

Everything That Breathes
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First Presbyterian Church of Waukesha
April 3, 2016

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!

John 20:19-31

¹⁹ When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.'²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.'²² When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

²⁴ But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.'

²⁶ A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.'²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.'²⁸ Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' ²⁹ Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

³⁰ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

When I read the first verse of today's psalm, I heard strains of Dr. Seuss and, as I continued, of Benjamin Britten's *Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra, Op. 34: Themes A-F*. I suspect you're familiar with Dr. Seuss. You might know Benjamin Britten for an album which was designed to orient children to each instrumental section of an orchestra, demonstrating them individually and then demonstrating how they come together in an orchestra.¹ Our diverse orchestral instruments in the psalm stand in the stead of the diverse things of God's creation. With that in mind, I offer my thoughts this morning in homage to *Fox in Sox* and the like.

Praise God!

Praise God if you stand petite,
maybe a perfect 5'4".

Praise God if you are taller,
reaching an even 6'4".

Praise God if God made you soft
like a welcoming pillow
or lean, just as the willow.

Don't forget of God's great power
as did the frightened disciples
who heard first-hand from the women
of God's end to mortality
yet dismissed their retelling as
a delusional malady.

¹ Thanks to Wes Anderson's *Moonrise Kingdom* for introducing this great work to me.

Praise God!

Praise to our almighty God
isn't a reflection of us²
but comes from concentration
on God's far-reaching greatness!
Praise God if you're sorrowful!
Praise God if you're jubilant!
Let your praise be ascendant!

Don't forget as Simon Peter,
whose eyes saw the tomb, Christ unbound,
saw the proof that Jesus was gone,
yet whose trembling hands turned the latch,
locked them inside, dusk until dawn.
against fear, his faith was no match.

Praise God!
Praise God, you who are youthful,
you with experienced years,
you in between here and there.
From each mouth praises appear.
So not by our own feelings
do grateful praises take seed
but by our mighty God's deeds.³

Don't forget as the disciples,
who looked at faces familiar,

² *Feasting on the Word: Year C, Volume 1*, p. 387.

³ *Ibid.*

who had also been with Jesus,
yet none remembered his warnings,
his promises, his predictions,
of new life on the third morning.

Praise God!

Praise God if you feel unruffled!

Praise God if chaos brings joy!

Praise God if you are anxious,
if everything annoys.

God is greater than what troubles,
beyond our weighty concerns,
a calm beyond what we've learned.

Don't forget so very quickly
like those who rejoiced the time when
Jesus again stood before them,
then kept to themselves that good news,
safe with their safe circle of friends.
They received his breath! No one knew.

Praise God!

Praise God you courageous ones!

Praise God you the uncertain.

Praise God you who are at peace,
and you the ill and hurting,
the troubled and tormented.

When we look inward, we miss
signs of God's wonderfulness.

Don't forget the Holy Spirit,
whose inspiration was exchanged
in the expiration of breath.
Forgive sins of brothers, sisters.
One week later still locked above;
no traveling, no new blisters.

Praise God!
Praise God if your heart feels full,
or if it feels like it's crushed.
Praise God if you go to school,
or if your days are all rushed,
if you sip coffee at dawn
or rock babies at nighttime.
Give praise to our God divine!

Don't forget the friends whom you trust,
who tell of Christ's resurrection,
an incredulous tale, no doubt,
bring you good news, never falsehoods.
Don't require your Lord and God
to display for you all the "goods."

Praise God!
Praise God if you feel so blessed,
and if you feel forgotten.
If you feel verdant like Spring
or wintry, somewhat rotten,

praise God the unchangeable,
our comfort and our constant,
whose lexicon has no “can’t.”

Don’t forget those who have believed,
who shared the good news to others
to next generations and next.
It may have taken them some time
to comprehend it more fully
this mystery divine, sublime.

Praise God!

Praise God if your name begins
with an “f” or “h” or “x.”

Praise God if you’ve respired
that is, if you’ve taken breath.

Praise God if your name begins
with a “c” or “g” or “z” -
simply, each of us who breathes.

Don’t forget we sit here today
because they *did* start to proclaim
with praises in God’s firmament,
in all the earth about God’s win
because of God’s power and might,
no more grave, no more death or sin.

Praise God!

Praises be sung to our God,

not to earn any reward,
but because our God is good,
because our God is our Lord.
God defeated death, our foe,
bringing us home up above,
surrounded, embraced in love.

Amen and amen,
“so be it” we say.
We give thanks that our God
loves us this way

Let us pray: O Lord, we praise you not so that we may receive from you but because we already have. Let our prayer of thanksgiving be acceptable to you this day. Amen.