

Tell Everyone you Meet What the Lord has Done!

I would like to read from the Message a portion of Psalm 105:

***Hallelujah! Thank GOD! Pray to him by
name!***

***Tell everyone you meet what he
has done!***

***Sing him songs, belt out hymns,
translate his wonders into music!
Honor his holy name with Hallelujahs,
you who seek GOD. Live a happy
life!***

***Keep your eyes open for GOD, watch
for his works;
be alert for signs of his presence.***

***Remember the world of wonders he
has made,
his miracles, and the verdicts he's
rendered—
O seed of Abraham, his
servant,
O child of Jacob, his chosen.***

***Then Israel entered Egypt,
Jacob immigrated to the Land of
Ham.***

***God gave his people lots of babies;
soon their numbers alarmed their
foes.***

***He turned the Egyptians against his
people;
they abused and cheated God's
servants.***

***Then he sent his servant Moses,
and Aaron, whom he also chose.
They worked marvels in that spiritual
wasteland,
miracles in the Land of Ham.***

Hallelujah!

Introduction: *Tell everyone you meet what the Lord has done!* The excitement of God's story comes in the telling itself! By sharing with others how God has worked in the twists and turns of our lives, we practice God's grace.

Immediacy: Proclaiming our story to the world is our mission as well as our calling. After returning from Orlando and the ELCA churchwide assembly, people this past week have been asking "How was it?" My first response is that we "are freed to Serve in Christ!" And I say: "I am so proud to be a part of the ELCA!" During the week we met people from different parts of our country and the world, experienced some of the finest worship, participated in dialog and bible study with 10 others, I met my prayer partner from Scotia New York, learned from others what it means to *live Lutheran*, and debated issues on the floor with over a 1000 participants. Bishop Mark Hanson shared his report emphasizing: **"This is Christ's Church, you are welcome here, and there is a place for you here!"** He told us of a woman who pressed him to sum up his forecast for the future of the church in one word, he responded: "freedom!" I was challenged to take seriously Luther's words when he said that we are **"Living a daring confidence in God's grace..."** when we live out this "call to multiply the church not divide it." We are privileged to *live Lutheran* when we listen to the Word of God. *To live Lutheran* when we listen to the people of our community where we are planted. And *live Lutheran*

when the Holy Spirit then leads us to respond! Again I am proud to be a part of our church!

Indwelling: Psalm 105 closes with “Praise the Lord!” “Hallelujah!” Pastor Thevanesan said: *“I sobbed when I read those words because that is the one thing I often neglect to do in my life. I take the praise of God for granted, assuming that someone else will do that for me. I think we can all relate to his words, sometimes it takes a moment to lift us up to see the bigger picture of God’s activity in our everyday lives.*

Psalm 105 recounts parts of Israel’s history, recalling her time in Egypt and reminding us of God’s sending of Moses and Aaron. Listening to the conversations of others in the ELCA I began looking back over our history as a congregation with praise noting places where we have begun to eradicate Malaria, resettled refugees, take seriously where we are planted in Stoughton and listened to the people through Faith in Action...These were burning bushes of God’s presence that we can see! As we note the evidence of God in our lives and speak of God’s marvelous work at Covenant - a “Hallelujah” rises to my lips.

How and when do you praise God? How can praise, thanksgiving and giving glory to God become part and parcel of daily living with all its uncertainty, strain and stress? Some people say their inability to deal with life’s pain mutes their praise of God. However, when we recognize our worth and our likableness, we also see the loving nature of God in other persons. As I love myself, I love others. As you affirm yourself you affirm others. When we take time to consider God’s work in our hands - God’s work in our own history we acknowledge God’s work in every person’s life and we join in another “Hallelujah!” I heard that Hallelujah when Renee Larson preached about people who practice justice. She was the wife of Ben Larson who died with hymns on his lips in the Haiti Earthquake. Now preaching at closing worship of the assembly she talked about the grace of God in the twists and turns of her life that now calls her to stand with those who have no voice. She mentioned that if only that cross traced upon our brow in baptism would stick out several inches to always catch our vision we would daily be reminded of the presence and power of God’s grace wherever our feet take us. Think about that cross on your forehead protracted enough to catch your peripheral vision. We would always be reminded of the bigger picture - and Hallelujah would rise to our lips!

Invitation: As we draw close to the 10th Anniversary of 911, something precious happened in Orlando, that some have called a -

Historic greeting from the Islamic Society of North America (Taken from the ELCA Website August 24, 2011)

Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson welcomed Dr. Sayyid M. Sayeed, national director for the Office for Interfaith and Community Alliances of the Islamic Society of North America.

Hanson said this is the first time an ELCA Churchwide Assembly has welcomed and heard from an Islamic leader, representing the largest Islamic organization in the United States.

“Peace be with you,” said Dr. Sayeed. The assembly responded with, “and also with you.”

“It is certainly an historic honor to be with you today,” Sayeed told the assembly. “Today the ELCA has broken [stereotypes] when it established a committee on Lutheran-Muslim relationships, and that committee has [shared] that we love you.” It was a standing ovation as the assembly applauded in response and both our communities pledged to move forward in a peace centered way for the new millennium.

Another moment a Hallelujah rose to my lips as we recognize God’s work in our Muslim sisters and brothers!

Imitation: In her memoir *The Whisper Test*, Mary Ann Bird (Mary Ann Bird, quoted in Leonard Sweet, *Strong in the Broken Places: A Theological Reverie on the Ministry of George Everett Ross*, University of Akron Press, 1995, p. 93) tells of the power of words of acceptance in her own life. She was born with multiple birth defects: deaf in one ear, a cleft palate, a disfigured face, a crooked nose, and lopsided feet. As a child, Mary Ann suffered not only the physical impairments but also the emotional damage inflicted by other children. “Oh, Mary Ann,” her classmates would say, “what happened to your lip?”

“I cut it on a piece of glass,” she would lie.

One of the worst experiences at school, she reported, was the day of the annual hearing test. The teacher would call each child to her desk, and the child would cover first one ear, and then the other. The teacher would whisper something to the child like “The sky is blue” or “You have new shoes.” This was “the whisper test”; if the teacher’s phrase was heard and repeated, the child passed the test. To avoid the humiliation of failure, Mary Ann would always cheat on the test, secretly cupping her hand over her one good ear so that she could still hear what the teacher said.

One year Mary Ann was in the class of Miss Leonard, one of the most beloved teachers in the school. Every student, including Mary Ann, wanted to be noticed by her, wanted to be her pet. Then came the day of the dreaded hearing test. When her turn came, Mary Ann was called to the teacher’s desk. As Mary Ann cupped her hand over her good ear, Miss Leonard leaned forward to whisper. “I waited for those words,” Mary Ann wrote, “which God must have put into her mouth, those seven words which changed my life.” Miss Leonard did not say “The sky is blue” or “You have new shoes.” What she whispered was “I wish you were my little girl.” Mary Ann went on to become a teacher herself, a person of inner beauty and great kindness. (Thomas G. Long, *Testimony, Talking Ourselves into Being Christian*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004, p.86.) Every time Mary Ann shares this story another child of God can be heard saying: “Hallelujah!”

In The End: Tell everyone you meet what the Lord has done! The excitement of God’s story comes in the telling itself! By sharing with others how God has worked in the twists and turns of our lives, we practice God’s grace. We all have the gift to be Miss Leonard...this week – Go ahead my friends, I invite you to live Lutheran “living a daring confidence in God’s grace” and making another child of God know that they are welcomed, loved and affirmed! Tell everyone you meet what the Lord has done in all of our lives! : **“This is Christ’s Church, you are welcome here, and there is a place for you here!”**