

“THE GIFT OF PRAISE”

Psalm 96

December 11, 2016

The Psalms are filled with praise. In addition to the psalms that are exclusively devoted to praise, praise weaves its way through the whole range of human emotion. It interrupts sorrow, confession, complaint, even hate. The Psalms teach us, if nothing else, that praise, that is praise of the Creator, is appropriate in all circumstances. Sometimes it is quiet, playing softly beneath the psalmist's grief, while other times it is loud clashing cymbals.

Listen to what biblical scholar, Ellen Davis, says about praise:

“Praise is more than something we do for God. Although the psalmists are not wholly above using praise as a bargaining chip, they would encourage us to see the bigger picture. The truth is that praise does more for *us* than it does for God. (It is time for Christians to get over the adolescent idea that the main reason to go to church is so that God won't be disappointed). Praise looks good on the straightforward, on those who aspire to look at the world realistically, un sentimentally – that is, those who aspire *not* to view the world through the distorting lens of their own fantastic desires. In other words, praise suits those who want to see the world as it really is....

... Praising God is not concocted flattery, but the most earnest human business we can undertake. Ultimately, it is for the sake of the world: We praise God in order to see the world as God does (p.34).”

Davis goes on to say in the same book, *Getting Involved with God*:

“... the psalmist urges the righteous to sing joyfully. And in that call to rejoice lies a profound understanding of worship. We cannot defer praising God until we are fully satisfied with our situation. The basic dynamic of praise is not that God gives us something and we say, ‘Thanks,’ out of our surfeited hearts. Instead, through praise we discover how much we have in fact *already* been given. Through the language of faithful worship, we come to see the world as it really is: the work of God's hand, the object of God's endlessly patient love” (pp.37-38).

We offer our thanks this morning to the choir and musicians who offer up the gift of praise to God who is worthy of praise, but maybe more for our sake, that we might see the world as God does: in need of love and loved by God. May praise have its full effect in our hearts, as God intends. Amen.

Davis, Ellen F. *Getting Involved with God: Rediscovering the Old Testament*. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc. Lanham, Maryland, 2001.