

still waters

home church studies

Psalms 104: 1-9, 24, 35 [Worship]

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.

24 O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.

35c Praise the LORD!

Consider: Peter B. Price

[Words]

"Man bites dog," runs a famous newspaper headline. It is meant to take our notice because it is a reversal of what we expect. "God hits back" could well have been the headline of tabloid writers following Job's arguments with God. "Who is this obscuring my intentions with his ignorant words? ...I am going to ask the questions, and you are going to inform me!" says God (Job 38:2-3). God searchingly questions Job about the order of creation, the universe, and everything else, concluding with the knockout punchline: "Have you grasped the celestial laws? Could you make their writ run on the Earth?" (Job 38:33). Contemplating the creation, the psalmist is moved to praise, "How countless are your works, Lord; all of them made so wisely!" (Psalm 104:24).

Most of us do not naturally contemplate God. Like the disciples we tend to offer the kind of prayers that ask God "to do us a favor" (Mark 10:35). Status and influence are more to us than spirituality. We find it hard to hear the question that goes alongside true holiness, "Can

you drink the cup that I shall drink, or be baptized with the baptism with which I shall be baptized?" (Mark 10:38). Even if like the disciples we answer the question by saying "We can," Jesus reveals that that, in itself, does not guarantee a reward that we can calculate ahead of its being granted.

Serving God demands the same generosity of spirit with which God serves us. God provides a creation that never ceases to amaze because of its fecundity, or the cosmos by its immensity. The same God provides an example in his Son coming "not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). The reward even for Jesus is service: "Christ did not give himself the glory of becoming a high priest, but the one who said to him, 'You are my Son; today I have fathered you'" (Hebrews 5:5).

There is a great paradox here: When we are obedient to God's calling we learn, like Jesus, through suffering (Hebrews 5:8). The reward is service, and to share with Jesus "the source of eternal salvation" (5:9). The last word is always with God!

Reflection and Action

When have you been forced out of self-obsession into contemplating the wonder of God's universe? Have you ever sensed God asking you questions? What were they? Can you look at any experience of suffering from which you have learned?



[Scripture]

Hebrews 5.1-10

1 Every high priest chosen from among mortals is put in charge of things pertaining to God on their behalf, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. 2 He is able to deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is subject to weakness; 3 and because of this he must offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people. 4 And one does not presume to take this honor, but takes it only when called by God, just as Aaron was. 5 So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"; 6 as he says also in another place, "You are a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek." 7 In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. 8 Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; 9 and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, 10 having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.