

Psalm 150

Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty firmament!
Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his surpassing greatness!
Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp!
Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe!
Praise him with clanging cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals!
Let everything that breathes praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!

Luke 9:51-53

When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. And he sent messengers ahead of him. On their way they entered a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him; but they did not receive him, because his face was set towards Jerusalem.

“Ready, Set, Better Go”

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Rev. David Dalke

Friday night I went to a track meet. It was cold. I don't know why those athletes choose to run in March, but they do, and I watched some of our young people run. I saw Jeremy Halpern run two miles. He didn't break stride, he just did beautifully, and I sat there, shivering, and watching. And then I started to think, and I reminisced. I reminisced running track. When I was in the 8th grade, in Indianapolis, Indiana, the school's name was John Strange. John Strange. I had a teacher named Mrs. English, and she taught English. I also had a teacher named Mrs. Church, but she didn't teach religion, she taught history. And then there was Mr. Martin, and he was our track coach, and I loved to run. Loved it. Ran the sprints. Fifty-yard dash, we had back then, and the hundred-yard dash, and I just loved it.

We didn't have starting blocks. We had cinder track, old cinder tracks. Boy, you didn't want to fall down on those. It hurt. Dad would go with me and I'd get down and get my hands ready at the starting place, and he's get my feet placed, and he'd dig with a stick, so we get someplace to push off. Then he'd go down to the end of the track, and we had a blanket. He'd wait, he'd wait for me. I was always the shortest one, so we'd all stand up, and it would be like this, here's one, and here's one, and here's one, here, here, here, and someone would always comment, “Boy, look at that little guy down there.” Dad said he always said to himself, “Yeah, but you ought to see him run. You ought to watch him run.” And the starter would say, “All right, all right boys, get ready. Get ready,” and we'd get down on our marks. And then he'd say, with his pistol he'd say, “Get set” then bang! and down the track we'd go, running like the wind. “Ready, set, go!” It's all about life. It's all about our faith. It's really all about Jesus. It's time to get ready. Time to get ready.

Bev said Lent is a time to get ready for Easter. She's right. You know, we're always getting ready for something, aren't we? I mean, the choir, don't you have to get ready? You practice. You give a voice recital. You get ready. You practice. Getting ready to go on a trip? You pack. You get ready. Going to take a test? You study, you get ready.

Going to preach a sermon? We'll let you be the judge. You can decide whether he or she got ready or not, you know. Lent, a time to get ready. You know, in about three weeks, we're going to have a labyrinth that we'll set up in Fellowship Hall. A labyrinth is a maze. It's a place where you go and you have a starting spot, and you kind of walk around meditatively. We did that, Cheryl and I did that in Sedona, Arizona. They had a labyrinth at one of the resorts, and we sent there, and we just kind of walked that labyrinth. You just walk slowly, and you finally wind up at the end. But it's a time to get in harmony, it's a time to take a look at who you are. It's a time to say, "Am I being who I want to be and doing what I want to do, and do I need to forgive somebody of something? It's a time to look at relationships. It's a time to dream while you're awake. It's a time to let go of stuff that is harmful to us. You just kind of walk, you just stroll slowly, let go. You get ready. You get ready to make changes. You get ready to do something different. We all need a labyrinth in our lives. We need to just have that time and place where we stroll and meditate and try to be in harmony with ourselves and with the world around us. We need a labyrinth. We need to get ready. And then, the starter says, "All right - ready." Then he says, "Get set, get set."

Getting set is that time between getting ready and doing something. When you're set, you are determined. You are tenacious. You're there. You're taking a deep breath, and you're looking down that track of life, and you're saying, "I need to decide. Am I going to go, or am I not going to go? I am set. I have to determine what I've been saying I'm going to change. I've got to decide if I'm going to forgive somebody. I've got to decide if I want to be different. So I get set.

Interesting things happen when we get set. I was in the dentist's office the other day. Now, here's my yearly checkup, and I had really gotten ready. I brushed my teeth furiously the night before, and I brushed them furiously the day of, and I flossed. I'm not a great flosser. I flossed for the first time since the last time I had my dental appointment. And I went in there and I sat down, I'd gotten ready, and I was set. And I picked up a *Sports Illustrated*, because I don't take it, and I thought, well, let's see what other corruption in sports is going on, and I started thumbing pages. There was a woman about my age, I'm guessing, sitting there reading *People* magazine. She was set, and I was set. All of a sudden she looked at me and said, "You married?" I don't ever get asked that question. I never get asked. Since Cheryl's here, "I said, 'Yes.'" I said, "I am! Profoundly!" and she said, "Well, I want to show you something." She handed me her *People* magazine, and the page she showed me had a big, pink purse. It was a Jessica Simpson purse, and I looked at it and smiled, and continued to read, and it said the price was \$1,177. She said, "You ought to get your wife one of those." I said, "Holy cow." She said, "I'm going to ask my husband for two of those."

Strange things happen when we get set. You never know what's going to happen. You think you're ready for something, and this just sort of interferes. Now, Jesus set his face to go to Jerusalem. He got set. Scripture tells it. He set his face to go to Jerusalem. Why in the world would he want to do that? A week later he was going to die. Why? Well, maybe because it was the Passover. My goodness, the high festival of the Jewish faith, the Passover. Maybe that's why he went there. Maybe that's why he set his face to go to

Jerusalem, because of the Passover. You remember the Passover. That's the time, you know, that Moses confronted Pharaoh, the Egyptians had held the Israelites in captivity for four hundred years, and all of a sudden God says, "Moses, you're going to be my great negotiator. You've got to go talk to Pharaoh, and tell him, if he doesn't release the Israelites, I'm going to send a bunch of plagues. Gonna scare him." Pharaoh would say, "I'm not going to release them." "Okay then, the Lord is going to turn your water into blood." Didn't make any difference. Moses went back again: "Got another plague for you, Pharaoh. You don't release those Israelites, you're going to have a plague of frogs. Frogs. They're going to jump around on your bed when you're sleeping."

Now I'm going to tell you right now, if I'd have been Pharaoh, that would have done it, for me. I would have said, "No frogs in my bed."

But then he did not release them, and there were plagues of gnats and flies and the killing of all the livestock. Locusts, boils all over their bodies, all these plagues, and Pharaoh still would not relent. Darkness covered the land. It didn't matter. Then all of a sudden, God said, "One last plague. You tell Pharaoh if he doesn't release the Israelites, to let my people go, I will kill all the firstborn of the Egyptians." And it didn't work. Pharaoh still refused. And then the Lord said to Moses, "Tell all the Israelites to slaughter a lamb and take the blood and put it on the doorposts of their homes, their houses, their tents, so that when I sweep over the land, and destroy all the firstborn of the Egyptians, I will pass over the Israelites. I will pass over."

Maybe that's why he went there. To celebrate the Passover. It was such a tremendous event in history. Maybe that was it. Or maybe he went there and set his face to go to Jerusalem because he wanted them to know that you have to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your soul, and love your neighbors as yourself. And that's what he said that time when he went there. Or maybe he went there to kick those tables over in the temple. Maybe he also went there to talk about parables, to cause people to think. Maybe. Maybe that's why he went. He set his face... Or maybe Aretha Franklin really has the right idea, because some years ago, she sang a song about what it means to be a natural woman, and in it, there are some lyrics that say, "When my soul was in the Lost and Found, you came along and you claimed it." When my soul was in the Lost and Found, you came along and you claimed it. Maybe that's why he went there. Maybe to claim every one of us. All I know is, he set his face to go to Jerusalem, where he would die a week later.

And the starter says, "Get ready, get set, go!" And now we go. Now we put ourselves into action. Everything that we said we were going to do, now we are required to carry it out internally. We are going to make a difference in this world, now, with the people around us and with ourselves. And Jesus took off. He left Galilee and took off, he went right towards Jerusalem, and he went right into a Samaritan city, and in that little village, they did not welcome him. They said "Samaritans and Jews don't mix. Take a detour, Jesus. Take a detour. You've got to go out and around, you can't come through this village."

We all know that sometimes life gives us detours. We set our sights and we put ourselves in action, and we want the very best, but it doesn't always happen. We know that. I sat with a group of eight people the other day, they're all leaders in this one organization, and we meet about every three months, and they talk about how they can create an environment where the people that work for them want to be there. They talk about relationships, and they get ready. We just love getting together, it's good for all of us, and they get set. We walk in there and we are set, and we're ready to go. The other day they all sat down and I looked at them and I said, "Daryl, how are you doing today? Let's all report in." And Daryl said, "I've had a sinus operation earlier in the week and I don't think I'm going to get through this day." And I looked over at Crystal, she's 28 years old, and said "How are you?" She said, "Well, I haven't told anybody this, but I just came from the doctor yesterday, and I was just diagnosed with ovarian cancer." I thought, "No." We talked about that, we kind of almost cried together, and people were hearing that for the first time, these eight people sitting around the table. I looked at Ted and said, "Ted, what about you?" He said, "I've had pneumonia, and I'm not quite cleared up, and I've still got a growth on my lung and they're going to check it out," and I thought, "What is going on here?" And the general manager hadn't even come in yet, because he was late, and he's never late. He walked in and he sat down. I said, "Jim, this has been a tough morning already. How are you?" He said, "I'm sorry to be so slow, but I've been on the phone with my sister. We've been talking because our mother died last night." Take a detour, Jesus. We all get caught up in that, and it's what we do with it. It's our determination, our tenacity of faith, and belief, the ability to be honest with our feelings.

One of the perks of a basketball team, when they win the NCAA, is that they get to go meet with the President, and last year the University of Kansas with Bill Self went to the White House, but on their way they stopped at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington DC. As the team walked up and down the corridors, Bill Self the coach noticed one young man lying in his bed with a leg missing, and he looked at him, and he said, "I'm sorry for what happened to you." To which the young man said, "You know, I have been in such pain. My leg hurt so bad that I just told the doctor, 'Cut it off. Cut it off so I can begin to run again.'" Boy, that's determination. That's determination.

One last thought about that Scripture we read. The Psalms, that 150th Psalm, talks about praising the Lord. You praise the Lord, and how do you praise the Lord? Well, with instruments of all kinds. When I was in our college choir, we sang that 150th Psalm. The choir would sing, "Praise the Lord," and Keith Mardock, who was our baritone soloist, would come in with, "with the lyre." We'd sing "Praise the Lord," and he'd sing, "with the cymbals," and we'd sing "Praise the Lord," and he'd sing, "with the lute," and we'd sing "Praise the Lord," and he'd sing, "with the pipe." "Praise the Lord." "With the harp." But that particular time he got mixed up. And we started, and we sang, "Praise the Lord" and Keith said "with the parp." We sang "Praise the Lord," and he sang, "with the parp." He was tenacious. "with the parp, with the parp..." and when it was all over I said to myself, "You know, he really missed it." But he stayed with it. He stayed right in there. He hung in there. And so did Jesus. He also hung in there. He hung in there so that all of us would sing on, and we'd all sing on, through all of life, through all of death, and

through all eternity, we'd sing on. And that's what we're going to do. Verses 3 and 4, number 292.