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Luke 24:44-53, Psalm 47  
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I am intrigued about the fact that one of the last things that Jesus said before he parted from his disciples is that he, himself, Jesus, was the fulfillment of the Psalms. We often think of Jesus being the fulfillment of the prophets or of the Torah, but Jesus as the fulfillment of the Psalms? What can this mean, because the Psalms were our words to God; human prayers. When Jesus and the first disciples would pray, they didn't just do free-form makeup prayers off the top of your head. They prayed the prayers that we find now in the book of Psalms. They learned those Psalms from their mothers when they were very very young. When Jesus was dying on the cross; he didn't make up a prayer, he used a Psalm; *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* How is Jesus the fulfillment of prayers to God? Or, in the Psalms we also find the liturgies, the orders of worship that would have been used in ancient Israel. Psalm 47, which is the reading for today. It begins, *Clap your hands all people. Shout to God with loud songs of joy for God has gone up with a shout.* You can tell from this Psalm and many others that when the Israelites worshiped, it was raucous. It was enthusiastic. It was a full-bodied experience. It would have great procession. They would carry the arc of the covenant into the temple. There would be a great shout. Trumpets would blare, dancers would dance. We have to think about this in terms of our worship here.

Sometimes people, they've been to other kinds of churches. I sometimes preach other places. You know, I've preached in largely African American churches where the people talk to you as you go. If it's good, they say, "Amen brother!" And if it's not going so well they say, "Fix it, fix it!" I used to be bugged because then I'd come back to us here and we're fixed pretty firmly in our pews. I think this is easy to misunderstand because here, I have to train young preachers in how to do this. You have to learn to detect when somebody's giving you your "Amen, preacher." I see it now and then. I'll say something and I don't get the "Amen, preacher," but what I get is sort of a nod. When I get that, I'm really pumped. I know he's not asleep. He is with you. Or the "fix it, fix it..." The way that plays out here is I look out and one of you has an eyebrow raised.

Worship in ancient Israel was enthusiastic, and yet it was ordered. It wasn't a free-for-all. When it was time to shout, you shouted. When it was time to clap, you clapped. When it was time for the dancers to dance, they would dance. When it was time for the trumpets to blow, the trumpets would blow. When it was time for silence, people would be silent. When it was time to kneel, people would kneel. When it was time to lift their hands, they would lift their hands.

You and I have trouble worshipping, don't we? The reason is that we live in this consumer culture where everything is a commodity. Everything is for sale. This frustrates me. I don't know if it frustrates you. You may think it's the engine of the American economy so it's OK. But I get bugged because I go to get gas now and the gas is expensive enough. But then as I'm pumping the gas, I notice in my hand I have actually picked up an advertisement as I'm pumping the gas. It says, buy a Kit Kat Bar. It's enough that I came to buy gas. But I must now buy a Kit Kat Bar now. Oh, OK. Everything is for sale. I'm watching a ballgame and you have the Delta Halftime Statistics. What makes statistics Delta? It was funny; you can laugh with me on this. Everything is for sale.

You may have read about the young man on the Internet who sold advertising space on his forehead, or the woman who was pregnant and she sold advertising space on her belly during her pregnancy. We live in a world where everything is for sale, and you and I are defined as consumers. You're a consumer, you must consume. If the economy is going badly, consume. It doesn't matter what you consume, just go consume something because it's good to consume because we are consumers. Then we get very, very confused about worship, don't we? Because we come in to worship, and it's like one more entertainment, one more chance to consume. We, up here, we know what you're doing. You're thinking, The Scripture reader today. He was pretty good. Yea, it was good. Howell's back in the pulpit. Those bells, yea, they're pretty good. And we become consumed. You see, Jesus is not one more commodity to be consumed. You know, I've consumed all this other stuff, I'm going to consume a little Jesus on Sunday morning. It doesn't work that way at all. We try to make it work that way, but we become the losers. We miss out on the point of worship. The point of worship isn't to come in and try to consume Jesus. Instead, we're the ones who are consumed. We come in to worship and we say, God take me. God use me. I'm not here to grab for myself, I'm here for you to grab me. I'm here for you to consume me. I want to be caught up into who you are. I want to be, as Charles Wesley put it in his hymn, "Lost in wonder, love, and praise." Do we even know what that's about anymore because we're so in to consuming? Everything is for sale. Jesus is not for sale. Jesus paid the price on the cross for us so that we might let ourselves be consumed by Him; saying my life is no longer my own. It is yours, oh God. This is our true worship.

Jesus as the fulfillment of the Psalms. All cries, all prayers through history are answered in Jesus. I've been gone for 11 days. I've been at our denomination's General Conference, which mercifully only meets every 4 years. If it met more often, we just couldn't take it. It's just something. It is 11 days of meeting. We determine the law and the direction of the church and it's just so hard because I have a very short attention span and about one hour of a meeting can do me in. We start at 8 in the morning and we go until midnight for 11 consecutive days. And I'm just frayed inside. All of that is just so tedious and frustrating, and I come back and I think, Why did I go to that meeting just to get frustrated? But actually there are some marvelous things that happen at a meeting like General Conference, and, for me, the best of it comes when I meet people from other places. And I don't mean other places like Chicago or Los Angeles, although you meet very interesting people from Chicago and Los Angeles. I'm thinking about people from the Congo, people from the Sudan, people in very poor parts of this world for whom their faith is very real or it's nothing at all.

We flew to Dallas/Fort Worth, and some of us were kind of whining because the plane was smaller than suited us. It's a long flight to be sitting in such a small plane. It was running a little bit behind. Then we got there and the shuttle wasn't there to pick us up right on time and then the shuttle seemed to go a long way to the hotel and we're kind of whining, being typical American travelers because everything wasn't going quite as smooth as we wanted. You know how that goes. We're just being people, right? So then I go to my first meeting and I'm sitting next to a woman from Africa, and it turns out that for her to get to that meeting she climbed in the back of truck and rode that truck across rocky, bumpy, pitted roads for about 10 days, sleeping in the back of that truck at night in order to come to this meeting. And she lives in a country where many children die every day from malaria. We don't have malaria here. If a child dies here, we would want to jump out of windows and think how could there be a God if a child could ever suffer anything. But I spent this past 11 days with people who live in a world where malaria is not at all under control, and in the time that you and I worship here today, in Africa, dozens of children will die from malaria. And people who come from such places, they don't not believe in God. They don't doubt God.

They have an immense faith in God. What they know how to do is to cry out to God for help. And Jesus is the one to cry out to for help. Jesus' very name in Hebrew, "Yahshua" means Lord Help.

What a perfect name for our Savior. All the cries of all God's people in every place through all of time are answered in Jesus. Lord help.

Sometimes when we think about people who are in more dire straits than our own, it helps us to get in touch with our own need, our own suffering, and we learn how to pray not in a self-satisfied kind of way but out of the depths of our heart, knowing our own darkness, knowing our own desperation, Lord help. To all prayers ever offered up, Jesus is the answer. Jesus loves; Jesus cares. We have great treasured hymns like, "What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and grief's to bear." What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer. Jesus isn't a commodity to be consumed. He is our Lord.

When the ancient Israelites would worship, they would carry that arc of the covenant up that hill of Mount Zion to the temple precincts. The great throng would gather and as they would get to the top of the hill, they would shout, "The Lord reigns. The Lord reigns. God has gone up with a shout." Now how is Jesus the fulfillment of this, according to the Gospel of John? Jesus established that he is the king of the universe when he did what? Not when he thumped his foes, when he conquered his enemies. No, it's when he went up on that cross. God has gone up with a shout. They nailed Jesus to a shaft of olive wood and then they raised that cross. Jesus went up and there was a shout. The crowds mocked and made fun. He can't really be God. He said that he was great, but look at him now. They mocked him and Jesus went up with his own shout, *My God, my God...* one of the Psalms, *My God why have you forsaken me?* What we believe is that in that very moment God was glorified. God became King. How does this work? We have to think about this because it's different from our ways of winning and losing and who has power and who doesn't have power.

At General Conference, we're deciding the law of the church and the direction of the church and we do this in a democratic process. I don't always think that is a good thing. I think a benevolent dictatorship would be good. I'd be happy to serve as that benevolent dictator. We could straighten out a lot of things. We have a democratic process, and the way we actually get it done when 1,000 delegates go to a place like Fort Worth is, you've got to do something. You can't just have a free-for-all in the room, so what do we do? You learn this in elementary school, and maybe you used it sometimes in your adult life. We use Robert's Rules of Order. And if you're somebody like me, this absolutely drives me crazy because the kind of Methodist who go to General Conference, they're masters of Robert's Rules of Order, many of them. They've got the book memorized backward and forward, and there are points of order and there are petitions and then counter motions and amendments and then there's an amendment to the amendment and there's an amendment to the amendment to the amendment but it turns out in our rules of order, if you try to an amendment to the amendment to the amendment to the amendment, that is out of order. But the amendment to the amendment to the amendment is fine and we debate these things and we perfect them, and it is just excruciating for somebody like me to sit through. And at the end of the day, you have winners and losers, and how do you come out winners and losers? Everybody votes. You raise, well actually at General Conference you don't raise your hands, you have these little electronic things and you push a button and immediately it registers the vote up on this screen. I thought, I want these for Sunday morning worship. That you could have a button and I could say, Did you get that? Yes. No. It'd be valuable to us.

So the way that this works is, of course, majority rules. But it's not just the majority rules. There's more that goes into play that you can imagine. Part of it is Robert's Rules of Order. If you're one of these wizards of procedure, you have a huge advantage over people who do not, because you know just when to trump in with a motion. When to call something out of order. And you have tremendous power if you just know the rules of order. That's not the only thing that comes into play. There are also people out there who are well-connected. I discovered this myself. I was working on some stuff and I discovered I had some clout. James Howell, Senior Minister, Myers Park United Methodist Church. Some people knew who I was and I was trying to get it done. People were paying attention to me and I thought, well, power. Being a benevolent dictator is cool, you see.

And sometimes we get confused. We think Jesus is Lord; Jesus must be the best-connected, the best-known of all. He's got the power, he gets the votes, but that's not the way Jesus rules at all. That's the way humans rule. Majority wins, the powerful who are connected, who know how to get it done. They're the ones who are in power. But Jesus has a different way of ruling. Jesus, when all the hands are raised, sits next to those who nobody votes for them or with them. Jesus looks around, and there are people making very very clever speeches, very forceful words being offered up to manipulate others. And Jesus sits with those who have no voice at all, that nobody speaks up for. The votes are cast, and Jesus looks at the mighty and the powerful and he says, *come down here and be with me. I am on the side of the people that you think of as the losers.* The people from Africa who have ambled in the back of a truck for a very long time and don't even speak English, and there is the humble side of those who have no power, who have no one. That's why the ancient Israelites in worship, they were a little small two-bit country that everybody else mocked and made fun of, but yet they gathered in worship and said, Our Lord reigns over all those other Gods from the powerful nations. The reason is they knew that their God was a different kind of ruler, the kind who sides with the nobodies, the kind who cares about children who are dying of malaria, the kind of God who gives voice to those who have no voice at all. They mocked Jesus as he hung on that cross, but then he was taking the side of all those who suffer, all those who are weak, all of us in our mortality. Jesus reigns.

What's left for us? We need to learn to worship, to be able to come to this place not to consume but to be consumed by God. To understand that the Lord does reign and he reigns by going down to the lowest, to be with those who have no one by their side. He asked us to go there as well, to be his hands, to lift up the needy, to learn that there are children dying of malaria and we think, We cannot just sit idly by and whine about our little problems. We must do something for God's children who have no one to stand in the breach for them. We are called to be the church, to worship God with our very existence, with all that we are, with all that we have. We say, Lord please consume me. Let my eyebrow be raised. Let my head, no, let my life be pushed into action so that I might be part of the body of Christ so that others will look and say, There is a God; there is love. God does reign and his reign is good. His reign is beautiful. Christ came. Not just so he could be like us, but so we could be like Him – serving, humble, worshiping God, offering up prayers in every situation to our Lord who never leaves us alone. Thanks be to God for this great and holy privilege. Amen.