

Psalm 117

At one wedding reception this summer, the mc looked very familiar. He was about average height, a bit less actually, fairly young guy but hair starting to recede, and I couldn't place him. He was great. Very well prepared, very funny, very engaging. (much help from his wife)

Then I remembered, way back when Edmonton Christian High was in the city finals in basketball, there was a kid who put on this ratty lion suit and went running out on the floor during timeouts and at half time. He had a stick and a metal garbage can lid and he would run back and forth along the side lines to get the crowd going.

It was him. The team mascot and cheerleader.

Any time you are at a game, or watching one on tv and you see the team mascot or the cheer team and the crowd, you are seeing a parable of one way that the church is related to the world.

I fully realize that I have just triggered all sorts of weird images, 'Yay God, yay God, complete with dance moves. Don't go there. But if some of us, especially the sports fans here could work with this, and remember when we see cheerleaders, cheer teams, maybe even team mascots, that there is a parable of the church..... that would be great.

And, that's what psalm 117 says after all.

'Praise the Lord, **all you nations**; extol (another word for praise) him **all you peoples**. Celebrate what God has done, give him thanks and praise.'

God showers his blessings on **all** people, he has compassion on **all** that he has made. The criminal and the detective both receive the blessing of gravity, the honest and the dishonest student both receive the gift of safety. The person who wakes up with a prayer in her heart and the committed atheist both enjoy their breakfast.

But so many people just don't know that what they enjoy is a gift from God. One way to see the calling of the church is that we are called to be cheerleaders for God.

Why? "Love and faithfulness". Love that is great toward us (that has overpowered and overwhelmed us) and faithfulness that lasts forever.

On this Thanksgiving Sunday morning I would like to take them in reverse order.

The faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.

Your turkey and cranberries and pumpkin pie is only possible by the faithfulness of the Lord. Here is what we are talking about: (Cal De Witt in Earthwise)

1. Earth's energy exchange with the sun – Our star, the sun, this great thermonuclear energy source is a great empowering provision of God's love. It energizes nearly everything we know, green plants, and all creatures that eat them, great flows of water and air, cars and planes and heating for homes and factories.

Covering the earth is a protective blanket, our atmosphere that shields us from the harmful rays of the sun.

2. Soil Building Soils build and develop. The carbon cycle, the water cycle, the nitrogen cycle and more, contribute to a veritable symphony of processes that bring

bare landscapes, even bare rock eventually to support a rich and diverse fabric of living things.

It can take a hundred years to form 2.5 cm of topsoil. Soil-building is one more expression of God's faithfulness and care for the world.

3. Cycling and Recycling in the Biosphere People who lived through the Great Depression of the thirties know that the present generation did not invent recycling. But neither did that generation. The whole biosphere uses, re-uses and uses again all that is contained in soil, water and air for maintaining its living and nonliving fabric.

Every living thing produces carbon dioxide, which is taken up by green plants to remake carbon skeletons that give dynamic structure to life. In each ecosystem, wetland, forest, prairie, lake and desert the different parts work together like a symphony. In the biggest ecosystem of all, the biosphere, all plants and all creatures and processes great and small contribute to their own ecosystems and together to the biosphere.

4. Water Purification and Detoxification

The treatment plants we have to purify water take their cue from God in creation. Water is filtered through beds of sand in a process called 'percolation'. It travels over great distances through soil and rock to the groundwater below.

Wetlands act as water purification systems. Wetland plants take up mercury and other heavy metals and produce clear water for rivers and streams. Contaminated water is made pure to be used over and over again.

5. Fruitfulness and Abundant Life

The fabric of the biosphere includes 250,000 species of flowering plants, orchids, grasses, daisies, maples, lilies and sedges.

When our friend Cal was in grade nine he was taught that there are about a million different kinds of living creatures. In grad school he learned that there are about 5 million. Today, the best estimate is 40 million species of living things on earth. We have only named about 1.5 million.

Is that necessary? Maybe, but it sure looks like what some have called a divine extravagance almost a divine wastefulness and abundance built into creation by our faithful God. Holy generosity.

6. Global Circulations of Water and Air

The earth is tilted at 23 ½ degrees. So it is unequally heated from season to season. As well, the rotation of the earth means that there is a difference in coolness and warmth in every 24 hour cycle.

These two factors drive the flows of water and air. Combined with the shape of the earth (prairies, cliffs, oceans, valleys and mountains) they give us weather. Global circulations give the 'breath of life' to our planet. They transport CO₂, Oxygen and water vapour to plants and animals and people as needed for life.

7. Human Ability to Learn from Creation (ref. video we watched at the beginning of the service)

Any time you travel to a new part of the world, you've got to connect with a local person. In England, they have painted on the curbs, 'look right' because North American tourists have not learned that they are in a different environment. They are used to glancing to the left for traffic, then carrying on.

In 1975 a study of the Hanunoo tribe in the Philippine Islands, found that an average adult could identify 1,600 different plant species. They knew 400 more plants than were previously identified by botanists, and they knew how to use these plants for food, construction, crafts and medicine. They also knew where to find each plant as needed in the jungle.

We are created with the ability to have a 'map' in our heads of all parts of creation. We are able to adapt and work with our environment. In our time we face the challenge of responding to the need to care for creation, perhaps like never before.

It is all this on-going, everyday faithfulness of the Lord to his creation that makes harvest and food possible. We call all people to join us in praising and thanking our Creator.

For great is his **love** toward us:

The word 'love' is that best Hebrew word, 'hesed'. It is love that goes outside of the box, outside of what is expected or entitled.

When a mother loves her baby, that's the way it should be.

But when a mother puts her arm around a little boy who got on the wrong bus after school on the first day of kindergarten and was dropped off in a different

neighbourhood and she helps him blow his nose, keeps him safe and gives him a snack and finds his parents, that is hesed. It is love that extends to those who have no right to expect it.

That's the word for the love of God.

It makes sense for the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to live in love. But this is what God has done. In love, God the Son has come into the world he created. He became one of us, subject to the limits and struggles and thrills of life here. He gave his life for the renewing of all things. In him all things hold together.

For these two reasons we call the world to join us in praise and thanksgiving.

How?

1. Be a thankful person, to be generous is to trust that God is faithful and will be
2. Openly thank God/ this sets us apart from the animals
3. Invite others to join you in giving thanks. Ask people what they are giving thanks for this year

In case you think I've sucked this out of my thumb, here it is in 1 Peter 2:9-10, '...you are a chosen people, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light'.

The Lord be gracious to you. The Lord be gracious to me. And all God's people said, Amen.