



ADVENT DEVOTIONAL DECEMBER 10, 2024

Weekly theme: Peace

SCRIPTURE

PSALM 146

- 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,
your God, O Zion, for all generations.
Praise the LORD!

DEVOTION

The Rev. Dr. Richard W. Wingfield '02/'13

The psalm is the first of five Hallel psalms. Here, the psalmist vows his praise to God and hope in God for his entire life because of God's character, care, and concern for the most vulnerable of society.

In this broken and polarized world with its volatile rhetoric, many powerful voices are clamoring for our attention claiming to be for us. In many cases, we have lent our voices to this rhetorical fray, declaring our support for them. Yet, this psalm is a reminder not to place our trust in those who possess power, prestige, position, or prosperity. Their lives are temporary, their plans finite, and they have no control over their destiny, let alone the lives of others.

Psalm 146 is a call to orient our praise and hope toward the everlasting and sovereign God of all creation. It is God who will see to it that the most vulnerable and marginalized, of whom Howard Thurman declared, "whose backs are against the wall" are cared for. Governments and armies have their place, but human power pales in comparison in the world where God reigns.

Yes, we are to sing the praises of our God. But the vocality of our praise must never be a substitute for our vocation of service to others. For the quality of the faith is judged by the quality of the justice in the land, i.e., how the least members of society are treated. My father often declared that we are the hands and feet of God. It is God who gives us the ability to extend the heart of God.

This psalm is God's letter of recommendation for the powerless. Notice them. Help them. Become one of them. Walk with them as the beloved community. It was Dr. James Forbes who once stated, "No one gets into heaven without a letter of recommendation from the poor."

And as we extend our hand, the voice of the Master says, "Inasmuch as you have done it to the least of these, you have done it unto me." This is indeed a life that's blessed.

PRAYER

Dear God, in a world that constantly calls for our allegiance, help us to trust you in all things. Help us to work out what you are working in us. Give us a heart like yours and help us to be an extension of your love. In Christ's name, amen.

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