

From the Pastor

Among my favorite Psalms is Psalm 113. It tells us to “Praise the Lord! Praise, O servants of the Lord; praise the name of the Lord.” That psalmist continues: “Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time on and forevermore. From the rising of the sun to its setting the name of the Lord is to be praised.” And why, why is the Lord to be praised? This is the reason: “The Lord is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens.” Indeed, “Who is like the Lord our God, who is seated on high, who looks far down on the heavens and the earth?”

God is this great power, a power greater than all other powers and greater than the sum of them. What does this God need? What does this God lack? Nothing. This God needs no mighty army, needs no riches, and does not need the shouts of acclamation and approval of great throngs of subjects. Unlike earthly princes and presidents, this great power is free from all of that.

What does God do with this freedom? It is astonishing to me. Says the psalmist: “He raises the poor from the dust, and lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes, with the princes of his people.” God, this great power, a power like no other, looks down. And if the translation of the New International Version is correct, this God doesn’t just look down on the heavens and the earth, this God “stoops down to look upon the heavens and the earth.” God stoops all the way down to the dust and to the ash heap, to the trash pile, to the garbage dump. From there does God raise the poor and the needy, those found among the dust and ashes. God raises them to sit with the princes of his people, to be human beings, to have a share in God’s dominion over creation (Genesis 1.28-30).

I cannot help but think that God is or must be a strange and confounding combination of great power and utter kindness. Who, indeed, is like the Lord our God?

Pastor Neal