

## **Meditation 1: Initial Claim of Faith**

When we look around the world it is sometimes hard to know where to begin.

And so today, we begin by declaring our faith and trust in God with a hallelujah!

For great is God's steadfast love toward us,  
And the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.

Hallelujah!

To trust and have faith and hope in God is simply to rely on God and his promises toward us.

I know many of you watched VBS and you sang that song: we trust, we trust, we trust in you Jesus. You're all that we need.

And that's what you were singing: We rely on God.  
And so we say Hallelujah!  
Praise God!

A hallelujah because of who God is and what God has done for us.  
A hallelujah that deeply affirms our faith.  
Hallelujah! God is seated on the throne. Not just over all things, but in all things, through all things. We are in God and God is in us. God hold the earth—from east to west, from the heavens to earth—all of creation in his hands.  
Hallelujah!

Hallelujah!  
God is above all things.  
And yet.

Hallelujah because God also humbles himself. And is not just high above all. But with us. Doing the work that needs doing.

Raising, lifting, making, giving.  
God sees the poor, the needy, the lonely, the dreams that are unfulfilled, the oppressed and has the power to bring life from death, transformation from mistakes, resurrection from death.  
God is allied with humanity.

Willing to reach into the ash heap, to travel through the dust, to be present in the darkness. To bring about this death to life transformation.

We too, if we look deep within, might have seen or known this transformation too—perhaps we cannot explain it but we know it happened.

Hallelujah!

This is why we praise God.

We rely on these promises.

We rely on God's works.

We've known them to be true.

We hold on to them in the sunny and stormy days. The summer and the winters of our lives. In times before COVID and in the middle of COVID.

And so we affirm our faith, reliance, and trust in God.

This is where we begin.

For great is his steadfast love toward us,

And the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.

We affirm this promise.

What is the work and promise of God that you have known that has sustained you in your journey in the past 6 months?

## **Meditation 2: Lament**

Hallelujah!

For great is his steadfast love toward us,

And the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.

Though we often begin with strong affirmations of faith. loud hallelujahs. Praising God for all the ways God came through.

At some point in our lives there's usually a moment we question if God's steadfast love is truly toward us. If God's faithfulness endures forever.

Where Hallelujah's are hard to whisper or even utter.

These moments are usually when we recognize we do not have control, our lives are more fragile than we thought, there is something we cannot fix, we cannot make better.

It might be big—life against us, a sickness, a situation like COVID—so big there is literally nothing we can do but endure, trauma, a lost loved one, really bad news all over the world.

And instead of Hallelujahs we cry in the presence of God.

Because we found ourselves in need of something we cannot provide for ourselves or others.

No hallelujahs here for the author of Psalm 102. Instead. He tells the truth about his situation.

He is fading away like smoke, there's a fire tearing up his bones, his heart is stricken, he's wasting away. He's like an owl lost in the wilderness. Unable to sleep, lonely like the sole bird on a house. Enemies hate him, he drinks his own tears. Sorrow is closest friend. God has abandoned him it feels.

No hallelujah's here. No "God's steadfast love is toward us".

But. He does come because of previous hallelujah's.

He's telling the truth about the situation he finds himself in and demanding God, the One who sits on the thrones and has promised to raise up those found in ash heaps, to have a conversation with the real trouble at hand.

It is a radical form of trust. it is a protest to the evil, the pain, the struggle or injustice he is experiencing and the goodness he knows of God. It is a cry for help for God to come through as he has promised. A cry of trust that the God of the broken hearted....the.....from above, will come through.

We often sugar coat hard life situations by saying things like:

"what does not kill me will make me stronger or that God will not send me more than I can bear. Or that this will make me more compassionate, more loving, more holy"

Yet here, rather than covering up the situation with sugar, we are invited to demand God have a conversation with the real tough stuff

of our world and come through on the promises to lift, heal, raise up all those who are bowed low. To bring life out of death.

To exchange our hallelujahs' for telling the truth about our situation and asking for the help we cannot provide for ourselves. A radical act of trust—a deep reliance on the one who sits enthroned and who walks among us. to still act, to still be present, to be near to those who cry out for help. Recognizing and holding out hope that indeed God will raise up the broken-hearted, lift and make new.....

I know we've all experienced these past few months differently.

Some of us have had our lives barely influenced by COVID, and others have felt the anxiety, fear, stress and restrictions.

While for others of you it has been hard—homeschooling from home, delayed dreams, marriages breaking down, loneliness, kids who are struggling, not being able to see your family, deaths and grief, illnesses unexpected, the stress and fear and anxiety of restrictions, or your walking closely with someone whose life looks like this psalm.

And we are invited to put down our Hallelujahs for a moment, and replace them with cries for help, for comfort. And trust that even though God and the promise of new life, healing and resurrection seem far off, God will come to the broken hearted.

And so, what is it that you need to cry out to God about? Ask for help? Or tell the truth about the difficulty of the situation?

### **Reflection 3: Praise and Thanksgiving**

The earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord.

The earth is full.

Sometimes it's easy to see and we are sure of it. And at other times it is hard

Yet. The earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord.

Whether easy or hard, if we take a long hard look we discover some Hallelujah's welling up in our hearts and slipping out of our lips, like when:

The person who called or invited themselves in even though it might've been hard.

The beauty of a tree, flower or a full bin of recently harvested crops.

The wonder of transformation and lessons learned only after the fact.

The delight of a baby or a job well done.

The care and kindness of a friend

The deep rest found in a good sleep or extended vacation.

From all these things and more. Hallelujahs' spring from our lips.

The earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord.

Gifts and steadfast love are literally dropped everywhere.

Whether these gifts of love are easy or hard to find they remind us of an abundant and gracious gift-giver—God. The one in whom we live, move and have our being. From whom all life and beauty flow from. And there is nothing left to do but give thanks—loudly or quietly, through song or spoken words, dance or a relieved sigh.

Through these gifts we learn and see glimpses of the steadfast love of the Lord.

Psalm 33 brings us back to the steadfast love which set the world into motion and brought about creation. And a Creator, a God whose character is marked by faithfulness, righteousness, justice and steadfast love. Our God is a reliable presence who not only continually upholds the world, but our lives as well—littering the world with God's steadfast love. For there is so much to give.

And we've known this steadfast love of the Lord, allowing us to know and see that love even when the mountains shake and fall into the heart of the sea.

Even in a world filled with chaos, things we cannot control nor understand, sicknesses we cannot yet heal, we are confident that the world will hold.

Just like lament, praise and thanksgiving is a radical act of trust. For it declares, even in the face of difficulty and uncertainty, that we've received gifts and goodness that we did not make happen, that we indeed rely on God's generosity, faithfulness, righteousness, justice and reliable presence. And it puts us in our rightful place—not as saviors of the world, but as receivers of a generous God. And so we raise a few halleluiahs.

I invite you to reflect: over the past 6 months, even in the middle of COVID, what are you grateful for? Wish to thank God for? Where and how have you known the steadfast love of the Lord?

#### **Reflection 4: Trust and Waiting**

We began our journey in trust and we end it today in trust.  
This trust is more weathered perhaps because we've gone through

Even though there are bold promises from God sometimes we wait for those promises to come true.

So often trust and faith and hope require us to wait for the Lord, to be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.

The Lord who is indeed our light, salvation, refuge and strength, who is with us and for us in all things, whose steadfast love is toward us.

While this is all true.

We still sometimes wait for God.

We wait for God's action, faithfulness, the healing of all things.  
We wait for deliverance and justice, light the way, resurrection the dead, bring transformation, to be a refuge, for the new creation and the day when there is no more crying, tears or mourning.  
We wait for God's kingdom come on earth as in heaven.

Yet in the middle of this waiting, we recognize we can still trust.

I love this line: I believe I will see the goodness of the Lord in in the land of the living.

This is a bold statement of trust that brings up a big “YES” in us. We want to, and we believe that we might and can and will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. And we wait for that.

Many of us are waiting and others of us have seen the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

And that’s why we walk side by side. So we can point out God and the goodness and steadfast love of the lord. Did you see it. point us toward trust, hope and reliance and faith.

This psalm is a statement of trust. And trust dares to hope and courageously hold on to that promise even in the chaos of life. It doesn’t deny the reality but says: even in the middle of all these threats I trust: I will see the goodness of the lord in the land of the living; that the earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord; that God will come near to the brokenhearted and lift up all who are bowed down. It is a decision to rely on God in the middle of everything, in all sorts of threats.

Trust doesn’t mean everything will go well, or we will be free of fear or doubt or tears. Or that Hallelujahs will always easily slip off our lips.

But it does mean we rely on God, we continue to walk forward and let the daily rhythms of our lives be undergird by God’s faithfulness and abundant generosity toward us

We wait for God to act on his promises to deliver us and bless us even in the present crisis and continue to make a way when there seems to be only dead ends.

Trust requires courage to hope for the day when we will see the goodness of the Lord. waiting can be hard. and tiring. It requires courage and strength. In the face of fear, difficulty, frustration, opposition, or a real sense that things are not the way they should be, we courageously trust in the steadfast love of God and the promise that God is a reliable presence.

We honor that the future has possibilities and potentials. There is more that is possible than what we see right now. We honor the reality that we don’t know what might come, what will happen and yet we

trust God's faithfulness, goodness, steadfast love which promises to hold us and be our refuge at all times and in all places.

I don't know how you are feeling about the upcoming season....winter and the potential for more COVID or what harvest will look like or how your illness will end up or all unknowns of what the next few months might bring....in all their goodness, all of their potentials and all of their unknowns.

And so as we courageously wait for the Lord. As we confidently declare we will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. And so we wait.

We wait for new normals and new rhythms to emerge. We wait for vaccines for COVID, for peace in every home and nation, for the resurrection of the dead, for healing and wholeness, for dreams to be fulfilled, for forgiveness and reconciliation with our loved ones and enemies, for jobs and too much food on the table, for marriages to be transformed, for courage to pursue what God has invited you into. We wait. With courage and with trust that the God who we have put our hope in, will indeed come through on the promises he has made to us.

We affirm the possibilities and potentials that the future holds because God holds it. Because God is intimately involved in it. Because God has shown us in Christ that God is all about resurrection. About coming through. About ending the evil and making all things new. And so we wait.

And as we wait, we don't do so as inactive people but active participants in the kingdom of God.

We go clinging to God's promises, and with a renewed sense that "yes" as we trust in God we can have courage to hope but also have courage to act on that hope. As signs of God's kingdom, faithfulness, reliable presence which we have heard about. In the good and bad we have courage and faith to act.

This prayer by Kathy Galloway sums it all up:

God, so much of faith is waiting  
like a pregnant woman waiting in hope

like a people under siege, holding out till relief comes  
like the soul lost in darkness,  
unable to see even a glimmer of light  
yet stumbling through the night because somewhere,  
Out ahead, day will surely break  
God, be with us in our waiting.

God be with us in our waiting indeed.  
Amen.