



**Praise the LORD.
Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his love endures forever.
Who can proclaim the mighty acts of the
LORD
or fully declare his praise?
Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel,
from everlasting to everlasting.
Let all the people say, "Amen!"
Praise the LORD!
(Psalm 106: 1-2, 48)**

Martin Luther considered the Psalms to be one of his favorite books of the Bible because he saw the Psalms sort of as the whole of Scripture in miniature. Within the Psalms we find the entire gamut of human emotion, from joy and happiness and great faith, to longing and despair and sadness. Some portions of the Psalms lament God's seeming distance from us and long for an understanding that God's presence is not so far away. Other portions of the Psalms rejoice in the God who actively shows love and grace and mercy, who is present in our lives and who supplies our greatest needs. Taken as a whole, the Psalms tell the story of a people who are on a journey with God, a journey which sometimes runs off course and needs correction, but a journey, nevertheless, which is constantly made in the shadow of the Most High, under the protective wings of a sheltering God. Psalm 106, quoted above, actually weaves the tale of this journey, honestly assessing moments when the people strayed from the path on which God had placed them and placed their own will above that of God's

will. Yet, in each instance, God's mercy and grace were greater than God's anger, and God embraced the people once again with divine promise, with the assurance that God would continue on this journey with God's people.

As we prepare as a people, a nation, to set aside time to give thanks to God this month, perhaps it would be good for us to read Psalm 106 and contemplate the message of the psalmist who tries to make sense of God's relationship with God's people. It might do us well to understand that our will is not necessarily the same as the will of the Father, and that we do err and stray on our journey with God. We do this as individuals and as a people. While it is not pleasant to look at how we fail in our collective journey, it is necessary if we are to understand the fulness of God's mercy and grace. Only when we see ourselves as human, as falling short of the glory of God, can we appreciate in greater measure the love God has for us and the promise God gives to us through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Uplifted by these promises and made whole again by God's mercy and grace, we are better prepared to praise our God and to give thanks to the one who has created us and who continues to be faithful to us. The Psalmist honestly assesses the relationship God has with God's people and begins and ends Psalm 106 with words of thanksgiving and praise. This Thanksgiving, may we see our God openly and honestly so that we can better understand God's grace and mercy, and may we, like the Psalmist, burst forth with words of thanksgiving and praise.

In Christ's Love,
Pastor Jay