

Psalm 138

[Worship]

1 I give you thanks, O LORD, with my whole heart; before the gods I sing your praise; 2 I bow down toward your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness; for you have exalted your name and your word above everything. 3 On the day I called, you answered me, you increased my strength of soul. 4 All the kings of the earth shall praise you, O LORD, for they have heard the words of your mouth. 5 They shall sing of the ways of the LORD, for great is the glory of the LORD. 6 For though the LORD is high, he regards the lowly; but the haughty he perceives from far away. 7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve me against the wrath of my enemies; you stretch out your hand, and your right hand delivers me. 8 The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O LORD, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands.

Consider:

[Words]

This cluster of texts evidences the grand drama of the gospel from human need to transformative divine response to a new life. The drama begins in the reality of human need and the inability of humans to resolve that need themselves. Isaiah 6:5 and Luke 5:8 offer an admission of powerlessness in the face of sin. In the psalm the trouble is an enemy from which deliverance is required (Psalm 138:7). In the lyric of Paul (1 Corinthians 15), the human condition concerns the

power of death. Thus the predicament of sin, enemies, and death attests to the helplessness of the actors in the text.

The response of God to such need overwhelms and cancels out the trouble. The God of the gospel is an answering God. Isaiah is answered by "blotting out sin" (Isaiah 6:7). In the gospel story it is, "Do not be afraid" (Luke 5:10). The psalmist can say, "On the day I called, you answered me" (Psalm 138:3). In 1 Corinthians 15, it is a "victory" (v. 57). The claim of faith is that our vexed life has been answered and resolved by the attentive mercy of God.

Such divine answering has consequences. Isaiah is "sent" (Isaiah 6:8-9). The disciples "follow" (Luke 5:11). The psalmist erupts in thanks. The Easter church stands "steadfast and immovable" (1 Corinthians 15:58). The word is out that life in faith is answered and summoned to new obedience.

Walter Bruggemann

[Scripture]

Luke 5.1-11

1 Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, 2 he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. 3 He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. 4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." 5 Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." 6 When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. 7 So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. 8 But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" 9 For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; 10 and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who are partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." 11 When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.