

Thursday, May 27, 2021—Psalms 139-141

With syrupy-sweet words and eyes filled with wonder, young couples profess their “amazing” love for one another and the strength of their bond. They finish each other’s sentences. They know the other fully.

Being comfortable enough with someone to be transparent is empowering and encouraging. There is no need for pretending. The Psalmist celebrated the purest of relationships with Yahweh Himself. God knew everything about him—when he got up, when he lay down, where he went, and what he thought. This was more than he could process, but he knew there was nowhere he could go where God would not be (139:7).

God knit him together in his mother’s womb, so God knew him like no one else. He asked God, then, to assess his life and point out flaws and areas for improvement. There was no need to hide or deny them. God already knew them. He wanted to know them himself so he could grow.

God’s wisdom and sovereignty give His people assurance that He also sees the wicked and violent coming against His people. They can call on Him for rescue and protection. He upholds the rights of the poor and provides justice for those in need (140:12-13).

With confidence, God’s people can ask for Him to shape them in godliness, in thoughts and words, and use righteous people in the accountability process (141:1-5). They can pray against the wicked and look to the Lord for safety. God is wise and sovereign, so His people flourish by knowing the One who knows all. Praise Him for His wisdom and power.

Wednesday, May 26, 2021—Psalms 136-138

Corrie ten Boom and her sister Betsy spent years in a Nazi concentration camp, suffering under Hitler’s plans while sharing the gospel of Jesus with the women around them. They learned they had an unlikely ally in their dormitory. The fleas that pestered them in their beds and clothes also kept the Nazi guards out of the rooms and prevented their hearing their gospel conversations and finding their Bibles. Betsy one day told Corrie they should have thanked God for the fleas.

An attitude of gratitude changes hearts and minds. The Psalmist called on God’s people to give thanks to Him because His love and mercy endure forever (136:1-3). They can be thankful for His wisdom and creative power. He secures them and supplies their needs. He makes a way where there is no way. Give thanks to God no matter the circumstances.

God’s people will find themselves in difficult circumstances, lamenting their place in life (137:1). They will feel far from God or the comfort they desire. Remembering His goodness and blessing assures His people God will bring justice (137:7-9) and make everything right.

Knowing God, His goodness, and His plans will spur gratitude from even the richest and most powerful on earth (138:4). Walking into dangerous and difficult places is not overwhelming when one knows the promises, power, and presence of God (138:7-8). Though the Lord is exalted, He welcomes the humble but distances Himself from the arrogant (137:6). Be thankful in all things. Trust God in hard things. Praise Him.

Tuesday, May 25, 2021—Psalms 133-135

In making people in His image, God formed people to long for and thrive in community. To be sure, some people are more comfortable in crowds than others, but every person becomes someone with others that he simply cannot be by himself. Even the one who regularly enjoys being alone is able to encourage and be encouraged through word or deed.

The people of God sang the Songs of Ascent (Psalms 120-134) on their way up the southern slope to the Temple. They prepared their hearts for worship by considering a variety of realities about God and about life. They concluded their preparation by celebrating the community in which God had placed them. They knew their dwelling together in unity was a blessing from Yahweh (133:1-3). Unity was a sign of God's pleasure.

Their celebration of community included the servants at the Temple who led them in worship (134:1-3). These men had the distinct privilege every day of coming into God's presence and assisting all those who came to that place with encountering God, reconciling with Him through repentance and forgiveness, and celebrating His protection and provision. There was no higher honor and calling than this.

The goal of worship is not to feel better about self but to affirm that God is great (135:5). He is above all things and does whatever He wants. He endures. He will judge evil and vindicates His own (135:14).

Thank God for Jesus, who restores connection with God and deepens connection with believers. Praise God for how He works.

Monday, May 24, 2021—Psalms 130-132

After a long separation, there is great joy at the sight of family walking up the steps of the front porch. When the night has been long and hard, the first rays of the rising sun beaming over the horizon give new hope. The doctor's arrival in the exam room stirs comfort and relief.

Walking toward the Temple, the people prepared themselves for worship by reminding themselves how much they needed God. They cried out to Him, and they wanted Him to listen. More than a watchman wanted the sun to rise, they wanted God's presence in their lives (130:6). With God there was hope for forgiveness, faithful love, and redemption. No one or nothing else was as life-changing and worthy of worship.

Coming to God is an act of humility and self-sacrifice. His promises of forgiveness, love, and abundance are not a license for arrogance or self-promotion. Like a weaned child with its mother (131:2), Israel approached God in love and patience. He was good, and He would provide in the right way at the right time. The people sang to God and to one another with the assurance of hope that comes in Him (131:3).

The city of the Jerusalem and the Temple within represented the faith and work of King David. He wanted to honor God, and God was pleased to honor Him (132:1-18). Praise God for His faithfulness to receive our worship and bless our lives. Pray for humility as you come before Him and faithfulness to serve Him as you live each day.

Sunday, May 23, 2021—Psalms 127-129

The opportunity to worship is a blessing beyond words. The God of all creation

welcomes those He has made to come into His presence and celebrate His greatness while also expressing personal needs and desires. He is completely transcendent but willingly personal.

That opportunity is not something the worshiper should take for granted or think is deserved. Coming to Him is only possible through the great High Priest, Jesus. He is the way into the Most Holy Place. Coming before God stirs humility and resets perspective on everything.

As the Jews climbed the hill toward the Temple, they took time to assess their lives. Everything in life was a waste if they did it without the presence, power, and purpose of God. Building a house or building a home without God was a work done in vain (127:1-3). With God's calling in mind, parents would see their children as a blessing from God, arrows in their quiver, to shape and launch into the world to provide security for the future and glory for God. The family was an important part of Jewish culture, and the people celebrated God as the source (128:1-6).

Without this perspective, children and work might be seen as a burden or inconvenience instead of true joy. Life without God's blessing is a life not worth living. The people knew the reality of hardship and attack and had seen God deliver them (129:1-4). As they approached Jerusalem, they reminded themselves through song of the blessing of being His.

Praise God for being the source of life and all that is good.

Saturday, May 22, 2021—Psalms 124-126

The Psalms use a Hebrew word "selah" on occasion. The meaning of the word is uncertain, but it seems to be a suggestion from the writer for those singing the song to stop and think about the concept contained in the words they've just sung. "Stop and think about it."

The Psalms of Ascent were a collection of songs the Jews used to prepare themselves for worship at the Temple. Each song made them consider another characteristic of God or the details of life with and without Him. Psalm 124 wonders, "What if God had not been on our side?" As they came near His presence, they considered the attacks they had endured because He had been faithful to protect and help them (124:7-8).

Like the mountains that surrounded Jerusalem, God was an impenetrable force around His people (125:2). They called on God to do good to the righteous and to banish those who did evil. They were aligning their hearts with His heart and His ways as they climbed His mountain.

God's people knew the heartache of suffering sin's consequences and the joy of experiencing His renewal and restoration. As they celebrated His protection and provision, they also acknowledged the suffering that comes to the sinful and the mercy and grace of God to forgive (126:1-6). Approaching Him to worship Him is a humbling, joyful, thought-provoking opportunity. He has done great things. He has crushed sin and His enemies. He is worthy of celebration and obedience. Stop and think about that.

Friday, May 21, 2021—Psalms 120-123

After the great tribute to the Law that is Psalm 119, the Hebrews placed the

Songs of Ascent in their hymn book. Like their love for the Law of God was their joy in coming to Jerusalem and climbing the hill to the Temple. The Songs of Ascent helped prepare their hearts for worship.

Psalm 120 addresses the condition of the world in which the worshiper lives. He lived among a people of lying lips and deceitful tongues. While he was for peace, they were for war. To acknowledge such an environment is an admission of its potential influence on self and the desire for cleansing from that evil before coming into the presence of God.

Not only were evil people around him but pagan altars and idols surrounded him. As he lifted up his eyes, he saw various worship places on the hills surrounding Jerusalem, but the Psalmist knew his help came from Yahweh, the maker of heaven and earth (121:2). Without a doubt, He was the protector and provider. No wonder there was such joy when they said it was time to go to the house of the Lord (122:1). To be near to Him was a distinct privilege and a reminder of all that was good. The Psalmist, then, encouraged everyone to pray for the peace of Jerusalem (122:6).

Like a servant looking to his master was the Psalmist coming before Yahweh (123:2). The world will never bless or satisfy. Our only hope is in the One who created and sustains. Praise Him for all He is.