

Tuesday, April 28, 2020
Devotional Thoughts from Pastor Jim Murr...

**"I give you thanks, O Lord, with my whole heart;
before the gods I sing your praise."**

(Psalm 138:1)

Psalm 138 is a Psalm of David. David wrote many Psalms. Some of them are pleas to God for help. Many of them are praise Psalms, where David is rejoicing in his God. The same is true about Psalm 138:1. David is giving thanks to God. He does that a lot! (I wonder how much it would affect our outlook on life if we spent a little time every day giving thanks to God – not just for the "stuff" we have, but for Who God is.)

It's the second half of verse 1 that I think needs our attention. David says that he will sing God's praises "before the gods." In other words, in the face of all of those things that THINK they have authority in life. In fact, David is praising God in the face of those things that so many people have given authority to. After all, that's what a "god" is. It's anything that has captured the bulk of my attention. It's those things that tend to direct the path of my life. It's anything that tends to occupy my thoughts to a greater degree than anything else.

David says that he is "singing God's praises" – the real God, the Creator of the universe – in the face of all of these other so-called "gods." This makes me think of if I go to a football game and sit in the midst of hundreds of "home team" fans while I root for the other team. I cheer when they "boo," and I "boo" when they cheer. The fact that I am in the minority doesn't deter me. David doesn't reserve his praise for God just for when he is safe on his own turf. He praises God on the enemy's turf as well. He does it "before the false gods."

If a "god" is something that tends to occupy my thoughts to a greater degree than anything else, many of us may have made the current pandemic a "god." It has captured the bulk of our attention. Maybe it's the first thing you think of when you wake up in the morning, and the last thing you think of when you go to bed. I'm sure that's the case for those who have been infected or affected by it. I'm sure it's the source of anger and "cursing" for those who have lost jobs and businesses. This is very understandable.

But what would happen if the true God were to occupy our thoughts to a greater degree than the pandemic? What would happen if the God of Jesus Christ, the God who sent His Son to die and rise for us and for our salvation ... what if He was the first thing on our minds when we wake up in the morning and the last thing on our minds when we go to sleep? What if we were to "sing His praises" IN THE FACE OF THE PANDEMIC? What if we were to sing God's praises IN THE FACE of anything that threatens our peace? Would that make a difference?

I think that if David was living right now, he would certainly give it a try. He would think of all of the wonderful attributes of God. He would focus on God's promises more than he would focus on the challenges of life. And the end result would be a special kind of joy and peace that exists even IN THE FACE of everything else.

David ends Psalm 138 by saying: "The Lord will fulfill his purpose for me; your steadfast love, O Lord, endures forever. Do not forsake the work of your hands."

God's peace!
Pastor Jim