

We're continue in a series on the Finding God in the Church: the Sacraments. In our Protestant Tradition we have two sacraments: baptism and communion.

Today we reflect on baptism as a refuge, space, home.

dwelling place | home | nest | courts : we read of God's dwelling place, of God's courts, of a home to be found at the altar of the Lord, all of which is summarized in the resounding praise of verse 4, "happy are those who live in your house."

Here again, as we saw last week in Psalm 46, the expectation of the psalms is that where God's name is, there God dwells and there God can be found. See for example -

Exodus 20:24 :: " You need make for me only an altar of earth and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your offerings of well-being, your sheep and your oxen; in every place where I cause my name to be remembered I will come to you and bless you."

Jeremiah 7:12 :: "Go now to my place that was in Shiloh, where I made my name dwell at first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel."

Psalm 74:7:: "They set your sanctuary on fire; they desecrated the dwelling place of your name, bringing it to the ground."

Selah (/ˈsi:lə(h)/; Hebrew: סֶלָה, also transliterated as selāh) is a word used 74 times in the Hebrew Bible—seventy-one times in the Psalms and three times in the Book of Habakkuk. The meaning of the word is not known, though various interpretations exist.. It is probably either a liturgico-musical mark or an instruction on the reading of the text, something like "stop and listen." Another proposal is that Selah can be used to indicate that there is to be a musical interlude at that point in the Psalm. The Amplified Bible translates selah as "pause, and think of that." It can also be interpreted as a form of underlining in preparation for the next paragraph. At least some of the Psalms were sung accompanied by musical instruments and there are references to this in many chapters. Selah may indicate a break in the song whose purpose is similar to that of Amen (Hebrew: "so be it") in that it stresses the truth and importance of the preceding passage. - *from wikipedia*.

May 19, 2019

Psalm 84

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

- ¹ How lovely is *your dwelling place*,
O Lord of hosts!
- ² My soul longs, indeed it faints
for *the courts of the Lord*;
my heart and my flesh sing for joy
to the living God.
- ³ Even the sparrow finds *a home*,
and the swallow *a nest* for herself,
where she may lay her young,
at your altars, O Lord of hosts,
my King and my God.
- ⁴ Happy are those who live in *your house*,
ever singing your praise.
Selah
- ⁵ Happy are those whose strength is in you,
in whose heart are the highways to Zion.
- ⁶ As they go through the valley of Baca
they make it a place of springs;
the early rain also covers it with pools.
- ⁷ They go from strength to strength;
the God of gods will be seen in Zion.
- ⁸ O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer;
give ear, O God of Jacob
Selah
- ⁹ Behold our shield, O God;
look on the face of your anointed.
- ¹⁰ For a day in *your courts* is better
than a thousand elsewhere.
I would rather be a doorkeeper
in *the house of my God*
than live in the tents of wickedness.
- ¹¹ For the Lord God is a sun and shield;
he bestows favor and honor.
No good thing does the Lord withhold
from those who walk uprightly.
- ¹² O Lord of hosts,
happy is everyone who trusts in you.

Romans 6:1-11

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

¹ What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? ² By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? ³ Do you not know that all of us who have been **BAPTIZED** into Christ Jesus were **BAPTIZED** into his death? ⁴ Therefore we have been buried with him by **BAPTISM** into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷ For whoever has died is freed from sin. ⁸ But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰ The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. ¹¹ So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

QUESTIONS FOR THE PRACTICE OF EXAMEN & CONTEMPLATION

- **What shimmers in your attention in these readings?**
- **The Psalm talks of God as home: the place where God's name resides. In baptism we take on the name of Jesus. So how are these ideas connected?**
- **The liturgy for funerals services articulates that in death our baptism is completed. How do you react to that vision of baptism?**

Romans is the sixth book in the New Testament. Biblical scholars agree that it was composed by the Apostle Paul to explain that salvation. It is the longest of the Pauline epistles (or letters) and considered his theological masterpiece.

In chapters 5 through 8 (*the sub-section from which our reading comes*), Paul argues that believers can be assured of their hope in salvation, through faith in Jesus, the faithful have been joined with Jesus and freed from sin. Paul has been just talking about how God responds to sin by offering forgiveness and grace in Jesus (salvation). In that logic Paul rails against the idea that would say if God gave us this.... For this amount of sin, then we should sin more, to receive an even better gift of grace and saving love. Paul explains why the life and death of Jesus matters and the connection between his life-death-and-resurrection and our own life-in-Christ.

Death - Life - Old Self

The language here also resonates with that which Paul used in 2 Corinthians 5:14-17:

"¹⁴ For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. ¹⁵ And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them. ¹⁶ From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. ¹⁷ So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!"

BE BAPTIZED (from the Greek noun βάπτισμα pronounced [baptisma] meaning "washing-ism"). In Greek Bapto- was a verb meaning both to wash, and to dip. It's the result of a dipping or sinking or submerging, spanning from the image of washing to includes the image of death by drowning. Christian Baptism has similarities to Jewish purification rituals of immersion in water, required for, among other things, conversion to Judaism. But baptism is to be performed only once, not a repeatable ritual. In Mark 10:38 and Luke 12:50 Jesus describes his own death as a baptism. Paul seems to refer directly to that idea here. Christian baptism has as its final goal new and eternal life. Yet that is to be understood more in the sense of participation in the life or event of Jesus than as regeneration. It's both a clear visible sign of incorporation into the Christian community (those following Jesus) and a mystery – baptism is the means by which we join with Christ in his death so that we can also be resurrected with him. Paul uses a complex intertwining of 'ifs' and 'therefores' to make that case that, baptized into Christ, we are at home with Christ in all things -- in his death and burial, his resurrection and newness of life, his death to sin and his alive-ness to God.