



A Devotional for Sunday, Dec. 27, 2020

The Christ Child has come and it feels like we finally can rest. Anticipation dies down a little, and we can relax for a few weeks before we start the journey of Lent. This devotional was written with you and your family/friends in mind. May this serve as a guide for deep conversations with your loved ones.

We will start off with the Psalm for this Sunday with a quick reflection, which will be followed by questions for you to engage with along with a family member or friend. There is no right or wrong way to do this. My personal suggestion would be to make some hot coffee, tea, or cocoa, curl up with your favorite blanket and walk through this devotional with a loved one, whether they be with you in person, on zoom, or via the phone. I am praying for each of you this morning. May this be a Sunday of rest and renewal!

In Christ, Pastor Katie

Psalm 148 (NRSV)

Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens; praise him in the heights!

Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his host!

Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars!

Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens!

*Let them praise the name of the LORD, for
he commanded and they were created.*

He established them forever and ever;

he fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed.

*Praise the LORD from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps,
fire and hail, snow and frost, stormy wind fulfilling his command!*

Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars!

Wild animals and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds!

Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth!

Young men and women alike, old and young together!

*Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted;
his glory is above earth and heaven.
He has raised up a horn for his people, praise for all his faithful, for the people of Israel who are close to
him. Praise the LORD!*

During the season of Advent, we spend four weeks preparing for the coming of the Christ Child. We explore the mysteries of his conception and birth. We focus on the hope, peace, joy, and love that come with the gift of the Jesus. But what is next? Do we simply wait for the season of Lent to think and reflect about the significance of Christ's life and ministry as we prepare for Easter? Or, do we keep the spirit of Advent with us all the way through Ash Wednesday?

It is easy to get caught up in praising God during the Holiday Season, and it is just as easy to continue life as it was once the holidays are over — when the Advent wreath goes back into the church storage; when we take down our trees and lights; when respites from work and school are over. But, is that really how we are meant to live our lives?

By being what they were made to be and doing what they were made to do, the sun and moon, the hills and the mountains, the fruit trees and flying birds can remind us how we are meant to live. Creation praises God by being creation, and it is good. Wind and snow can get out of control and cause damage; people can lose sight of their limits and do great harm — and then their praise is muted. But all of them were made with purpose and made for praise, and the psalm rejoices in that.

This morning, I invite you to explore and consider the questions below for yourself. There is the initial questions and some have a follow up *Dig Deeper* question. The goal is not to have a right or wrong answer. The goal is for you to dig as deep as you are willing. Pick the questions that interest you. Then, I would invite you to gather with your family, roommates, or if you live alone, to call a family member or friend to explore these questions and thoughts:

- How do we take our experience of Advent (the preparing for and the arrival of the Christ Child) with us in our routine/daily lives?

Dig Deeper: Psalm 148 was chosen for this devotional simply because it was in the lectionary. The lectionary was established for many reasons. One of those reasons is that in three years time, the church will have gone through the entire Bible. Another reason the lectionary was first established, was in hopes that a person could go into any church in any city and hear the same scripture being read. The lectionary was carefully thought out, and scripture was never chosen at random. It has been a tool

used by Christians for many generations. Why would this Psalm be the one chosen for the lectionary reading just after Christmas? What are we to gain from this Psalm? How does it reinforce Advent and Christmas?

- How do we continue to seek and live out our purpose and praise?
Dig Deeper: Psalm 148 reminds us that we are made for a greater purpose. How do we take praising God and turn it into our daily actions? How does this move beyond the idea that praise is only singing or worshipping? Can we worship God by the way we live our lives?
- How do we resist the temptations that can accompany routine and the culture of the United States, which can lead us to put value on the wrong things and forget our Advent experience?

Dig Deeper: Israel has a history in the Old Testament of falling into this trap of getting caught up in the society and culture around them, thus ignoring their greater purpose. How can we as Christians in the United States avoid the trap? How do we become the hands and feet of Christ in our culture and society?

- How do we praise God when we are discouraged? How do we praise God when we are encouraged?

Now is a time of celebration! The Christ Child has come! We are journeying together towards Easter. The church year is new. You have a fresh slate to start over. This is a time that is worthy of celebration, praise, reflection, and rest! Amen.