

I Love the Lord

Psalm 116:1-9

The Reverend Doctor Michael Newheart

September 12, 2021

Prayer: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord our strength and our redeemer.

The title of this sermon on this Homecoming Sunday is "I Love the Lord." Every time you hear me say, "I love the Lord," lift your signs up. OK? Got it? Let's try: "I love the Lord."

A few minutes ago, the scripture—or Bible lesson--was read. It came from the book of Psalms, which is the longest book in the Bible. It is in the Old Testament. The word Psalm means "song," specifically song accompanied by a stringed instrument, like a harp. If you have a guitar or a ukulele (or if you want to pretend and play "air guitar" or "air ukulele"), you can make up your own tune and sing these songs. For example, you can say, "I love the Lord because he has heard my voice." When the singer sings about "the Lord," it's the Lord God, who has brought the Hebrews out of slavery in Egypt. God is the Lord of justice.

In this psalm, this song, the singer is happy because God has saved them from some terrible situation. It seems that the singer has been very sick. They were lying in bed; their tummy hurt; they had a fever; they had pains all over their body. And the singer would lie in bed and moan: "Oh! Oh!" Amidst pain, the singer called out to God, "Lord, help me, Lord, save my life." And God did. They got their strength back. They rolled out of bed and stood up. And they said, "I love the Lord. I called on God to save me and God did." So, he wrote this Psalm, this song in the Bible, to tell us about what God did for him. He says, "I love the Lord."

So, how much time passed between when the singer sang, "Lord, save me!" and "I love the Lord"? I don't know. When we hear the song, we think that this healing took minutes or hours. But maybe it took days or weeks or months or even years. Maybe their family prayed with them and brought them something to eat and something to drink. And family and friends would come talk to them and help them feel better. And the person would say, "Thanks for coming by to see me. Thanks for bringing food and drink. Thank you." And eventually the person got well. Maybe it was a slow process, but fast or slow the singer got well and sang, "I love the Lord."

In this songbook, a lot of different people sing to God about their sicknesses, and they talk to God in different ways about difficult circumstances: Sometimes they blame others—their enemies. Sometimes they blame God. Other times they blame themselves. But here in this Psalm the singer doesn't blame anybody. The singer just says that God has saved them. And as a result, they sing, "I love the Lord."

Maybe you've been sick, or you've had a really, really, really bad day. Maybe your tummy hurt, or maybe you just hurt all over. And you were miserable. But time went on. You stayed home from school, you went to bed, your parents fixed you chicken noodle soup, they gave you medicine, and you eventually got better. You can say too, "I love the Lord." You can say it

because God saved you from being sick. Now someone might say, "God didn't save you. It was just nature taking its course. It was the medicine. It was the doctor." But that's how God works, through doctors and medicine and nature. Sometimes there may be direct healing from God, but more often God works slowly through natural means. You can say, "I love the Lord. I love the Lord." Out of that love, you pray to God. Out of that love, you praise God.

I would like to end by telling another story. Last month there was a bunch of rain that fell here. I want to tell you a story about someone in another part of the country at another time where it rained a lot. The family prayed, "God, please save us." The whole family was convinced that God would save them, so they went out on top of the roof to wait for God. A rowboat came by and offered them help. They said, "No, God is going to save us." Then a motorboat came by and offered them help. They said, "No, God is going to save us." And then a helicopter came and offered help, and they said, "No, God is going to save us." But the waters kept on coming and this family drowned. So, the family confronted God and said, "You said that you were going to save us, but you didn't show up." God said, "What do you mean? I sent you a rowboat, a motorboat and a helicopter, but you refused them all."

God works through rowboats and motorboats and helicopters, medicine and doctors and parents and chicken noodle soup to make us well when we are sick. When we are sick, we can say, "I love the Lord," and when we are well, we can still say, "I love the Lord." God uses all these things in nursing us back to health.

So, when something good happens to you, say, "I love the Lord." Because God has given that gift to you. When something bad happens, you can also say, "I love the Lord." God has given the gift of life to you. And perhaps you will be the one who brings God's gift to someone else, so that they too can say, "I love the Lord." And then together we can change things so that all people can know health and happiness. All believers in the Lord, then, can say, "I love the Lord."

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