

### Sunday, May 27, 2018—Psalms 139-141

The Psalms were songs for the people of God, but many times they were also prayers and remain powerful in that role for modern believers. Not having the tune does not dampen the impact of the words.

Psalm 139 provides three topics of discussion with God—majesty, reality, and humility. In verses 1-18, the Psalmist acknowledges the absolute majesty of God. There is nowhere he can go that God is not already there. From the heights and depths of the visible world to the inner reaches of his mother's womb, God is present. That assurance allows the Psalmist to address reality in verses 19-22. His enemies are wicked, and he wants God to destroy them. He does not use dampened words. He hates these people, but he tempers any self-righteous tendencies with verses 23-24 in humbly asking God to search his inner being and reveal anything personally evil. This psalm provides a powerful guide for daily prayer with God.

Psalms 140 and 141 are good companions for Psalm 139 as they explore further the cry of the burdened soul needing rescue from evil men. He confesses God's sovereignty and his sole hope in him, and he gives God a reason to rescue—otherwise, the wicked will become prideful (140:8). He wants God's ways to prosper and the poor and needy to flourish. He even welcomes the rebuke of the righteous (141:5) to set him straight and avoid the pitfalls of the wicked.

Pray with the mind of the Psalmist. Worship God. Share burdens. Be humble. Praise God as He works through those prayers.

### Saturday, May 26, 2018—Psalms 136-138

Above all other characteristics, God is holy. He is unlike any other. His holiness is what the angels proclaim being complete when they sing, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty." His love, however, ranks very highly as Psalm 136 makes clear. His faithful love endures forever.

Psalm 136 provides an overview of God's action and His history with Israel. Through His rank over all idols, His power in creation, and His history with Israel in their infancy, disobedience, and restoration, God has continually demonstrated His love—His great care and compassion for His people. Hard days are not an indication He has stopped loving His own. He remains holy, and He remains loving in each and every circumstance.

This was especially important to remember in the days of exile. While in Babylon, the people sang the songs of Zion to remember what they once had and what they had lost because of their own sin. Though difficult to do, they knew the importance of remembering (137:6). As the United States remembers its fallen warriors on Memorial Day, so God's people took time to remember in order to praise God and to commit themselves once again to obedience and worship.

The holiness and love of God mean the people of God can trust Him to complete His promises. "The LORD will fulfill his purposes for me. LORD, your faithful love endures forever; do not abandon the work of your hands" (138:8). Praise God today for who He is and what He does.

### Friday, May 25, 2018—Psalms 133-135

Jesus faced tough questions from the religious leaders several times during His ministry. Trying to trap Him, the Pharisees asked Him which was the greatest commandment. In Matthew 22:37-40, Jesus said loving God and loving people were the top priorities. All the Law and the Prophets hung on those two commandments.

As the people sang the Psalms of Ascent and approached the Temple, the last two Psalms promoted these two truths. There was a God-ordained blessing to the harmony that existed between fellow Jews (133:1). Their joy in one another was the visible testimony to the world that God had chosen them and blessed them. Jesus affirmed this when He prayed in the Garden the night before His arrest and crucifixion. In John 17, He prayed for the unity of believers because that would be a testimony to His reality and God's sending Him.

Loving people is the second greatest commandment. Loving God is the first, and Psalm 134 urges the LORD's servants to bless Him as they stood in the Temple and lifting up holy hands. He deserves praise because He is good and greater than all the gods (135:5). He has made the earth, and He causes the weather to work and the seasons to change. He set His people free from Egypt and gave them Canaan as an

inheritance. Those who worship idols become like those idols—visible yet powerless. God’s people, however, find true life and real power in Him.

Thank God for His character. Praise Him for you church family and weekly worship.

#### Thursday, May 24, 2018—Psalms 130-132

If there were a list of characteristics necessary for following Jesus, humility would undoubtedly be at or near the top. Scripture continually condemns pride and arrogance. In the Beatitudes, Jesus mentions the poor in spirit first. The Psalms of Ascent urged humility as well.

Climbing the hill toward Jerusalem, the worshipers pondered aloud, “LORD, if you kept an account of iniquities, Lord, who could stand?” (130:3). There was forgiveness in Yahweh, so they put their hope in Him. Like a watchman waiting for the warmth and relief of the sun breaking over the horizon were the people of God approaching their Sovereign (130:6). They revered Him because of His grace, mercy, and redemptive power.

Psalm 131 affirms this desire for humility and recognizes the things of God are far too lofty for the human mind to consider (131:1). The Psalmist said he had calmed and quieted his soul like a weaned child. There would be no outburst or whining. There would be patience built on hope.

Coming to Jerusalem for worship was a requirement, yet Psalm 132 reminded the people of the great privilege this experience was as well. King David had longed to build a home for the presence of God, but he was not able. When his son, Solomon, completed the task, God promised to bless that place and the nation (132:13-18). The pilgrims were able to experience something about which King David only dreamed.

Praise God for His grace and mercy which allows us to know Him and worship Him. Pray for increasing humility and joy.

#### Wednesday, May 23, 2018—Psalms 127-129

Gathering for worship is a reminder of what is true and important. The cares of life come alongside the glory of God and the love of church family and lose some (if not all) of their power and sting. When the Jews sang the Psalms of Ascent, they were singing God-affirming truth together.

Psalm 127 speaks to life and legacy. Adults spend their day working to provide for family, and the home and the city wall were the individual and collective symbols of identity and security—the goals of each person and community. If a man labored to build a house or a wall without Yahweh’s intervention, he was wasting his time. If, however, he built with God’s blessing, he found his purpose. When that man realized the blessing of children, he knew God’s favor was truly upon him because they would contend for his reputation, provide for him in old age, and continue the story of faith in their family into the next generation.

Psalm 128 also celebrates family and legacy. The foundational step is for a man or woman to fear the LORD and walk in his ways (128:1). God will ensure that person will see the results of his hard work, enjoy life and family, and see God’s peace over the city. To be sure, life will not always be easy, as Psalm 129 describes (129:1-3), but the Lord is righteous (129:4), and He will bring disgrace on those who oppose Him and His people.

Praise God for the meaning and blessing He brings to life.

#### Tuesday, May 22, 2018—Psalms 124-126

After a grueling week of work or an emotional few days with difficulty, gathering with other believers is a welcome salve to the weary soul. God knew the toll the world would take on His people, so He established in their lives the weekly rhythm of the Sabbath. Though helpful, Sabbath rest is of no help if the believer does not intentionally seek it.

Likewise, the people of God who came to Jerusalem sacrificed much to make the journey and then experienced physical labor to climb the hills toward the Temple. They did not want any of that to distract them from their purpose for coming and their ultimate joy in Yahweh, so they sang the Psalms of Ascent to prepare themselves for worship and blessing.

As they climbed the hill, they considered, “What would be our condition if ‘the LORD had not been on our side?’” (124:2). They knew, God had allowed them to escape from countless traps and raging floods. “Our help is in the name of the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth” (124:8).

The immovable rocks beneath their feet reminded them of the unshakable trust they had in God (125:1). The mountains which surrounded Jerusalem were a picture of the protection God provided for His people (125:2). God would do what is good and bring peace.

Like the dry riverbeds which swelled with springtime rains were the fortunes of His people. In His timing, He would restore them and bring them bounty (126:1-6). He was worthy of their trust and praise. Make time to enjoy God each day. Celebrate weekly with others.

#### Monday, May 21, 2018—Psalms 120-123

The Jewish people were to travel to Jerusalem three times each year to worship as a nation. That pilgrimage required physical effort as they marched upward toward the city and then finally ascending the southern slope of Temple Mount. Psalms 120-134 were the Psalms of Ascent which helped them turn their body, mind, and soul toward Yahweh.

Psalm 120 began their ascent with a reminder that Yahweh alone was their rescue. They lived in a world of people with lying lips and deceitful tongues who were inclined to war while Yahweh was a God of peace and righteousness. He would ultimately destroy falsehood.

Jerusalem is elevated above most of Israel, yet the city itself sits in a geographic bowl, surrounded by slightly higher mountains on either side. When climbing toward the dwelling place of Yahweh, the Jews would lift up their eyes and see high places all around where others worshiped false gods. They would ask, “Where does my help come from?” (121:1) and know their help was not available from any of the false gods at the altars around them. Their help came from Yahweh, the maker of heaven and earth (121:2). He was the only One who could create, protect, and provide.

That reality led to great rejoicing when the call came to go to Jerusalem (122:1). This also led God’s people to pray for peace in Jerusalem (122:6-8) and for Him to show them favor (123:3).

Lift your eyes to Yahweh today. Admit to Him you are nothing without Jesus. Pray for His peace, protection, and provision.