

*Psalm 86:1-10, 16-17
6 Pentecost / Year A / Proper 7
22 June 2008
Preached by the Rev. David Fredrickson*

I want you to take a moment this morning and I want you to think about power. Not the power of oil and gas fired trucks and equipment; not coal or nuclear generating plants. No I want you to think for a moment about the physical, psychic, and spiritual energy that runs your body, balances your mind and moves your soul. Where does this power come from? // At the end of the day, where do you find shelter from all the strain that this broken and sad world heaves upon your body, mind and spirit? // Where do you search for peace? These may sound like strange questions to some, but besides the psychologist's couch, where else, but the church, can you and I ask questions like these and seek meaningful answers?

We don't know exactly what was going on with the one who wrote Psalm 86, but it appeared that things were pretty bleak for him. He was poor and miserable; he felt like his very life was being threatened, and it seemed to him that he was hated by the people around him. Perhaps this morning, you can relate. Most of us are facing some sort of adversity: sickness, financial crisis, major life decisions, spiritual questions and doubt, trapped at work or in a failing relationship, mired in repetitive patterns of destructive behavior, a deep-seated loneliness.

Where does the power come for you to find strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow? // for our psalmist, that strength came by taking his miserable life and dragging it before God in prayer. "Bend down O Lord, and hear my prayer; answer me, for I need your help." // Bend down here O Lord, right down here and listen to me. Let's face it, too often you and I may believe fervently in God, but imagine him to be either

removed or uninterested in our struggles. How often do we spend more time lamenting God's absence than we do seeking his presence? How often do we bring the level of honesty and need and desperation before God that the psalmist does here in Psalm 86?

Bono, the lead singer for U2 has often professed his love for the Psalms. The U2 song, *Wake Up Dead Man* calls Jesus back to life to engage and redeem a broken world, echoing the longing sentiments of Psalm 86; "Jesus, I am waiting here, boss / I know you're looking out for us / But maybe your hands aren't free. Your Father, he made the world in seven / He's in charge of heaven / Will you put a good word in for me?" In this song we hear the kind of honesty and hope that real interaction with God requires. It doesn't shy away from real issues and real needs, nor does it assume a happily-ever-after God. It stands in the tension and knows that "You [alone O God, you alone] will answer me."

In Alcoholics Anonymous and other 12-step programs we hear echoes of Psalm 86. Step I: we admitted that we were powerless over our addiction - that our lives had become unmanageable. Step II: Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. Step III: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God. // Doesn't that mirror the Psalmist's cry? Dear God, I am in need. You are my hope. You will answer me. I am devoted to you.

This morning we are going to baptize little Colin Downey into the life of the church and into the very life of God. Will his life be without struggle and pain? No it won't. Will the God whose life we are baptizing him into this morning be attentive to his cry and bend an ear down to listen and answer? Yes he will! You and I are called to be

there throughout little Colin's life to help him understand that at the end of the day, he will find shelter from all the strain that this broken and sad world heaves upon his body, mind and spirit in the one true God who keeps watch over him day and night.

Bend down, O LORD, and hear my prayer; answer me, for I need your help. Protect me, for I am devoted to you. Save me, for I serve you and trust you. You are my God. Be merciful, O Lord, for I am calling on you constantly. Give me happiness, O Lord, for my life depends on you. O Lord, you are so good, so ready to forgive, so full of unfailing love for all who ask your aid. Listen closely to my prayer, O LORD; hear my urgent cry. I will call to you whenever trouble strikes, and you will answer me. Nowhere among the... gods is there a god like you, O Lord. There are no other miracles like yours. All the nations -- and you made each one -- will come and bow before you, Lord; they will praise your great and holy name. For you are great and perform great miracles. You alone are God. Look down and have mercy on me. Give strength to your servant; yes, save me, for I am your servant. Send me a sign of your favor. Then those who hate me will be put to shame, for you, O LORD, help and comfort me.

In Jesus Name; Amen.