

Sermon

All?

A Sermon for Cary Presbyterian Church

Sunday, November 6, 2022

22 Sunday After Pentecost

Hag. 2:1 in the seventh month, on the twenty-first day of the month, the word of the LORD came by the prophet Haggai, saying: 2 Speak now to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people, and say, 3 Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Is it not in your sight as nothing? 4 Yet now take courage, O Zerubbabel, says the LORD; take courage, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; take courage, all you people of the land, says the LORD; work, for I am with you, says the LORD of hosts, 5 according to the promise that I made you when you came out of Egypt. My spirit abides among you; do not fear. 6 For thus says the LORD of hosts: Once again, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land; 7 and I will shake all the nations, so that the treasure of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with splendor, says the LORD of hosts. 8 The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, says the LORD of hosts. 9 The latter splendor of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts; and in this place I will give prosperity, says the LORD of hosts.

Psa. 145:0 Praise. Of David.

- 1 I will extol you, my God and King,
and bless your name forever and ever.*
- 2 Every day I will bless you,
and praise your name forever and ever.*
- 3 Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised;
his greatness is unsearchable.*

- 4 One generation shall laud your works to another,*

- and shall declare your mighty acts.*
- 5 *On the glorious splendor of your majesty,
and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.*
- 6 *The might of your awesome deeds shall be proclaimed,
and I will declare your greatness.*
- 7 *They shall celebrate the fame of your abundant goodness,
and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.*
- 8 *The LORD is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.*
- 9 *The LORD is good to all,
and his compassion is over all that he has made.*
- 10 *All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD,
and all your faithful shall bless you.*
- 11 *They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom,
and tell of your power,*
- 12 *to make known to all people your mighty deeds,
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.*
- 13 *Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and your dominion endures throughout all
generations.*

- The LORD is faithful in all his words,
and gracious in all his deeds.*
- 14 *The LORD upholds all who are falling,
and raises up all who are bowed down.*
- 15 *The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food in due season.*
- 16 *You open your hand,*

satisfying the desire of every living thing.

17 *The LORD is just in all his ways,
and kind in all his doings.*

18 *The LORD is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth.*

19 *He fulfills the desire of all who fear him;
he also hears their cry, and saves them.*

20 *The LORD watches over all who love him,
but all the wicked he will destroy.*

21 *My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD,
and all flesh will bless his holy name forever and ever.*

I. I always want to grin a little bit when I read Psalm 145

A. So many great and majestic phrases:

8 *The LORD is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.*

15 *The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food in due season.*

16 *You open your hand,
satisfying the desire of every living thing.*

**B. And the sweep of God’s reconciling love is
breathtaking! The Psalmist repeats the word “All”
17 times in 11 verses.**

**C. To “all” we are told, God is:
Good
Compassionate
Faithful**

**Gracious
Upholding
Encouraging
Just
Kind
Near
Generous**

- D. The Psalmist is ecstatic is naming *all* of God’s mercies to *all* . . .**
- E. And then in the second half of the penultimate verse “ **BUT *all* the wicked God will destroy.**”**
- F. Grace & Mercy dominate for 20.5 verses . . . but then destruction for “the wicked.”**

II. In a former congregation I served we had a core-value that “everyone belongs.”

A. We were so committed to that core value that every Lord’s Day service began with the pastor declaring some version of “We are glad you are here - everyone belongs.”

1. The church was diverse

† **Ethnically**

† **Politically**

† **Theologically**

2. Always reminded me of the old BCP 1928 prayer about “all sorts and conditions of people.”

O GOD, the Creator and Preserver of all [humankind], we humbly beseech thee for all sorts and conditions of [people]; that thou wouldest be pleased to make thy ways known unto them, thy saving health unto all nations. More especially we pray for thy holy Church universal; that it may be so guided

and governed by thy good Spirit, that all who profess and call themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace,...

B. After many years of service in that congregation and after literally thousands of repetitions of the core value at the start of worship that “everyone belongs.”

- 1. I have a couple come to my office and say, “Wait a minute! I didn’t know we had *those* sorts of people as members of the church.”**
- 2. To which I replied, “What did you think I meant for the last decade saying, “everyone belongs?”**
- 3. So often in church even when we say “everyone belongs” what we mean is “everyone like me belongs.”**

III. Perhaps you will think I preach too often on this subject of unity in the presence of our diversity . . .

- A. But I read the daily news about our nation which seems more and more polarized and less and less able to engage in respectful and productive civil discourse . . .**
- B. And I watch the body of Christ in the world as it too is racked by the same pressures of ideological purity and schismatic impulse . . .**
- C. And I watch as both churches and their pastors suffer in this highly fractious environment . . .**
- D. And I cannot help but notice how often the passages assigned for worship can be read as calls to a better way.**

IV. And we know that we are not the first to wrestle with the question of who belongs and for whom is the gospel meant...

A. Jesus had hardly finished giving the Great Commission in Matthew 28 when we began arguing about who should receive the good news and be prepared for baptism.

B. Notice that Jesus, too, uses the word “all”

Matt. 28:16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

1. He makes no qualifiers . . . ALL nations

C. Peter and the Jerusalem disciples are unsure that the good news is meant for “all” until Peter is confronted by God in the trip to Joppa and to Cornelius’ house where he sees that the Holy Spirit is already at work and he declares:

Acts 10:34 Then Peter began to speak to them: “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, 35 but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.

D. Apostle Paul also speaks about spreading the gospel and he, too, uses the word “all” to describe how he did it...

1Cor. 9:19 For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them. 20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. 21 To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law) so that I might win

those outside the law. 22 To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. 23 I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.

- E. I do not doubt that Psalm 145 - even the second half of verse 20 has it right . . . Part of God’s good news is that justice is balanced with grace...**
 - F. And yet, we are in no position to condemn.**
 - G. When Jesus told the parable about the wheat and the tares what becomes clear is that there will be day of judgement where the wheat and the tares are separated . . . but *we are not on that committee.***
- V. Today we come to the Table of our Lord.**
- A. As the old prayer said it**
“all sorts and conditions of [people];”
come to this table.
 - B. Those full of faith and those unsure**
 - C. Those with a guilty conscience for sins which linger**
 - D. Those in a season of prosperity and those struggling to make ends meet**
 - E. Those enjoying good health and those praying for healing**
 - F. Those who are glad to know that God’s mercy and grace and reconciliation is for *all* and those who struggle to understand how God could love people *like that.***
 - G. But no matter your condition — come to this Table of grace and receive its gifts and learn what it desires to teach you.**

And as you come - think of the prayer which opens the letter to the Ephesians 1:17 -23

I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, 18 so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. 20 God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. 22 And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.