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The Lord's Leadership - Psalm 146

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As I was praying for our divided nation and our God-beloved world, my eyes were drawn to [Psalm 146](#), which begins with an invitation to praise the Lord. In the Hebrew, the combining of two words

—one for praise and the other for Yahweh—exhorts people to lift up the name of the Lord. And that happens through what we do and say, as well as who we are. That is what the word, *Hallelujah*, means: “Praise the Lord.”

Not surprisingly, there are more “Hallelujahs” in the Psalms than anywhere else in the Bible. And, several Psalms feature this theme more than once, with some of them beginning and ending with the exhortation to praise the Lord (eg. 135:1, 3, 21; 146:1, 10; 147:1, 20; 148:1, 14; 149:1, 9; 150:1, 6).

This is certainly the case with Psalm 146, which opens and closes with a reorientation to praising God. The editors have divided these ten verses into eleven sentences. Note how the first verse even invites people to praise the Lord *twice*. In verse 2, then, the Psalmist professes to *do* what he exhorts—to praise the Lord throughout his entire life. Example is the best form of exhortation.

¹ Praise the Lord!

Praise the Lord, O my soul!

² I will praise the Lord as long as I live;

I will sing praises to my God all my life long.

The next three sentences, though, are especially meaningful to me today, as we pray about the election and the direction of our nation. Despite the messianic sirens of political parties, personalities, and media champions, the Psalmist exhorts us to not put our trust in princes, or kings, or governors; human leaders will in time pass away. Rather, those who trust in the Lord will never be disappointed.

After all, it is Creator-God, who has made heaven and earth and sea; he is the one who keeps faith forever. He also executes justice for the oppressed, and provides food for the hungry, and he invites us to partner with him in sustaining the cosmos and in meeting the needs of his beloved children. And, he invites us into partnership in his sustaining-redeeming work.

³ *Do not put your trust in princes,
in mortals, in whom there is no help.*

⁴ *When their breath departs, they return to the earth;
on that very day their plans perish.*

⁵ *Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the Lord their God,*

⁶ *who made heaven and earth,
the sea, and all that is in them;
who keeps faith forever;*

⁷ *who executes justice for the oppressed;
who gives food to the hungry.*

On setting prisoners free, opening the eyes of the blind, uplifting the bowed down, watching over strangers, and upholding the orphan and the widow, this is the work the Lord does, and he invites us into partnership with him along these lines, as well. When churches, governments, and organizations do this work well, we further the Lord's work collectively.

He also loves the righteous and brings the wicked to ruin, so we can trust his grace and truth to be at work in the world beyond what we can see. And, he invites us to join hands in helping God's righteous and redeeming work come to pass; *that* is our calling, rather than idolizing a particular way forward.

The Lord sets the prisoners free;

⁸ *the Lord opens the eyes of the blind.*

The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down;

the Lord loves the righteous.

*⁹ The Lord watches over the strangers;
he upholds the orphan and the widow,
but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.*

The Psalm closes with a reminder that the Lord’s reign continues forever—beyond particular administrations or human governments—and God’s transcendent leadership bends toward justice, grace, and truth.

*¹⁰ The Lord will reign forever,
your God, O Zion, for all generations.*

Praise the Lord!

As we have prayed for a sense of national discernment in the election process—including the counting process—manifested through an albeit imperfect system of voting, my hope is that the Lord’s leadership will be at work, through the process and beyond it. Perhaps our democratic process could also be a form of the Lord’s leading in our land, as the Light of Christ is accessible to all ([John 1:9](#)), despite the fact that we also “see through a lens darkly” ([1 Cor 13:12](#)).

As the Psalmist reminds us to not put our trust in princes (or governors, or parties, or platforms), may we first and foremost put our trust in the Lord, seeking to further his will on earth as it is in heaven ([Matt 6:10](#)). If that happens, the Lord will indeed be exalted—not only with our words—but also with our lives.

Written by [Paul Anderson](#)