

The Second Sunday of Easter, April 11, 2010
Acts 5:27-32, Psalm 150
Revelation 1:4-8, John 20:19-31

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“Let everything that breathes praise the Lord” Ps 150:6. The ending of today’s Psalm is a good place to start. For we should at all times and in all places praise God. Every moment, every action should uplift and glorify the Lord. But how? How can we manage to always be mindful of praise? We can start by loving our neighbors as ourselves. The commandment to love our neighbors is not an excuse to neglect the love of self. For we cannot love others if we cannot be comfortable with who we are. We need to realize that God loves us in spite of ourselves. Loving others reminds us that we are all God’s children. This allows us to see the beauty in others and presents us with an opportunity for praise and thanksgiving.

With the promise and fulfillment of Easter, we are offered grace and peace. We are loved. We are set free: free from our sins, free from bondage to those sins and the sins of others. We are made whole. We are renewed in the new life of Christ. For this we offer our praise to God.

Praising God can be done in our daily lives, in our common actions. Seeing the glorious colors of spring, reading someone’s beautiful words, allows us to be thankful and praise God. Singing of any kind, in the choir, in the car, in the kitchen, is praise. Song is special because it involves not only the singer, but the listener as well. Both are joined together in praise to God. The gift of the Eucharist invokes us to praise because we are embraced by the presence of the Lord whenever we come to His table. Waking up everyday, drawing breath, moving our muscles, using our senses, should always present us with an opportunity to praise the Lord. How is it that two single cells manage to come together and produce such diverse multi-celled beings? Isn’t that amazing! We should always remember that we are fearfully and wonderfully made.

Today’s Psalm instructs us to praise God for His mighty deeds (Ps 150:2). In the resurrection, the glory of God is made manifest in Jesus Christ. We are shown that God can do all things. We are invited into this mystery, this wonderful mighty deed. We are privileged to be included, the ultimate occasion for praise.

In John’s Gospel, the disciples are confronted with fear. Fear of the unknown, fear of being alone. They are not yet sure of the resurrection. They do not yet know what has been given to them. Thomas who comes late (there’s always one in every crowd) does not believe that the Lord has risen. He refuses to accept what is told to him by the disciples, simply because he has not seen the Lord with his own eyes. But even Thomas and his doubt are an occasion for praise. Thomas comes around to acceptance, to belief like a lot of us, after the fact. And the Lord is there to welcome us into His love. Jesus comes to them and offers them peace. As soon as they recognize the Lord, their fear is replaced by joy. They are given the gift of the Holy Spirit and are sent out to share the good news with others. We too have been given this gift and are expected to share it as well. When we share what we have been given, we praise the Lord.

It is difficult to praise God when your life is in turmoil. When life is a daily struggle where does praise to the Lord fit in? My life in the last two months has been full of chaos and misery. Quite frankly, it’s been exhausting. The last thing on my mind has been praising God. And yet there have been moments, all of them unexpected, when the Lord would reach out to me to sustain me. Someone would say something that I really needed to hear. Beautiful, joyful pieces of scripture would suddenly be on a church bulletin board as I drove by or would be the reading for the week. The sunrise/sunset would be glorious. I would hear a song that would speak volumes to me. These moments were given to take me out of myself, to bring me to the point of trusting that, in the words of Julian of Norwich, “all will be well.” I was reminded that I can do all things through Christ who sustains me. My life though still chaotic, has lost a lot of the misery. I came across this statement a

few weeks ago: “there is no such thing as a problem without a Divine gift hidden within it. You have these problems because you need the gifts they carry within.” Thinking about peeling away the layers of the problem to search for the gift, lifts the burden. So if I take notice of these moments, they become an occasion for praise, for thanksgiving.

I’ve heard people wonder why the poor, the marginalized, the oppressed, seem to spend so much time praising God? Could it be that when you’ve reached a point where the only thing you can do is trust in the Lord, in His infinite love, you become open to the joy that only God can give. Even though society may have written you off, told you that don’t matter, you know that the Lord says that you are worthy, you are important. This gives you a tremendous sense of peace. This is expressed as wonder, as love, as praise.

Easter Sunday always brings about a temporary moment of praise. The church is beautifully decorated, great anthems are sung, trumpets resound. We are filled with the Good News at least for that day. The next week comes and we are back to business as usual. We’ve praised the Lord last week. We’re good for a while. But are we? Why should we only praise God on a particular occasion when we happen to think about it? Wouldn’t it be lovely to be able to praise the Lord whenever the mood hits us? Psalm 103 vs 1 and 12 read: Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy Name. Bless the Lord, all you works of his, in all places of his dominion, bless the Lord, O my soul. If we actually did what is asked of us, we would always be able to praise God because it would become habit. We would no longer have to think of praising God. It would become our permanent state of being.

In this Easter season, let us remember all that has been given to us, our lives, our friends and family, the world around us. Let us try and be mindful of praising God in those mundane moments as well as the obvious ones. The Resurrection makes that possible for us all.