

### Living the Word: Psalm 138

When we pray we often ask God to do things for us, to help us, but how often do we thank Him afterwards? In Psalm 138 the psalmist praises God for His help, believing the Lord God hears us when we call to Him. This psalm is his thank you note afterwards. The psalmist praises 'The Lord'. 'The Lord' was the special title the Jews used for God. God's name was sacred and could not be mentioned, even in worship. Instead, they addressed Adonai, the Lord God or Sovereign Lord. This was the "covenant" name for God. God continually made covenants or agreements with his people. He did so with Abraham, Noah and Moses, for instance. The formula was always the same: 'I will be your God and you will be my people.' God always kept His side of the agreement, of course, but Israel did not. When Israel was invaded, their prophets reminded them it was because they had broken their side of the agreement. The reference to the kings of the earth praising God reminds us that praise is not to be exclusive to Israel but includes gentiles, too. Despite Israel's unfaithfulness, the psalmist recognises in this psalm that God's love for His people never ends and He will always send help to us. A God whose name is too awesome to be mentioned still recognises those in need of help from Him. God also sees the proud who think they are too good to need help. But the right hand of God – His strength – lasts for ever, because God will keep His covenant promise and always hears and helps those who call to Him.

### Collect

O God, who cause the minds of the faithful to unite in a single purpose, grant your people to love what you command and to desire what you promise, that, amid the uncertainties of this world, our hearts may be fixed on that place where true gladness is found. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

27<sup>th</sup> August 2023

Twelfth Sunday after Trinity

Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time



Today's Gospel is called 'the Confession of St Peter' because, by a gift of divine grace, Peter confesses right belief in Jesus Christ. He knows him to be 'the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Peter (always so attractive to us because of his passionate responses to the Lord) sees the truth of who Christ is and speaks it aloud in definite and trumpet-clear terms. To confess that Jesus is the Christ – to say that *he* is Lord and no other, to confess Jesus Christ to be 'true God from true God, consubstantial with the Father', has profound and far-reaching consequences. We see it here in a new name given: Simon bar-Jonah becomes Peter. This is not simply a name-change but a whole life change. It is a mission given. And as we know from Christian history, Peter's confession of Christ would lead him far from the shores of the lakes he once fished, all the way to Rome, and to a witness that would be total – the witness of martyrdom. If you confess Christ to be God with the same conviction and passion as Peter, your life will not be the same. Expect seismic shifts, changes of your life's direction, unexpected endings. Be wholly open to what the Lord wants to do with you and your faith, how he wants to use you, where he wants to send you, that he might be glorified.

*Today's Gospel: St. Matthew 16:13-20*