

“Fountain of Life”
Psalm 36; John 2:1-11
Second Sunday After the Epiphany
1.16.22
West End Presbyterian Church
Sermon #6

Psalm 36

To the leader. Of David, the servant of the Lord.

1 Transgression speaks to the wicked

deep in their hearts;

there is no fear of God

before their eyes.

2 For they flatter themselves in their own eyes

that their iniquity cannot be found out and hated.

3 The words of their mouths are mischief and deceit;

they have ceased to act wisely and do good.

4 They plot mischief while on their beds;

they are set on a way that is not good;

they do not reject evil.

5 Your steadfast love, O Lord, extends to the heavens,
your faithfulness to the clouds.

6 Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains,
your judgments are like the great deep;
you save humans and animals alike, O Lord.

7 How precious is your steadfast love, O God!

All people may take refuge in the shadow of your wings.

8 They feast on the abundance of your house,

and you give them drink from the river of your delights.

9 For with you is the fountain of life;

in your light we see light.

10 O continue your steadfast love to those who know you,
and your salvation to the upright of heart!

11 Do not let the foot of the arrogant tread on me,
or the hand of the wicked drive me away.

12 There the evildoers lie prostrate;
they are thrust down, unable to rise.

The Word of God for the People of God! Thanks be to God!

John 2:1-11

1 On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. **2** Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. **3** When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." **4** And Jesus said to her,

“Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.” **5** His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” **6** Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. **7** Jesus said to them, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. **8** He said to them, “Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.” So they took it. **9** When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom **10** and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.” **11** Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

The Word of God for the People of God! **Thanks be to God!**

Let us pray: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O God, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

The Book of Psalms is an interesting book. It's not solely attributed to one person. It's not a series of what we would consider stories. It's a book of prayers. Prayers that reflect the human condition: Sorrow, joy, anger, and doubt. Also, this book is divided into five smaller books to reflect the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures: Genesis through Exodus. I would also venture to guess for many who are listening to this sermon, you have your favorite or perhaps favorites.

St. Athanasius noted that the Book of Psalms represents the entire human life. Martin Luther called the Psalter "the little Bible." John

Calvin said in his commentary on the Psalms “there is nothing wanting which relates to the knowledge of eternal salvation.” Of course, for the longest time, Presbyterians only sang Psalms.

The prayers that make up the Psalms don't hide anything. There is pure ecstasy, for example, in Psalm 100: “Shout to the LORD all the earth!” There is awe and wonder in Psalm 8: “When I behold your heavens, the work of your fingers...who are we that you are mindful of us?” Of course, there is lament in Psalm 22: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

These examples are just an inkling into the wondrous, complex book of the Bible.

Today's psalm is Psalm 36. It comes at the tail end of Book I, which incorporates Psalms 1-41. Psalm 36 and the immediate psalms before and after it reflect a theme of trust. We don't trust in our own

strength and human ingenuity, but in the LORD's strength which is stronger than anything possible. It's in Psalm 36 we get the truth of what happens when we rely on our own devices instead of placing our trust in God.

There is a way these verses from Psalm 36 are ordered that make perfect sense once you dig deeper. The guts of the psalm, verses five through ten, are the psalmist's statement of faith. The rest of the verses are the psalmist's cry for help.

Surrounding the words of faith the author of Psalm 36 utters, there is a looming threat from the wicked. The wicked are foolishly convinced that they and they alone are the masters of the universe. Verse two says: "They flatter themselves in their own eyes that their iniquity cannot be found out and hated."

In other words, the wicked are so full of themselves, they have convinced themselves of the big lie that they have never done anything wrong and never will. These dangerous people cannot be trusted as there is nothing in them but lies, deceit, and mischief.

“They have ceased to act wisely and do good”. They have abdicated their responsibility to fight for the truth, do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God. Instead, these truly evil people lie, cheat, love power, and walk around with an inflated sense of self-importance. They seek to harm anyone who stands in their way. They threaten the psalmist and they threaten us today.

Let me put it to you this way: Psalm 36, a prayer attributed to David, wasn't written during a time of peace and stability. This prayer was prayed in the midst of harassment from outside forces.

Think about that for a moment. Verses five through ten, the statement of faith the author has written down for us to sift through

thousands of years later was neither written in a vacuum nor in good times. These words in 36:5-10 that stand in opposition to the opposition, that threaten the threat, that call out the ungodly for what they are, frauds, recognize that it is nothing we do that will save us, but it is God's steadfast love that will save us. Faithful love. Never ending love. Love that chases us when we have lost our way. Love that protects us when we are threatened. Love that corrects us when we screw up. Love that sets boundaries to keep us and each other safe.

The steadfast love, the faithful love of God saturates Psalm 36. And that love is extravagant love. That love doesn't hold back. That love gives, and gives, and gives, and gives, and gives, and gives, and just when you think there is nothing left, it gives some more. The love that comes from God and God alone operates in the Spirit of Abundance, not in the wicked spirit of scarcity. It is a

love that seems so ridiculous to the human mind, but is only a preview of just how ridiculously loving God is.

That love God has shown us through the ages is not for humanity alone! God has saved humans and animals alike, as 36:6 tells us. And when we find that there is threat and opposition from the wicked spiritual and physical forces, we, the LORD's children, take refuge in God, just like bear cubs cling to their mothers for protection!

God's love for us is so ridiculous. No matter how hard we try to explain it, we will never do it justice. God's love made flesh in the person of Jesus Christ who won't skimp on the good stuff just like turning the water into the best wine those people had tasted. And it is the transforming power of love found in the Holy Spirit that keeps us moving, even when the threats around us increase.

My friends, in all the forms we experience God's amazing love, there is abundance. In God's amazing love that is infinitely deep, we can freely drink from it because there is more than enough to go around. In God's amazing love the bursts wide open like a fountain gushing forth, there is life. The threats and the opposition from the wicked forces that seem to run rampant are no match for God's amazing, faithful, infinite, deep, broad, and life-giving love because in God and in God alone can we find rest, refuge, and peace.

Beloved in Christ, trust this Good News!

In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.