

## Trinity Sunday/Introduction to the Psalms

May 31, 2015

Haven Lutheran Church

Readings: 2 Corinthians 13: 11 - 13; Psalm 1

*Grace to you and peace from our Triune God — Father, Son, Holy Spirit. Amen*

I wonder what was the first hymn of praise sung to God? Did Adam and Eve lead a choir of animals and birds to delight the Lord? Did those seasoned-citizens, Abraham and Sarah, commission the first Hallelujah Chorus when they finally had their son in their nineties? No mention of either in the Bible, but we do have plenty of other persons and people bursting into song or dance — Moses and the Israelites sang after God liberated them from slavery, and his sister Miriam took a tambourine to lead the women in a dance and song about their deliverance through the Red Sea; David sang and danced as the Ark of the Covenant was carried into Jerusalem (1Chron. 15:28); Hannah and Mary raise their voices in thanks for the sons God gave them. Matthew tells us Jesus and his disciples sang hymns at the last Supper (Matt. 26:30) Songs of prayer are what bubbles up when we are caught up in the wonder, delight or gratitude we find in our Lord. Like when you sing one of your favorite hymns or hundreds of voices sing together at a Synod Assemblies. The distance between us and God, the distance between each other disappears as we're drawn into the song and dance of community.

Today we begin a six-Sunday series on the book of Psalms. Before we ever had black, red, green, blue or cranberry hymnals, we had the hymn book of our Hebrew ancestors, the Book of Psalms or the Psalter that Jesus himself would have sung in synagogue or at a Sabbath or Passover meal. The Book of Psalms is a collection of prayers thought to span over 1000 years, with a variety of authors who wrote at different times, for different reasons. One-hundred-fifty psalms were finally collected and edited by scribes in the post-Babylonian exile era. The word "psalm" is derived from a Greek term that refers to songs accompanied by string instruments, which lets us know they were intended for corporate worship. The lyrics rise out of faith intersecting human life. You find jubilation and thanksgiving but also anger, lament and complaint to God about the situations faced by a group or individual. In all cases, the psalms are addressed to a God *in whom the person and congregation has faith and trust*, because of God's past faithfulness and, in many cases, despite the current circumstances.

Psalm 1, taken as a whole, serves as an invitation and introduction to the entire Psalter. (Invite congregation to open Bibles to Psalm 1) This first psalm leads us to reflect on what it means to live one's life in accordance with God's teachings as presented in Holy Scripture.<sup>1</sup> It holds up to the community of faith ---- and not just the

individual — the hope and promise that blessings will come from delighting in the instructions of the Lord,<sup>2</sup> not as reward, but as a consequence of our oneness with God. Psalm one calls “fortunate” those who take real pleasure in living according to God’s law ---- or better translated as God’s “teachings” or more broadly, God’s will.

The psalmist uses the images of two distinct paths — God’s way or the way of the wicked, sinners and scoffers. It sets out a choice. Choose and strive to seek and study God’s ways OR follow in the steps of those who do not depend on God, who rebel against God’s will or mock God. The poet adds another pair of images to show the consequences of each chosen path. Those who depend on God and follow God’s instructions will become like trees whose roots are sunk deep near a steady source of water. Rooted in the Lord’s Word, they are tapped into the very source of life and strength. Like that tree, they will bear fruit and be blessed with a resilience during difficult times. Those who follow the way of the wicked will find their lives more like chaff, the discarded part of the wheat, with no heft, that is at the mercy of whatever winds blow.

When you put it that way, the choice seems so clear.. Who would choose anything but God’s way? Yet.... the wicked and scoffers and sin are often subtle and seductive —promising what only can mimic the good life God offers. We can easily be tempted or fooled because sin often doesn’t seem like outright “evil” exactly ....just a bit off kilter from God’s ways.<sup>3</sup> How do we discern God’s will and know when we are being swayed by those people and things that seem to glitter with goodness but are actually adverse to God’s ways of generosity and mercy, service and worship? How can we know? The Psalmist tell us we are to turn toward God day and night. We need to deliberately spend time in prayer, read scripture daily and worship weekly so God’s instructions becomes a transforming part of who we are, that we can call on, day and night, as we make those countless small or large decisions. It’s not about gritting our teeth to follow law but letting God’s teachings change our very manner of being — the very desires and values that direct our behaviors.

In our human sinfulness, we usually don’t put happy together with following rules. But the law of God is ultimately the law of love. “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul body and mind and love your neighbor as yourself.” Today we remember that kind of love is modeled by the Triune God: Father-Son-Holy Spirit — a community in one, “each centering upon the others, voluntarily, pouring love, delight, and adoration into each other, creating a dynamic, pulsating dance of joy and love”<sup>4</sup> that spoke and breathed life into a new creation so that triune love could be shared with us. This is the

God in whose image we are created. Created to love as the Triune community. Which is why, as Psalm 1 tells us, we will be most happy and thriving when we live a “God-directed and neighbor-oriented” way of life,<sup>5</sup> walking together in Christ for the sake of the world, joining in the love and dance of the Trinity. Amen. L.M. Alessandri 5/30/15

#### ENDNOTES

- 
1. Adapted from Mark Throntveit's "Commentary on Psalm 1" as posted on [www.workingpreacher.org](http://www.workingpreacher.org)
  2. Walter C. Bouzard, "Commentary on Psalm 1" as posted on [www.workingpreacher.org](http://www.workingpreacher.org)
  3. Adapted from James Howell, "Commentary on Psalm 1" as posted on [www.workingpreacher.org](http://www.workingpreacher.org)
  4. Adapted from a quoted from Tim Kellor (;pastor & author) as cited in a blog entitled, "The Dance of the Trinity" posted on <https://thefarrands.wordpress.com/2013/06/04/the-dance-of-the-trinity/>
  5. J. Clinton McCann, "Commentary on Psalm 1" as posted on [www.workingpreacher.org](http://www.workingpreacher.org)