

Psalm 145

14th, 18th & 25th Sundays Year A

17th Sunday Year B

5th Sunday of Easter year C; 31st Sunday Year C

Office of Readings Sunday Week 3

Evening Prayer Friday Week 4 & Christ the King

The title reads: 'Praise. Of David.' Before praying the psalm let us note its special themes. The key theme is that of totality and comprehensiveness. This is expressed by the acrostic form (The letter 'n' is missing in the Hebrew, but is supplied in the Greek Septuagint - verse 13b). Totality is also clearly stated in the following verses:

'I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name *forever and ever*.
Every day I will bless you, and praise your name *forever and ever*' (verses 1-2).

'YHWH is faithful in *all* his words, and gracious in *all* his deeds'(verse 13b).

'My mouth will speak the praise of YHWH,
and *all* flesh will bless his holy name *forever and ever*' (verse 21).

It is a psalm praising YHWH the king:

'I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever' (verse 1).

'They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom, and tell of your power,
to make known to all people your mighty deeds,
and the glorious splendour of your kingdom.

Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and your dominion endures throughout all generations' (verses 11-13).

The reign of YHWH is gracious, for he cares for and saves especially the weak and needy:

'YHWH upholds all who are falling, and raises up all who are bowed down.
The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season.
You open your hand, satisfying the desire of every living thing'(verses 14-16).

'YHWH fulfils the desire of all who fear him; he also hears their cry, and saves them.
YHWH watches over all who love him'(verses 19-20).

Various characteristics of YHWH are praised:

YHWH is great [Hebrew *gādôl*, גָּדוֹל] and powerful [Hebrew *gibbôr*, גִּבּוֹר].

'Great is YHWH, and greatly to be praised; his greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall laud your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts. On the glorious splendour of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate. The might of your awesome deeds shall be proclaimed, and I will declare your greatness'(verses 3-6).

'They [all creatures, especially the *ḥasîdîm* - those loved by God] shall tell of your power,
to make known to all peoples your mighty deeds'(verses 11-12).

YHWH's glory* [Hebrew *kābôd*, כְּבוֹד].

‘On the glorious splendour of your majesty, I will meditate’(verse 5).

‘They [all creatures, especially the Hasidim - those loved by God] shall speak of the glory of your kingdom . . .

to make known to all people the glorious splendour of your kingdom’(verses 11-12).

YHWH is good [Hebrew *tôb*, טוֹב].

‘All generations shall celebrate the fame of your abundant goodness’(verse 7).

‘YHWH is good to all’(verse 9).

YHWH is righteous/just* [Hebrew *šaddîq*, צַדִּיק].

‘All generations shall sing aloud of your righteousness’(verse 7).

‘YHWH is just in all his ways’(verse 17).

YHWH is gracious [Hebrew *ḥannûn*, חַנּוּן].

‘YHWH is gracious’(verse 8).

‘YHWH is gracious [Greek *hosios*] in all his deeds’(LXX verse 13).

YHWH is tenderly compassionate [Hebrew *raḥûm*, רַחוּם].

‘YHWH is tenderly compassionate’(verse 8).

‘His compassion is over all that he has made’(verse 9).

YHWH's love is long suffering [Hebrew *'erek 'appayîm*, אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם].

‘YHWH is slow to anger’(verse 8).

YHWH's steadfast love/covenant love/kindness* [Hebrew *ḥesed*, חֶסֶד].

‘YHWH is abounding in kindness’(verse 8).

‘YHWH is kind in everything he does’(verse 17).

YHWH's faithfulness [Hebrew *'emûnâ*, אֱמוּנָה].

‘YHWH is faithful [Greek *pistos*] in all his words’(LXX verse 13).

YHWH is close [Hebrew *qārûb*, קָרִיב].

‘YHWH is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth’(verse 18).

YHWH is holy [Hebrew *qōdeš*, קֹדֶשׁ].

‘All flesh will bless his holy name forever and ever’(verse 21).

Praise of YHWH

[ס] ¹I will extol you, my God and King, and bless* your name forever and ever.

[צ] ²Every day I will bless* you, and praise your name forever and ever.

[ג] ³Great is YHWH*, and greatly to be praised; his greatness cannot be fathomed.

[ג] ⁴One generation shall laud your works to another, and shall declare your mighty deeds.

[ג] ⁵On the glorious splendour of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.

[ג] ⁶The might of your awesome deeds shall be proclaimed, and I will declare your greatness.

[ג] ⁷They will celebrate the fame of your abundant goodness, and will sing aloud of your justice*.

[ג] ⁸YHWH is gracious and tenderly compassionate*, slow to anger* and abounding in kindness*.

[צ] ⁹YHWH is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made.

[ג] ¹⁰All your works shall give thanks to you, YHWH, and all your faithful shall bless* you.

Have you not known? Have you not heard? YHWH is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.

– Isaiah 40:28

As for me, I would seek God, and to God I would commit my cause. He does great things and unsearchable, marvellous things without number.

– Job 5:8-9

He does great things beyond understanding, and marvellous things without number.

– Job 9:10

YHWH passed before him, and proclaimed, ‘YHWH, YHWH, a God tenderly compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in kindness and faithfulness.’

– Exodus 34:6

Bless YHWH, who crowns you with kindness and tender compassion.

– Psalm 103:4

You love all that exists and detest none of the things you have made, for you would not have made anything if you had hated it.

– Wisdom 11:24

The ‘faithful’ are the *ḥasîdîm* – those who welcome God’s *ḥesed*. and keep the covenant.

Commenting on God's tender compassion and long suffering love, Origen, the first great scholar of Scripture, in his commentary on Ezekiel writes:

The Father, God of the universe, long suffering, full of mercy and compassion - is it possible that he does not suffer in any way? Do you not know that when he undertook human affairs he underwent human suffering? If people call on him he is moved with compassion and shares their pain, he suffers greatly from love and enters into the experience of things which, because of the greatness of his nature, he cannot of himself experience. For our sakes he takes upon himself human suffering.

– PG 13,715

YHWH sits enthroned forever.

– Psalm 9:7

My days are like a lengthening shadow;
I wither away like grass. But you, YHWH,
reign forever; your name endures
from one generation to the next.

– Psalm 102:11-12

YHWH reigns forever, your God, O Zion,
for all generations. Praise YH!

– Psalm 146:10

YHWH sustains the just ... YHWH makes secure
our steps. It is he who holds us in his heart as we
journey through life. We might stumble, but we
shall not fall, for YHWH holds us by the hand.

– Psalm 37:17,23-24

YHWH lifts up those who are bowed down.

– Psalm 146:8

All these creatures look to you to give them their
food in due season. When you give to them, they
gather it up; when you open your hand, they are
filled with good things.

– Psalm 104:27-28

'O you who answer prayer! All flesh comes to you, with its burden of guilt. Our transgressions overwhelm us, but still you pardon them. Happy is the person whom you choose to bring near to live in your courts ... You visit the earth and water it, you greatly enrich it; the river of God is swollen. You provide the grain harvest by watering the furrows abundantly ... You crown the year with your bounty; your furrows overflow with abundance. The pastures of the wilderness overflow, the hills are girded with joy, the meadows are clothed with flocks, and the valleys are decked with grain. Together they shout and sing for joy.

– Psalm 65

[C] ¹¹They will speak of the
glory* of your kingdom, and
proclaim your power,
[G] ¹²to make known to all peo-
ple your mighty deeds,
and the glorious* splendour of
your kingdom.

[T] ¹³Your kingdom is an ev-
erlasting kingdom, and your
dominion endures throughout
all generations.

[I] YHWH is faithful in all his
words, and gracious* in all his
deeds.

[C] ¹⁴YHWH upholds all who
are falling, and raises up all
who are bowed down.

[S] ¹⁵The eyes of all look to
you, and you give them their
food in due season.

[E] ¹⁶You open your hand, satis-
fying the desire of every living
thing.

Praise of YHWH

[ז] ¹⁷YHWH is just* in all his ways, and kind* in all his doings.

[ק] ¹⁸YHWH is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.

[ג] ¹⁹He fulfils the desire of all who fear* him; he hears their cry and saves* them.

[ע] ²⁰YHWH watches over all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy.

[ה] ²¹My mouth will utter the praise of YHWH, and all flesh* will bless* his holy name forever and ever.

Seek YHWH while he may be found, call upon him while he is near.

– Isaiah 55:6

It was you who took me from the womb; you entrusted me to my mother's breasts. Placed on your lap from my birth, since my mother bore me you have been my God. Do not stand far off. Trouble is near and I have no one to assist me.

– Psalm 22:9-11

Hear my prayer, YHWH, attend to my cry; do not be deaf to my tears.

– Psalm 39:12

I anxiously waited for YHWH; he stooped down to me and heard my cry.

– Psalm 40:1

Saint Augustine reflects on this psalm in his '*Ennarationes*':

Look at the whole fabric of creation, all its intricate and ordered beauty, its harmony swelling to a crescendo from the simplest to the most intricate forms, only to descend again without interruption, splendid in its variation - all of creation praises the glory of God.

In what sense can we say God is praised? God is praised when we, contemplating it and finding it beautiful, praise God.

The perfection of the earth is like a voice that is mute. Let us fix our gaze upon it and see its beauty. Let us look at the life constantly bursting forth, the energy, the wonder of the seed that gives birth to something so much grander than itself. Let us see it, and in our contemplation seek answers to our questions. Let us allow ourselves to be overwhelmed as we inquire. Let us discover the immense power of it all, its beauty and energy. We will come to realise that creation does not exist of itself. It points to its Creator. What we have discovered in it witnesses to the one who gives it all it is, and we are carried on to praise the Creator. And so, as we contemplate the perfection of this world, its very beauty responds: 'I do not make myself. It is God!

Let us observe this world. All its beauty surrounds us, and we are part of this creation! And what of the beauty of the angelic world which also envelops us? And what of the reign of God's love? This we do not yet see in all its splendour, but we know to believe in it even though we see it so imperfectly. Believing in it, we long for it, and this longing enables us to bear all things. It is the grandeur of a perfection which will certainly be revealed. Not yet seeing God, we are in love with him, that we may possess him when we see his beauty.

Saint Therese of Lisieux, in her poem on the Sacred Heart of Jesus (1895), writes:

One day, O my God, like Magdalen,
 I wanted so much to see and be close to you.
 My gaze searched the immense plain
 seeking to find the Master and King.
 My eyes caught the clear ocean wave,
 the star, the flower and the bird. I cried:
 'If I do not see God, O beautiful nature,
 you are for me only one vast tomb!'

Joseph Mary Plunkett (executed 1916) writes of Jesus:

I see his blood upon the rose
 And in the stars the glory of his eyes,
 His body gleams amid eternal snows,
 His tears fall from the skies.
 I see his face in every flower;
 The thunder and the singing of the birds
 Are but his voice – and carved by his power
 Rocks are his written words.
 All pathways by his feet are worn,
 His strong heart stirs the ever-beating sea,
 His crown of thorns is twined with every thorn,
 His cross in every tree.