

#### Sunday, May 20, 2018—Psalm 119

The people of Yahweh lived in a day when gods abounded. Every people group understood divine beings and spiritual powers to be in existence and at work in their lives. These forces were not approachable and needed appeasement through gifts, sacrifice, and more. Life was a series of attempts to make them happy or to atone for misbehavior.

Imagine, then, the difference for Israel in their relationship with Yahweh. He had chosen them and guided them. He gave them a covenant which outlined His promises and expectations. He gave them His word so they would know His heart, mind, and actions. They may not have always understood His timing, but the word made clear His character.

Psalm 119 celebrates the great gift of God's word. With the Word, God's people found the path to knowing and pleasing Him and experiencing the fullness of life. They did not worship the word because only God was worthy of worship, but they rejoiced over the word because of the benefits of reading, meditating over, and memorizing and applying it.

The CSB says, "I pursue the way of your commands, for you broaden my understanding" (119:32). The NIV translates that same verse, "I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free." Intentional perusal of the truth gave the writer a broadening of understanding and a joy in life like nothing else before. With this song, the Psalmist celebrates the wonderful gift unlike any other ever given.

Praise God for the provision of His word.

#### Saturday, May 19, 2018—Psalms 115-118

C.S. Lewis wrote some of the most thought-provoking literature in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Some of that was disguised as children's fantasy literature in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. The central figure in Narnia is the lion, Aslan, who created all and oversees it. He is the definition of what is powerful and right. In discussing Aslan with a little girl named Lucy, Mr. Tumnus says, "He is not safe, but he is good."

There was this understanding that Aslan could do whatever he wanted. No one could control him, so no one should become too comfortable around him, yet he was their hope. Good. Not safe.

Psalm 115 pictures God this way. "Our God is in heaven and does whatever he pleases" (115:3). In contrast, all the idols of the world were made from precious metals and had human features like the people who made them, but they couldn't see, hear, speak, or act. Yahweh was the help and shield for those who feared Him, so the Psalmist urged them to bless Yahweh and be blessed by Him. He was good and not to be ignored.

While supremely powerful, Yahweh is amazingly connected to His people. When His people cry out to Him, He listens and responds. "The LORD is gracious and righteous; our God is compassionate" (116:5). He guards the inexperienced and gives His people rest (116:6-7). The happy declaration is, thus, "LORD, I am indeed your servant" (116:16).

Praise God today for His faithful power and love (117:1-2). Be amazed that One so powerful could love so faithfully (118:1-29).

#### Friday, May 18, 2018—Psalms 112-114

Luke says Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man (Luke 2:52). When God works in His people today, He works in similar fashion. He changes them mentally, physically, spiritually, and relationally. He changes what they value, think, and do.

Psalms 112-114 speak to the satisfaction of the soul which leads to praise from the lips and obedience in life. God transforms the inner man which produces fruit in the outer man. "Happy is the person who fears the LORD, taking great delight in his commands" (112:1). God blesses him and his descendants, giving them all a measure of righteousness and wealth. He gives stability so that

“He will not fear bad news; his heart is confident, trusting in the LORD” (112:7). His satisfaction in Yahweh stirs him to give to the poor and assist the needy, causing frustration for the wicked.

This satisfaction—the great peace only God can provide—moves the child of God to praise Him. There is no one like He is. Those who truly know Him consider them His servants (113:1), fully dependent on Him for the remainder of their lives. He raises up those with nothing to nobility and brings fruit to the barren womb. He is worthy of worship.

Creation trembles in His presence (114:7). If creation is made to obey, how much more will His people give Him their allegiance? They are His sanctuary (114:2) and testify to His presence and worth through their satisfaction, praise, and obedience. Praise Him for His satisfying ways.

#### Thursday, May 17, 2018—Psalms 109-111

The Psalmist faced miserable conditions because of the wicked and deceitful around him. They “did not think to show kindness, but pursued the suffering, needy, and brokenhearted in order to put them to death. . . . He loved cursing . . . he took no delight in blessing . . .” (109:16-17). Their words and their actions were completely reprehensible.

In complete honesty and dependence, the songwriter called on God to make his enemies’ lives and the lives of their family miserable. How can this be a godly response? The Psalmist knew God stood for the needy (109:21), so He would not affirm how the wicked were acting. The writer also knew God would not allow hate and falsehood to prosper, so he was praying God would act. In causing them to suffer, they would face the consequences of their sin with God, not the writer, responsible.

What he did not ask was for God to make him comfortable, to give him wealth, or to make him the avenger. God would play that role. He was simply asking for deliverance from evil and justice for the oppressed.

This affirmation of righteousness, power, and justice are echoed in Psalm 110, a song the nation would sing on the day they enthroned a new king. He was God’s representative to the people, so they expected God to use him powerfully and bless him richly.

Thank God for His powerful words and actions. “He has sent redemption to his people. He has ordained his covenant forever. His name is holy and awe-inspiring” (111:9).

#### Wednesday, May 16, 2018—Psalms 106-108

Graduation ceremonies and wedding receptions usually include someone’s giving good advice to the guests of honor. These Psalms include great truth for living to anyone who listens.

Those who live like God discover true happiness. Real joy floods their souls when they realize He has made them to live in justice and righteousness. They experience the prosperity of being His people, the joy of His nation, and the pride of His heritage (106:5). This only comes after admitting one’s sinfulness (106:6) and His great power to save. They cry out, “Save us, LORD our God, and gather us from the nations, so that we may give thanks to your holy name and rejoice in your praise” (106:47).

Two of the most powerful forces in the world are God’s faithful love (107:1, 8, 15, 31) and His powerful word. The Psalmist knew some wandered in the desert or the darkness and gloom. The fools who suffered affliction finally cried out. “He sent his word and healed them; he rescued them from the Pit” (107:20). His word calmed raging seas (107:29) and guided them to the harbor for which they longed.

By His love and His word, God is able to accomplish great reversals. Deserts become pools. The noble become shamed. The needy become fruitful. “Let whoever is wise pay attention to these things and consider the LORD’s acts of faithful love” (107:43).

Sing praise for the great power of God. “Give us aid against the foe, for human help is worthless. With God we will perform valiantly; he will trample all our foes” (108:12-13).

Tuesday, May 15, 2018—Psalms 103-105

The months of May and June are filled with expressions of congratulations because those two months see the most numerous occasions for graduations and weddings. Those who have reached a significant milestone in life hear from young and old alike about their happiness for them and their wishes for a fruitful future. Often, the ones receiving congratulations are unaware of how blessed they are to have these well wishes and good advice. They simply can't take it all in.

God, on the other hand, is the definition of awareness. He knows what is good, true, and right. The Psalmist cries out to his own soul at the beginning and end of Psalm 103, urging his core self to bless Yahweh. In between he recounts all that God has done and celebrates who He is. The song is a reminder to the forgetful, flawed, and weak human to “congratulate” God on His greatness and achievement. He already knows, of course, but He is blessed when His people acknowledge it.

Psalm 104 continues this theme of blessing the LORD but celebrates His work in all of creation, not just His redemptive work in Israel. He is not simply the God of a small nation in the Middle East. He is Lord over all creation and deserves to be blessed.

Psalm 105 celebrates the conjunction of God's character toward His people and His ability to work in creation to bring their redemption. He did all this “so they might keep His statutes and obey His instructions” (105:45). Praise God for who He is and who He allows us to become.

Monday, May 14, 2018—Psalms 100-102

The life of faith is filled with all kinds of emotion, but the Psalmist encourages the people of Yahweh to se

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ve Him with gladness (100:1). There will be sadness. There are days of exhaustion, but when considering who He is and the privilege of knowing Him and being known by Him. His people can, above all things, be glad. Even on days when they are not happy, they can serve Him with gladness because He is good, and His faithful love endures forever (100:6).

The life of faith is personal, but this life cannot be private. Psalm 101 discusses the way a personal commitment to Yahweh affects the lives of all those with whom the faithful interact. He describes the standards he sets for himself because of his commitment to Yahweh (101:1-4) and then says he will not tolerate someone else's slandering a neighbor (101:5). He will show favor to those who are faithful, and those with integrity will serve him (101:6). Deceitful and lying people will have no place in his home (101:7). He will seek to wipe out evil in his city every day (101:8).

The life of faith develops a realistic view of self compared to God. “My days are like a lengthening shadow, and I wither away like grass. But you, LORD, are enthroned forever; your fame endures to all generations” (102:11-12). This understanding is the very basis for prayer. He is eternal. He is good. Man is weak and needy.

Pray to Him in gladness today. Lead others to do the same.