

Notes for Brian's Sermon at Brentwood Presbyterian Church

Sun, July 8, 2018

**What Response Does God Enjoy?
(Psalm 95)**



**O that today you would listen to his voice!
Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah,
as on the day at Massah in the wilderness,
when your ancestors tested me, and put me to the proof,
though they had seen my work.
(Ps 95:7b-9)**

A lesson from the psalm

Hard hearts create deaf ears – a calloused soul, toughened by the thick scars of troubles and traumas, is difficult to get through to with the antidote of God's forgiving love – the psalm has two distinct parts and tones – the first 6.5 verses ring forth with enthusiastic praise from a people gathered to worship their God – but the second set of verses presents who God really enjoys – that the people listen to their Creator and Redeemer – that there is a genuine dialogue and conversations between the partners in the covenant made to bless this creation, their common home

Provocative points to ponder

- Have you ever noticed how easy it is to hear just what you want to hear? – it's a very limited form of hearing – it's usually determined by what we think is best for us – it keeps us in a comfort zone where things are predictable, stable, and sensible, within frameworks of understanding life to which we are deeply devoted – Walter Brueggemann calls this attitude "orientation" – a good number of the Psalms reflect this certitude – we know the order that God has ordained and we simply have to conform to it to live the good life – it's simple, really – it's clear and straight forward – thank God for that!
- But such an attitude ignores the dramatic shift in this psalm at vs 7b – in the midst of this hymn of enthusiastic praise for God's goodness, the God addressed speaks up – that God, in essence, says, "Do you really get what I enjoy most? Are you really listening to what I'm saying about what I'm doing and about the kind of responses that give me deep joy? Because I'm not sure you do. You've got a history of arguing with me and misunderstanding me, of trying to get me to show up the way you want me to. You've got a history of not listening!" – that's what the reference to Massah and Meribah is all about – in the midst of their wilderness wanderings, Israel began to grumble and demand proof on their terms that God was present on their terms, for what they thought would benefit them most in the midst of their fears – the freedom God was leading them into to bless creation was not enough – they wanted a much more obvious degree of security and stability for themselves – and God's invitation = "Let's talk and I want you to listen for layers of meaning that emerge in our conversation!"

Finding this in God's living Word, Jesus Christ

- As I was pondering this psalm this week, the episode in Jesus' life among us that caught my attention was the entry into Jerusalem for the Passover festival – a time of praise for what God had done for his people – but were they really listening to what God was saying in the teachings and tactics of the living Word – the authorities and their soldiers got it – this is a challenge to their security and stability – but, within a week, as the way of the cross God had chosen became more and more apparent, even those closest to Jesus, those who had listened to his teachings for three years, betrayed and abandoned him – their listening had not yet gotten deep enough to shape their souls the way God would enjoy most
- and what's that, you might still be asking – it's this – “Listen deeply enough that you can grow into a faithful participation in my work!”

Your Notes

Prayers for Help – help us really listen for what you are saying to us and seeking to do through our lives – help us to hear you more deeply, live with you more faithfully, serve you more effectively, and enjoy you more fully - (silence to consider this)

Prayers of Thanks – for the many ways in which your voice comes to us – in this community of faith and friendship with you – in the surprises you send to disturb out complacencies – in the needs that we and those dear to us face that call forth our compassion (silence to consider this)

Prayers of Wow – for you patient and persistent efforts to get us to really listen for your forgiving grace in our lives, so that we are formed and reformed to bless your creation (silence to consider this)

The framework and flow of thanks, help, and awe is taken from Anne Lamott's wonderful little book on prayer, Help, Thanks, Wow: The Three Essential Prayers (New York: Riverhead Books, 2012).