

**“Trusting the One Who . . .”**  
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*A reflection during a Season of Gratitude*

Revelation 19:5-8; Psalm 146

November 3, 2019

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You can find the scripture readings [here \(Revelation 19\)](#) and [here \(Psalm 146\)](#).

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November 1 was All Saints Day. We celebrate those who belonged to Jesus and followed his way, and who came before us. They are saints because Jesus claimed them. The Holy Spirit made them holy. All of this was a free gift of God’s grace.

They are part of the living community of God’s People. We are too. [Now, so are Jayce and Nicholas.] This living community is not just here. It’s not just throughout the world. It stretches through time. God has made us part of something that is longer than our lives.

We didn’t have a worship service on November 1<sup>st</sup>. We are marking All Saints Day today, and next Sunday too. Next week, we are going to remember before God those we are grieving for.

Today we are celebrating with them. Remember that massive crowd in the first Bible reading? They (and we) are worshipping God together. They (and we) are Jesus’ heavenly bride, wed to him by his love. Friends, we have been brought into the party that finishes every party.

II

You can imagine the Psalms being the party’s soundtrack. The Bible’s Book of Psalms is a collection of 150 poems. These were composed by different people over many lifetimes. They have wisdom about life, and us, and God, and how to pray with God: how to pray when things are lovely, how to pray when things are terrible, how to pray when you’re under attack, how to pray when you’re at peace, how to pray when you’ve done wrong, how to pray when you’re alright, how to pray when injustice is running wild, how to pray when all is well.

The collection ends with five celebration psalms. Each of the five starts and finishes with a Hebrew word, *hallu-jah*. *Hallelujah!* It means “Praise the Lord!,” “Celebrate God!” These five psalms form a crescendo, a rising sound of joy.<sup>1</sup>

We just read the first of the five, Psalm 146. It is a solo, one voice. Imagine one of the saints singing it to us. It might be a saint you know! She or he has gone before us and, from the presence of God, has wisdom for us.

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<sup>1</sup> This collection of five psalms moves from one voice (Psalm 146) to calling on “everything that breathes” to praise the Lord (Psalm 150:6).

The Psalm begins: *“Praise God, my soul!”* She’s talking about your whole being, your whole self.<sup>2</sup> Celebrate God with your whole life, everything about you. Celebrate God your whole life long. However many days God gives you, it is ample time for you to give God your joy, your gratitude, your wonder, your praise.

These first words set the tone. It’s celebration!

### III

Then the tone shifts, from celebration to caution.

[A few minutes ago, we sang a song, and its first words come from another psalm, Psalm 121:

*I lift my eyes up to the mountains.  
Where will my help come from?]*

Who are you going to count on to help you? Who can you trust?

Here is the caution: *“Don’t put your trust in princes!”*

It’s talking about anyone with authority, influence, power and resources. We could include political leaders, celebrities, business bosses, judges, experts. Let’s include ministers, teachers, parents. Let’s include everyone. The Psalm says, *“Don’t trust any mortal, for in them there is no help.”*

That’s strong! Too strong? If someone has knowledge, and ability, and good character, can’t we trust them? I think so, as far as it goes. I hope there are people in your life whom you can turn to for help. But even the most faithful friend can only be trusted so far.

The Psalm makes not distinction between good leaders and poor leaders, competent or incompetent. When it cautions, *“Don’t put your trust in them,”* that covers even the very best among us. It’s not that they are bad. It’s that they are human. So they will disappoint us. Every one of them.

And every one of them has an expiry date. Their power to help you will die with them. All their plans will flitter away.

This is a celebration psalm, but it has this cautioning question: who are you going to trust?

### IV

That question cues up the chorus.

*“Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob.”* (Jacob was Israel’s ancestor and,

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<sup>2</sup> The Hebrew word often translated as “soul” is *nefesh*. It does not refer to one part of you. It is your self, all that you are.

because of Jesus, we are brought into Jacob's family.) Happiness here has a sense of deep, abiding contentment.

How on earth can we be content in this world as it is? True contentment comes when we rest our trust in God. Not in people, and stuff people make, and things people do. People, including you and me. Not people, but God.

Why? It's because of what God does, because of what God is like and who God is. The Psalm gives us a list. You can imagine a shout of "Yes!" after each one.

God creates everything. Yes!

God keeps faith — God is trustworthy — forever. Yes!

God creates justice for those who are oppressed. Yes!

God feeds those who are hungry. Yes!

God gives freedom to those imprisoned. Yes!

God gives sight to those who are blind. Yes!

God lifts up those who are bent low. Yes!

God loves those who are just. Yes!

God watches over immigrants, refugees, newcomers. Yes!

In the ancient world, widows and orphans were especially at risk, but God provides for those who are vulnerable. Yes!

God twists and turns the ways of the wicked. Those whose actions and policies prey on those whom God helps, God will make a mess of what they've got planned. Yes!

God reigns forever. Yes!

V

Who are you going to trust?

When push comes to shove, into whose hands will you put your life, and everything and everyone you care about? Whose hands?

When you are a ball of confusion . . . or maybe more important, when you are not and think you have everything figured out . . . whose wisdom are you going to rely on to guide you, even more than your own?

You know the answer.

But you might be thinking — and you are not the only one — “I don’t know if I can trust God.” Maybe you don’t even know if God is real.

Or, you might be thinking — and again, you’re not the only one — “I want to trust God, but I don’t know if I can trust enough.”

Here is the good news. The strength of your trust does not matter so much. What matters most is that God is trust-worthy. God is trustworthy whether you know it or not.

You might have had the experience of trusting someone 100%. But they did not come through. The strength of your trust did not matter, and they broke your heart.

If your heart is broken, and trust is hard, God knows. God understands. God loves you.

Jesus said that if your trust in God is as big as the smallest seed, that is enough. I suggest that if you want to grow your trust in God, listen to Jesus. Look at him. Learn about him. In his person, he will show you what God is like. Perfectly. Jesus shows that God is for you.

Those saints, they were not perfect. We don’t trust in them!

Their trust was not perfect.

But they knew where to look.

Now, they are beholding the face of God.

Hallelujah!