

Tuesday, May 19, 2020—Psalms 115-118

Why do you follow Jesus? Hebrews 11 gives the names and stories of dozens of people through history who have placed their faith in God. Some found rich blessing. Many experienced intense suffering. To follow Jesus is not the path to personal fulfillment or comfort. To follow Jesus is to put an end to any selfish desires and live only for His glory.

The psalmist knew this mindset. “Not to us, O Lord, not to us but to your name be the glory because of your love and faithfulness” (115:1). The world may scoff at your faith, but the things in which they place their faith are temporary, man-made, and ultimately powerless.

To know Him is to love Him. To know His love, compassion, and grace stirs deep thankfulness and allegiance. The psalmist cried out from the pit of despair, and God answered. He asked, “How can I repay the Lord for all his goodness to me?” (116:12). The only way to respond is to celebrate Him, pray to Him, and walk with Him in obedience. Who can ever repay One who is so rich, loving, faithful, and merciful?

Psalms 117 and 118 testify to the enduring love of God. When you are fully convinced of God’s love for you, then you can face uncertain days and uncomfortable experiences. Suffering will no longer cause you to doubt His love but will allow you to become more like Jesus. He suffered not so you wouldn’t suffer but so you could become like Him in your suffering. His presence is more rewarding than His blessings. He is the true treasure.

Monday, May 18, 2020—Psalms 112-114

Parents are familiar with the responses to their commands. Sometimes there is hostility. Regularly there is a slump-shouldered acceptance and obedience. Rarely is there great joy as a result of being told to clean a room, wash those hands, or finish the job.

The psalmist knew the blessings that came from knowing Yahweh and walking in obedience. “Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who finds great delight in his commands” (112:b). As one matures in faith, he is not only willing to obey but finds it enjoyable. The benefits affect him and his children. “He will have no fear of bad news; his heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord. His heart is secure; he will have no fear; in the end he will look in triumph on his foes” (112:7-8). This is the path of delight.

God is able to turn circumstances from darkness to light. “He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes . . . He settles the barren woman in her home as a happy mother of children” (113:7-9). He took an entire nation out of slavery in Egypt and gave them a home of their own. That unknown nation became His sanctuary. The sea parted. Mountains danced. Rocks poured water.

Knowing Who He is and what He can do allows His people to find great delight in His commands. He leads for His glory and His people’s good. Tell God of your joy in Him. Obey with gladness. Share this joy.

Sunday, May 17, 2020—Psalms 109-111

Times will come when God seems silent or uncaring. Talk to Him anyway. The

tendency would be to allow the doubt and despair to lead your heart away from God. The psalmist went to God despite the uncertainty.

“O God, whom I praise, do not remain silent” (109:1). He was challenged by people in his life, and he didn’t see God acting to solve the problem or even listening as if He cared. The psalmist continued to place the need before the Lord rather than giving up or taking matters into his own hands. He called on God to bring vengeance and justice (109:6-20). He remained transparent and vulnerable before Yahweh and leaned on His grace, “For he stands at the right hand of the needy one” (109:31a).

Seeing God act in power and provision leads to celebration. King David wrote a psalm to celebrate the coronation of a new king, yet his words pointed to a greater king than even he himself was. “Yahweh said to my master, ‘Sit at my right hand . . .’” (110:1). David anticipated God the Father’s crowning Jesus, God the Son, as King of kings and making Him our Priest forever (110:4). A God with that kind of power and provision is a God His people can trust even when He seems silent.

“Great are the works of the Lord; they are pondered by all who delight in them . . . to him belongs eternal praise” (111:2, 10c). Praise Him today, even if He seems silent, because He is faithful and good.

Saturday, May 16, 2020—Psalms 106-108

“Count Your Blessings” is a classic hymn of the Christian faith. The song encourages the struggling and burdened to take their eyes off their difficulties and to count the blessings of God. Naming them one by one will likely surprise that person when seeing all the things God has done.

The psalmist knew this amazement as well. He calls his people to praise the Lord and then asks, “Who can proclaim the mighty acts of the Lord or fully declare his praise?” (106:2). He recounted the numerous ways the people of God had been unfaithful and forgetful and the repeated actions of God to discipline, rescue, and restore. God is worthy of praise, so he calls on God to save them so they can bring honor to His name.

While the uninformed may consider the God of the First Covenant to be heartless and capricious, the psalmist knew Him to be loving and forgiving. “Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever” (107:1). Israel knew God was nothing if He were not loving and faithful. To be sure, He disciplined His people for their sin, yet He continually restored and satisfied with His love and care. “Whoever is wise, let him heed these things and consider the great love of the Lord” (107:43).

His love and faithfulness give His people confidence. “With God we will gain the victory, and he will trample down our enemies” (108:13). Count your blessings today and walk in renewed confidence in Him.

Friday, May 15, 2020—Psalms 103-105

The psalmist encourages his soul to praise the Yahweh. He urges his inmost being to bless God because of all His benefits: He forgives sins, heals diseases, redeems, loves, satisfies, works justice for the oppressed, reveals His ways, is compassionate and slow to anger, acts in grace and mercy, has compassion, and remembers that man is simply dust (103:1-14). “But from everlasting to everlasting the

Lord's love is with those who fear him" (103:17). Consistent meditation on these truths revives the soul!

The Lord is worthy of praise for all His benefits, and His glory in creation will stir praise in the heart of His children as well. He wraps Himself in light (104:2) and set the earth on its foundation. Waters move at His command, and He sets their boundaries. He waters the creatures and the fields, and provides food for both man and beast. The sun and moon run their course to mark the days and seasons. "May my meditation be pleasing to him, as I rejoice in the Lord" (104:34).

Thinking about Him provides encouragement and hope for His people. "Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always. Remember the wonders he has done . . ." (105:4-5a). He chose Israel and made a covenant with them, and He remained faithful, working powerfully to confirm His word so His people could obey Him (105:45).

Consider all the benefits God has given. See His glory in creation. Remember the promises He has made and the way He has fulfilled them. Bless Him. Worship Him. Obey Him.

Thursday, May 14, 2020—Psalms 100-102

Life has a way of being distracting. Completing daily tasks, dealing with unexpected distractions and challenges, paying bills, and other necessities fill our minds and hearts with plenty of information and emotion. The space we make for God can easily be crowded out.

The psalmist likely knew this as well. He writes, "Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture" (100:3). As he calls on the people to worship, he urges them to know this fact—God is good. He is our Shepherd. When we walk through the valley, He is with us. Keep watching and listening to Him.

The life of faith, then, is not one lived in response to the situations of life but one live with intentionality over the situations of life. The psalmist tells God how he will live his life—actively making choices to walk in God's ways, avoid evildoers, silence slanderers, interacting with the encouraging and faithful (101:1-8). This discipline leads to strength.

This does not shield the believer from difficulty. The psalmist said he felt his life withering away (102:12) as if God were far away. He groaned before the Lord, but then he made the mental decision to remember the faithfulness and character of God (102:12-28), just as Psalm 100 urges. He found hope in God once again. "But you remain the same, and your years will never end" (102:27).

Know that the Lord is good. Praise Him despite the struggles.

Wednesday, May 13, 2020—Psalms 97-99

During the COVID-19 crisis, many of those working on the front lines have become heroes. Doctors and nurses, truck drivers, grocery and other essential-business employees, and more have put aside their personal desires for the sake of others. Their tireless efforts have made them seem superhuman, yet they remain emotional, vulnerable, and needy. Their desire is for appreciation and cooperation, not worship.

The psalmist knew the people of his day had options for worshiping other gods rather than Yahweh. These idols were attractive. (Sin always is.) These idols, however, were not God. They would lead to the people's shame (97:7) because they were powerless. In contrast, God was all-powerful. He was unapproachable (97:2) because of His holiness, yet He welcomed His people's praises and worship and gladly guarded and delivered those who were faithful (97:10).

God's holiness makes it impossible for humans to come to Him, so He comes to them. "The Lord has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations. He has remembered his love and his faithfulness to the house of Israel" (98:2-3a). He will come to judge, and His people can rejoice because He has made them righteous.

His holiness could keep Him completely distant, yet His love compels Him to connect with His creation. God is faithful to speak to His people (99:6-7). He loves justice and punishes sin, and He remains forgiving to those who confess and repent (99:8). Praise Him today for His heroic work—to reveal, to speak, to forgive, to lead, and to conquer.