



still waters

home church studies

Psalm 147.12-20

[Worship]

12 Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem! Praise your God, O Zion! 13 For he strengthens the bars of your gates; he blesses your children within you. 14 He grants peace within your borders; he fills you with the finest of wheat. 15 He sends out his command to the earth; his word runs swiftly. 16 He gives snow like wool; he scatters frost like ashes. 17 He hurls down hail like crumbs—who can stand before his cold? 18 He sends out his word, and melts them; he makes his wind blow, and the waters flow. 19 He declares his word to Jacob, his statutes and ordinances to Israel. 20 He has not dealt thus with any other nation; they do not know his ordinances. Praise the LORD!

Consider:

[Words]

We may trace the exuberant acknowledgment of God's impact on the world through the prophetic poem, the lyrical epistle, and the psalmic doxology, all of which attend to the way in which God has come in Christ, "full of grace and truth." The poem of Jeremiah is addressed to Israel in exile, assuring a homecoming from Babylon. We notice the double use of "gather" (Jeremiah 31:8, 10); God is the great gatherer who does a sweep of the Near East, and by act of daring sovereignty brings all the lost back to safety. Paul echoes Jeremiah, witnessing to God's "plan" to "gather up all things in him." This is the God who has "blessed," "chosen," "destined," "lavished," and "made known" (Ephesians 1:3-9); now everything is changed and made new. God promises a safe place ("inheritance") in even larger scope than that of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 31:14). It is no wonder that we have in Psalm 147 a great doxology that catalogues the

transformations wrought by God, all on behalf of the people whom God loves (Psalm 147:20).

The news of Christmas is that God gathers home a relationship, a possibility, a belonging. That is a gospel assurance in a world of displacement, alienation, and fearful violence. It is a gift to come down where we ought to be!

Walter Bruggemann



[Scripture]

Ephesians 1.3-14

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. 5 He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace 8 that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight 9 he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. 11 In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, 12 so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. 13 In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; 14 this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.