

DAILY DEVOTIONAL THURSDAY, JULY 30th

Dear Christian Friends:

8 The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

9 The Lord is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made.

14 The Lord upholds all who are falling, and raises up all who are bowed down.

15 The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season.

16 You open your hand, satisfying the desire of every living thing.

17 The Lord is just in all his ways, and kind in all his doings.

18 The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.

19 He fulfills the desire of all who fear him; he also hears their cry, and saves them.

20 The Lord watches over all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy.

*21 My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord,
and all flesh will bless his holy name forever and ever.*

Psalm 145:8-9, 14-21

What do you believe?

That's a pretty heady question for a Thursday morning. And, truthfully, I'm not sure how I would want to answer that now. How to put into our own words exactly what we believe about God, ourselves, the world? That's tough to do!

Though we should all devote more personal time and thought to such a question – and come up with an answer that satisfies us more or less – people of every age have relied on answers developed by others and distilled into memorable phrases. We call these statements “creeds”, from the Latin word, *credo*, which means “I believe.” The early Christian church put together three such statements: the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed and the Athanasian Creed, each getting progressively longer. But a creed can also be a short statement; the first Christian creed was “Jesus is Lord!”

If we look to the Old Testament for a “creed”, a statement of belief, we could do a lot worse than the opening verses of today’s reading from Psalm 145. “The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The Lord is good to all and his compassion is over all that he has made.” (NRSV.) The first sentence is from God’s self-revelation to Moses at Mt. Sinai; the second is the experience of the Hebrew people as they were delivered from slavery and death, and realized the scope of God’s creative, redemptive and protective power. This was a statement of belief repeated many times in the Old Testament and one that has made its way into our liturgy, the Lenten Sentence we sing before the gospel lesson.

What **do** you believe? What do **you** experience about God? Keep thinking and praying about that to come up with your own answer. But in the meantime, keep in mind Psalm 145: “The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.”

I believe that works for me!

Gracious and merciful God, we praise you for your incredible patience and love. We thank you for providing for all our needs of mind, body and spirit. Above all, we thank and praise you for your love in Jesus Christ, our Lord. Keep us firm in faith that we may be a blessing to others. Amen.

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