



FROM THE PASTOR

Psalm 131, Of David.

- ¹ My heart is not proud, LORD,
my eyes are not haughty;
I do not concern myself with great matters
or things too wonderful for me.
- ² But I have calmed and quieted myself,
I am like a weaned child with its mother;
like a weaned child I am content.
- ³ Israel, put your hope in the LORD
both now and forevermore.

Let me share with you today a delightful little psalm: Psalm 131. Only three verses long, it is short enough to commit to memory. These three little verses pack a powerful punch. It occurs to me, as I think about this psalm, that it is just the right thought with which I should close my eyes in sleep after a hectic or challenging day—and if you are like me, every day is usually a hectic or challenging day on some level. Or, during the day, in the midst of the daily stresses of life, it would be refreshing to just close your eyes for a moment (unless you are driving or operating machinery) and let these words run across your mind.

The very first verse of this psalm provides for us a reality check.

***My heart is not proud, LORD,
my eyes are not haughty;
I do not concern myself with great matters
or things too wonderful for me.***

Today people feel like they have to be right about everything and then, being convinced of their rightness, defeat or destroy all disagreement with them. That sense of self-righteousness is a very heavy burden to bear. Back in the very early days of the television show SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE, before it became an instrument for a particular ideological propaganda, there was a delightful comic on the show named Gilda Radner. She often played a character she called Roseanne Roseannadanna. As this character, she would appear on the “newscast” part of the show to give an editorial about some pressing matter of the day. She would always get one of the words, upon which her editorial was based, mixed up and end up giving a talk on something completely irrelevant. When corrected, she would simply say, “Oh well, never mind.” She was fun to watch and she reminded us of an important truth. Everybody gets something wrong sometime!

The Christian life is not an examination to see how well we get things right. There is only one thing we need to get right—faith in Jesus Christ—and our broken will is not able to get it right. We get it right because God pours into our hearts the Holy Spirit to bring us to this saving faith. Consider the words of what Jesus said to Peter when he confessed Jesus as ‘the Messiah, the Son of the living God’: “***Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my***



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Father in heaven. (Matthew 16:17). Paul expresses it this way, **"...and no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit.** (1 Corinthians 12:3b) So you see, even if we are right in our thinking and speaking about what is fundamental in life, it is God at work through us. God, not us, deserves the credit. This is tremendously freeing because not every question we face in life is fundamental and we will often get it wrong. But God—who is ultimately in control—never will.

So, we may find calm and peace even in the midst of turmoil. For we have another to sustain us, even when we are wrong. We have another to gather us to himself and hold us to himself. Here David uses the beautiful feminine imagery of a child no longer needing to nurse at the mother's breast, but feeling safe in her arms: **"But I have calmed and quieted myself, I am like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child I am content."**

I watched the Vice-Presidential Debate last night. I sure didn't see anything that looked to me like contentment. There are some very important things missing in our national and cultural context at the present moment. One of them is contentment. Not that the issues that divide us are not important. They are very important and we are called to address them. But neither candidate, neither party, neither vision of government, and not even the old guys "solving the problems of the world" in the booth at the diner will be able to fix things perfectly. But we should be thankful that we live in a world in which we can always work to change for the better in peaceful (hopefully) ways. We should always be thankful that we have God, who is with us in our struggles and promises, ultimately, to make all things new and perfect. Surely I can be content in that hope and that contentment will reach all the way into current struggles.

So contentment grows out of hope. Hope grows out of faith. And faith grows out of a trusting *relationship with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*. Or, as David so beautifully ends this psalm with the third verse: **"Israel, put your hope in the LORD both now and forevermore."**

In Christ's service,
Pastor Brian Shirey



Post Scripts:

Our lessons for this Sunday, October 11, the Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost, are:

First Reading: Isaiah 25:6-9

Psalm 23

Second Reading: Philippians 4:4-13

Gospel: Matthew 22:1-14

† for Sunday, October 18, the Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost, are:

First Reading: Isaiah 45:1-7

Psalm 96:1-13

Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Gospel: Matthew 25:15-22

† for Sunday, October 25, Reformation Sunday, are:

First Reading: Revelation 14:6-7

Psalm 46

Second Reading: Romans 3:19-28

Gospel: John 8:31-36

† We began to worship in Centennial Hall before the leaves were on the trees this spring. The leaves are beginning to turn colors and soon will fall and we are still in Centennial Hall. Three more weeks and our paraments will be changing colors: Red for Reformation Sunday, White for All Saints and Christ the King Sundays, and blue for Advent. It looks very certain that we shall see these color changes in Centennial Hall. We could, if the danger from COVID-19 would suddenly end, slip back into our sanctuary and back into our normal functioning, but that seems unlikely for a while. As I have said so often, thank you for your patience and your faithfulness. Thank you to all who cannot be in Centennial Hall on Sunday morning, but decorate it with your thoughts and especially your prayers!

† I will be on vacation for two weeks in October (8-22). So there will be two weeks in October when these little articles will not appear on our website. Again, thank you for your patience.