

5/6/12 Sermon – Psalm 150 | Ascension Batavia

Grace and peace be to you, from God our Father, and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

I'd like to join me in an exercise today. Take a deep breath. Go ahead. Breathe in ... breathe out. Now close your mouth and hold your breath. ... doesn't feel so good does it. You can stop yourself from breathing, but do you really make yourself breath? Who has given you this amazing ability to breath? You may sit down now, thank you.

We read our text which comes from

Psalm 150 (NKJV)

- 1 Praise the Lord! Praise God in His sanctuary; Praise Him in His mighty firmament!**
- 2 Praise Him for His mighty acts; Praise Him according to His excellent greatness!**
- 3 Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet; Praise Him with the lute and harp!**
- 4 Praise Him with the timbrel and dance; Praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes!**
- 5 Praise Him with loud cymbals; Praise Him with clashing cymbals!**
- 6 Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!**

I am Breathing, I am Praising

This is God's word. In Jesus name, dear fellow redeemed,

If we are breathing then we have reason to be praise: we praise Him in His sanctuary, we praise Him for His mighty acts, we praise Him in every way we know how.

1. In His sanctuary

What is church? There are more than 8 different definitions a person could come up with to define "church." In the next month, we will be taking up a study of worship in Adult Bible Study. We will be discussing what true worship is and the history of different forms of worship among God's people. This begins next Sunday with a study of true worship. And in order to understand worship, one must understand what it is to have church, or should I say, to be "Church."

(v.1) I am breathing, I am praising – we praise God in His sanctuary.

We should understand first of all what the word "sanctuary" means. The word literally means "holy place." And the word holy means "set apart." When we say, "praise God in

His sanctuary,” we refer to praise God in the place where He has is set apart – the place where He dwells apart from sin. The more important question perhaps is how do we get there? How do we enter His holy place? Where do we go to worship and praise God?

At first you might think, “well, that’s easy pastor, we worship God at church.” But again I ask you, what is church? Is it this building? Is church the pews you sit in? Must we have a pulpit and an altar in order to have church? At the time of the reformation, 16th c., our Lutheran fore-fathers battled this question and wrote the following, which you can find in the Book of Concord 1580 –

“The church is not merely an association of outward ties and rites like other civic governments, however, but it is mainly an assoiation of faith and of the Holy Spirit in men’s hearts. To make it recognizable, this association has outward marks, the pure teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments in harmony with the Gospel of Christ.” (Ap. VII & VIII, sec. 5, Tappert ed.)

So when you confess in the Apostles Creed, “I believe in ... the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints ...” you are saying one and the same thing. The communion of saints is the holy Christian Church. As the book of Concord also says, “the church in the proper sense is the assembly of the saints who believe the gospel of Christ” (Ap. VII & VIII, sec. 28, Tappert ed.).

So the place where God dwells, His sanctuary among His people, is His people. To be in His sanctuary is to be gathered around God’s Word. After all, that is where He will visit us. When Jesus was teaching His disciples about what Church is, He said, **Matthew 18:20 (NKJV) — 20 For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.**”

Jesus has to be with us in order to enter God’s sanctuary. Without gathering “in His name,” means we are left to come before God’s presence on our own. To find ourselves without Christ, means to stand before God with all our sins still upon us. To come to praise Him without Christ, is no longer to be set apart from sin. What then would lead us to feel comfortable coming before Him without Jesus? It would either be a misunderstanding of who God is or a misunderstanding of who we are. For we are tainted without Christ. As we said, the word “Sanctuary” means “holy,” “set apart from sin.” So there is no way we could survive a visit with God unless we are completely set apart from sin.

“Praise God in His sanctuary.” This is why our liturgy, our order of service centers around having Christ with us. We begin in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. This means we are about to enter God’s Sanctuary. And what is the first thing we do? We confess our sins. This is because we know there is no worthiness for us to praise His perfect name until we get these sins out of the way. There is no sense in holding back any one of the most seemingly insignificant sins. God knows them. We confess them. This is the entrance to true praise – each and every time, we gather in His name, we leave our sins at the door. As Moses had to take

off His shoes to enter holy ground, so we take off our sins and lay them humbly before Jesus as we step forward.

Now in Christ we are set apart. We can enter that holy place where God dwells. By faith we go there as we gather around His word and sacrament. God is present right here where His people are. You have entered His sanctuary.

2. For His mighty acts

But how or why do we praise Him. What is the content of our praise? Again, take a deep breath. Evolutionists would have you think that what you just did – being alive – is the result of an infinitesimal improbability, that you live only as the result of a random event so improbably that the probability hardly be known – the Big Bang ... in fact evolution could be compared to building a house. Say you go to Menards and buy a home builders kit. You get all the wood, nails, caulk, siding, shingles. We won't even mention electricity and plumbing. The likelihood of Evolution even being possible is as likely as it would be for you to scoop up all those materials with a helicopter, fly over an open field, drop them, and find a four bedroom house put together exactly according to the design. Not only that, but we still needed someone to get all the materials and drop them from the plane. Now who did that if no one existed to get things started?

Oh, yes, now we remember – we couldn't breath without Him.

(v.2). I am breathing, I am praising. God has done some mighty acts. Our praise reflects those great deeds.

God is creator, God is preserver, and God is sustainer. As Job confessed **Job 12:10 (NKJV) — 10 In whose hand is the life of every living thing, And the breath of all mankind?**

God holds in His hand the breath of life. He gives, we merely receive. These are His mighty acts, not ours. And this follows in all aspects of our life including our spiritual breath.

Too often our praise centers on our own mighty acts. What great things have I done? Or why is God holding me back from greatness. We like the credit. Even when we say we don't, really we do. Down deep, we want someone in this world to know that I picked up that litter and threw it in the trash. It is in our flesh. We want our loved one to acknowledge all the things I have been doing for the other person. We suffocate ourselves or others by our selfish agenda.

Take a deep breath. Inhale ... exhale. Now let me ask you a question? Is life about you living or God giving? What I mean to say is for you to think about whether our spiritual life is all about us giving or us receiving. Do we continue to be alive because we are doing the living or because God keeps on giving? Too many churches are

focused on you doing something for God in your worship and are missing out on what God is doing for you.

But Jesus said in our Scripture reading, **John 15:5 (NKJV) — 5 “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.**

Abiding by faith in Jesus is to be alive, to breathe in the nutrients we need for our spiritual life. Abiding by faith in Jesus, we will produce fruit. I am breathing, I am praising. Meaning, it is not a question of am I praising, it is an inevitable result of faith in Jesus. This is because in Jesus we receive God’s mightiest act of all – His redemption. We are given the blessings of communion with God. We are restored and forgiven for all our selfish acts of self-service. Our self centered attitude fades away as we realize we don’t abide any longer in our own self praise, we abide in the vine.

Praise then is not about what I must do, it is about what Christ has done. Praise then centers on abiding in that source of life. Just as we need an environment with oxygen in it to survive and live, so also we need to the presence of Christ through God’s Word to keep our heart beating and our lips praising. Praise the LORD for His mighty acts.

3. In every way

God deserves praise in every way. And it comes to Him only through His giving. Notice the wide variety of instruments mentioned in our psalm. Praise is not to be limited to the organ. In fact some reformed churches today still teach that worship should be done without any instruments. They believe because the NT doesn’t mention instruments, then we shouldn’t use any.

When David’s son, King Solomon, finished building the Temple in Jerusalem, it was finally time to bring the ark of the covenant into the temple. The procession of ark of the covenant featured a wide variety of musical instruments including 120 priests with trumpets assembled before the altar. We read, **2 Chronicles 5:13–14 (NKJV) — 13 indeed it came to pass, when the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord, and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, saying: “For He is good, For His mercy endures forever,” that the house, the house of the Lord, was filled with a cloud, 14 so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God.**

We can see how the words of our psalm rightly apply to God’s people in Israel. And yet how do these words apply to us here at Ascension. We don’t have 120 priests with trumpets. When possible we do have an organ accompany us, but for the most part it is a computer that performs our music. Even though the psalmist did not say, praise Him with the sound of windows media player, I think it still applies.

Is God really concerned with how many musicians we have in the congregation? ... If that we so, then it would be all about us and the praise would be on us according to what we are capable of. Israel was able to do this because God had given them the gifts to do so. What God is concerned about as He was with Israel and their Temple worship was that we are making use of the gifts that God has given us. As we support the work of our Synod fellowship we see these gifts at work. For instance, the ILC Tour Choir, from a school supported by our offerings, joined us this spring with all sorts of gifted musicians joining in this harmony of praise.

Our praises can come in many forms – not all of which are musical. The early NT church for the most part didn't have trumpets or symbols. They worshiped in small groups in their homes and sometimes even among the tombs because they hid from Roman and Jewish persecution. And yet they praised God in every way. They gathered around a small table, a little bread and wine and heaven came to them through the word.

Colossians 3:16 (NKJV) — 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Our praises come in any and every way God enables you through His word. It comes simply by gathering around His word and sacrament and abiding in Jesus by faith. The fruits simply will be there. Where there is faith, there are fruits of praise. No must is needed, only Christ freely moving you to breath. Inhale the word and exhale fruits of praise.

Romans 12:1 (NKJV) — 1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

Praise is not all musical. The what is not as important as the why of our praise. Whether it is helping out with church property, helping out with the Ladies group, ushering, serving on a board or office or simply participating in congregational activities, these all give praise to the LORD.

I am not alive because I'm living, I am living because He's giving.

Can you children help me again. Stand up and take a deep breath. Now breathe a big sigh of relief. We are sighing because we remember that Jesus has taken all the pressure off us. We don't need to impress God. We simply breath. – in Jesus, perfect praise just comes forth and goes to our Father.

To God, the only Wise,
The one immortal King,
Let hallelujahs rise
From every living thing;

Let all that breathe, on every coast,
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

I am breathing, I am living, in Christ who is giving. Amen.