

The Psalm set for today is 113 and this is one of my favourites of the psalms and so I was glad to be able to write about it.

I cannot improve on what Paula Gooder writes in one of the books I am using as my source material "Reflections on the Psalms" published by Church House Publishing. You may know of Paula Gooder in her current post as a Biblical Scholar and Chancellor of St Paul's Cathedral.

Paula says: "Psalm 113 begins a small collection known as the "hallel" psalms (Psalms 113-118). Their focus is suggested by the title of the collection. Hallel in Hebrew means simply praise. Indeed the word Hallelujah (which is translated as 'Praise the Lord') occurs regularly throughout these psalms.

"The striking feature of Psalm 113 is the encouragement to constant praise of God – from the rising of the sun until its setting. We are accustomed to praising God from time to time, when we remember, but here the psalmist reminds us that the God whom we worship deserves far more praise than that.

"The verb 'to praise' is connected in Hebrew with the verb 'to boast'. This connection reminds us of one of the key elements of praise – that we should boast about God, who he is and what he has done. In the general busy-ness and pressure of life, it is all too easy to forget all the God has done for us. Psalm 113 calls us to a discipline of 'boastful praise of God', to rehearse time and time again, from the rising of the sun to its setting, all that God is and all that he has done. As we do this, we will discover that we become more and more alert to what God continues to do in our world. The more we praise, the more we will discover reason to praise!"

These psalms are also referred to as the Egyptian Hallel and are used in particular at the major Jewish annual festivals. At Passover, Psalms 113 and 114 would be sung before the meal and Psalms 115 and 116 after the meal. It is possible that this practice is alluded to in Matthew's Gospel 26.30 and Mark's Gospel 14.26 in connection with the Last Supper. In other words, these might have been the last psalms which Jesus heard before he was arrested, tried and crucified.

From Trinity Sunday, as we move onwards with our journey it is good to remember that we need to continue to praise the Lord. It's not time to put our feet up, physically or mentally or spiritually, as we still have work to do – to continue to praise the Lord. The Psalm is a powerful reminder of God's concern for the poor and needy and God's power, through the Spirit, to effect transformation in human lives.

Let us pray

From the rising of the sun to its setting
we praise your name, O Lord;
may your promise to raise the poor from the dust
and turn the fortunes of the needy upside down
be fulfilled in our time also,
as it was in your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen