

Grace, mercy, and peace be yours through Jesus Christ, your living Savior. Amen.

Psalm 148 (NKJV) — **1** Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord from the heavens; Praise Him in the heights! **2** Praise Him, all His angels; Praise Him, all His hosts! **3** Praise Him, sun and moon; Praise Him, all you stars of light! **4** Praise Him, you heavens of heavens, And you waters above the heavens! **5** Let them praise the name of the Lord, For He commanded and they were created. **6** He also established them forever and ever; He made a decree which shall not pass away. **7** Praise the Lord from the earth, You great sea creatures and all the depths; **8** Fire and hail, snow and clouds; Stormy wind, fulfilling His word; **9** Mountains and all hills; Fruitful trees and all cedars; **10** Beasts and all cattle; Creeping things and flying fowl; **11** Kings of the earth and all peoples; Princes and all judges of the earth; **12** Both young men and maidens; Old *men* and children. **13** Let them praise the name of the Lord, For His name alone is exalted; His glory is above the earth and heaven. **14** And He has exalted the horn of His people, The praise of all His saints— Of the children of Israel, A people near to Him. Praise the Lord!

Let All Creation Shout: Hallelujah!

May the words of our mouths and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in Your eyes, O Lord, our Strength and Redeemer. Amen.

In Jesus name, dear Christians,

If you were to turn to p.20 of the Lutheran Hymnal you would find something called “the Gradual.” This is the short reading that we considered between our Epistle and our Gospel reading. Following the reading of the Gradual, we join in singing the triple “hallelujah!” Now how many of you are aware of what that word “hallelujah” actually means? Well, today you can go home and tell your friends that you learned a Hebrew word.

Our text begins and ends with this Hebrew word: Hallelujah! It means “Praise the LORD.” The first part of the word, “Hallelu” means “praise” and the second part “jah” is a shortened form of Yahweh, the Hebrew name for God. We have it translated “the LORD” in all caps. Praise Jah! our text says. Hallelu-jah! Those who put together this Liturgy we find in the Lutheran Hymnal wanted to have this song ring out every service. Hallelu-jah! Praise the LORD! Indeed there is good reason for this song to ring out all the time. Let all Creation Shout: Hallelujah!

1. He created all things

Well I was away to Eau Claire this last week, my parents introduced me to a show called “Frozen Planet.” It is a program on the Discovery channel where a crew of

scientists with cameras journey to very cold, remote locations to film parts of God's creation that have never been recorded before. How sane they are to do this, I can't say. However, it opened my eyes to a whole new realm of God's creation that goes on surviving in a drastically harsh climate virtually unknown to us.

Perhaps you have seen "March of the Penguins." While we gather in our cozy homes during those cold winter months, a penguin survives a treacherous 60 mile journey to reach safe breeding grounds, find a mate, lay an egg which must be incubated by the male's body heat for an additional two months in -80 degree temperature while the mother journeys all the way back to sea to feed and obtain extra food for her young. The male then has to journey back to the sea after surviving some four months without food. The parents then must tend to the chick for additional months as spring approaches and they can finally return to the sea.

As frozen as that the Antarctic is, it is anything but dead. In fact that is what Hallelujah is all about – life. The living creation praises the living God. In the heights, all His angels, all His hosts, sun, moon, stars, the heavens above the atmosphere – the creation is alive! God has created it just so. God has given life to the remotest corners of the Antarctic, where the beauty of His hand cannot be ignored.

One might wonder, well, how can penguins praise God? How can the sun and moon shout Hallelujah? (v.5,6) Praise is all about giving honor or credit to the higher attribute. The creation shouts forth praise simply by being there. Evolution cannot silence the glory of God's creation. In fact, we are witnessing right now that presence of God in His creation this Spring season as new life comes forth around us. It is as if the trees are reaching with hands stretched out to heaven to praise God for the gift of life. The creation testifies to a Creator by perfectly obeying God's command as v.8 says.

How many of us can claim such obedience? The creation never fails to do as God asks. As God was creating this world, there was not one creature of nature, which decided to do other than God intended. That was until man came along.

Now an interesting difference is noticed. God gives Adam the freedom to choose. He does not operate like natural science which follows God's every command without question. No, Adam and Eve had a choice. A choice between whether to praise God or praise themselves. They had before them life and death. And they chose death. They chose to give up a true praise of God and honor themselves.

Isaiah 38:18 (NKJV) — 18 For Sheol cannot thank You, Death cannot praise You; Those who go down to the pit cannot hope for Your truth.

In order to bring forth a people who can praise God once again, He had to create new life. Jesus had to conquer death in our place. We have been given reason to give thanks and hope in God's truth. We are no longer dead, but living. The Hebrew word's root meaning of Hallel is "to shine." We shine forth in even greater light than all the rest of creation. (v.11,12).

The resurrection of our Lord has blossomed into new life into God's people. Even more than a tree that buds every spring, God takes pleasure in His people budding and bringing forth fruit every day. Every time you give credit to God as our creator and redeemer, we shout Hallelujah.

This means even in calamity we have reason to praise God. Even in those tornadoes in Texas, and in the midst of whatever tornadoes might tear through your life, we have reason to shout hallelujah.

This is not to say that we are smiling all the time. Think of Hallelujah as the ongoing acknowledgement of Your Savior Jesus. This is to show forth your hope in the resurrection despite all earthly circumstances. This means to march as the penguins do miles upon miles through treacherous terrain and nasty climates, because you know what lies beyond. This means to witness to the hidden life you possess by marching onward. You go with God's will, knowing that this is giving the LORD praise. It is pointing those around you to that lasting hope that is within you. Perhaps you aren't smiling, but your words and actions show where you believe your life comes from. Let all creation shout – Hallelujah!

2. His name is above all others

Your witness shines like a spotlight. Recall how that the most basic meaning of that Hebrew word "Hallel" is, "to shine." Our praise becomes like a spotlight, shining all glory, not on ourselves, but on God's name which is above all other names.

(v.13a) Sometimes we describe God's name as "who He is and what He does." That is, God's name is more than letters forming syllables and sounds. His name is who He is. But for God, He uses this phrase, My name, to refer to everything about Him. This is His reputation so to speak. Your spotlight is to shine on God's name ... to highlight who the true God is and what the true God does. That is what it means to praise His name.

In the Lord's prayer, we pray: "Hallowed be Your name." Here is Martin Luther's explanation to this petition:

What does this mean?

God's name is certainly holy all by itself, but we pray in this petition that we also keep it holy.

God doesn't need anything from us to make His name great. It is holy all by itself. In fact, what could we offer Him to make His name any higher?

After all, a person's reputation is based on who that person is and what that person has done. In a sense one's "name" is his reputation.

What praise do we deserve? What is in my name or your name? Is it a reputation for being reliable or unreliable? Is there a reputation for being trustworthy or dishonest? Is

there a reputation for being impatient or long-suffering? Who we are and what we've done is far from deserving of praise. Would you want someone to shine a spotlight on all the things you've done? As we see revealed our attitudes, our willful sins, our secret desires, our lies, we deserve anything but praise. **Psalm 10:3 (NKJV) — 3 For the wicked boasts of his heart's desire; He blesses the greedy and renounces the Lord.** This is where there should be a distinct difference between the believer and the unbeliever. The wicked boasts, literally, causes himself to be praised, in his sinful desires. But the believer knows who we are and what we've done deserves no praise. The believer is sick of his sinful desires. The believer wants the spotlight back on Christ.

For God's saving name stands exalted above all others. **Psalm 117:1–2 (NKJV) — 1 Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples! 2 For His merciful kindness is great toward us, And the truth of the Lord endures forever. Praise the Lord!**

The name of the LORD: Who He is – The God of truth, who never lies, of mercy and love. His steadfast promises never change. As we read in our epistle reading: "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1John 1). The name of the LORD: What He does – saves. **Acts 4:12 (NKJV) — 12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."**

Let all creation shout: Hallelujah!

3. He has exalted the horn of His people

Indeed, God has exalted the horn of His people. While I was watching one episode of that Discovery Channel program "Frozen Planet" – I saw a pack of wolves hunt down a herd of bison. Perhaps the most amazing part was when I saw the wolves catch up to the herd and begin to try to take down some of the bison. There were between six and twelve wolves latching on to one of the bison, and from behind comes another bison in a full speed run. With his horns lowered, I saw him barrel right through not only a dozen wolves, but also the bison they were trying to take down. The power of that animal with horn forward was quite amazing.

We find that dating back to the early history of Israel, the ram's horn or an oxen horn was looked at as a symbol of strength. **Psalm 92:10 (NKJV) — 10 But my horn You have exalted like a wild ox.** If you've ever seen a rodeo competition, you will know what we are talking about. The horn of a wild ox or bison could easily kill one of us in one thrust.

So for God to declare that He has **exalted the horn of His people**, is to speak of the strength and victory God has given you. In fact, symbolically, the horn of God's people would best be seen in Christ Jesus and the salvation He has accomplished through His death and resurrection. When Zecharias spoke concerning the coming of the Messiah

in Luke chapter 1, he said, **“Luke 1:68–69 (NKJV) — 68 “Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people, 69 And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of His servant David**

With more power than that bison, the LORD has butted through the enemies. Jesus has suffered for your sins and was raised to guarantee your forgiveness. This means no pack of Satan’s wolves can bring you down so long as you rely on the horn of our Savior Jesus.

It is often when times are most difficult when this horn is lifted the highest. When you have committed a grievous sin, or when you have been trampled by a stampede of tragedy – that is when the horn is raised. God stands by us in our weakest moment. His steadfast love is what barrels through the worst of difficulties we face.

(v.14) Through baptism you are a part of God’s own special people. No other people have come near to God, to be called His own, His covenant people. Only those who believe in the perfect sacrifice of God’s Son are cleansed and drawn near. However our sins push God away, He keeps pulling us back. He keeps drawing us nearer. This is where we shine – not on our works, but on God’s works. **Psalm 34:3 (NKJV) — 3 Oh, magnify the Lord with me, And let us exalt His name together.**

Join me, dear Christians, in magnifying God’s name. May the Spirit give us strength, not to shy away from a chance to witness to God’s saving name. May God lead us to speak of His truth with others. Let us join all creation with shouts of Hallelujah! Praise the LORD.

1 Peter 2:9–10 (NKJV) — 9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God.

Amen.