word of God. The Spirit prepares and equips you for that lifelong war through his Word and Sacraments, but you're not alone. No, it's not just your fellow believers who are struggling along with you, but as the battle rages on, when the possibility of victory for God's people seems more and more hopeless, then we see Christ himself with us on the battlefield. Victory is certain and the forces of evil will be swept away by the King of kings. The forces of evil even lose countless soldiers from their own armies as the Spirit works on heart after heart with the awesome weapon of the Gospel, and the gates of hell are too weak to keep those souls there for eternity. Even in this lifelong war, you have every reason to praise our triune God. To our triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—be all the glory forever and ever!

Hear now a reading from Ephesians 6 – Hymn: CW 537:1,3,4 – Onward, Christian Soldiers