

Psalm 146: God's characteristics



Psalm 146 (145) (Mode 1. 5....65 / 3.....23)

This is an invitation to praise the Lord because of who the Lord is – a God who cares for those who place their trust in him.

Praise the Lord, O my soul!
I will sing praises to my God
I will sing all my life long,
make music to my God while I live.

The Psalmist tells himself to praise God from the depths of his being (his 'soul, his nepesh).

Put no trust in princes,
in human beings who must die.

‘Mortal human beings’ are those who come from ‘adam’, and so from the ‘adamah (the ‘earth’, see verse 4), to which they must return.

‘Thus says the Lord: Cursed are those who trust in mere mortal human beings and make mere flesh their strength, whose hearts turn away from the Lord. Blessed are those who trust in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord’(Jeremiah 17:5,7).

‘O grant us help against the foe, for human help is worthless. With God we shall do valiantly; it is he who will tread down our foes’(Psalm 60:11-12).

‘It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to put confidence in mortal human beings. It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to put confidence in princes’(Psalm 118:8-9).

When their breath departs, they return to the earth;
on that day their plans come to nothing.

‘Humans, made of earth a short time before, after a little while go to the earth from which all are taken, when the time comes to return the borrowed souls’(Wisdom 15:8).

‘All that is of earth returns to the earth,
and what is from above returns above’(Sirach 40:11).

‘You turn us back to dust, and say:
Turn back, you mortal human beings’(Psalm 90:3).

‘Remember that you fashioned me like clay;
and will you turn me to dust again?’(Job 10:9).

‘All humankind [’adam] must go to their eternal home, and the mourners will go about the streets; before the silver cord is snapped, and the golden bowl is broken, and the pitcher is broken at the fountain, and the wheel broken at the cistern, and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the breath returns to God who gave it.’(Ecclesiastes 12:5-7)

Open to receive your blessing
are those whose hope is the God of Jacob,
who made the heavens, the earth and the seas,
and all that is in them.

‘Know that I am with you [Jacob] and will keep you
wherever you go, and will bring you back to this
land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I
have promised you’(Genesis 28:15).

‘You are the God of my salvation;
for you I wait all day long’(Psalm 25:5).

‘I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry.’(Psalm 40:1)

‘You, Lord, are my hope, my trust, Lord, from my youth.’(Psalm 71:5)

‘Hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is great power to redeem’(Psalm 130:7).

‘Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need’(Hebrews 4:16).

I. Lord, you keep faith forever

This is the first of ten qualities which the psalmist attributes to the Lord. We are told that God keeps faith for ever. This means that God will keep all the promises he has ever made to you and to your children and to the world. We will never be without God's love, no matter how dark the road may seem. Can we believe this when things are going hard for us?

2. You are just to the oppressed.

If we believe that God executes right judgment for the oppressed, then a lot of people must not be listening or responding to grace. If we were, the world would not be such an unjust place. Is God asking me or you to reach out in one or other area of oppression and do what we can, always respecting persons and in love, to put injustices right? Is God inspiring me, or us as a community, to do something in a specific area. If so am I willing to listen and to begin responding?

Jesus' agenda - see Luke 4

3. You give food to the hungry

Jesus gave food to the hungry (See Mark 6:34-44; Matthew 25:35-40). Can we love God without sharing his longing to reach out to meet people's hunger - for bread, for love, for a listening ear, for dignity, for a place and a home?

4. and freedom to prisoners.

‘Loose the bonds of injustice, undo the thongs of the yoke, let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke’(Isaiah 58:6).

See Jesus’ example (Matthew 4:16; Luke 13:16). If so many people are locked into racism and prejudice and destructive addictions, and inability to forgive, it is not because grace is lacking. It must be because so many are insensitive to grace and failing to respond to the inspiration of God’s loving Spirit to go out and help unlock the prisons that we create in our fear.

5. You open the eyes of the blind.

‘Thus says God, the Lord ... I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.’(Isaiah 42:5-7)

‘I will lead the blind by a road they do not know, by paths they have not known I will guide them. I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground. These are the things I will do, and I will not forsake them’(Isaiah 42:16).

6. You lift up those who are bowed down.

‘The Lord is faithful in all his words, and gracious in all his deeds. The Lord upholds all who are falling, and raises up all who are bowed down’(Psalm 145:13-14).

7. You love the righteous;

8. you watch over strangers.

‘God gives the desolate a home to live in’(Psalm 68:6).

9. You uphold the orphan and the widow.

‘Learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow’(Isaiah 1:17).

10. Lord, you love the just,
but thwart the path of the wicked.

The Lord reigns forever,
your God, O Zion, for all generations.

‘The Lord is king; let the peoples tremble! He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake! The Lord is great in Zion; he is exalted over all the peoples’(Psalm 99:1-2)

‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign forever and ever’(Revelation 11:15).