

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL 2021

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ADVENT DEVOTIONAL NOVEMBER 29, 2021

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 145

- 1 I will extol you, my God and King,
and bless your name forever and ever.
- 2 Every day I will bless you,
and praise your name forever and ever.
- 3 Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised;
his greatness is unsearchable.
- 4 One generation shall laud your works to another,
and shall declare your mighty acts.
- 5 On the glorious splendor of your majesty,
and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.
- 6 The might of your awesome deeds shall be proclaimed,
and I will declare your greatness.
- 7 They shall celebrate the fame of your abundant goodness,
and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.
- 8 The Lord is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
- 9 The Lord is good to all,
and his compassion is over all that he has made.

10 All your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord,
and all your faithful shall bless you.
11 They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom,
and tell of your power,
12 to make known to all people your mighty deeds,
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.
13 Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and your dominion endures throughout all generations.

The Lord is faithful in all his words,
and gracious in all his deeds.
14 The Lord upholds all who are falling,
and raises up all who are bowed down.
15 The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food in due season.
16 You open your hand,
satisfying the desire of every living thing.
17 The Lord is just in all his ways,
and kind in all his doings.
18 The Lord is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth.
19 He fulfills the desire of all who fear him;
he also hears their cry, and saves them.
20 The Lord watches over all who love him,
but all the wicked he will destroy.
21 My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord,
and all flesh will bless his holy name forever and ever.

DEVOTIONAL

The Rev. Michelle Wahila

An acrostic, Psalm 145 uses the letters of the Hebrew alphabet successively to begin each phrase of praise throughout this piece of poetic wisdom. With each letter of the alphabet used, God is lauded. It's like saying everything, even every word from A to Z gives praise to the Lord. The Lord is "great" and "good." Gracious and merciful, God's steadfast love is abounding, and God's compassion is over all things.

This hymn of praise could be a rather fitting angelic chorus – perfect for the Christmas season. But what about those years when Christmas carols don't resound in our hearts and our cup of cheer is empty? As 2021 draws to a close, we may not be ready to string up twinkling lights; we may not be able to gather with family and friends to celebrate.

This Psalm, like the others in this section (139-144), is attributed to David. As we read the words of praise, we would do well to remember David's own narrative. Assassinations, exploitations, war, grief, power, and privilege—David's story is filled with turmoil. Amid dark valleys, David found words of praise for a King greater than he.

A life in turmoil and a world in turmoil is set in contrast to hope penned with poetic prose. From A to Z, we come to understand not just that God is to be praised, but why: the Lord upholds all who are falling... the Lord is just in all his ways . . . the Lord is near to all who call on him.

God sparks hope within darkness through mighty acts of justice, compassion, and mercy. The Lord picks up those who are falling and satisfies need. Forever and always on the side of the marginalized and suffering, these words describe a kin-dom where the foundation is God's faithfulness to the weary and worn. God gives steadfast love to the failing and faltering.

The challenge for David and for us is to speak words of praise "in the midst." We need not look far to see the faces of those suffering. Perhaps we ourselves are walking dark, tumultuous valleys. Praise "in the midst" must look like hope, and hope is sparked when holy words of justice, mercy, and compassion are put into action.

For hope to be concrete, it must be experienced, and we experience God's steadfast love in our kinship. Words of praise are passed from generation to generation, because God's mighty acts call us all into a new world and a new way of being—together.

Together, we await the birth of Emmanuel, "God with us." May we do so "in the midst" with the justice, compassion, and mercy of God guiding our hearts and hands.

PRAYER

God of abundant goodness, guide us in your compassion and justice. Draw us into new ways of being and living together. May our kinship be marked by your love; our actions marked by your mercy. May hope be sparked "in the midst" of turmoil. May our lives resound with songs of praise for the One who is with us, intertwining all into a story of eternity. Amen.

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