



still waters

home church studies

Psalm 146

[Worship]

1 Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD, O my soul! 2 I will praise the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God all my life long. 3 Do not put your trust in princes, in mortals, in whom there is no help. 4 When their breath departs, they return to the earth; on that very day their plans perish. 5 Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD their God, 6 who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who keeps faith forever; 7 who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets the prisoners free; 8 the LORD opens the eyes of the blind. The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous. 9 The LORD watches over the strangers; he upholds the orphan and the widow, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin. 10 The LORD will reign forever.

Consider:

Biblical faith attests that God, creator of the world, is the giver of life, even in a world of deathliness. While that claim is pervasive in faith, it is rooted in specific, nameable moments when God's power for life was particularly concentrated and effective in contexts of death. In these readings, we have two such specific moments. Elijah is presented as the one who gave life to the widow's son: He prayed, and then declared to the mother, "See, your son is alive" (1 Kings 17:23). In a reprise of that narrative, Jesus commanded the widow's only son, "Young man, I say to you, rise!" (Luke 7:14). In neither case does the narrative explain or speculate. It only bears witness. It asserts that God's has moves powerfully beyond all of our categories to offer new life. In these moments, the creator enacts the new creation.

[Words]

From that the church echoes Israel in doxology concerning the God who gives new life to prisoners, the blind, the bowed down, strangers, orphans, and widows (Psalm 146:8-9). Such practices, in neighborly action and in broad policy concerns, exhibit God's way in and intention for the world. This God is a "help," as the psalmist says, toward that life, exactly when human agents are "no help."

It is to this life-giving God that Paul is summoned as witness and apostle. And of course, Paul intends that the churches he addresses should join him in praise and obedience to the God of life. This requires a bold confidence (the kind that Paul exhibits) that refuses the world's deathliness and that acts with and toward the new life God gives. The Psalm summarizes that new way in the world as "justice for the oppressed" (Psalm 146:7). Easter faith is indeed revolutionary in the world. The Spirit of Pentecost is the Spirit of new life, the force not stopped, even by our fear of that newness.

- Walter Brueggemann

[Scripture] Galatians 1 .11-17

11 For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. 12 For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. 13 For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. 14 And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. 15 But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, 16 as pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone; 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.

Question:

Resurrection says something to people. It implies something is dead, but within the power of God, the object reanimates to become purposeful, saying strong things about God's love, where it is directed, and through whom it is delivered.

Where can you see failings, unravelings, "deaths" restored to life as God's voice around us?

*Also, read for yourself this week,
Luke 7.11-17 & 1 Kings 17.8-24*