

11/30/08

THE CALL TO WORSHIP Psalm 96 (NIV)

Pastor: 1 Sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, ***all the earth.***

People: **2 Sing to the LORD, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day.**

Pastor: 3 Declare his glory among **the nations**, his marvelous deeds among **all peoples.**

People: **4 For great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods.**

Pastor: 5 For *all the gods of the nations are idols*, but the LORD made the heavens.

People: **6 Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and glory are in his sanctuary.**

Pastor: 7 Ascribe to the LORD, **O families of nations**, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

People: **8 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering and come into his courts.**

Pastor: 9 Worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness; tremble before him, ***all the earth.***

People: **10 Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns." The world is firmly established, it cannot be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity.**

Pastor: 11 Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound, and all that is in it;

People: **12 let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy;**

Pastor: 13 they will sing before the LORD, for he comes, he comes to judge the earth.

People: **He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his truth.**

Pastor: We begin this Advent worship in the name of the Lord of **all the earth**, God of all the nations and peoples.

People: **In the name of God the Father, and in the name of God the Son, and in the name of God the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

THE FIRST LESSON Isaiah 64:1-9

(In spite of their sin and unworthiness God's people plea for His coming. They call for His coming because they trust God is their Father and they are His people. vv. 8-9)

1 Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you! 2 As when fire sets twigs ablaze and causes water to boil, come down to make your name known to your enemies and cause the nations to quake before you! 3 For when you did awesome things that we did not expect, you came down, and the mountains trembled before you.

4 Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him. **5 You come to the help of those who gladly do right, who remember your ways. But when we**

continued to sin against them, you were angry. How then can we be saved? 6

All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away. 7 No one calls on your name or strives to lay hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us and made us waste away because of our sins.

8 Yet, O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand. **9 Do not be angry beyond measure, O LORD; do not remember our sins forever. Oh, look upon us, we pray, for we are all your people.**

THE SECOND LESSON 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

(God is coming again. He calls us into fellowship and keeps us strong for that coming of Jesus!)

3 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

4 I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. 5 For in him you have been enriched in every way-- in all your speaking and in all your knowledge-- 6 because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you. 7 Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.

8 He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.

THE THIRD LESSON Mark 13: 24-37 (Jesus calls His disciples to "Watch.")

24 "But in those days, following that distress, "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; 25 the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.' 26 "At that time men will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. 27 And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.

28 "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. 29 Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it is near, right at the door. 30 I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. 31 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

32 "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33 Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come.

34 It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. 35 "Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back-- whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. 36 If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping.

37 What I say to you, I say to everyone: **'Watch!'**"

35 "Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back-- whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. 36 If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping.

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INTRO - Many in Alaska have heard of the rescue of Dave and Barb Anderson, Don Wharton, and 4 other Christians who went to Lavrentiya, Russia in July 1993 to bring the Gospel and were in a small plan that crashed into the Bering Sea in July on their return to Nome and America. Don Wharton had spoken at St. John the Sunday before the crash.

Before the plane crashed they radioed their position to the Air traffic Control Center in Anchorage, and the rescue began. Many people, many pilots and crew, had to put their lives on hold in order to perform the rescue. People are only supposed to be able to survive about 20 minutes in the 36 degree temperature these people experienced as their plane sank and they swam in the water. But, men went out of their way and began plucking the 7 from the water until finally, about an hour and ten minutes later, all seven were rescued.

The rescuers might have thought it was a hopeless and not worked so hard. But they risked their lives, and all 7 were saved. Don Wharton and the Andersons have both sung at St. John again since that crash and rescue.

- I. If there was ever someone who did not have to go out of His way to rescue someone, it is our Savior, Jesus.
 - A. As God he had given us a perfect world
 1. But, we doubted our creator.
 2. We believed the lies that the things of this world are more desirable than our Creator.
 3. We rebelled against the God who loved us, and we were bound for death and hell.
 - B. Yet God sent His Son, Jesus, to rescue us.
 1. Jesus didn't have to do it, but He left heaven, lived a life of poverty, lived His life for others rather than himself, suffered for others, and rose for others.
 2. He went to this trouble so He could save us.
 - C. God offers eternal life in heaven to all who believe in Jesus as their Savior.
 1. Jesus is coming again as Judge.
 2. In today's Gospel He calls us to be ready and to watch, so we are believing and saved when He comes again.
 3. Jesus says in verse **32 "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33 Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come.**
- II. But today, we have the call to be rescuers.
 - A. **37 What I say to you, I say to everyone: "Watch!"**
 1. Jesus does not just say this to us, to you, He calls EVERYONE to "Watch."
 2. Jesus wants all to be ready for His coming, to be believing and accepting Jesus so they have eternal life in heaven.
 3. But, you know, not everyone knows about Jesus. Not everyone believes in Jesus. Many will not be ready when He comes.
 - B. The job of telling others so they may come to faith is a big and difficult job.
 1. It takes effort, prayers, time.
 2. It takes money to bring Jesus to others.
 3. Are you willing to do this?
- III. Today is Alaska Mission for Christ Sunday.
 - A. The AMC is the mission arm of all our denomination's churches in Alaska, and the mission arm of St. John as we try to share Jesus with others who do not know him in places outside our town.
 1. The AMC works to tell people along the Alaska Highway System about Jesus with worship services, VBS's, and Lay Ministers.
 2. The AMC is working in the Kuskokwim Delta through the work of Corbie and Nancy Cross to tell people about Jesus. The people of this area are living in an area where there is more substance and domestic abuse than any place else in our country. It can be a dark place.
 3. The AMC is working to bring the good news of Jesus to the native Village of Hoona through Vicar Michael Borg, his wife Justine, and their children. In fact, two girls from Hoona worshiped with us this summer as they were preparing for Kaleidoscope.
 - B. So today, as Jesus asks you to be rescuers, the AMC asks you to join them in the rescue. In fact,

our handout gives ways you can help.

1. First, will you pray for the AMC, it's workers, it's board, it's volunteers that their efforts may reach those in Alaska who need Jesus?
2. Secondly, perhaps you can be part of a team that does a VBS this summer for the AMC. We have had youth groups, family groups, mens's groups go and lead a Vacation Bible School in the past. We will be working to find a team this year too.
3. Finally, donations can be made on a one time, or on going basis. In addition to my tithe to St. John, we give a monthly donation to AMC and Thrivent matches our donation at .50 on the dollar up to \$600.00.

CONCLUSION - Perhaps you have heard the story of George Thomas, a pastor in a small New England town. One Easter Sunday morning he came to the Church carrying a rusty, old birdcage, and set it by the pulpit. Pastor Thomas told the congregation "I was walking through town yesterday when I saw a young boy coming toward me swinging this bird cage. On the bottom of the cage were three little wild birds, shivering with cold and fright. I stopped the lad and asked, "What you got there son?" "Just some old birds," came the reply. "What are you gonna do with them?" I asked. "Take 'em home and have fun with 'em," he answered. "I'm gonna tease 'em and pull out their feathers to make 'em fight. I'm gonna have a real good time." "But you'll get tired of those birds sooner or later. What will you do then?" "Oh, I got some cats," said the little boy. "They like birds. I'll take 'em to them." The pastor was silent for a moment. "How much do you want for those birds, son?" "Huh?!!!! Why, you don't want them birds, mister. They're just plain old field birds. They don't sing-they're not even pretty!" "How much?" the pastor asked again. The boy sized up the pastor as if he were crazy and said, "\$10?" The pastor reached in his pocket and took out a ten dollar bill. He placed it in the boy's hand. In a flash, the boy was gone. The pastor told his people he picked up the cage and gently carried it to the end of the alley where there was a tree and a grassy spot. Setting the cage down, he opened the door, and by softly tapping the bars persuaded the birds out, setting them free. Well, that explained the empty bird cage on the pulpit, and then the pastor began to tell this story.

One day Satan and Jesus were having a conversation. Satan had just come from the Garden of Eden, and he was gloating and boasting. "Yes, sir, I just caught the world full of people down there. Set me a trap, used bait I knew they couldn't resist. Got 'em all!" "What are you going to do with them?" Jesus asked. Satan replied, "Oh, I'm gonna have fun! I'm gonna teach them how to hate and abuse each other, how to rebel and be selfish and abuse themselves. I'm really gonna have fun!" "And what will you do when you get done with them?" Jesus asked. "Oh, I'll kill 'em," Satan glared proudly. "How much do you want for them?" Jesus asked. "Oh, you don't want those people. They ain't no good. Why, you'll take them and they'll just hate you. They'll spit on you, curse you and kill you!! You don't want those people!!" "How much?" He asked again. Satan looked at Jesus and sneered, "All your tears, and all your blood." Jesus said, "DONE!" Then He paid the price. The pastor picked up the cage he opened the door and he walked from the pulpit.

Jesus has rescued us. He calls on us to share His rescue with others.