

LENT DEVOTIONAL



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LENT DEVOTIONAL MARCH 23, 2025

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

Stephanie Backus '24

"Praise the Lord" the psalmist writes. "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord." It's been a hard year. We've watched as students lost their lives in school shootings, as the nation became deeply divided in a particularly difficult presidential election, and as the increasing severity of weather from winter storms to hurricanes has left communities devastated by damages. In these moments, it can be hard to find the spirit with which one can praise the Lord. But after a particularly devastating hurricane, two communities showed us all what the Psalmist meant when they wrote "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord."

Montreat, N.C., and adjacent Black Mountain, N.C., were devastated by Hurricane Helene as the onslaught of rain led nearby creeks and rivers to leave their banks and rush through communities in the western part of the state. Some towns were destroyed, and while Montreat and Black Mountain suffered considerable damage, it's what happened after the storm that so aptly illustrates Psalm 150.

The Montreat Conference Center holds a particular place in my heart. Coming into seminary in 2021, I did not even know it existed, but after my first summer experience there with the Presbyterian Association of Music's Worship Conference, I fell in love. I had found a place where everything that has breath praised God. Even the bears tried to come into the conference center's worship space one Sunday morning!

After Hurricane Helene, the conference center became a place for information for the community. It became a place where people could come together to learn when power and water would be restored and what they could do to help their neighbors. Nearby Black Mountain Presbyterian Church became a place where people found fellowship over a meal. Eventually, the church had to rent a nearby warehouse for all of the supplies being donated. It would have been easy for both to close for a period of time, so that they could evaluate their own damage and care for their own people. But they didn't. They opened to care for all people. What a beautiful example of praising the Lord, in unusual ways, outside of Sunday morning worship. We praise the Lord always—for God is powerful, and nothing can surpass God's greatness.

PRAYER

Good and gracious God, in creation, you gave us breath with which to praise you for all of our days. When times get tough, I pray you strengthen me in order that I may be able to continue praising you. I know tough days are to come. I pray you continue to pour your Spirit out upon me. In the name of Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.

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