

Advent Devotional December 10, 2023

Scripture

Psalm 150

- 1 *Praise the Lord!*
Praise God in his sanctuary;
praise him in his mighty firmament!
- 2 *Praise him for his mighty deeds;*
praise him according to his surpassing greatness!

- 3 *Praise him with trumpet sound;*
praise him with lute and harp!
- 4 *Praise him with tambourine and dance;*
praise him with strings and pipe!
- 5 *Praise him with clanging cymbals;*
praise him with loud clashing cymbals!
- 6 *Let everything that breathes praise the Lord!*
Praise the Lord!

Devotion

Franklin Tanner Capps, Director of the Miller Summer Youth Institute

Many scientists are saying that a sixth mass extinction event is upon us. This conclusion has provoked skepticism and outright denial—reactions that are quite understandable, given how tough it is to face the fact that our lifestyles and collective behaviors are likely responsible for the decline of vast webs of life that may take us down with them when they finally collapse. It's also unsettling news, because it asks us to come to terms with the fact that we're creatures whose lives depend on the lives of others. And in a fundamental way, we're reminded that we humans are neither the point nor the final goal of God's creative purposes. Rather, we are invited—in our limited time and limited ways—to be worshipful participants in what God is doing across creation.

Like the news of a sixth mass extinction, Psalm 150 is displacing. Because God is not confined to the sanctuary, the psalmist calls on praise to arise in the firmament. The clap of human hands cannot be heard there, but the beating of griffon vulture wings in the skies above Ethiopia can. God will be praised with or without us. While humans have rerouted rivers and manipulated the elements, sometimes to catastrophic consequence, human hands have also fashioned bone and bark into trumpets, reed and bamboo into pipes, skin and wood into lutes and tambourines, and alloyed the basic elements of copper and tin into cymbals. For the psalmist, these instruments join a cosmic chorus that are voicing creation's praise.

Advent is an interlude for quiet listening. During this time of waiting and anticipation, may we pay closer attention to the de-centering and displacing hums, chirps, whistles, and drumming of so many other creatures who are inviting us to live lives of joyful care while joining them in the worship of the Creator.

Prayer

Lord God, grant us a spirit of listening that would open us to our fellow creatures, so that, through them and with them, we might come to know you more deeply and praise you more fully. Amen.