

6/6/2010

THE PSALM AND THE INVOCATION

Psalm 30 Of David.

Lay Minister: 1 I will exalt you, O LORD, for you lifted me out of the depths and did not let my enemies gloat over me.

People: 2 O LORD my God, I called to you for help and you healed me.

Lay Minister: 3 O LORD, you brought me up from the grave;

People: you spared me from going down into the pit.

Lay Minister: 4 Sing to the LORD, you saints of his;

People: praise his holy name.

Lay Minister: 5 For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime;

People: weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.

Lay Minister: 6 When I felt secure, I said, "I will never be shaken."

People: 7 O LORD, when you favored me, you made my mountain stand firm; but when you hid your face, I was dismayed.

Lay Minister: 8 To you, O LORD, I called; to the Lord I cried for mercy:

People: 9 "What gain is there in my destruction, in my going down into the pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it proclaim your faithfulness?

Lay Minister: 10 Hear, O LORD, and be merciful to me; O LORD, be my help."

People: 11 You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, 12 that my heart may sing to you and not be silent.

Lay Minister: O LORD my God,

People: I will give you thanks forever.

Lay Minister: (Loudly) We begin our worship exalting and singing to, (Louder) praising, (Loudest) and thanking the Lord who is our help and our salvation.

People: (Loudly) We begin 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 PRAYER OF THE DAY

Lay Minister: Let us pray.

People: O Lord, Father of all mercy and God of all comfort, You always go before us and follow after us. Grant that we may rejoice in Your gracious presence and continually respond in lives that show works of faith and love; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

THE EPISTLE LESSON Galatians 1:11-24

(God calls Paul to be an apostle.)

11 I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. 12 I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ. 13 For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. 14 I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers.

15 But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was

pleased 16 to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man, 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus. 18 Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter and stayed with him fifteen days. 19 I saw none of the other apostles-- only James, the Lord's brother. 20 I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie. 21 Later I went to Syria and Cilicia. 22 I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. 23 They only heard the report: "The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." 24 And they praised God because of me.

THE GOSPEL LESSON Luke 7:11-17

page

(Jesus raises a widow's dead son.)

11 Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. 12 As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out-- the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. 13 When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, "Don't cry."

14 Then he went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still. He said, "Young man, I say to you, get up!" 15 The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. 16 They were all filled with awe and praised God. "A great prophet has appeared among us," they said. "God has come to help his people." 17 This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country.

THE SERMON "God's love changes lives . . . even ours"

Galatians 1

Maybe you have heard the name of Chuck Colson. Today he is known for other reasons. But, in the 1960's and 1970's he was the legal counsel for the Nixon administration. He was willing to do anything, to get a job done. He has admitted he said he would run over his own grandmother to get the president re-elected. It is no surprise that this man who pursued his goals at any cost was the first man to go to prison in relation to the Watergate scandal.

Throughout history we can see people who followed their own ideas and principles blindly, zealously, willing to do anything to accomplish their goals. Paul tells us he was one of these people. In Galatians 1:13-14, Paul says of himself, **13 For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. 14 I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers.** Seeking to advance, Paul was working to destroy God's church, by arresting and persecuting the people of God. He even thought he was serving God.

We all know people who have given themselves to pursuing selfish goals, like Colson, like Paul, people who hurt others. Some of these people have caused financial troubles for the rest of us. Some of these people have caused political scandal, and lack of faith in our government. But, in each of our lives there are areas that, even as children of God, need changing. Sometimes people can see our struggles. Sometimes our struggles are hidden. But, each of us struggles with selfish desires that separate us from God and hurt others. When you run into someone like Chuck Colson, it seems there is no hope for change. When you run into someone who, like Paul, is working so hard against God's church, it seems there is no hope for change in that person. Sometimes as we struggle with our personal weaknesses it seems there is no hope with our struggle, in that area, at least.

But, because of God, the impossible does happen. Look at verses, 15, 23 and 24. **15 But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased 16 to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles . . . 23 They only heard the report: "The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." 24 And they praised God because of me.** God revealed His love through Jesus to Paul, in Paul, and, according to verse 15, *by grace* this man who zealously persecuted the church now preaches to gentiles around the world. When we realize that almighty God, who is our judge, instead of first condemning us reaches out with sacrifice, with mercy, with love and forgiveness, when we realize he treats us differently that we deserve, He moves us to different lives.

No matter what struggle with selfish sin faces you, God can change it. This is fact. When Jesus is revealed to you and in you, you find that God has overcome your sin. God's love is stronger than your selfishness. God comes with love to live in you. God, through Jesus, changes us, in this life and eternally. And, this is not some possible hope. God acts concretely to love and forgive and change us. Today this happens as Jesus come in His Body and Blood to forgive us. Today this happens as Lorelai Lawton is baptized. God changes us.

Charles Colson is no longer first known as the Watergate criminal. In prison Chuck Colson came to faith in Jesus. You see, by grace God revealed himself in Colson. And for he last 35 years this man who would do anything, now seeks to serve the Lord. Imagine, God loving a criminal like him. Now he writes for other Christians, and seeks to help those in prison. He is known as a committed and effective witness for Jesus.

No matter your weakness, your struggle, God loves you in Jesus. God who **called [you] me by his grace, was pleased 16 to reveal his Son in me.** If God can change Colson, and he did, if God can change Paul, and He did, God is right now, in His strength and love, changing us into faithful children by God's love. Do not hold on to yourself, but the grace of God in Jesus Christ.