

Psalm 99

Morning Prayer Thursday Week 3

This is the last in series of psalms (93-99) celebrating the kingship of God. The key theme is holiness. The appropriate response to the transcendent God is one of awe.

Cherubim guarded the Ark of the Covenant,
God's throne in the temple.

You are enthroned upon the cherubim.

– Psalm 80:1

YHWH of hosts, God of Israel, who are enthroned above the cherubim, you are God, you alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; you have made heaven and earth.

– Isaiah 37:16

Mount Zion, the city of the great King.

– Psalm 48:2

It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came.

– Ezekiel 36:22

¹YHWH* is king; let the peoples tremble*! He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake!

**²YHWH is great in Zion; he is exalted over all the peoples.
³Let them praise your great and awesome name.**

This refrain is repeated in verses 5 and 9. We recall Jesus' prayer: 'Hallowed be your Name'(Matthew 6:9).

^{3b}He is holy.

Holy, holy, holy is YHWH of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.

– Isaiah 6:3

The Holy God shows himself holy by righteousness.

– Isaiah 5:16

Thus says the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with those who are contrite and humble in spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite.

– Isaiah 57:15

I will display my greatness and my holiness and make myself known in the eyes of many nations. Then they shall know that I am YHWH.

– Ezekiel 38:23

I am God and no mortal, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath.

– Hosea 11:9

Holy and awesome is his name.

– Psalm 111:9

Through those who are near me I will show myself holy, and before all the people I will be glorified.

– Leviticus 10:3

YHWH loves justice

⁴Mighty King, lover of right judgment*, you have established equity; you have executed right judgment* and justice* in Jacob.

⁵Extol YHWH our God; worship at his footstool. *He is holy.*

⁶Moses and Aaron were among his priests, Samuel also was among those who called on his name. They cried to YHWH, and he answered them.

⁷He spoke to them in the pillar of cloud; they kept his decrees, and the statutes that he gave them. ⁸YHWH our God, you answered them; you were a forgiving God to them, but an avenger of their wrongdoings.

⁹Extol YHWH our God, and worship at his holy mountain; for YHWH our God is holy.

God loves justice.

You love justice and hate wickedness.

– Psalm 45:7

God establishes a system of justice on the earth.

Your throne is God's throne; it endures forever.

Your royal sceptre is a sceptre of equity.

– Psalm 45:6

God does this through the government of Israel.

Give the king your judgments, O God, and your justice to the king's son, that he may judge your people with justice, and your poor with right judgment.

– Psalm 72:1-2

The refrain is repeated from verse 3.

You led your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

– Psalm 77:20 (see Numbers 14:5)

YHWH is king of a priestly people.

You shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation.

– Exodus 19:6

This is the only time Samuel is mentioned in the Psalter. See Jeremiah 15:1 where he is linked to Moses.

See Exodus 24:15-18. Also the following:

... keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, yet by no means clearing the guilty, but visiting the iniquity of the parents upon the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.

– Exodus 34:7

A variation on the refrain of verses 3 and 5.

As Christians we reflect on the holiness of the Most Holy Trinity. Jesus addresses God as 'Holy Father' (John 17:11). In the Book of Revelation we hear the hymn: 'Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God the Almighty, who was and is and is to come' (Revelation 4:8). The song of the crucified and risen Jesus includes the words: 'You alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your judgments have been revealed' (Revelation 15:4). In a later hymn we hear: 'You are just, O Holy One, who are and were, for you have judged these things' (Revelation 16:5).

Jesus is acknowledged as holy: 'The child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God' (Luke 1:35). Peter says of Jesus: 'We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God' (John 6:69). The Letter to the Hebrews presents Jesus as a high priest who is 'holy' (Hebrews 7:26).

The Spirit of love that is the communion between Jesus and his Father is regularly called the 'Holy Spirit', and the Spirit who makes holy ('sanctifies'). See 1Peter 1:2 and Romans 1:4.

Consequently those who are united to Jesus are drawn into this holiness and are regularly spoken of as holy ('saints'). See John 17:19; Romans 1:7; 1Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 1:1; Colossians 1:2,12; 1Corinthians 3:17; Ephesians 2:21. In the words of Saint Peter:

As he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; for it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'

– 1Peter 1:15-16