

Sunday, May 13, 2018—Psalms 97-99

The political world works tirelessly to expose the flaws of its participants. Opposing sides enjoy nothing more than telling stories that damage credibility, electability, or viability—especially when the revelation illustrates hypocrisy on the part of the individual or organization. What one proclaims to stand for or against should be a consistent stance.

Psalm 97 celebrates the righteousness and justice (97:2) that were foundational to the rule of Yahweh. He was infinitely powerful, and nature bowed before Him, yet His character was the true hope of His people. As a result, the writer tells his countrymen, “You who love the Lord, hate evil!” (97:10). It was that simple. Love what He loves. Hate what He hates. Be consistent, and He would continually protect and rescue them. To do anything different was to invite ridicule and deserved punishment.

To live hypocritically is to invite outside judgment but also to experience inner turmoil. A person knows he is double-minded and begins to wonder when he will be found out. The one who lives in faithfulness and righteousness, however, can live in peace and look forward to the day when God returns in judgment. When all is exposed, there will be nothing for which to be ashamed. “He will judge the world righteously and the peoples fairly” (98:9). This is cause for celebration for those of pure faith.

These truths are certain because God is like no other god. He is completely unique. Holy. This holiness leads His people to worship (99:9). Make time today to acknowledge and celebrate who He is.

Saturday, May 12, 2018—Psalms 94-96

Some of the funniest videos on the internet and television come from moments when someone films another who has no idea the recording is taking place. Children, especially, tend to misbehave or disobey if they think no one is watching. Awareness can bring a rapid change of action.

The Psalmist speaks on numerous occasions about the fool who believes there is no God or who is convinced God does not see. In Psalm 94, he believes the wicked and arrogant behave that way because they think the God of Jacob does not pay attention to them (94:7). The writer calls them to wisdom—the understanding of His supremacy and a repentant life which surrenders to Him. In fact, he says the one who lives in the discipline of Yahweh is the one who is truly happy (94:12), finding in God precisely the thing for which the foolish are searching everywhere else.

Psalm 95 discusses the alternative to this wisdom. The people who wandered in the desert—the people of Yahweh Himself—were people whose hearts had gone astray. God was disgusted with that generation (95:10), and they did not enter His rest. Foolishness is never fulfilling.

The Psalmist knew the truth which many people do not grasp even today. “For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the LORD made the heavens” (96:5). People give their allegiance to gods which ultimately have no creative ability or true power. Yahweh alone deserves allegiance.

Praise God for being real, aware of all, and good.

Friday, May 11, 2018—Psalms 91-93

For the Jew, hospitality was a common, cultural practice. When a stranger or alien arrived at a Jewish home, the residents offered their best with no expectation of repayment. As God had provided for them, they in turn provided for those who were on their own personal pilgrimage.

Psalm 91 paints the powerful picture of hospitality by describing the results of one who comes into the presence of Yahweh. “The one who lives under the protection of the Most High

dwells in the shadow of the Almighty” (91:1). To come to Him and rely on Him was a guarantee of rescue and protection (91:9-10). God guaranteed He would deliver the one whose heart was set on Him (91:14) and satisfy Him with long life (91:16).

Psalm 92 admits the wicked and evil sprout like grass (92:7), so he was not naïve. There was evil in the world, yet God would be exalted in the long-term. God would work in the lives of the righteous to make them fruitful even in old age (92:14) so they might declare the justice of Yahweh and the righteousness He represented.

These two psalms represent the tension every believer faces: living in a world of wicked people and offering hospitality to them. There is a risk of being taken advantage of or even being harmed when one makes himself vulnerable and offers help. This is why the believer has to trust Him more and more each day. “The LORD reigns!” (93:1). He will provide for those who trust in Him. Praise Him for His greatness.

Thursday, May 10, 2018—Psalms 88-90

The Psalms are beloved because they contain some of the most memorable and inspirational truths in Scripture. The assurance of the Shepherd in Psalm 23 and the certainty of the Word in Psalm 119 moved the writer and continue to bless readers today. The Psalms are also appreciated because they deal with real life. Unlike a television sit-com, not every issue is resolved at the end.

Psalm 88 is such an unresolved song. The writer begins by saying he is crying out day and night, and he concludes by saying darkness is his only friend. This is not a text one would have printed for a wall hanging or cross-stitched on a throw pillow. Why would the Psalmist write with such sorrow? Life is not always easy, but God is faithful. His people are in covenant with Him, and He has given them the privilege and responsibility of prayer. This song allowed writer and singer to declare they had been faithful to the covenant. Their singing would remind them God would also be faithful to His. He always had. He does not change.

Though not necessarily sung immediately after Psalm 88, Psalm 89 picks up on this very idea of God’s faithfulness. Imagine the light and warmth that could wash over a weary soul when he sang of God’s faithfulness with a host of other believers. “Happy are the people who know the joyful shout; LORD, they walk in the light from your face” (89:15).

Pray with the Psalmist that God would teach you to appreciate each day, good or bad, to develop a heart of wisdom (90:12).

Wednesday, May 9, 2018—Psalms 85-87

Following Jesus is a realization that the good news is a declaration of reality, not simply following good advice or a particular philosophy. Jesus conquered the great enemy of mankind, so following Him is walking in victory. To reject Him is not simply deciding against some advice or counsel but to reject willingly the only path to life and abundance.

Psalm 85 details the life and abundance He gives when His people follow Him. Faithfulness, love, truth, righteousness, and peace arrive. “Also, the LORD will provide what is good, and our land will yield its crops” (85:12), and righteousness leads the steps of the faithful.

To follow some other leader or adopt another philosophy is to admit there are other “gods” in life. Something or someone has taken the affection of the heart, the attention of the mind, and the affirmation of the will which only God deserves. There is no one like God (86:8), and no one can do the things God has done and will do (86:10). Thankfully, He is slow to anger and abounding in love. He is gracious and compassionate (86:15) and will rescue His children and put His enemies to shame (86:17).

What God establishes He will sustain and cause to flourish. No god is greater than Yahweh, and no city is greater than Zion, the dwelling place of Yahweh (87:2). Those in whom His Spirit dwells, then, have the greatest God living in them and are, therefore, His most prized possession. Praise God for His reality, power, and goodness.

Tuesday, May 8, 2018—Psalms 82-84

The leaders of the earthly nations and kingdoms face a powerful temptation—to believe they are divine. Some nations even worship their leader as such. This worship is woven into the hearts of people. God made humans to worship Him, but they easily stop short and worship a god in their own image.

In Psalm 82, the writer says “God stands in the divine assembly; he pronounces judgment among the gods” (82:1). Who are these “gods” with whom He stands? These are the kings of the earthly kingdoms, and God challenges them to provide justice and uphold the rights of the vulnerable and rescue the weak from the wicked (82:2-4). He reminds them of their distinct privilege but also of their inherent weakness. They will die like every other human (82:7). They are not divine after all.

This bent toward divine thinking caused many kings to rebel against Yahweh and strive to wipe out His people (83:4). The Psalmist recalled how God dealt with other nations who had done this, so he called on Him to do it again. “May they know the you alone—whose name is the LORD—are the Most High over the whole earth (83:18). The Temple was the place where this Most High one dwelled, so being there was a blessing like no other (84:1, 10), yet He did not sequester His power there. He was a shield for His people wherever they went.

Praise God for His all-powerful ways. “Rise up, God, judge the earth, for all the nations belong to you” (82:8).

Monday, May 7, 2018—Psalms 79-81

Two vocations were prominent in Israel—shepherd and farmer. There were other professions practiced by the men of the country, but these two were common and necessary for the flourishing of the nation. Sheep were necessary for ritual, clothing, and food. Farming provided produce for sacrifice, providing for families, and helping the needy.

These psalms address God in both of these roles—as one who leads them and cultivates their lives. God led them out of Egypt and gave them decrees for living (81:5-7), yet the people did not listen. He says clearly if they would repent, He would rescue (81:14), like a shepherd coming to snatch his sheep from its predator. He is more than willing to feed them with the best wheat (81:16) if they will follow faithfully.

Psalm 80 cries out to this Shepherd and gives Him another name—LORD God of Armies (80:4, 7, 14, 19). He is a shepherd like no other. He has the angel armies at His disposal to protect, defend, and deliver His sheep from any and every foe. The suffering the psalmist sees, therefore, is not a result of His weakness or indifference. Sin has separated the people from their Shepherd, and His protection is not available until they repent.

Their sin has made them an object of reproach (79:4). The nations ask, “Where is their God?” (79:10). The song writer calls on God to restore the people, to allow them to see His face once again, so they, His sheep, can express their gratitude forever.

Give thanks to Him for His protection and provision.