

*Sermon on Psalm 146 prepared by Jonathan Shradar*

**Psalm 146:1-10**

**Louder still is the reign of the King.**

Over the last month I have found myself in an increasing number of conversations about the end times.

For secular friends, we think of existential threats to institutions we have come to rely on. The end of the world, at least as we know it.

To those who profess to know Jesus, end times, the last things, becomes an area of keen interest and for some obsession. Rightly so, Jesus has promised to return from heaven, bringing his throne and eternal reign over all things with him.

As things of our existence get increasingly strenuous; as earthquakes multiply, as wars rage everywhere, as leaders are elevated to a god-like place in the hearts and minds of those who were once serious people... as national Israel is gripped in a war with those who wish for their extinction. We ask, are these signs of the approaching end of days?

Yes.

But maybe not in the way we think. Maybe not in the 'chart Christ's return based on news reports' sort of way. But as reminders that the way of man is fleeting, and isn't working. That we are in desperate need of Christ's return to reign forever, to set everything right.

This is Advent. It starts in the darkness of our present and anchored in the past of Christ's incarnation and cross, propels us to the future of light. More than just one season of the calendar, it is our whole experience.

"What other time or season can or will the Church ever have but that of Advent?"  
Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics

“All Christians live in eschatological times between the ages. The kingdom of God has arrived, but we pray ‘Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.’

The world in which we live is riven by innumerable horrors – war, famine, disease, abuse, injustice, environmental destruction, ethnic cleansing, violence against women, industrial levels of abortion ...

This is, in Joseph Conrad’s words, the heart of darkness. And Advent looks unflinchingly into that darkness and names it for what it is.

It does not do so nihilistically. Advent awaits a transformed world; it looks forward in hope to a future consummation of the kingdom because of the victory of God in Jesus Christ over Sin, Death and the Powers.” Patrick Mitchel, Irish Bible Institute

And looking forward in hope is exactly what we must be about, and we do so looking unflinchingly into the darkness and calling it what it is, broken.

How does Psalm 146, a hallelujah psalm, fit into Advent?

This is a song meant to stir our trust in the King who reigns over all things in contrast to where our hearts may be inclined to find satisfaction.

So we sing to our souls. *I need the soul reminder and call to something better.* And maybe you do too.

Oh my soul... praise the Lord.

Psalm 146 is praise that is louder than the noise of doom in our day. It is not delusional, but a life steadied by a trust in the One who holds everything and has your best interest in mind!

We begin, as the Psalm does, with where not to go, to that which is busted, and then hopefully will hear the song of who is to be trusted. This song seasons us, gives steel to our spines as we live in these days.

**Busted**

What are the things we are prone to trust? For life, for security, for the future?

Treasure, pleasure, measure (how we compare to others), esteem...

This soul song rather than create a long list of things we trust that we shouldn't, targets one that is key. Trusting in man, but not merely humanity, those that are noble.

It's part of our make-up, longing for a "dear leader" we can shake hands with and rally behind. Our fickle hearts move to who is the 'noble of influence' in the moment, but we still put so much trust in princes. Those who scratch our itch.

- This is Israel crying out for a king so they could be like other nations.
- This is the church in Corinth encamping around their preferred preacher, being of Apollos or of Paul.
- This is us when we disregard the Word of God and instead follow those that tell us to do what feels right to us, to reject his way for one of our own scripting.

And we don't just do this "out there," we do in the church, and some of us have the trauma to prove it.

"There has always been within the church a sinful propensity to give undue praise and prominence to men. There is a fine line between blessing God for men whose lives and ministries he has used to bless you and build you up in Christ, and making those men idol substitutes.

There is something in the human psyche that is prone to admiring a person's gifts above their character. We regularly hear it said that a man's private life has no bearing on his public life of service. If he has ability, and especially if the ability is adorned with a measure of charisma, then we should not enquire into his private life or hold anything in his private life against him. Sadly, tragically, the Christian church has not escaped this mental and spiritual idolatry throughout its history."  
Ian Hamilton

What we mess up in the church, we run ragged with in the streets.

What we need though is not a scratched itch of fancy or a sub-tribe to call our own, or the strategies that would tell us we are superior to others.

What we need is salvation, then, now, and forever.

Divine salvation that has its focus on rescue from earthly enemies, from guilt, sin, and the punishment we deserve. We need an exodus from slavery to the world and its way...

Princes, however great, are not to secure our greatest trust, in whom there is no salvation. Quite the opposite, often piling on the shackles that once bound us.

Princes are temporary, what we need is eternal.

**Psalm 146:4** “When his breath departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish.” (ESV)

Some of us have lived long enough to see nobles come and go. When we are clear headed we see the truth of Psalm 146.

It is a battle in our souls...

Primed for an election year, for wars and the rumors of them.

At Advent when darkness seems to get more of the day. We have to sing the louder song of not trusting in temporary things, the busted things, but giving ourselves over to someone better.

“When injustice assaults  
again  
when image-bearers die  
again  
when grieving mothers mourn  
again  
when communities lament  
again  
when eyes are closed  
again

when backs are turned  
again  
when right takes a hit  
again  
when business as usual returns  
again  
when accountability is questioned  
again  
when narratives are twisted  
again  
when anger rises  
again  
when hope dims  
again  
then we remember  
again  
the kings of earth  
do not hold our hope  
then we remember  
again  
put not your trust in princes  
in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation  
they will fail us  
again  
they will compromise  
again  
forsake their call  
again  
like your people of old  
harmed by corrupt kings  
we will remember  
again  
our hope is held by a  
greater king  
we will work  
again  
we will stand  
again

we will fight  
again  
because we know  
our greater king  
is just  
is good  
is righteous  
is merciful  
in every way  
he will rise  
again  
and right every wrong  
again  
while we wait  
we will hope  
we will believe  
we will work  
we will pray  
we will right wrongs  
again and again  
until the greater king comes  
again  
to usher in righteousness  
Forever.” Paul David Tripp

“The psalmist shares that people will disappoint us in their humanity (Psalm 146:3–4). Yet he contrasts people’s limitations with the limitless One by reminding us that our hope lies in the eternal God, who is as consistent on the good days as the bad.”

### **Trusted**

Here is the light that dispels the darkness.

**Psalm 146:5–6** “Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob,  
whose hope is in the LORD his God,  
[6] who made heaven and earth,  
the sea, and all that is in them,

who keeps faith forever;" (ESV)

John Piper, on X (where it is dark!) "Trust him for every help you need — one minute or one century from now."

The path to true happiness is trusting in the Lord. As those whose help is in Yahweh.

Why trust him? "How do we know it makes sense to trust in God? Answer: God has made the heavens and earth, the sea and all in them! He truly is God, and hence, all hope and trust in him is validated fully."

To be trusted for more than creation.

**Psalm 146:7–9** "who executes justice for the oppressed,  
who gives food to the hungry.

The LORD sets the prisoners free;  
[8] the LORD opens the eyes of the blind.  
The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down;  
the LORD loves the righteous.  
[9] The LORD watches over the sojourners;  
he upholds the widow and the fatherless,  
but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin." (ESV)

Creator and he is good... "As the true God that he is, he alone is able to execute justice for the oppressed, to give food to the hungry, to set prisoners free, to open the eyes of the blind, to lift up those bowed down and to watch over the sojourner, the widow, the fatherless (vv. 7–9). In each of these mercies, our God reflects his gracious character. And as God, he alone reigns over every and all generations. So, let all peoples, at all times, praise the Lord! (v. 10)."

The invitation now for us is to humble ourselves before him, rely upon him and embrace him as God and king.

And this is exactly what we need. In the uncertainty. When the talk is bleak. When fears rise. When our minds and hearts can't make sense of the world around us.

He can be trusted because he gave himself for us.

I notice here a striking similarity to Jesus reading Isaiah 61 and saying it is fulfilled in him. Remember this story?

**Luke 4:16–21** “And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. [17] And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,

[18] “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives  
and recovering of sight to the blind,  
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,  
[19] to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

[20] And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. [21] And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” (ESV)

The year of jubilee has finally come. Still, at that moment, they would reject him.

The announcement of good news to the poor, of food for the hungry, of lifting up the reverently humble, of giving a family to the widow and the orphan, it seems absurd to those trusting in what is vapor. But to those given new hearts by the Spirit of God, to those that believe that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus was for you... to us these are the words of life.

Words that bring peace, hope for our future with Him, and steadiness in the present as we wait.

His reign will go on forever and as those eager for His kingdom’s fullness, we live for the things he promised.



“God executes justice for the oppressed (Ps. 146:7a), and so do we when we work according to God’s commandments, by God’s grace. God gives food to the hungry (Ps 146:7b), and so do we. God liberates people in chains, as do legislators, lawyers, judges, and juries. God restores sight to the blind, as do ophthalmologists, opticians, and glassmakers. God lifts up those who cannot rise on their own, as do physical therapists, orderlies, elevator makers, and parents of infants (Ps. 146:8). The Lord watches over strangers, as do police and security workers, flight attendants, lifeguards, health inspectors, and peacekeepers. He takes care of orphans and widows (Ps. 146:9), as do foster parents, elder care workers, family lawyers and social service workers, financial planners, and boarding school workers. Praise the Lord! (Ps. 146:10).” Theology of Work

We cling to the light and live for the renewal of others and all things. Renewal that can only be found in trusting the Lord.

How we thrive as we wait, during the advent that is all of life before his return. Trusting him. Calling others to trust in him. Lifting our voices in this song of praise.

This is exactly the song we need.

As we wait, as we journey through these lives. The Lord’s reign makes him a sure hope for God’s suffering people.

Psalm 146 is the start of a collection of Hallelujah songs to close out the book. Each beginning with this call to “Praise the LORD!”

“This series of psalms invites us to ask: What would prompt all the praise of Pss 146–150? The answer to that question is that these psalms celebrate the best ending of the biggest story, a story better and more epic than Star Wars, the Lord of the Rings, or Harry Potter. The true story of the world, and its glorious resolution, provokes the praises of Pss 146–150.”

“They bring the Psalter as a whole to a rousing crescendo. Whatever temptations we endure, whatever disappointments, whatever sorrows, all those dissonant notes are resolved harmonically into praise.” Eugene Peterson

## **Louder still is the reign of the King.**

I need that to be true in my life, in my heart, and through my hands and voice.

“Psalm 146 celebrates Yahweh as Savior, while urging that no mere mortal can bring about the needed deliverance. The Lord set salvation in motion by sending Jesus, a salvation to be consummated when he comes again, then to achieve resurrection liberty for the captives and sight for the blind, and the hallelujahs of Ps 146 will ring true forever.”

Are these the end times? Absolutely. But not for fear or conspiracy, or silly myths. It is for the church to recognize the busted hoping in nobles and instead resolve to trust the King who has come and is coming again. Singing louder of his goodness, his reign. His peace for all time.

The tension of our times... it isn't new or unique to us...

*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, “Christmas Bells” in the height of the Civil War.  
The darkness of those days.

“I heard the bells on Christmas Day  
Their old, familiar carols play,  
    And wild and sweet  
    The words repeat  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And thought how, as the day had come,  
The belfries of all Christendom  
    Had rolled along  
    The unbroken song  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Till ringing, singing on its way,  
The world revolved from night to day,  
    A voice, a chime,  
    A chant sublime  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Then from each black, accursed mouth  
The cannon thundered in the South,  
    And with the sound  
    The carols drowned  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

It was as if an earthquake rent  
The hearth-stones of a continent,  
    And made forlorn  
    The households born  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And in despair I bowed my head;  
"There is no peace on earth," I said;  
    "For hate is strong,  
    And mocks the song  
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:  
"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;  
    The Wrong shall fail,  
    The Right prevail,  
With peace on earth, good-will to men."

**Psalm 146:10** "The LORD will reign forever, your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the LORD!" (ESV)

