



# Glyfada Christian Center



01/09/2024

**Preacher** Leto Karantoni; Vassilis

**Topic** God is good

**Service** Sunday Service

**Passages** Psalm 145:1-4; Numbers 6:24-26; Psalm 139:7-13; Psalm 139:13-16

## God's Love, God's Protection

### Pastor Gail Stathis – Opening Prayer

1. I always love to find myself in the company of those who want to praise God. To be able to worship Him with people that love Him. It's wonderful to worship the Lord at home by yourself, we need to do that, on the mountain wherever those private times. But the Lord so often calls us to praise His name together. Let us lift up our holy hands, let us come together, and praise the Lord.

2. So, we are thankful this morning, and in this room, if you didn't bring a paper Bible, around the room, we have some beautiful new turquoise Bibles. We didn't know, but we found out, those great big thick Bibles, I don't know why they're so thick, but the print is really tiny, and we didn't know it. So, we're happy for those that read English, we have a little bit bigger print for you this morning.

3. Would you stand with me and let us read Psalm 145. Every time I read from the Bible, I now ask people to stand, I remember in the Old Testament, how they came together, they had been released from, they had been in exile and they were back in Israel, and it said, they stood in the rain, for hours, the adults and the children, as the Word was read. And when they heard it, they wept. What a wonderful thing, they so loved the Word, Amen.

4. Psalm 145:1-4, "I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever.

Every day I will praise you and extol your name for ever and ever. Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom." And I love this next believe, because I believe it's a Scripture of promise for all of us. God is at work! "One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts." Amen.

5. I believe today, that the promise is, as we praise the Lord, even though we are all alive at this time, we are all the same generation, on the other hand, my generation is going to tell Victor's generation, of the great acts of God, Amen. Greater things are ahead, because of who God is, Amen. Let's pray and welcome the Lord.

6. Father, thank You so very much, thank You that You are already here, thank You Lord, that You are everywhere Lord, there's no limit to where You are Lord, there's no limit to what You can do Lord, oh God. How great You are and Lord today, we want to praise You, in this house and say thank You Lord for who You are. Great are You almighty God, and I pray that there will be such joy, such testimony and witness in our lives today, that as we leave, God, those of the next generation will say, 'I want that too Lord,' that grab a hold of You God, and they will want to be Your witnesses in this land of Greece, Lord, that Lord God, the glory of who You are, will be displayed in Hellas, in Greece Lord, that Father, we will see the greatest harvest. We are waiting God, to see what You will do among the children, the teen agers, the young adults, God, Lord, the grandmothers and grandfathers, Lord. God there is no limit to the generations You are working among today. And we give you praise in the name of Jesus. Amen. Let's bless the Lord.

#### **Leto Karantoni – Main message**

1. Glory to God; God is Good. Amen. It is always good to be here. I thought this morning, that one of my professors at university, that if you are going to make a speech, that you should start with some joke, to keep the people's attention on you. But I don't have any joke to tell you. But I have something true to tell you. God is good. He's full of grace and mercy.

2. These two months, July and August are very difficult months for me, because they are the months when we receive the most messages from Cyprus and Cypriots, who never forget that they had to leave their homes, we are still refugees 50 years now. And these two months are very emotionally charged, but I always think that God knows best. And I believe that God knows the best for each one of us who is here today. He has a better plan in His mind for us.

3. So, if you'd like please turn with me to Psalm 139:1-6, we will read the first 6 verses and then we will continue: "You have searched me, Lord, and you know me.

You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.

You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.

Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely.

You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.”

4. God is the One who knows all things about us.’ It says here, “You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.” He knows our thoughts, He knows our intentions, our dreams, what are our expectations and He knows all our difficulties. He knows what we are going through today, what we’re going through right now, He knows our thoughts right now and He knows what our plans are for the next moment. He knows our past, He knows our present, He also knows our future. Our past is also known to us now. We know where we came from, we know what we’ve been through and we know part of the present. We know this exact moment; I know that Vassilis is here and he is translating. And I am here preaching.

5. I see Stavro in front of me, smiling. I know my now, this exact moment. I know that if I turn around, I will see pastor Gail and Eva-Lena. It is terrifying, but God knows the future. He knows the next moment. He knows our future. For me, it is marvelous when someone knows my own future, holding my tomorrow in His hands. I trusted Him and I gave my life to Him. You trusted Him and you gave Him your life. But think that in His hands now, He holds your tomorrow. He holds your own future. He holds your dreams and He wants to realize them for you.

6. He understands us better than anyone else. He knows even our most hidden thoughts. He knows what is going on around us. He knows what happens for us. He knows what’s happening inside us. You know, sometimes what’s happening around us, is unrelated to what’s happening inside of us. Many people never understand if you are sad, if you have feelings of desperation and disappointment, because all they see is the smile on your face. But God says, ‘I know what’s going on inside you. I know better than anyone else what you have hidden in your heart.’ And God always knows to do the best, not only on the outside but also on the inside.

7. In the portion of Scripture that we read, it says that, ‘He surrounds us and puts His hand on my head.’ Today, if you see someone being surrounded all around, he’ll say, ‘what huge pressure is this?’ But because I grew up in a village, I know that elderly people in the village, they would surround their properties with a fence of thorns and this fence would have nothing to do with punishment. And it also didn’t have anything to do with isolation or pressure, but it was to protect the open areas of their yards from foxes or some other animals, such as snakes.

8. That’s why, when the Lord says that He surrounds me, He doesn’t want to pressurize me, He doesn’t want to smother me, but He wants to protect me. The Scriptures say that the angels surround the just. We are His children and we have angels all around us that protect us. Are you not glad that you have someone protecting you? Someone is there for you, not allowing the enemy to touch your soul. It says that if we belong to God’s circle, then no arrow that comes against us, a fiery arrow no matter how powerful it may be, this arrow cannot touch us. Our Lord protects us and does not allow it to come anywhere near us.

9. It says that He puts His hand on our head, he doesn't put it there to hurt us. I once had a professor, that when we did something in the classroom, he wouldn't smack us with a ruler, or send us outside, but he would come and hit our head with his hand. But the Lord, here, wants to place His hand on us to bless us.

10. In the Old Testament, and that in many Christian circles today, a father would place his hands on the heads of his children and would bless them and say good words to them. He would say, 'May the Lord make His face shine upon you.' (Numbers 6:24-26) To show His love for you. He has chosen you to be a part of His house. How wonderful it is to have God's hand on our head. He blesses us. He called us and I said your name. I bless you and I want to bless you. God is wonderful. He's behind you and He's chasing after you, because He loves you very much.

11. Let's read Psalm 139:7-13, "Where can I go from your Spirit?

Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there;

if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn,

if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me,

your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, 'Surely the darkness will hide me

and the light become night around me,' even the darkness will not be dark to you;

the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you. For you created my inmost being;

you knit me together in my mother's womb."

12. Where can I go Lord from Your Spirit, Lord and from Your face. Where can I escape to? Where can we go far from God? He searches our hearts and He knows our thoughts. The Psalmist here says, 'Even if I go down to hades, You are there.' As much as we would like to hide from God, He finds us. Nothing is hidden from God. He examines our hearts, but He chases after us, He does not want to lose us. No matter where we go, He is there for us. We are very special people for Him. He created us. You, you and you and I, we are very special to God. Regardless of how strange we may be, no matter our idiosyncrasies, He loves us. He chases after us and He wants us to be close to Him.

13. He has promised that, because of faith we became His, He will never forsake us. But He will be with us until the end of the age. No matter what you may be going through at this stage, no matter what you think of yourself at this time, God tells you, "You are special to me. You are my beloved. You are the one whom I have loved with a perfect love. I sacrificed My Son for you. You are unique."

14. I would have liked for us all to read these verses together from verse 13-16, but read them at home. "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful,

I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place,

when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.”

15. I read a book recently, and in that book, there was a character that had a very ugly face. But it said that when he smiled, his whole face changed, it would glow. People look at the beauty of the face depending on what they see with their eyes, (beauty is in the eye of the beholder, the saying goes), they have their own standards as to how beautiful or handsome someone is. I would like to spoil this thought. My Bible says, and even your Bibles will say the same, that we are fearfully and wonderfully made, so, turn and say to yourselves, ‘God has made me beautiful and unique.’ This is what my Bible says. There is no one else who is like as you. You are unique and special.

16. Vassili, when God was making you, He said I’m done with Vassilis. I’m throwing this mold away. It no longer exists. The same holds true for me. And for Stavros and for Benyamin. When God created us, He wanted us to be unique. Each one separately. But all of us uniquely together. And He gave each one of us unique finger prints.

17. I went to have a new identity card issued, and he told me to put my right index finger here, and your left index figure here. And he said to me that it is only these that prove who you are. No one else has the same finger prints. God has created this for me. And he has made me wonderful and beautiful, amazing. Thank you!

18. God wants you specifically. He created you and He has made you only for Himself. He gave you a personality and a character, abilities, spirit. He gave you Spiritual gifts, and He sent you for a particular purpose. To live, work and to be His. He separated you for Himself. Stavro, please come forward, ‘Stavro, I have made you unique. I have made you different, you’re not similar to Vassili, you will never become a Brian, but you will be Stavros. And you will be mine. And my purpose for you is to live with you forever. Amen.’

19. God created us to live with Him, forever. And He has plans, for you and for me. Verses 16b-18, “all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand — when I awake, I am still with you.”

20. God did not just create you and abandoned you. He didn’t give you a specific purpose and said to you go and do whatever you want. He doesn’t turn His back to you and goes in the opposite direction. His thoughts are on you daily. He thinks about Eva-Lena daily. He thinks about Imalka daily. Every day His mercy and grace are upon our lives afresh. He gives us new opportunities every day. And His mercy is renewed and covers us. He wants to spend time with you. He likes to walk with you, to talk to you, and this was from the very beginning in Genesis. God liked to walk and talk with Adam and Eve. And now He enjoys to walk and talk with you.

21. God has plans for you and these plans for you only you together with God can accomplish them. The plan that God has for me, Kitty cannot accomplish it. It can only be fulfilled by me, if I remain in God’s presence, and if I feel His renewed mercies every day.

22. God knows us. And He is ready to live each day with us. Every day, I hear Him whisper in my ear, 'I am your Father, I am your Abba, your Daddy, I am so pleased that you are my child, I am so please that you are my beloved child.' And I know that many times you've pastor Gail saying that God loves her more than anyone else. But today I can declare that I am the beloved child of God! And each one of you can say the same thing about yourselves.

23. Maybe today, you may have heard from people, from your parents, words that shouldn't have been said to you. You may have experienced rejection from beloved people. Maybe you have felt disappointed many times. But don't let anything done by people to you, to defeat you. It's time to look up. It's time to see how precious you are in God's hand. God says, 'My beloved child, you are Mine forever. Take My hand, and let us run together, this road race.' And when you run with God, and I run with God, and someone else runs with God.

24. You know that I am really a family person, I really enjoy belonging somewhere and I really love this Psalm, because it tells me that I belong to God, that I belong to this family of the wonderful Jesus Christ. He is my brother, He is my friend, He is my Savior, and in this family, I am alone. I have all of you, as family. We are not alone. We are of the house of Jesus Christ. We are invited to be His children. That's why today, be encouraged because you belong somewhere. Because He loves you. May God bless you. Be well. And may His love always be your support. Amen.

Pastor Gail – Communion.

1. We'll pass out the communion now. You're free to sit, but I'd like you to stand and hold it as an offering to the Lord. I am in awe for what He did for me, what He did for you. Oh, my goodness. Yes, what You did for me. He loves us. The world can't win, because the victory of Jesus, keep our eyes on Jesus. So, if you will hold the communion, and it is a little different today, because this young man standing beside me (Vassilis), cannot yet preach. He came to me just last Sunday, and he asked me, can I preach next Sunday. I told him, no, we got to go a little bit together, but I felt the Lord said, 'To share a little bit today for communion.' This is an offering that we can give to the Lord today. Ok, let's listen. And if you're all tired, you can sit down. I'm so excited. He asked to share, isn't that wonderful. Praise God, but you can't preach, not very long.

**Vassilis.**

1. So, first of all I want to thank the Father of lights, the giver of all things good and perfect. I want to thank Pastor Gail and Brian and the leadership of the church for giving me that opportunity to say a few words. And I'd like to begin with a question. What's the table of the Lord? What is it for you?

2. For sure partaking of the communion, the blood and the body of Jesus Christ, is in remembrance of Jesus Christ when He walked on earth 2000 years ago. But for us, it means that we publicly, loudly and decisively and testify, in the spiritual and the natural, Jesus' full and complete work, our faith and remission of sins and salvation in His name.

3. But is there something else in that table? What I see in that table is a vivid relationship, between God and man, where God has a fervent desire to be with Him, as disciples and friends. That invitation reminds me of Jesus that said 'Come' to Peter. Whoever sits at that

table, enjoys the care of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit and we can see Jesus welcomes the 12 with the washing of their feet.

4. Of course there are many gifts at that table, for example, Jesus gave us abundant life, He gives us a heavenly house, He unites us with the Father. He gave us an everlasting friend and helper, the Holy Spirit. And of course, these gifts are for now and forever. And there is also our side. We are not in that table to just listening and quiet. But we are not at that table to be demanding and whining either.

5. I can imagine, Jesus Christ with His disciples, that they were having bonding time, talking about all the great things that they had gone through and what's next. And Jesus called the disciples, friends, and we are best friends of Jesus. And as you may already know that friends are not perfect and that's the point. Because friends are to play, to share and do life together and when we do that with Jesus Christ, we are made perfect with and through Him.

6. So, the partaking of communion, should be just a remembrance of something that happened 2000 years ago, it should be something that happened just a few moments ago. It started back then, but it continues with us through having a conscious relationship with Jesus Christ. So, to conclude, the partaking of Holy Communion, is an announcement of the cross and the resurrection and it is an invitation to be with the Lord, and to have a deep and meaningful relationship with Him. Amen.

#### Pastor Gail – Communion

1. Amen. You just went to seminary. That was deep. It was wonderful – He calls us friends. And we get to live at His table always. He's alive. That was powerful, praise God. We're sharing His body and blood today. We're sharing the life of that Amen. And because of that, we live forever. And on that night, He took the bread, He broke it, 'This is my body broken for you as friends, my brothers and sisters, my family, Hallelujah.

2. Lord, we bless You. We thank You, for life in You, as we give our life to You Lord, we die to selves, we come alive more by the power of Your resurrection. We thank You right now, in the name of Jesus. Take and eat. When Jesus took the cup, Hallelujah, this is My blood which was shed for you. He gave His whole life; He gave it all. Such love, such wonderful love and He took the cup. And we know, there was only one cup, which they all shared. This is my blood which was shed for you. We thank You, oh Lord. Jesus there is no greater love than Yours. Father, thank You for sending Your Son. Today, seal it in our hearts and minds, but knowing, beyond emotion, that You love us. Let the power of Your life that You gave for us. Let it grow stronger and stronger. Live it in us as never before, in the name of Jesus, Amen. Take and drink.

#### Pastor Gail – Closeout

1. I'm going to take just one more minute. Angelo, I need you to come up here. Yesterday, I was reminded of something. I was a prodigal; I was away from the Lord. We're all prodigals. Who would we be without the Lord? And yesterday, I remembered the painting by Rembrandt, of the prodigal son. And I remembered yesterday, He found me, He was waiting for me, as he also found you. And I have a picture, you (Angelo), you're the Father. When the Son comes home, oh, he's all torn and the Son comes before the Father and he kneels before him, and the Father hugs him, the Father loves him. Oh, how great was his love. Oh,

Lord, thank you. Today, we can sit at the table, no matter what we've done, because the Lord sent His Son, He holds us and He loves us, and I felt yesterday and all day today, someone in the room, needs to know, that the Father is here, that the Father loves us, He protects us. Angelo, the Father loves you, He's just waiting for you, and I thank you Angelo, that you became 'my father' today.

2. The Father is waiting for us. Is that not amazing? He's waiting. And we're getting ready to close, I just want to remind you, no matter how far you might wander. We all sometimes wander in our minds, the Father is waiting and even if we have nothing to bring to Him, because we have nothing to bring to Him, we can come to Him and He pulls out a chair for us, as He says, my child come sit with me at this table with my Son. Oh, thank You Holy Spirit, isn't that amazing? I don't apologize, I know, I'm going on a little longer, but I just felt that the Lord wanted someone to hear this. So, Lord, as we close today, we thank You, that even, Lord, as our voice grows weak with age, even if our voice has been wrecked by things we have done in the world, to You, we begin to praise You, to You it is so beautiful.