

## **Sermon Psalm 146 for the Twenty Third Sunday of Ordinary Time**

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In the name of God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen!

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul!

These words from Psalm 146 echo through the centuries, a demand to lift our hearts and voices in worship.

Psalm 146 is the first of the final five "Hallelujah" psalms in the Book of Psalms, each beginning and ending with a call to praise the Lord.

These psalms form a fitting conclusion to the entire Psalter, which is, in Hebrew, known as "Tehillim," meaning "Praise Songs."

Today, as we reflect on Psalm 146, we are invited to place our trust not in human leaders or earthly powers, but in the eternal God who is ever faithful, ever just, and ever compassionate.

We will see how this psalm not only calls us to praise but also challenges us to reflect God's justice and care in our own lives, particularly towards those who are most disadvantaged by the decisions of human government; for me the groups that came to mind are the aged, people living with mental illness, and those struggling with addictions some of which are in all three groups.

The psalm begins with a personal declaration of lifelong praise:

"I will praise the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God all my life long."

This is not a fleeting or momentary commitment. It is a promise to live a life that continually reflects the goodness and faithfulness of God.

This kind of praise is not just about singing hymns or offering prayers. It is about living in a way that honours God, embodying the values of justice, mercy, and compassion that are given to us by God.

As we think about the disadvantaged in our society, the elderly who struggle to find adequate care, the people living with a mental illness who face stigma and inadequate support, and those trapped in cycles of severe addiction. One may ask the question of how can our lives be a song of praise to God?

How can we live in a way that reflects God's care for these vulnerable groups?

The psalmist sets the stage for us, showing that true praise is not just in our words but in our actions, in the way we engage with the world around us, particularly with those who are most in need.

I'll say that little bit again; true praise is not just in our words but in our actions.

The psalm quickly shifts focus in verses 3-4, warning us not to put our trust in princes, in mortals, "in whom there is no help."

The psalmist is not condemning ALL human leaders but reminding us of their limitations.

To be honest, I think here in Australia we have absolutely no problem at all reminding our politicians of their limitations.

Alas, even the most well-intentioned leaders are mortal, and their plans more often than not perish with them.

In our own context, we can see this clearly.

Our local councils, State, and Federal Governments, have and will continue to make decisions that impact the lives of many in our community, particularly the most vulnerable.

Please don't get me wrong I am not here to bash all the politicians over the head with words. But to think that one is perfect in the role as we are so often told by well oiled media spin doctors is naive.

While some policies are designed to help, they often fall short, leaving the aged, the mentally vulnerable, and those struggling with addictions without the support they most desperately need.

Our human leaders, no matter how powerful, how loud, how confident are fallible.

Their solutions are often temporary, their plans subject to change with each election cycle with the aim of self-preservation.

Throughout all this though God's reign is eternal, and God's care for the vulnerable is unwavering.

This is why the psalmist urges us to place our ultimate trust **not in** human leaders, but in the God who reigns forever.

"Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God."

Here, the psalmist emphasizes the blessedness of those who place their hope in God, the Creator of heaven and earth, the One who keeps faith forever.

Trusting in God means placing our hope in God's justice, compassion, and eternal reign.

Unlike human leaders, God's plans do not perish; the promises made are sure.

For those who are disadvantaged in our society this is a really powerful message of hope.

God sees their struggles and is committed to justice and care that endures.

The reference to God as the "God of Jacob" reminds us of God's covenant faithfulness.

Just as God was faithful to Jacob and his descendants, so too is that faithfulness passed onto us today. What we receive from God is a care for creation and for humanity that is unending, and it is in the Lord that we find true security and hope.

The heart of the psalm really lies in verses 7-9, where the psalmist describes God's active involvement in justice and care for the vulnerable.

"The Lord executes justice for the oppressed; He gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the strangers; He upholds the orphan and the widow, but the way of the wicked He brings to ruin."

These verses are a powerful testament to God's ongoing work in the world. They remind us that God's justice is not abstract but is manifested in concrete actions that uplift those in need.

Today, we can see the parallels in our society. The oppressed, the hungry, the prisoners, the blind, the strangers, the orphans, and the widows.

These categories still exist, and God's heart is still with them.

In our context, we must also consider those who are often neglected by society and government policies:

The aged, who may feel abandoned in understaffed care facilities.

The mentally unwell, who struggle with inadequate public mental health services.

And those battling addiction, who face stigma and very limited access to rehabilitation, most of who just end up in Prison entering a cycle that is near impossible to get out off.

God's justice and compassion extends to these individuals as well, and as people of God, we are called to reflect that same care.

This means advocating for policies that support these vulnerable groups, offering our time, resources, and voices to ensure they receive the help they need. It also means embodying God's compassion in our daily interactions, seeing each person as made in the image of God and deserving of dignity and respect.

"The Lord will reign forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations. Praise the Lord!"

This for me is a powerful reminder that God's rule is not limited by time or circumstance. God's care for the vulnerable, commitment to justice, and reign over all creation are everlasting.

For us, this is both a comfort and a challenge.

It comforts us because we know that God's reign is unshakeable, and justice will ultimately prevail.

It challenges us because we are called to live in a way that reflects this eternal reign.



We are called to be agents of God's justice and compassion in the world, particularly towards those who are most disadvantaged.

As we look around our society and see the needs of our most vulnerable, we are called to respond not out of our own strength, but out of the strength that comes from trusting in God's eternal reign.

We are called to be the hands and feet of Christ, bringing hope, healing, and justice to those who need it most.

The central message of Psalm 146 is to Trust in the eternal God who is just, compassionate, and sovereign.

Let us commit to living lives that reflect justice and compassion, particularly towards those who are most disadvantaged in our society.

The good news here is that we do not do this work alone.

We are never alone as we have a relationship with God is with us, guiding us, empowering us, and working through us.

God's reign is eternal, and care for the vulnerable is unending.

As we trust in God and reflect divine love in our lives, we can bring hope and healing to a broken world.

Let us praise the Lord with our words and our actions, let us commit to living lives that truly reflect justice, compassion, and eternal reign.

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

Praise the Lord!"