

We take so much for granted. As kids we expect a meal to be on the table. Most of us are used to three meals a day and snacks. When we say anything about a meal it is to complain that we don't like it. As adults we work and work rarely stopping to recognize what is happening and how God is with us. When we stop it is to complain that things could be better or someone else is not pulling their weight. As older adults we have experienced much in life and have learned a lot. When we speak it is often to complain about the priorities that other people have which don't fit with what we have learned (or how our bodies are failing.) Food, the ability to work, life experience are just some of the things that we take for granted. We take things for granted when we don't remember God at work, when we don't give God credit for food, for work, for life.

It is easy to complain, to only see what is not happening. It is easy to express the ways we feel that God or others are failing us. It is easy to see the weaknesses in our church.

There is an alternative. We can share praise for what God is doing. We can speak specifically about the things God has done and is doing in our lives and in our church and in our world. When we take God into account, we thank him for having food. We thank him for the opportunity to work with and care for others. We thank him for life.

This is not to say that there are not extremely difficult things that we face. (Things we could legitimately complain about.) We have been looking at the life of King David. Not everything that has happened in his life had been good or easy. He could complain about being chased by Saul for years, or the man dying when he brought the ark to Jerusalem, or not being allowed to do what he wants, build a house for God. Yet, in our scripture today David gives God praise. He accounts for God at work in his life. His prayer comes out of his knowledge and experience of God's holiness and power. As he takes God into account David (didn't ask What are you going to do for me? or why haven't you done this for me?) He asked these questions 'Who am I?' 'What is my house' that you have brought me thus far?

We may doubt God has brought us far. What if things seem worse? I have been happier. There were bigger numbers at our church in the past. I was part of a large group that helped scrap and paint a house for the Carpenter's Project. If one looked at it now, it would seem like another well taken care of house. If one looked closely, he or she could find flaws in the

paint job. Other complaints could easily be made. Sometimes you have to share the picture of what was before and what has been done, not just sharing the picture of what is wrong now. We forget that before it was really peeling. There was scraping, then primer, and then a new coat of paint. Knowing the before and after gives us the perspective to offer praise that is appropriate.

When we account for God at work, we recall how God has been with us and with our church in specific ways in good times and bad. We each have a story of how he has brought us to today. God cares for us, God cares for our church. Who are we that we receive his attention?

What God has done is not all there is. It is only a 'small thing' in David's language. God promises to do more. David acknowledged God's work in the past. This gave him confidence to acknowledge how God will be at work in the future.

We also have the promises of God continuing to work in and through us. We may be like the house was half-way through. At that point a coat of primer looked amazing. One could also say it still needed work and little had been accomplished. There was still more work to be done. God will build us. God chooses us. You like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house through Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:5)

Awareness of the greatness of God at work in and through us overwhelms our complaints. The Lord knows David. David knows he is a servant of God, not an equal. Yet the Lord has honored David beyond measure, what can he say. (give me more?) David does not offer empty words of thanks, but shares words of deep intimacy. (Sometimes simply telling someone that you love them is more powerful than going on and on.) David gives God all the credit. It is because of 'your promise and according to your heart that you have wrought all this greatness.'

God's promises give us hope, according to his heart shows his work is one of love. Out of hope and love comes his great gift of faith wrought in us through Jesus Christ. Now specific praises can be given. Since we believe, we know who God is, we know what he has done for us, we know what he will do for us. So with David we can say, 'You are great,' 'there is no one like you,' 'there is no God besides you.'

David can say this not just because of his experience, but because he has heard about what happened with God's people. God's people are proof that God is worthy of praise. They demonstrate and communicate what God has done and who God is in relationship with people. God 'redeemed' them (saved out of Egypt and then out of the wilderness despite sin.) God did great and awesome things. (God didn't just do what they want. There were

the consequences of sin, but God was with them through the consequences.) God gave them a place to live. God established the people as his own. God became their God forever.

Praise for the future and willingness to rely on God in the future comes from how we can see what he does in relationship with people. That is where his glory can be recognized. David's courage to pray comes from God's promise to be with him and his family forever, a promise undergirded by what God has done for his people. David's faith is summarized in verse 28: you are God, your words are true, and you have promised good to your servant. These is how God relates to us too. In Jesus Christ, God promises good to us. He promises new life, life forever with him.

If we know who God is, what he has done and promised, we can join in asking him to do what he has promised. Prayer lays claim to the promises of God and constantly acknowledges God's sovereignty. We don't take him for granted. Our act of prayer is a recognition of God's interests, which extend beyond our own self-interest. Then any blessing we receive will point to his greatness and bring praise to our Lord.

We pray that others will see God through what he does in fulfilling his promises for us. 1 Peter 2:9 says, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." Our life together as Bell Memorial Presbyterian church is proof for others of God's greatness. When we feel like complaining, let us instead discover and acknowledge what God has done in us, let us discover and acknowledge what God is doing in us so that his name will be magnified in our community.