

26 November 2017

How to Be Thankful
Psalm 104

Some people struggle to think of things to be thankful for. In our “Joys and Concerns” time here at church, we have no trouble naming our prayer requests. Life is like that: it continually offers us things to be concerned about. But finding the joys, finding the reasons for gratitude, is a little harder. When we force ourselves to look for things to be thankful about, we can generally come up with “family” and maybe the beauties of nature. But after that it’s like pulling teeth. Thankfulness doesn’t come as easily as worriedness. We just don’t really know how to be thankful.

But we can learn. Today, instead of having a sermon, we are simply going to allow the ancient words of Psalm 104 teach us how to pray our thanks.

Liturgist: We read the first nine verses of Psalm 104. The psalm begins on page 554 in the Old Testament portion of your pew Bible.

- ¹ Bless the Lord, O my soul.
O Lord my God, you are very great.
You are clothed with honor and majesty,
² wrapped in light as with a garment.
You stretch out the heavens like a tent,
³ you set the beams of your chambers on the waters,
you make the clouds your chariot,
you ride on the wings of the wind,
⁴ you make the winds your messengers,
fire and flame your ministers.
⁵ You set the earth on its foundations,
so that it shall never be shaken.
⁶ You cover it with the deep as with a garment;
the waters stood above the mountains.
⁷ At your rebuke they flee;
at the sound of your thunder they take to flight.
⁸ They rose up to the mountains, ran down to the valleys
to the place that you appointed for them.
⁹ You set a boundary that they may not pass,
so that they might not again cover the earth.*

First of all, Lord, we thank you that we exist, that you preferred that there should be something rather than nothing, and that when you spoke or sang or molded the universe into being, you included us. What was once chaos, you spoke into order. With your power, you set boundaries to hold back the abyss, set foundations to hold us in place, made laws of time and space to govern our motion and limits. You invented time itself – established *now* as different from *back then*,

and allowed both to raise thoughts of *someday*. You decorated the passage of time with lights in the heavens, a great light to rule the day and a lesser light to rule the night and filled the vast spaces with lights and motion, all dancing their own dance. God we thank you that you are, by nature, One Who Creates, and that we are, by nature, your creation.

RESPONSE

“All Creatures of Our God and King”

No. 62, v. 1

St Francis of Assisi

**All creatures of our God and King,
Lift up your voice and with us sing, O praise ye! Alleluia!
O brother sun with golden beam,
O sister moon with silver gleam!
O praise ye! O praise ye! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

Liturgist: We now read verses 10-13.

¹⁰ *You make springs gush forth in the valleys;
they flow between the hills,*

¹¹ *giving drink to every wild animal;
the wild asses quench their thirst.*

¹² *By the streams the birds of the air have their habitation;
they sing among the branches.*

¹³ *From your lofty abode you water the mountains;
the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work.*

God, we thank you for life, and specifically for that precious token of all life – water. For where you have given water, you have given life. Life of every sort, from the water bugs to the wild horses dipping their muzzles in mountain streams. God, forgive us that we do not thank you every day for water.

You give water in the deep places, accessible only by the tap roots of desert plants and by the deep searching of solitary trees on the plains. You give water in brooks and wells, rivers and lakes, in the rain and the dew, in the mountain snows that fill the springtime floods. God we thank you for water.

RESPONSE

“All Creatures of Our God and King”

No. 62, v. 3

St Francis of Assisi

**O sister water, flowing clear,
Make music for the Lord to hear, Alleluia! Alleluia!
O brother fire that lights the night,
Providing warmth, enhancing sight!
O praise ye! O praise ye! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

Liturgist: We now read verses 14-23.

¹⁴ *You cause the grass to grow for the cattle,*

*and plants for people to use,
to bring forth food from the earth,
 ¹⁵ and wine to gladden the human heart,
oil to make the face shine,
 and bread to strengthen the human heart.
¹⁶ The trees of the Lord are watered abundantly,
 the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.
¹⁷ In them the birds build their nests;
 the stork has its home in the fir trees.
¹⁸ The high mountains are for the wild goats;
 the rocks are a refuge for the coney.
¹⁹ You have made the moon to mark the seasons;
 the sun knows its time for setting.
²⁰ You make darkness, and it is night,
 when all the animals of the forest come creeping out.
²¹ The young lions roar for their prey,
 seeking their food from God.
²² When the sun rises, they withdraw
 and lie down in their dens.
²³ People go out to their work
 and to their labor until the evening.*

Creator, we thank you for the intricate cycle of life and nature. We thank you for food. We thank you for the grains and the roots and the vegetables, and we thank you for the creatures who eat them and for the beasts of the field who graze, and for the creatures who eat the beasts of the field.

We thank you for the tastes and smells and the joy of food and the gladness of eating together with those we love. We thank you for the creamy sweetness of chocolate, for the smiling warm smell of baking bread, for the welcome morning bitterness of coffee, for the juicy crunch of an apple, the melting flavor of a strawberry, the burst of a juicy grape between our teeth. God, your imagination is stunning. We thank you for the smell of woodsmoke and the sizzle of broiling venison and freshly caught fish on an open fire. We thank you for wine and oil, honey and butter, fruit jam and cream. God, you did not have to make a world so sensual, so delightful to experience, so beautiful, so full of joy – and the fact that you did is, for me, proof of your love. You have been very gracious, God. You have been very good.

Your earth brings forth bounty beyond expression. God, we thank you.

RESPONSE

“All Creatures of Our God and King”

No. 62, v. 4

St Francis of Assisi

**Dear mother earth who day by day,
Unfoldest blessings on our way, Alleluia! Alleluia!
The flowers and fruits that in thee grow,**

**Let them God's glory also show!
O praise ye! O praise ye! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

Liturgist: Verses 24-35.

- 24 O Lord, how manifold are your works!
In wisdom you have made them all;
the earth is full of your creatures.*
- 25 Yonder is the sea, great and wide,
creeping things innumerable are there,
living things both small and great.*
- 26 There go the ships,
and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it.*
- 27 These all look to you
to give them their food in due season;
when you give to them, they gather it up;
when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.*
- 29 When you hide your face, they are dismayed;
when you take away their breath, they die
and return to their dust.*
- 30 When you send forth your spirit, they are created;
and you renew the face of the ground.*
- 31 May the glory of the Lord endure forever;
may the Lord rejoice in his works—*
- 32 who looks on the earth and it trembles,
who touches the mountains and they smoke.*
- 33 I will sing to the Lord as long as I live;
I will sing praise to my God while I have being.*
- 34 May my meditation be pleasing to him,
for I rejoice in the Lord.*
- 35 Let sinners be consumed from the earth,
and let the wicked be no more.
Bless the Lord, O my soul.
Alleluia!*

Father, we exist because you choose that we exist. You chose it from the start, when you spoke Being itself into being, and you choose it each day as a continuing blessing. In you, O God, we live and move and have our being. All of us, every one, every creature – from the algae on the pond to each one of us gathered here to acknowledge a reality beyond our own. All of us live here, in the space called life that you carved out of chaos. We breathe because your breath, your wind, your spirit breathes through us.

Loving God, when you show your face to us, we live and live abundantly. When we cannot see your face, we return to the chaos and collapse into the dust. You are all that is, all that ever will be, all that we are. You are our origin, and you are our future.

And so, God, we thank you. Amen

RESPONSE

“All Creatures of Our God and King”

No. 62, v. 7

St Francis of Assisi

**Let all things their creator bless,
And worship him in humbleness, O praise ye! Alleluia!
Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son,
And praise the Spirit, Three in One!
O praise ye! O praise ye! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**