

## **“MISSION POSSIBLE”**

Psalm 146:1-10      November 3, 2024

A robber held up a well-dressed man, pointing his gun and yelling, “Give me all your money!” The man replied, “Don’t you know who I am? I’m a U.S. congressman!” The robber retorted, “In that case, give me all *my* money!”

Sorry, but after the endless political commercials, the constant mudslinging, and the ridiculous interviews I think most of us could use a few laughs. I’m ready for this election to be done already. With much angst about who is going to the White House I thought it was important to be reminded that regardless of what happens on Election Day, the earth will keep turning, the seasons will change, babies will be born, and God will remain in control of his complex and often contentious creation. This morning’s Psalm might just help us maintain a proper election perspective as people who follow Christ Jesus.

### **I. ONLY GOD DESERVES PRAISE.**

**“Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul! I will praise the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God all my life long.”** Psalm 146 is the first of five Hallelujah psalms. They are hymns written to focus the worshippers praise upon God. They summon us to praise, make promises to praise, and essentially be committed to the lifelong practice of praising God. In fact, the psalm begins and ends with words of praise.

In our society today, we often praise people for making a lot of money, for athletic accomplishments, and for taking political stands we agree with or making speeches that move us. But do such people really deserve our praise? Our admiration, perhaps, but praise is traditionally reserved for a god, a ruler or a hero, and most politicians in our American democracy do not fit these categories. Certainly, we should support our candidates and work with them to advance the causes that are important to us. There are times to offer our congratulations, but praise them? No. Lavish admiration should be reserved for God alone.

To praise God is to give credit where credit is due, to the Lord who is our creator, our wisdom, our strength, our redeemer and our sustainer. When we offer praise, we are saying that God is God, and we are not. Our praise is not just a Sunday morning action. It is a lifelong commitment to praise God in our daily lives. This hymn of adoration is to the only one who deserves our full attention, commitment, and honor. Don't misplace your praise. The candidates are not God.

## **II. GOD'S REIGN IS FOREVER**

**Q: How many congressmen does it take to change a light bulb?**

A: Two—one to change the bulb and one to change it back again.

The psalmist writes, **“Do not put your trust in princes, in mortals, in whom there is no help. When their breath departs, they return to the earth; on that very day their plans perish.”**

We take a chance when we rely on political leaders to help us because they are as flawed, weak, biased, transitory and limited as any human being on Earth. Everyone has weaknesses and limitations, from the far left to the radical right, across the political spectrum. The psalm warns us against putting our trust in mortals, because every one of us is made of dust and to dust we shall return. Our complete faith should be directed toward the one eternal God, maker of heaven and earth.

I like to compare celebrities and politicians to **fireworks**. They shoot up high, show a beautiful display, make a lot of noise, and then fizzle out. The Psalmist is warning us not to put our faith in princes and mortals who are temporary and whose power is fleeting. In fact, a good many of them are destructive, selfish, and not very helpful. So if you're expecting your favorite candidate to make you happy and be the savior of the nation, you're creating a recipe for disappointment. No candidate can make everyone happy all the time, even their own supporters.

But there is another path to take: Unreserved confidence in God. **"Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob," says Psalm 146, "whose hope is in the Lord their God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who keeps faith forever".**

Better for us to look for happiness in a relationship with the Lord God, the one who made heaven and Earth, and who is eternally faithful. God is the source of every good and perfect gift and this is a Lord who always keeps promises, including to love and forgive us. With God, we

have a leader who can be trusted to provide for us, and who never, ever flip-flops, lies, or goes back on a campaign promise. This is a God who can't be bought or used for personal agendas. And with God there are no term limits. Who is the real source of help and hope? Who is the one who reigns forever? It sure isn't a name on the ballot but in the book of Life! Put your hope for the future in God.

### **III. THE BEST AGENDA**

I have always enjoyed sitting on a **deck or porch**; however it might be a good idea to get your porch or deck inspected. According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, an average of 6,000 people per year are injured because of the structural failure or collapse of a deck, porch, railing, or staircase. The North American Decking and Railing Association estimates that 40-50% of the 40 million residential decks in the U.S. are not up to current code or are in danger of collapse. That place you go to rest could turn into your resting place.

According to International Association of Certified Home Inspectors, about 90% of deck collapses occur as a result of the separation of the house and the deck ledger board, allowing the deck to detach from the house. Up until 2003 it was acceptable to attach a deck directly to a house using only nails. However, after a tragic deck collapse in Chicago, the building code changed and now a mandatory piece of material called the ledger board must be bolted to the house. We might want to think twice about the platform we are standing on.

Of course, political candidates are all about their platforms and the issues they stand on. Their platforms tell you what they are for or against, what they want to do while in office, and why you should care about the things they care about. A politician's platform tells you what they value. Of course, their platforms are designed to get them elected, not necessarily carried out.

As the Lord of the Universe, it shouldn't surprise us that God has a platform too. That platform with built on righteousness, justice, and the wellbeing of this world. Psalm 146 says that God is the one "**who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets the prisoners free; the LORD opens the eyes of the blind, lifts up those who are bowed down, and loves the righteous.**"

These are God's values and the platform from which the Lord operates. And while good Christians will certainly debate the ways that our society can address these concerns, there should be no disagreement about their priority to God.

In every time and place, God lifts up the burdened and loves those who are in a right relationship with him. God has special concern for the strangers and immigrants in our midst and wants to take care of orphans and widows -- those who have no way to provide for themselves. Once again, there are going to be honest disagreements about how best to meet these needs, but the needs themselves and the care for these people groups

are indisputable. These values should cause us to pause, and think about the values of the candidate we are voting for.

Regardless of who is in office, we Christians are to do as God does by living out that life of love to the widow, fatherless, prisoner, blind, and victims of human tragedy. This is what it means to love in the bible. This is the platform we are to build our lives upon.

As we head to the election booth this week, remember it is only God who deserves our praise, only God's reign lasts forever, and only God's values matter. If you are joyful on election night, don't get overly elated. And if you are disappointed when the election is over, don't get too depressed. The next presidential campaign will begin before you know it, and the political pendulum will begin to swing in the other direction. Instead, remember that as Christians, the most important leader in our lives is Almighty God, and one day every knee shall bow and every tongue confess, this one true Lord. **In the meantime, praise the Lord!**

If your candidate wins, praise the Lord! If your candidate loses, praise the Lord! If you are excited about the next four years, praise the Lord! If you are worried about what will happen next, praise the Lord! There is nothing that can happen on Election Day that should shift your focus away from giving praise to the God who has created you, redeemed you and sustained you throughout the course of your life. There is always room for praise. Amen.

# First Presbyterian Church in Hawley

## Sunday, November 3, 2024

### Second Scripture Lesson

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#### Psalm 146

<sup>1</sup>Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD, O my soul!

<sup>2</sup>I will praise the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God all my life long.

<sup>3</sup>Do not put your trust in princes, in mortals, in whom there is no help.

<sup>4</sup>When their breath departs, they return to the earth; on that very day their plans perish.

<sup>5</sup>Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD their God,

<sup>6</sup>who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who keeps faith forever;

<sup>7</sup>who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets the prisoners free;

<sup>8</sup>the LORD opens the eyes of the blind. The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous.

<sup>9</sup>The LORD watches over the strangers; he upholds the orphan and the widow, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

<sup>10</sup>The LORD will reign forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations. Praise the LORD!

**This is the Word of the Lord.**  
**Thanks be To God.**