

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Twenty-fifth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 27) – November 10, 2024

“Praise the Lord, O my soul! I will praise the Lord as long as I live... Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation. Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God... The Lord sets the prisoners free.”

–Psalm 146:2–3, 5, 7b

Psalm 146 is the first of the final five hallelujah or praise psalms. The closing chapters of the book of psalms conclude with promises of the LORD, but there are also words of warning to mankind who have a habit of putting our trust in the wrong places. The First Commandment and the words of warning expose our misplaced trust. This is then followed by lavish words of promise of what the LORD has done, does, and will continue doing to deal with sinners and our wayward hearts. Inevitably, following the general election cycle in our nation, people will begin to post on social media platforms, “Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation” (Psalm 146:3). In a cursory observation, this is most commonly posted by those whose candidate lost. It reveals that one had put their hope in a human being to help improve their life and their nation. Should we not have put our trust in the LORD for all things before the election? Should this not be a word to those whose candidate won even more so than to those whose candidate lost? Indeed, this is a word to all of us who vote. We all have fallen short of the First Commandment and our particular political desires disclose that we had less trust in God regarding our earthly life and believed that some human being will at least make up the difference.

In an eschatological turn in verse 5, the LORD blesses us who demonstrate that we do not fear, love, and trust God above anything else. In mercy, he has come to us who need help and salvation. He who made the heaven and earth and sea, promises “keeps faith forever.” We do not keep faith; we give up faith in the LORD by putting our trust in anyone who we believe will open the door to financial and political freedom. We cannot by our own understanding or effort believe in Jesus Christ that he has, is, and shall keep us in true faith forever. This belief in Christ is the work worked in us by the Holy Spirit alone. Before his ascension, Jesus Christ told us that even the psalms are written about him (see Luke 24:44). This psalm declares the end of all earthly regimes and political winners and losers. Jesus Christ is exposing the reality that we are all imprisoned by the fact that we have put our trust in our politics. But our LORD Jesus Christ is king of a kingdom not of this world, for it is a kingdom ruled by the gospel apart from the law. He is the only one who has the power to keep us in true faith and to set the prisoners free. While the earthly rules perish one after another, he rules his kingdom forever. In Christ alone do we have our salvation.

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