

Psalm 29
January 9, 2022

Here we are once again meeting by video, I hope for only a couple of Sundays. I have heard it said that these are unprecedented times, and they surely are. We are tired of pandemic life. Sadly, Covid is not a person and does not get tired. But I am sure that we will get through the difficulties associated with it and come out on the other side ever stronger.”

It is also the first Sunday after the Epiphany, when, in the Christian calendar we mark the time that Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan River, and began his career as the leader of a movement, preaching what has been called, “good news.” It was the beginning of a journey that led to his passion and death, as well as to resurrection, as it will for the church over the next few months.

It coincides with winter, the coldest and most blustery and darkest time of the year, but also a time when we know that spring approaches. The deep night of winter gradually gives way to the day of spring and serves as a visual aid to help us along our gospel journey.

Finally, it is the new year, a time of hope and re-dedication, both to our lives in general, in which we seek healthier habits and growth in knowledge, and better prospects; and also in the life of faith, where we seek a better relation to God and each other, and to neighbors far and near. I am not sure there are as

many resolutions this year as in the past, but by habit we seek a new energy for the daily tasks of life.

The reading from the psalter gives us some advice that seems right for the occasion. It begins;

“Ascribe to the Lord, O mighty ones, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name, worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness.”

I have been aware of this text for some time because we use it as an offertory text, but I find that the use of the word, “ascribe,” is somewhat unfamiliar. It simply means, “to attribute,” like an affect to a cause. In this case, it simply means to attribute a quality or characteristic to someone. It means that we should give God what is due, and there is not better way to start off the new year.

As we think about the circumstances of our lives, we may sometimes give too much attention to the immediate; what is good or bad, right or wrong about it; how to fix the bad and preserve the good. But here at the beginning of the year we are offered the chance to take life out of the realm of the immediate and for a moment see it in universal terms, the big picture, if you will.

It is tempting to turn to nature here, it’s grandness and it’s danger, it’s longevity. “The voice of the Lord is over the waters, the God of glory thunders . . . “ we read and if the temptation is to complain or cry, “foul,” it

must also be to marvel. I think of the storms of this past week out in Colorado, where hurricane force winds fanned the flames of wildfires that destroyed neighborhoods and threatened life and then within one day were snuffed out by a blizzard that held in it's reservoir a foot of snow that put the fires out. Of course, you know, my oldest son lives only about 15 miles away from where this happened, so I paid a little attention to it.

Before we start the discussion about climate concerns, while we acknowledge the weight of these kinds of destructions for those who experience them first hand, and we are mindful of them, might we also take a moment to just marvel at the power of nature, which is a metaphor of God's power.

“The voice of the Lord is powerful, majestic, the voice of the Lord breaks into pieces the cedars of Lebanon . . . “

God is seen as a storm that appears with flashes of lighting that shakes the desert, twists the oaks and strips the forest bare. The violence of it is not the spirit of our age to celebrate because we have seen too much violence and rebel against it. And dare we should.

But if the power of God is seen as a destructive storm, then it must also be seen as the source of life and being, and it is at this that we truly marvel. The cedars of Lebanon may have been twisted by a flood or a

cyclone but life persists even as life stubbornly persists in the middle of a pandemic.

So think about that too; the miracle of life, the vastness of interstellar space, set next to the intricate complexity of micro-biology, and everything in-between; think of the infinite variety among people, of human expression and beauty. Begin the year thinking again about the meaning of it all. “And in his temple all cry, 'glory,' because the Lord is with his people through thick and thin. The Lord gives strength to his people, the Lord blesses his people with peace.”

May it be so. And may our thinking about it now at the beginning of this new year and upon the celebration of Christ's epiphany and in these unprecedented times, strengthen us for the journey ahead, a journey that most assuredly leads to our salvation. Amen.

God of grace and glory, you call us to be your people, faithful and courageous. As your beloved Son embraced his mission in the waters of baptism, inspire us with the fire of your Spirit to join in his transforming work.

As we begin this new year, we are aware of those around us who are in need, and we are aware of our own need. We pray for material and spiritual health.

We pray for the sick, the lonely and confused, those who are unable to escape the elements in winter, those recovering from disaster. We pray for our country and its leaders, and all those who serve.

Sisters and brothers, *our* baptismal vows call us to the confession of sin and compassion and mercy on behalf of those in need. With repentant hearts we offer now our prayers for the church and the world:

Lord God,

You revealed your Son in the waters of the Jordan and anointed him with the power of the Holy Spirit to proclaim good news to all people. Sanctify us by the same Spirit, that we may proclaim the power of the gospel by acts of love in your name. We ask this, and offer all these prayers, in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns for ever. Amen.

[Back](#)[Home](#)