



Daily Devotions in the Psalms

Psalm 99-103

Monday 17th August - Psalm 99

The Lord reigns,
let the nations tremble;
he sits enthroned between the cherubim,
let the earth shake.
2 Great is the Lord in Zion;
he is exalted over all the nations.
3 Let them praise your great and awesome name
—
he is holy.
4 The King is mighty, he loves justice—
you have established equity;
in Jacob you have done
what is just and right.
5 Exalt the Lord our God
and worship at his footstool;
he is holy.

6 Moses and Aaron were among his priests,
Samuel was among those who called on his
name;
they called on the Lord
and he answered them.
7 He spoke to them from the pillar of cloud;
they kept his statutes and the decrees he gave
them.
8 Lord our God,
you answered them;
you were to Israel a forgiving God,
though you punished their misdeeds.
9 Exalt the Lord our God
and worship at his holy mountain,
for the Lord our God is holy.

It's an easy mistake to make to think that God was only interested in the nation of Israel and not the nations around them.

Yet, the reason that God chose Abraham and his descendants was precisely because he wanted them to be a light to the nations, who might come and join in the worship and praise of Yahweh.

We get a sense of that in this Psalm. The Psalmist says that God's reign should cause the nations to tremble (v. 1) and praise Him (v. 3).

And God's faithfulness to Israel is also meant to preach to the nations. God established the King, equity and justice (v. 4). His footstool (the temple) was a place of worship for the nations as well as Israel. His previous dealings with Moses, Aaron and Samuel show his faithfulness and grace in answering their prayers. He is a God who can be known.

We might not be able to go to the temple to "exalt the Lord our God", but what we have is better. We're the new temple. God dwells among us. We've seen greater fulfilment of His promises and faithfulness in Christ's death and resurrection and in the send of the Spirit. We're called to be a light to the nations so that others may join in our praise of the great King.

So, brothers and sister, exalt the Lord our God! Worship Him! Let your life of worship be a sign to the world around you that God is worthy of their praise too.

Lord God, we praise you! You are holy and great and awesome. You have kept your promises and established your people. Lord, please help us to live for the fame of your name. Help us to be a people who call and invite others to join in our praise of you. May the world look at us and long to know the God who has saved and changed us. Please give us an increasing heart for the nations. We pray this in the name of Jesus, Amen.

James

Tuesday 18th August - Psalm 100

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.

2 Worship the Lord with gladness;
come before him with joyful songs.

3 Know that the Lord is God.

It is he who made us, and we are his[a];
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise;
give thanks to him and praise his name.

5 For the Lord is good and his love endures
forever;

his faithfulness continues through all
generations.

This Psalm begins by reminding us that the Lord is God over the whole earth, not just the people of Israel. Every living creature owes God their praise whether they acknowledge him or not.

We are commanded to remember who God is and who we are in relation to him – He is God, we are his creation. God is also owed our glad service, coming into his presence with a song of praise in the heart. This is not our world's response and often not ours either.

There is a growing theme of praise between Psalm 95-100. This praise Psalm does not stand alone, Psalms 146-150 do something similar. All real prayer pursued far enough becomes praise. It doesn't get there quickly or easily and can even take a lifetime, but any prayer no matter how desperate or angry and fearful, ends up in praise through God's grace. The Psalms hint at this all throughout. Eugene Peterson wrote, "... our lives fill out in goodness. Earth and heaven meet in an extraordinary conjunction. Clashing symbols announce the glory. Blessing. Amen. Hallelujah."

Our motivation to joyfully serve Jesus is because we are his. Obedience is a delight, to love and resemble the one whose sacrificial love lasts forever.

Thank you Father, that you are good and eternal and that we are not consumed because of our sin. That we are able to take a breath and praise you for your greatness and kindness that we see ultimately through Christ. Amen.

Martin

Wednesday 19th August - Psalm 101

1 I will sing of your love and justice;
to you, Lord, I will sing praise.

2 I will be careful to lead a blameless life—
when will you come to me?

I will conduct the affairs of my house
with a blameless heart.

3 I will not look with approval
on anything that is vile.

I hate what faithless people do;
I will have no part in it.

4 The perverse of heart shall be far from me;
I will have nothing to do with what is evil.

5 Whoever slanders their neighbour in secret,
I will put to silence;
whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart,
I will not tolerate.

6 My eyes will be on the faithful in the land,
that they may dwell with me;
the one whose walk is blameless
will minister to me.

7 No one who practices deceit
will dwell in my house;
no one who speaks falsely
will stand in my presence.

8 Every morning I will put to silence
all the wicked in the land;
I will cut off every evildoer
from the city of the Lord.

The Campbelltown Art gallery has an exhibition of first nations art. Part of the exhibition is a series of statements written on a wall. I am still.... On drugs, I am still filling in potholes, I am still sad, I am still frustrated etc. it a simple list of things which show that the artist is caught or stuck in their life. It feels almost meaningless as if there is no hope. I wonder if you have ever felt the weight of being still stuck in the same situation, problem, job or another predicament of life. But if you look closely when this happens there can be hope written between the lines. That soon one day there might be something different happen to the artist as if the artist is looking to be surprised.

Take some time to write your own I am still list

Where are you hoping for God to bring about a change or surprise you?

In this psalm, there is a repeated I will. The psalmist is wanting his life to change and will live accordingly. Why? Because of His love for God, and as the psalm progresses he takes on the thoughts of God and eventually seems to be like God. Perhaps take some time to think about how Jesus life echoes or is different in this psalm?

Take some time to write your own I will.... List. What do you need God to help you in as write your list?

Take time to consider what you will do in order to repent and change.

Lastly, consider what Jesus has done for you in this psalm Jesus has done and what He will do.

Phil

Thursday 20th August - Psalm 102

Hear my prayer, Lord;
let my cry for help come to you.

2 Do not hide your face from me
when I am in distress.

Turn your ear to me;
when I call, answer me quickly.

3 For my days vanish like smoke;
my bones burn like glowing embers.

4 My heart is blighted and withered like grass;
I forget to eat my food.

5 In my distress I groan aloud
and am reduced to skin and bones.

6 I am like a desert owl,
like an owl among the ruins.

7 I lie awake; I have become
like a bird alone on a roof.

8 All day long my enemies taunt me;
those who rail against me use my name as a curse.

9 For I eat ashes as my food
and mingle my drink with tears

10 because of your great wrath,
for you have taken me up and thrown me aside.

11 My days are like the evening shadow;
I wither away like grass.

12 But you, Lord, sit enthroned forever;
your renown endures through all generations.

13 You will arise and have compassion on Zion,
for it is time to show favour to her;
the appointed time has come.

14 For her stones are dear to your servants;
her very dust moves them to pity.

15 The nations will fear the name of the Lord,
all the kings of the earth will revere your glory.

16 For the Lord will rebuild Zion
and appear in his glory.

17 He will respond to the prayer of the destitute;
he will not despise their plea.

18 Let this be written for a future generation,
that a people not yet created may praise the Lord:

19 "The Lord looked down from his sanctuary on high,
from heaven he viewed the earth,
20 to hear the groans of the prisoners
and release those condemned to death."

21 So the name of the Lord will be declared in Zion
and his praise in Jerusalem

22 when the peoples and the kingdoms
assemble to worship the Lord.

23 In the course of my life he broke my strength;
he cut short my days.

24 So I said:
"Do not take me away, my God, in the midst of my
days;
your years go on through all generations.

25 In the beginning you laid the foundations of the
earth,
and the heavens are the work of your hands.

26 They will perish, but you remain;
they will all wear out like a garment.
Like clothing you will change them
and they will be discarded.

27 But you remain the same,
and your years will never end.

28 The children of your servants will live in your
presence;
their descendants will be established before you."

Jerusalem is in ruins, the people of Judah are in captivity, and the poor afflicted psalmist pours out his heart to God. Note the heading to this psalm: "A prayer of the afflicted; when he is overwhelmed and pours out his complaint to God" AMP

There are three sections to this psalm: 1. A desperate cry for help v.1-11. 2. Zion will rise from the ashes v.12-22. 3. A reflection on life's brevity v.23-28.

The Lord will hear the cries of his people in exile in Babylon, release them from bondage and bring them back to their beloved Jerusalem v.18-22. Life is full of hardship and adversity v.23-24. But the Lord is the everlasting God v.26-27.

His people from one generation to the next can look to him and rely on him to deliver them and bless them v. 27-28. Note the tone of desperation at the start of the psalm v.1-2, and the quiet confidence and assurance at the end v.28.

Father God, we pray for those people who are complexly devastated by the things that are happening in the world at the moment. Thank you for the promise in this psalm that Zion will rise from the ashes. We recall those times in our lives when you have lifted us up and planted joy in our hearts, when there was no earthly reason for us to feel that way. Thank you your Son, Jesus, and for all he accomplished by his living, dying and rising. Amen.

John

Friday 14th August - Psalm 103

Praise the Lord, my soul;
all my inmost being, praise his holy name.
2 Praise the Lord, my soul,
and forget not all his benefits—
3 who forgives all your sins
and heals all your diseases,
4 who redeems your life from the pit
and crowns you with love and compassion,
5 who satisfies your desires with good things
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
6 The Lord works righteousness
and justice for all the oppressed.
7 He made known his ways to Moses,
his deeds to the people of Israel:
8 The Lord is compassionate and gracious,
slow to anger, abounding in love.
9 He will not always accuse,
nor will he harbour his anger forever;
10 he does not treat us as our sins deserve
or repay us according to our iniquities.
11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
so great is his love for those who fear him;
12 as far as the east is from the west,
so far has he removed our transgressions from
us.

13 As a father has compassion on his children,
so the Lord has compassion on those who fear
him;
14 for he knows how we are formed,
he remembers that we are dust.
15 The life of mortals is like grass,
they flourish like a flower of the field;
16 the wind blows over it and it is gone,
and its place remembers it no more.
17 But from everlasting to everlasting
the Lord's love is with those who fear him,
and his righteousness with their children's
children—
18 with those who keep his covenant
and remember to obey his precepts.
19 The Lord has established his throne in heaven,
and his kingdom rules over all.
20 Praise the Lord, you his angels,
you mighty ones who do his bidding,
who obey his word.
21 Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts,
you his servants who do his will.
22 Praise the Lord, all his works
everywhere in his dominion.
Praise the Lord, my soul.

Do you feel flat and spiritually lifeless at this point in life? Does praising God from the heart seem difficult?

Psalm 103 reminds us that we have much reason to "praise the LORD".

In the first 5 verses, we see that David is conscious not just about what the LORD gives but what He has saved us from. We're prompted to think not just about God's blessings but also the pit from which we've been drawn. Do we realise how dire our situation without a saviour is? Do we sense the relief of salvation as well as the excitement of restoration?

Vs 6-19 speak of a creator who not only reveals Himself to His creation but reveals Himself lovingly to a creation that has rebelled and deserves nothing but His wrath. Again, like a diamond on black cloth we see the contrast of who we are in our natural state and who God is, revealed in His actions. Eg "compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love" (v8).

In the messiness of life, it can be hard to believe the message of this Psalm. Remember, Job wasn't privy to what God was doing behind the scenes and neither are we at this point. But God had a plan for Job and He has a plan for us.

Despite how things may seem, God's kingdom does rule (v19). The angels know this and praise Him for it. Let's do likewise!

Danny