

## A Psalm of the Sons of Korah

**48** <sup>1-3</sup> GOD majestic,  
praise abounds in our God-city!  
His sacred mountain,  
breathtaking in its heights—earth's joy.  
Zion Mountain looms in the North,  
city of the world-King.  
God in his citadel peaks  
impregnable.

<sup>4-6</sup> The kings got together,  
they united and came.  
They took one look and shook their heads,  
they scattered and ran away.  
They doubled up in pain  
like a woman having a baby.

<sup>7-8</sup> You smashed the ships of Tarshish  
with a storm out of the East.  
We heard about it, then we saw it  
with our eyes—  
In GOD's city of Angel Armies,  
in the city our God  
Set on firm foundations,  
firm forever.

<sup>9-10</sup> We pondered your love-in-action, God,  
waiting in your temple:  
Your name, God, evokes a train  
of Hallelujahs wherever  
It is spoken, near and far;  
your arms are heaped with goodness-in-action.

<sup>11</sup> Be glad, Zion Mountain;  
Dance, Judah's daughters!  
He does what he said he'd do!

<sup>12-14</sup> Circle Zion, take her measure,  
count her fortress peaks,  
Gaze long at her sloping bulwark,  
climb her citadel heights—  
Then you can tell the next generation  
detail by detail the story of God,

Our God forever,  
who guides us till the end of time.

## Just a Carpenter

**6**<sup>1-2</sup> He left there and returned to his hometown. His disciples came along. On the Sabbath, he gave a lecture in the meeting place. He made a real hit, impressing everyone. “We had no idea he was this good!” they said. “How did he get so wise all of a sudden, get such ability?”

<sup>3</sup> But in the next breath they were cutting him down: “He’s just a carpenter—Mary’s boy. We’ve known him since he was a kid. We know his brothers, James, Justus, Jude, and Simon, and his sisters. Who does he think he is?” They tripped over what little they knew about him and fell, sprawling. And they never got any further.

<sup>4-6</sup> Jesus told them, “A prophet has little honor in his hometown, among his relatives, on the streets he played in as a child.” Jesus wasn’t able to do much of anything there—he laid hands on a few sick people and healed them, that’s all. He couldn’t get over their stubbornness. He left and made a circuit of the other villages, teaching.

## The Twelve

<sup>7-8</sup> Jesus called the Twelve to him, and sent them out in pairs. He gave them authority and power to deal with the evil opposition. He sent them off with these instructions:

<sup>8-9</sup> “Don’t think you need a lot of extra equipment for this. *You* are the equipment. No special appeals for funds. Keep it simple.

<sup>10</sup> “And no luxury inns. Get a modest place and be content there until you leave.

<sup>11</sup> “If you’re not welcomed, not listened to, quietly withdraw. Don’t make a scene. Shrug your shoulders and be on your way.”

<sup>12-13</sup> Then they were on the road. They preached with joyful urgency that life can be radically different; right and left they sent the demons packing; they brought wellness to the sick, anointing their bodies, healing their spirits.

**July 8, 2018**  
**Psalm 48; Psalm 6:1-13**  
**“Sent”**  
**Kerra Becker English**

According to the internal world of Kerra, religion is something you practice – like a sport or a musical instrument. But there are those who would define it differently. Some would say religion is something you believe. Those folks would say that there are a list of doctrines or tenets that make up what it means to be a Christian. Others might say religion is something you can attend -like a sporting event or a concert. You go to religious services to be entertained or maybe a little more informed, but not necessarily to be part of the show. Having a good attendance record at your church then becomes indicative of what it means to be “religious.” And still others may say that religion is something you are born into. Mom and Dad were Christians, therefore I am too, by default. And then there are those that would say that religion is fake, a trick to make people fall in line with certain behaviors. To believe in God or be a part of a church is to be duped into spending your Sundays on something that has no evidence for existing and no purpose beyond turning people into obedient sheep.

Maybe you can come up with even more cultural definitions for religion – but what I really want to do today is to share why I believe it is a practice, and then describe how I think your regular religious practice here at Ashland Presbyterian Church reflects who you are and how you engage with the world as people of deep faith.

Worship, as it has been carefully designed, and routinely practiced, is a rehearsal for life. I know that there are those out there who would say that it is boring, repetitive, and irrelevant for today’s world. And yet, in our world where everything is moving fast, expected to be entertaining, and intended to sell us something, worship is probably the most counter-cultural,

radical, life-changing kind of thing we can do. There are some assumptions that undergird worship in the manner that we do it that, if we let them, will shape who we are over time and give us resilience and meaning in a world that sometimes seems intent to tear us down and render our lives insignificant.

1) It all begins with an **assumption of love** – our love for God, and God’s love for us. We gather as a community as an expression of our love for God. It is our gift to offer praise and thanksgiving, to be joyful before the Lord our Maker.

So get out your bulletins – we’re going to look for evidence of these assumptions in how our worship is put together.

Welcome – and MUSIC

Call to Worship/Invocation of God’s presence

Assurance of God’s forgiveness – some see confession as a negative, but perhaps its our greatest positive (No matter what has happened in the previous week, or in however long it’s been since you’ve been here – you are forgiven!)

And more...

2) The second assumption is that **our holy book, the Bible, contains deep truths**, and hearing and interpreting those truths is relevant to our lives today – right now.

Again – digging into the bulletin – how does scripture reveal itself?

Reading it, preaching on it, singing it – those songs become familiar – even when sermons are LONG forgotten

We gather to hear the story – familiar and yet anew each time

3) The third assumption is that hearing the Word in scripture elicits a **response** from us. We respond to God's Word. It isn't entertainment, it's an invitation!!!

Back to the bulletin –

Offering – why do we collect money?

Sacraments – affirmations of holiness in our midst

Affirmations of Faith – saying what we believe to be true together, using ancient words or contemporary words

More...

4) The fourth assumption goes with today's scripture reading to remind us that those who are called to love and listen to the Word of God in Christ are not finished with their religious responsibility, they will be **sent to do God's work in the world**. Go with a buddy, travel light, you are enough to make a difference, maybe you will be heard, maybe not, but, no matter what preach with "joyful urgency that life can be radically different."

I've argued that the very last blessing is the most important part of worship.

It at the very least should be the culmination of all that we do each Sunday morning.

You are being prepared here for the world out there.

This may be a sanctuary, but it's also a training ground.

And I believe, fully that you, Ashland Presbyterian Church have listened, have embodied this kind of worship life and structure in a way that isn't always apparent – even in churches who worship in the very same format that we do. You gather in love, affirm that love, delight in that love. And you are not telling people that they are done with their Christian responsibility when they've finished worship – you push them out the door and into lives that are making a difference.

Called to love, Sent to serve