



Daily Devotions in the Psalms

Psalm 45-49

Monday 1st June - Psalm 45

For the director of music. To the tune of "Lilies." Of the Sons of Korah. A maskil. A wedding song.

My heart is stirred by a noble theme
as I recite my verses for the king;
my tongue is the pen of a skillful writer.
2 You are the most excellent of men
and your lips have been anointed with grace,
since God has blessed you forever.
3 Gird your sword on your side, you mighty one;
clothe yourself with splendor and majesty.
4 In your majesty ride forth victoriously
in the cause of truth, humility and justice;
let your right hand achieve awesome deeds.
5 Let your sharp arrows pierce the hearts of the king's
enemies;
let the nations fall beneath your feet.
6 Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever;
a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your
kingdom.
7 You love righteousness and hate wickedness;
therefore God, your God, has set you above your
companions
by anointing you with the oil of joy.

8 All your robes are fragrant with myrrh and aloes and
cassia;
from palaces adorned with ivory
the music of the strings makes you glad.
9 Daughters of kings are among your honoured women;
at your right hand is the royal bride in gold of Ophir.
10 Listen, daughter, and pay careful attention:
Forget your people and your father's house.
11 Let the king be enthralled by your beauty;
honour him, for he is your lord.
12 The city of Tyre will come with a gift,
people of wealth will seek your favour.
13 All glorious is the princess within her chamber;
her gown is interwoven with gold.
14 In embroidered garments she is led to the king;
her virgin companions follow her—
those brought to be with her.
15 Led in with joy and gladness,
they enter the palace of the king.
16 Your sons will take the place of your fathers;
you will make them princes throughout the land.
17 I will perpetuate your memory through all
generations;
therefore the nations will praise you for ever and ever.

I have a confession to make: I was a little jealous of the other guys because as I read through each Psalm; because at first glance this one was the one I'd be least keen to write a devotion on. But on reflection, this Psalm provides another reminder that God's word is always richer and better than we might first think.

It's quite a unique Psalm; it's a wedding song, predominantly sung to the king, rather than Yahweh. The king is praised for his excellency (v. 2), his strength and splendour (v. 3) and his character (v. 4). Even his clothes smell good (v. 8)!

There's something so optimistic about this Psalm; the king is righteous, his throne will last forever, his bride is gorgeous. There's joy and gladness and the hope and promise of an everlasting dynasty (v. 6 - though it speaks of God's throne, I think it is referring to the throne of God in Israel on which sits the king) and a legacy and memory of this king and his offspring forever (v. 17).

Yet, for all this optimism, the kings of Israel are a disappointment. Some think this Psalm was written for Solomon's wedding to Pharaoh's daughter (or perhaps one of his 700 other weddings?!). But regardless of which king it is for, I'm left with the reality that none of the kings really continued in righteousness. Exile meant the end of feasts and weddings and princes and the throne...

...until the real king showed up.

Reading Psalm 45 this side of the cross, I can't help but see Christ as the greater king. He is the most excellent of men, and His throne and God's throne lasts forever because He is God. He really is everything the Israelite kings should have been. And what's more - we are the bride. The palace awaits us. Revelation 19 tells us there will be a wedding feast.

So let Psalm 45 stir your affections for the real King and the greater wedding to come. And be reminded that Scripture is always better than we think. Slow down. Reflect on it and see what God shows you.

James

Tuesday 2nd June - Psalm 46

**For the director of music. Of the Sons of Korah.
According to alamothe. A song.**

God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.
2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give
way
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,
3 though its waters roar and foam
and the mountains quake with their surging.[c]
4 There is a river whose streams make glad the
city of God,
the holy place where the Most High dwells.
5 God is within her, she will not fall;
God will help her at break of day.

6 Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall;
he lifts his voice, the earth melts.
7 The Lord Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.
8 Come and see what the Lord has done,
the desolations he has brought on the earth.
9 He makes wars cease
to the ends of the earth.
He breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
he burns the shields with fire.
10 He says, "Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth."
11 The Lord Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.

This is a deeply unsettled time for our church, neighbours, country and world. This time has interrupted our lives in many ways, disruptions to our routines, work, exercise rhythms and friendships. Verses 2 & 3 provide a visual description of trouble where the things that have been depended on to always be there are beginning to fail. However, verses 1, 7 and 11 present God in a very personal way, confessing that he is with us and for us, an ever-present help in trouble. It doesn't say that God will help us get into a refuge but that he is that refuge.

All sorts of things can take away or diminish the benefits of earthly citizenship. However, we are told the heavenly city has a river (v4), it's the Spirit of God, the power of God, so while earthly cities can be destroyed the heavenly city cannot. Every Christian is a citizen of an earthly city, but our foundational citizenship, by God's grace, is in his heavenly kingdom (Phil 3:20).

"Be still and know that I am God" (v7). Even though we are in the midst of an enforced stillness, we are one of the least contemplative, busiest, most mobile, running around cultures in history, unable to be still, always feeling out of time. It seems the free time gained by technology didn't make us relax, it's made us run.

Lord, we thank you that you are always with us and for us. We feel so vulnerable to sickness, anxiety, loneliness and financial loss. But we're reminded that nothing can take away our inheritance of infinite love. Lord help us to see more of who you are in Jesus Christ, that we may rest in the knowledge that you will never leave us or forsake us. Amen.

Martin

Wednesday 3rd June - Psalm 47

**For the director of music. Of the Sons of Korah.
A psalm.**

Clap your hands, all you nations;
shout to God with cries of joy.

2 For the Lord Most High is awesome,
the great King over all the earth.

3 He subdued nations under us,
peoples under our feet.

4 He chose our inheritance for us,
the pride of Jacob, whom he loved.

5 God has ascended amid shouts of joy,
the Lord amid the sounding of trumpets.

6 Sing praises to God, sing praises;
sing praises to our King, sing praises.

7 For God is the King of all the earth;
sing to him a psalm of praise.

8 God reigns over the nations;
God is seated on his holy throne.

9 The nobles of the nations assemble
as the people of the God of Abraham,
for the kings of the earth belong to God;
he is greatly exalted.

Why are we so bad at clapping?

When I first started at CCBC 14 years ago there was a rumour going around, told in quiet whispers, that CCBC was known as a church that clapped. It is hard to believe, but it seemed that years before, due to a difficult time of grief and pain the church lost its ability to clap. It is good to think about why did the church lose this outward expression of joy. A joy that can unify us. It didn't seem to be a change of worship fashion, the church didn't seem to suddenly become a place of liturgical dancers, flag-waving or lifting of hands, clapping just stopped.

It is understandable when that happens. During times of trial or grief, or pain it is easy to forget where to get relief, where to find joy. That is why I think the psalmist begins by calling or probably more commanding the people of God from all nations back to the place of joy and of clapping. It is good to remember here that 'being in the nations' is a summary for the life lived in exile away from God.

Why is this important? Well, a couple of things the psalmist points out. One is that a physical response to the goodness of God (vs 1) is good. It seems strange that as physical beings we find responding to God physically so difficult and awkward. Our hearts and minds can have a schism from our physical response. But the psalmist has a clear reason for this to happen. The God of the Bible is sovereign and He has chosen us as His people and He is exalted over all the world and has defeated His enemies.

Secondly, God is good towards His people; the rest of the psalm details some of the ways God is good. How often do we forget this goodness in the face of an uncertain world? This is why this psalm is so helpful for us, as we come together and remember what we have in Christ.

As a way of applying this psalm, it might be good to thank God for His love and affection for us in Christ. His reign over both the small world of our lives as well as the big world of nations. As a result, when you pray, lift your hands, kneel, dance or lay flat, but find some way to respond physically to our great God. After all, it is His salvation that we get to experience in Jesus Christ. The eternal King who reigns and who loves us, even if we might feel embarrassed or have forgotten.

Phil

Thursday 4th June - Psalm 48

A song. A psalm of the Sons of Korah.

Great is the Lord, and most worthy of praise,
in the city of our God, his holy mountain.

2 Beautiful in its loftiness,
the joy of the whole earth,
like the heights of Zaphon is Mount Zion,
the city of the Great King.

3 God is in her citadels;
he has shown himself to be her fortress.

4 When the kings joined forces,
when they advanced together,

5 they saw her and were astounded;
they fled in terror.

6 Trembling seized them there,
pain like that of a woman in labor.

7 You destroyed them like ships of Tarshish
shattered by an east wind.

8 As we have heard,
so we have seen

in the city of the Lord Almighty,
in the city of our God:

God makes her secure
forever.

9 Within your temple, O God,
we meditate on your unfailing love.

10 Like your name, O God,
your praise reaches to the ends of the earth;
your right hand is filled with righteousness.

11 Mount Zion rejoices,
the villages of Judah are glad
because of your judgments.

12 Walk about Zion, go around her,
count her towers,

13 consider well her ramparts,
view her citadels,

that you may tell of them
to the next generation.

14 For this God is our God for ever and ever;
he will be our guide even to the end.

Last week a dangerous storm lashed across much of Western Australia, battering the coast with strong winds and heavy rain. Winds gusted at close to 100 km per hour. Buildings were damaged, homes and businesses left without power. It took the state completely by surprise. Psalm 48 is one of the Songs of Zion. In this psalm you can almost hear the lashing of the storm.

In v.1 the people praise the beauty and magnificence of Mount Zion (Jerusalem). More than this, they say: How great is the Lord, how deserving of praise. Enemy forces thought that they could destroy the city, but God scattered them. They were broken in pieces just as the ships of Tarshish are smashed by a storm. Israel had heard in the past of God's mighty deeds, but now with their own eyes they see God's deliverance (48:8). In thanks for the victory people flock to the temple (48:9). Throughout the towns of Judah there is much rejoicing (48:11), and the psalmist anticipates God's praise and glory reaching out even unto the ends of the earth.

The Songs of Zion awaken our hopes and desires. They are lyrical hymns which magnify the greatness of God in the city of Jerusalem, and acclaim his authority throughout the world. They also celebrate the resilience of the city: the ability of Mount Zion, by God's grace, to weather the storm.

Hebrews 6:19 says these amazing words: We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul.

Father God, thank you for enabling us to rest secure in Christ's salvation, for strengthening us to weather the storm, for giving us the grace to stand.

John

Friday 5th June - Psalm 49

For the director of music. Of the Sons of Korah. A psalm.

Hear this, all you peoples;
listen, all who live in this world,
2 both low and high,
rich and poor alike:
3 My mouth will speak words of wisdom;
the meditation of my heart will give you
understanding.
4 I will turn my ear to a proverb;
with the harp I will expound my riddle:
5 Why should I fear when evil days come,
when wicked deceivers surround me—
6 those who trust in their wealth
and boast of their great riches?
7 No one can redeem the life of another
or give to God a ransom for them—
8 the ransom for a life is costly,
no payment is ever enough—
9 so that they should live on forever
and not see decay.
10 For all can see that the wise die,
that the foolish and the senseless also perish,
leaving their wealth to others.

11 Their tombs will remain their houses forever,
their dwellings for endless generations,
though they had named lands after themselves.
12 People, despite their wealth, do not endure;
they are like the beasts that perish.
13 This is the fate of those who trust in themselves,
and of their followers, who approve their sayings.[d]
14 They are like sheep and are destined to die;
death will be their shepherd
(but the upright will prevail over them in the
morning).
Their forms will decay in the grave,
far from their princely mansions.
15 But God will redeem me from the realm of the dead;
he will surely take me to himself.
16 Do not be overawed when others grow rich,
when the splendour of their houses increases;
17 for they will take nothing with them when they die,
their splendour will not descend with them.
18 Though while they live they count themselves
blessed—
and people praise you when you prosper—
19 they will join those who have gone before them,
who will never again see the light of life.
20 People who have wealth but lack understanding
are like the beasts that perish.

The Psalmist in this chapter is calling all the people of the world to hear him out as he speaks words of wisdom to both high and low, rich and poor alike to give them understanding about life, wealth and death. It calls for the wise person to realise that there is nothing to fear from the oppressive rich; like animals, they too will die; but the righteous will live forever. This psalm is quite different from a psalm of praise. It is an instruction text that provides:

1. A call for understanding (v.1-4)
2. A declaration of the vanity of trusting in wealth (v.5-9)
3. A declaration of the worthlessness of possessions after death (v.10-12)
4. A description of God's redemption (v.13-15)
5. A conclusion that there is no need to fear the rich (v.16-20)

We live in a society where the culture of wealth accumulation has become a yardstick for a successful life. In this psalm, there is a warning for us against trusting in wealth (v.6-9); for wealth can achieve nothing of lasting value in this life or the life to come. Wealth cannot buy redemption for only God has the power to death and hell.

The reality of death is inevitable as soon as we are born into this world. All of us are just hanging in the thread of God's mercy as to when this mortal life will be over. But death is a great equaliser. People who have beauty, riches and power in this world will eventually lose them all at death. They will be stripped of everything except their soul. Hence, the psalmist turns to God who alone can redeem his soul and who alone can deliver him from the realm of the dead. (v.15).

God never intended that we should not have riches. He only intended that riches should not have us. It is vitally important for Christians who possess wealth not to be possessed by it; for life does not consist in the

abundance of possessions (Luke 12:15b). God wants us to possess Jesus who is the real treasure for only He can give us the fullness of life for eternity.

Lord may we always treasure Jesus above all else in this life. May we be reminded that we came naked into this world and that we shall depart the same. Only Jesus who is our treasure in heaven shall be our lasting possession forever. May you find us rich toward Him.

Edwin