



Calvary Presbyterian Church
Sunday, JULY 9, 2023

He Lifts Us Up:
Reflections on Psalm 145
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SCRIPTURE:

PSALM 145:8-14 (The Voice Translation)

*The Eternal is gracious.
He shows mercy to His people.
For Him anger does not come easily, but faithful love does—and it is rich
and abundant.*

*⁹But the Eternal's goodness is not exclusive—it is offered freely to all.
His mercy extends to all His creation.*

*¹⁰All creation will stand in awe of You, O Eternal One.
Thanks will pour from the mouths of every one of Your creatures;
Your holy people will bless You.*

*¹¹They will not be silent; they will talk of the grandeur of Your kingdom
and celebrate the wonder of Your power*

*¹²Until everyone on earth who has ears to hear knows Your valiant acts
and the splendor of Your kingdom.*

*¹³Your kingdom will never end;
Your rule will endure forever.
[You are faithful to Your promise,
and Your acts are marked with grace.]*

*¹⁴The Eternal sustains all who stumble on their way.
For those who are broken down, God is near. He raises them up in hope.*

SERMON

It was battered, scarred, lost. And there was a story there for sure.
Why was it there?
Who put it there?

It was like a writing prompt for the middle schoolers that I used to teach—**use your imagination and write the story of what precipitated this particular scene.**

I was throwing away my root beer from Taco Time when I saw a violin laying on top of the trash inside the dumpster at my apartment complex. It wasn't covered in mushy banana peels or dried orange rinds; it was just laying there on a pile of plastic garbage bags. I didn't know exactly what I was looking at, but I knew that it didn't belong there.

I wondered if a kid decided he didn't want to practice any more and found a convenient place to stow his instrument. I wondered if it was stolen and if the thief was disappointed that the case wasn't full of money.

I was able to lean into the dumpster and flip the lid backwards to close the case without dumping the violin. I was able to latch one of the latches to grab the case by the handle and lift it out. I put it in my car, and I drove to church.

Imagination is a requirement for this journey of faith. We need to imagine the life of the psalmist...imagine the story behind the stories of everyone we meet...imagine the love of God that is so beyond our comprehension.

Psalm 145 is known as an orientation Psalm, and we must let it re-orient us or let it change our perspective on the way we see God and/or how we perceive God sees others.

The psalm is a psalm of David; David is written not as a king leading his people into battle, but as a servant leading all of us into sacred worship.

It is an acrostic psalm (each line begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet in respective order). It has 21 verses and today's passage is the section in the middle: presumably summarizing the emphasis of the whole psalm.

"Kol" in Hebrew is the word for ALL. We must listen for how many times and ways the word ALL shows up in this particular psalm. ALL means everything! Yahweh is the ALL king. God's kingdom is an universal, everlasting kingdom—of an all-inclusive king, filled with unrelenting devotion to us. The psalm speaks of a comprehensive, sweeping expanse of God's rule in the world, AND ALL of us are to praise the all king to all the earth.

HESED is hard to translate into English. We say loving kindness. The word HESED means both womb and love. HESED means an all-love, all-grace, all-mercy kind of faithfulness.

The main point of this psalm is that Yahweh is the lord of all, which means—especially means—beyond Israel. It is a scandalous claim (and perhaps why Jesus was considered a stumbling block), but the psalm proclaims the encompassing majesty and goodness of God. Our God was, is and will remain to be about undeniable inclusivity, and especially an inclusivity that includes the downtrodden.

Consider Psalm 113:7...

In the NLT: *He lifts the poor from the dust and the needy from the garbage heap.*

In the KJV: *He raises up the poor out of the dust and lifts up the needy out of the dunghill.*

In The Message/Eugene Peterson: *He picks up the poor from out of the dirt, rescues the forgotten who've been thrown out with the trash.*

Poor doesn't simply mean without resources, but it means downtrodden, as stepping on or pushing down trash in a dumpster. He refers to the oppressed, the persecuted.

When we add verse 8 to Psalm 113:7, we understand the intention of God lifting those from the ash heap, because our God is a dumpster diver, and raising them to positions of power:

He gathers up the poor from their dirt floors and pulls the needy from the trash heaps and places them among heads of state, seated next to the rulers of his people Where they cannot be ignored.

God does not discard, throw away or place his beloved in the ash heap.
We do.
We do.

Every time we place someone beneath us, every time we diminish the worthiness of another, we place them in the ash heap. Friends, **YOU will not look into the eyes of anyone that God doesn't already love.**

Today we are going to hear some special music. In the lyrics, you hear the crowd ask the question: what changed? The song is about how we perceive someone's worthiness and how we measure the worth of a person, especially those who may be a stranger to us.

The song emphasizes the touch of the Master's hand. But the master, in the song, didn't really change the worth of anything or anyone, but what we must consider as we listen to the lyrics is that God wants to change our perspective regarding the worth of a person.

Like Christ, we are to embody gracious mercy. We are to see the downtrodden, and then, on behalf of God, reach into the dumpster and lift them up. This has always been God's design to bring about HIS KINGDOM COME!

Friends, let go of the temptation to pre-judge **or prejudice** someone who you believe deserves a dumpster, instead be the one who sees the downtrodden as a beloved child of God whose worth is already established.

Don't judge worthiness. Reveal it!

God's HESED (womb-love, loving kindness) is for all—all the Earth—all the people—all the days.

God's love doesn't change. God's heart doesn't change.

It is our hearts that must change; we must see others through the loving eyes of God.

The Touch of the Master's Hand

*Well it was battered and scarred and the auctioneer felt
It was hardly worth his while
To waste much time on the old violin
But he held it up with a smile
He said it sure ain't much but it's all we've got left
I guess we ought to sell it too
Oh, now who'll start the bid on this old violin
Just one more and we'll be through*

*And then he cried:
One, give me one dollar, who'll make it two
Only two dollars, who'll make it three
three dollars twice, now that's a good price
Who's gonna bid for me
Raise up your hand now, don't wait any longer
The auction's about to end
Who's got for just one dollar more to bid on this old violin*

*Well, the air was hot and the people stood around
As the sun was setting low
And from the back of the crowd, a gray haired man
Came forward and picked up the bow
He wiped the dust from the old violin
And he tightened up the strings
Then he played out a melody pure and sweet
Sweeter than the angels sing
And then the music stopped and the auctionier
With a voice that was quiet and low
He said now what am I bid for this old violin
And he held it up with a bow*

Then he cried
One, give me one thousand, who'll make it two
Only two thousand, who'll make it three
Three thousand twice now that's a good price
Come on, who's gonna bid for me
And the people cried out, what made the change
We don't understand
Then the auctioneer stopped and he said with a smile
It was the touch of the Master's hand

You know, there's many a man with his life out of tune
Battered and scarred with sin
And he's auctioned cheap to a thankless world
Much like that old violin
Then the Master comes and the old, foolish crowd
They never understand the worth of a soul
And the change that is wrought just by one touch
Of the Master's hand

(oh) Then he cried out:
One, give me one thousand, who'll make it two
Only two thousand, who'll make it three
Three thousand twice now that's a good price
Come on, who's gonna bid for me
And the people cried out, what made the change
We don't understand
Then the auctioneer stopped and he said with a smile
It was the touch
(ooo) It was the touch
of the Master's hand

May it be so. May it be so.

