

The Lord Stoops Down to Lift Us Up

15th Sun. after Pent. – 09/21/25 – Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Psalm 113:1-9 Pastor Keith Besel

vv. 6-7, [Literal translation from the Hebrew – that Yahweh...] **“is the one who makes Himself low to look upon the heavens and the earth. He raises the poor from the ground and from the garbage dump He lifts up the person in need.”**

Introduction

- ✧ How many of you remember playing king of the hill when you were young? When I was a kid we played it on what seemed like mountains of snow piled up by the plows that cleared the paved portions of our playground at school, or on the piles of snow that we shoveled from our driveways at home.
 - ➔ We raced up the snow pile; pushing, grabbing and trying to shove each other down the slippery slope. And once on top, the goal of course, was to stay on top for as long as possible – as the “king”.
- ✧ Our lives in this world are a lot like playing king of the hill. Whether we’re at work, at home or among our social group of “friends” we find ourselves too often scrambling for an advantage; competing with each other for attention – sometimes fighting just to get a word in edgewise. And when we do, we don’t want to let go of that little bit of power and influence; even if it means pushing or cutting or keeping others down to keep ourselves; our image or our position “on top.”
- ✧ Today’s Psalm of the Day; Psalm 113 reminds us of who it is that is really on top; pointing out the greatness of God. His glory is above the heavens. He is exalted over all the nations “from the rising of the sun until its setting,” says verse three. He’s the One who is enthroned on high.
 - ➔ Yet, this God, we are told, is different from the way we all want to act when we “think” that we’re on top in some way. He who is above all things; who made all things, actually stoops down to raise us up; to bring hope and help to all of us who are poor and needy here on earth.
 - ➔ God is not like the arrogant and inflated rulers of this world who are all puffed up in their pride and selfishness. No, He does not play king of the hill.
- ✧ Though He is rightly and indisputably great and exalted over every power and principality, His deepest care; His concern is for the most miserable of His creatures. He stoops down to look at the lowliest of us beggars here in this garbage pile of sin; to see those oppressed and beaten down by the ones abusing their influence. He looks upon the weakest of the weak, like the unborn child still in the womb or the young and old who are disabled or unable to fend for themselves; and He sees us all with His unmatched love.
 - ➔ Indeed, Jesus tells us in Luke 12:7 that He even numbers the hairs on our head; He knows and cares about us to the smallest detail. So, “fear not,” He says, “You are of more value than many sparrows.”

I. So Much Suffering and Poverty!

- ✧ Nevertheless, there remains so much terrible human suffering, oppression and poverty in this world! We see it on every continent; in every nation and community so that we are so tempted to ask, “Why?”
 - ➔ In many third world countries, people literally live in what you and I might call a garbage dump.
 - ➔ Yet even here in America, considered to be the richest country in the world by our gross domestic product (GDP), we have sorrow and suffering all around us.

- ✘ And the struggle to explain this suffering becomes, I believe, the most common excuse for why so many people refuse to believe and trust in God. “If God is such a loving God,” we hear people ask, “then why does He allow it?”
 - ➔ Even in Biblical times, the unbelieving world challenged the writers of Scripture like the Psalmist that wrote our text today – when they faced misfortune and calamity by asking, “Where is your God?” “Where is God in a world where millions of people die of hunger and disease?” “Where is God when we ourselves face tragedy and suffering and death; when we see that this human life is but a breath that can be taken away in a moment?”
- ✘ That is why tribal people often think of the creator god only as an entity that is far away and aloof. These are what are called animistic societies or belief systems who believe that natural objects and phenomena, even the universe itself, has a soul.
 - ➔ In one African tribe, it’s said that a woman was once pounding rice with a long-handled pestle. But in her effort she reached too high on the upstroke so that she punched a hole in the sky. Their creator god was so annoyed at this that he just moved far away so that he would no longer be annoyed by those he created. There are many stories like this that try to explain what people and societies think is the absence of the creator god. The bottom line for them is a belief that God is too far away; too busy; too uncaring to actively intervene in this world.
 - ➔ Others, who are called Deists, believe that God is like a watchmaker who put the world and everything in it together, but now He just lets the world run on its own. They don’t believe that He can, or ever does miraculously intervene to alter nature’s laws. So, the end result is the same as with the animists; that God is still distant and uncaring.
- ✘ But the Bible; God’s holy and inspired Word, gives us an altogether different answer to the question of God and human suffering, doesn’t it?
 - ➔ Scripture tells us that it isn’t that God has abandoned us, but instead it is that we human beings, like rebellious and selfish children, have turned away from Him.
 - ➔ God first created us in love; with every intention that we would live this life, from the beginning, in perfect fellowship with Him. But the devil, in the form of a serpent, tempted Eve just as he still tempts us, leading her; leading us to question God and ask, “Did God really say ...?” (Gen. 3:1)
 - ➔ And like Eve, we in our sin too often want to be free from God. Actually, we want to be our own god and live without Him. This, my friends, is the true source of all of the misery and suffering in this world. It is us, and all of the other people here with us, trying to play king of the hill, that are to blame.

II. God Condescends to Us in Love

- ✘ But, rather than remaining aloof from human suffering, what does the one true God actually do? He doesn’t move away, in fact, just the opposite. He takes the initiative and He comes down to us in His inexplicable love!
 - ➔ The good news of this text before us today is that God, He alone is the one and only true King; not just King of the hill, but King above all kings and Lord above all lords. He is so much greater than any and all of us, in fact, that our puny efforts to comprehend Him always fall short. There is, in fact no possible way for us, on our own, to approach or ever come near to Him in His holiness. But He doesn’t leave us alone. No, verse six says that He “is the one who makes Himself low to look upon the heavens and the earth.”
- ✘ Even the adults here today still understand that sometimes size intimidates us, right? Remember when you were a small child and big, adult men often seemed scary? I remember

when our oldest daughter, Brittnie, was little there was one of the nicest men in our congregation who had a large, dark mustache. And no matter how nice he was to her, every time that she saw him, she ran screaming away from him. But often, it makes a great difference when adults squat, or kneel down to a child's level; giving the feeling that they can now be trusted; that they are now fully understood.

➔ Verse four in our text talks about God as majestic, "high above all nations and His glory is above the heavens." Still, though God is so far above us in holiness and majesty, power and glory, He doesn't remain distant from us tiny human creatures. No, He stooped down, coming to us in our own human flesh; entering our world as a human baby!

➔ Then, in His earthly ministry, Jesus even said, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart" (Mt. 11:28-29).

✘ Yes, God the Son lowered Himself; He left His throne on high and entered into the garbage and sin of this world; being born to a lowly virgin in a stable.

➔ And what did He do while He was here? He lived with the poor. "The Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head," Jesus said in Matthew 8:20. He helped the poor and the needy. He touched the lepers; He ate with the outcasts and He wept with the grieving.

✘ It is truly amazing that Jesus, the Creator of the universe, would say, as I already quoted earlier, "I am lowly in heart"? (Mt. 11:29)

➔ You see what that means? He is no King of the hill, lording it over us. No, He stoops down under us and takes up our load of sin upon Himself. He goes down to the ash heap; into the dung pile. Why? to lift us up; to bring us out of our own, self-imposed darkness of sin and death.

➔ And He bore the death-deserving load of our sin on the cross, just so that He might raise us up. So yes, in His resurrection, we, too, are now raised! By faith in Him, we are exalted, says verse eight, "to...sit with the Prince" of the universe! Ephesians 2:6 tells us that God "raised us up with [Jesus] and seated us with Him in the heavenly places", high above the power of death and the deception of the devil.

III. Jesus Continues His Mission of Love through Us

✘ And Jesus continues His mission of love for all of the people suffering here on earth, even after He ascended in victory to His throne at the Father's right hand. He continues to stoop down through those whom He has already brought to Himself here in His Church. In John 20:21 Jesus said to His first church members and leaders, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you."

➔ His extreme love shown in coming down to us, my friends, now leads us to show that unmatched love and care to others in need around us today.

✘ The First Letter of John was written specifically to address the common heresy that still exists today; that leads people to ignore and neglect those around us in need. But 1 John 3:16 tells us that Jesus "laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers" who are in need around us.

➔ But there are some that say, "all that matters is the spiritual world; that none of this that we are dealing with here on earth even matters to God."

✘ But all of this that He created does matter greatly to God. So much so that He became one of us; that He came to raise us up out of the garbage dump that we have made of His creation; that as verse nine says, "He gives the barren woman a home, making her the joyous mother of children." That is, He brings all who are lonely or oppressed or grieving or hurting in any way;

He brings all of us who suffer with the consequences of our own sin into His loving and saving arms. And He seats us with Him here and now in His family – in the Holy Christian Church. And He promises that through faith in Jesus we are seated with Him in eternity in His glory on high!

Conclusion

✘ So, my fellow Christians, we have this glorious truth before us today, that our Lord did not play power games when He came and lived in this world. No, He came down from the mountain to care for us; to save the lost, the poor, the needy, the weak, and the defenseless. He sacrificed Himself to raise us up, and by the power of His Spirit, He strengthens us now to love others in His name so, that they too may be raised up to be with Jesus.

➔ So, together we join the psalmist in verse one and verse three, shouting and singing, “Praise Yahweh! Praise, O servants of Yahweh, praise the name of Yahweh! ... From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of Yahweh is to be praised” forever! Amen.