



still waters

home church studies

Psalm 147.1-11, 20c [Worship]

1 Praise the LORD! How good it is to sing praises to our God; for he is gracious, and a song of praise is fitting. 2 The LORD builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the outcasts of Israel. 3 He heals the brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds. 4 He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names. 5 Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure. 6 The LORD lifts up the downtrodden; he casts the wicked to the ground. 7 Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; make melody to our God on the lyre. 8 He covers the heavens with clouds, prepares rain for the earth, makes grass grow on the hills. 9 He gives to the animals their food, and to the young ravens when they cry. 10 His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the speed of a runner; 11 but the LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love.

20c Praise the LORD!

Consider:

In the psalm, the one who numbers and names the stars of night (verse 4; see Job 38:4-7), who cares not a whit for military strength (verse 10), here is concerned for the least, binding up the wounds of the brokenhearted (verse 3).

Paul's ministry especially includes the weak (those chosen by God to shame the strong; see 1 Corinthians 1:28). To preach the good news among them, he himself becomes weak. In actuality he moves back and forth over social and cultural boundaries with an adeptness that can only be called a *chrism* or, as he does, a commission. By this freedom he becomes the slave of all (verse 19). Indeed, he aspires to the mind of one

who did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but took the form of a slave (Philippians 2:6-7).

Little wonder a day in the life of Jesus shows forth a similar freedom. He moves so easily among the sick and the possessed who press in at the front door. He goes off in search of them bearing the good news.

But more must be said about his freedom to be among them. It includes the freedom to withdraw. Jesus is not in bondage to time or circumstance.

The pattern of his day, set early in Mark's gospel, seems designed to preserve spiritual sanity. There is a rhythm between public and private, between action and contemplation, in which he moves. That solitude of prayer under the morning stars, which Simon and friends take as a disruption of an otherwise busy schedule (Mark makes them famous for misunderstanding the rudiments of discipleship), is the very thing that turns a day of despair into a day of freedom.

Reflection and Action:

Where are your patterns leading you; to sanity and solitude, or hurried isolation from God? When has your day of despair ever been changed by a quite contemplation of God's presence?

[Scripture] 1 Corinthians 9.19-23

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.