

This Little Light of Mine

First Congregational Church Branford; 11/11/18

Psalm 146; Job 42:10

Rev. Suzanne Personette

Psalm 146 is a pledge and promise to praise God all our life long. It is God who is a source of real help and a ground for real hope.

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.

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 for ever;

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

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.

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

Praise the Lord!

In the Book of Job, we learn how Job's struggles are brought to a resolution:

And the Lord restored the fortunes of Job when he had prayed for his friends;
and the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.

This is the word of God for the people of God.

Let us pray. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditations of all our hearts,
be acceptable, and pleasing, in your sight, O God, our Rock, and our Redeemer.
Amen!

Are you ready for a miracle?!
As ready as you can be
Are you ready for a miracle?
The Spirit will set you free
Are you ready, ready, ready, ready
We're ready, We're ready for a miracle!
Jesus went unto the well,
He made the water wine
Raised up Lazarus from the dead
Restored sight to the blind
Jesus, man of Galilee
He walked across the sea
He said Greater than this shall you do
Gave the power to you and me
Are we ready for a miracle?
As ready as we can be
Are we ready for a miracle?
The Spirit will set us free

That's from a song from the 1992 Steve Martin movie, "Leap of Faith."
FCCB, are you ready for a miracle?!

This is so *exciting!* I've had to sit on this exciting scripture for two weeks! (Did you know that Job could be exciting?!) Two weeks ago I included a small mention of Job in the sermon. You know Job, long-suffering Job, right? While writing that sermon two weeks ago, I was thinkin' about him and I went to the Book of Job to find out exactly how God restored Job following his time of great suffering. *And, there it was*, I saw it as if for the first time just how Job got his fortunes restored to him. Here's what happened and, it's right there in

black and white that I printed right into your bulletin: *when he prayed for his friends, the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.*

That's one of the most exciting things I've ever read, and all by itself it's a perfect stewardship sermon! Look at the verse, what do we need to do for God to give our church twice as much as he has before... what's the answer?!YES!!! *When we pray for our friends!*

When Job started caring more for *others*, God heaped upon Job various kinds of treasures and granted him a new and abundant family. Yahweh blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning. When Job stopped complaining about his lot, when he stopped feeling sorry for himself (woe is me)... Job was restored *when he prayed for his friends.*

I just have really found it to be true that what we focus our attention on grows. If all we do is think about ourselves and our problems, what are we going to have more of??.... Right! Iff we worry about lack, what are we going to have more of..... Right!

Today's scripture is a trumpet call to pray and do for others, to make Christ's love known, not just in word, but in action. People always say when they get out of themselves a little, they find their own life is blessed. It's like, *we rise by lifting others.* Last week we talked about the giving flow - what we put out there comes back to us - it just seems that God really blesses *giving.* If we get in the flow of praying and caring for others, what's going to happen?!

The Lord will give us twice as much as he had before. The message seems to be that God blesses those who care for those who need help! The message seems to be that God blesses those who care for people who need help.

We rise by lifting others. People, I'm telling you, God will bless this house if we bless others, if we start looking a little more outward. After a bit of a chaotic time, and I know you know what I'm talking about, we needed to be a little inward, to be together. And, that's okay. We need to love each other, needed to know we were loved that God was with us, that we were going to be okay as a community. Need to put some salve on our wounds.

And, now, I think we're ready to move forward! This is great - early last week, some of our members were discussing social action. Claire Bennitt had the idea to place a short article in the Spire each week on some area of concern in an effort to get us *thinking about others again.* Then, Betsy Hyde came up with the idea that the articles could go under the heading, *This Little Light of Mine.* She wrote, *with so much darkness in the world today, there's such a great need to let our lights shine!*

Church, I think if we shine our light as a church, we're gonna get blessed!
Are you ready for a miracle? Are we ready to let our light shine?

Can we sing This Little Light of Mine one time through? Phil?....

Now, remember how the Discernment Team's report identified our lack of joy? Boo! I think praying for others, working to make life better for others, is going to bring us joy! People, I've seen churches, once they've come together to pursue *some area of mission they feel they can make a difference in*, turn things around. There's an increase of joy, increase in attendance, increase in giving. That's what Job found when he started looking outward, right? *When he cared for others, he was restored!* Together, maybe during the Life Among the Believers conversations in December and January, we'll see where we feel FCCB's calling lies, 'cause you can't pick everything, you can't make a difference in everything. Pick one thing, and that will be FCCB's calling. Is it to help refugees, the imprisoned, the homeless, domestic violence sufferers, gun reform, or something else?? Whatever it is, *together*, we'll choose it.

Speaking of joy, I can't help but think of joyful person, comedian and talk show host Ellen DeGeneres. About 10 days ago on her show she introduced something new, called *Generation Good!* I love that so much! She asked people to send in video examples of people who are doing good! Ellen said how much more of that we need right now. To be a force for good. *This Little Light of Mine* ... (Who knows, maybe FCCB will send in a video!)

I just think, beloved, we're gettin' ready for a miracle around here! Job, Ellen, the Discernment Team, This Little Light of Mine have all converged at the time of our *Commitment Sunday*... That's no coincidence. Our pledges will help prepare the way for our life together in 2019. What shall we bring? Maybe we'll make great strides toward being Generation Good here at FCCB in 2019!

Are we ready for a miracle?

Are we poised for God to bless these days more than our beginning days?

Can we sing it one last time?... Hit it, Phil!

Take that, World!

Amen!