

ORCHARD ROAD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Small Group Bible Study

SERIES INTRODUCTION

For the month of May, we will continue our series of studies on Psalms which will help us to focus on the theme of worship and explore its various aspects and the roles they play. The aspects of worship that we will explore include: silent meditation, praise, music, prayers, acts of blessings, and evangelism.

7 May

Make A Joyful Noise

Psalm 98

14 May

Hear My Prayers

Psalm 102

21 May

Bless the Lord

Psalm 103

28 May

Tell of God's Wonderful Works

Psalm 105

ii. Psalm 98:5 What are the quieter instruments mention here?

iii. Psalm 98: 6 What are the nosier instruments mention here?

iv. Psalm 98:7-8 Who or what else worships God? Would you consider this as worship?
Have you ever heard this worship?

b. What does all these instruments tell us about what we can use in worship?

c. What do we use today in our worship? Does it matter that it is so different from the Psalmist days? Is there anything we should not use in worship?

Discipleship Pointers

- Over the centuries, the church has witnessed major “wars” over how she should worship God. In our own Presbyterian history, there were periods where hymns were not allowed in worship - you could only sing the Psalms. There were even arguments over whether certain musical instruments were linked to the Devil. It is a pity because we are encouraged to sing praise to the Lord and such arguments over instruments and musical style distract us from concentrating on the worship.
- What is important is that our worship be worthy of God and shows who God is. This may mean different style, structures, etc. But there is one thing that Paul emphasis in 1 Corinthians 14:33, 40 - worship must be done decently and in order - what this means will be different for different people and congregations. Christian worship varies from silent meditative worship to ear-splitting worship. The instrument, the music we make is not important - why and who we are worshipping is what is important.

Family/Group Moments

- Consider your group’s worship style, approach, are you focusing on what’s important?
- Are there areas to improve with regards to the group’s worship?

Hear My Prayers

PSALM 102

GENERAL SURVEY

TOPIC

KEY VERSE

MAIN PERSON/S

KEY IDEAS & QUESTIONS

Introduction

The title of this psalm says: A Prayer of One Afflicted. Although it is a prayer of lament by an individual, the psalm is not individualistic. The psalmist represents the community in prayer when he affirms that God is ever present even when His people are in difficult circumstances. This psalm demonstrates how we can learn to pray not just for ourselves but for the community. How can we pray together as a family during the worship service? What are the elements of this psalm that make it a prayer that is both personal and communal?

For Study and Discussion

1. O Lord, hear my prayer (v1-11)
 - a. How would you describe the tone of the Psalmist in his opening cry to God? What emotions belie his words? (v1-2)
 - b. What vivid word images are used by the Psalmist to portray how he feels (v3-7)? Identify his emotions and explain what he may be experiencing.
 - c. What kinds of afflictions might the Psalmist be experiencing that caused him to write of these things? (v8-11)
 - d. What the Psalmist writes of his experience is extremely difficult. Has there ever been a time in your life when you felt the same way? Share what has helped you in those times.
2. O Lord, You are God (v12-17)
 - a. What change of direction do you see in the Psalmist's tone in these verses? Describe your observation. What do you think caused the turnaround?
 - b. What does the Psalmist say of God? How does he express his hope in God?

- c. In what ways might this turnaround speak to you in your own situations? What lessons can you take to heart and remember, in times when you may experience the kind of emotions the Psalmist had felt?
3. Hope for the future generation (v18-28)
- a. What purpose does the Psalmist declare of why he wrote the words of the psalm?
- b. State in your own words what the Psalmist wants the future generations to know and hence, to do?
- c. What contrasts do the Psalmist point out between mankind and God in v23-27? Of whom might the description in verses 24b to 27 be pointing to (see Hebrews 1:10-11)? What is the only hope of salvation for humanity that the Psalmist is declaring (v28)?
- d. What changes will you make in how you live your life, in the light of what the Psalmist has painfully experienced, understood and written for our learning?

Discipleship Pointers

The Psalmist was going through a time of distress and senses that his very life was slipping through his fingers. Though he tries desperately to hold on to it, yet his “days vanish like smoke” (v3). Apparently stricken by the pains of grave illness, his “bones burn like glowing embers” (v3) and his heart so weakened, it “blighted and withered like grass” (v4). It left him with no appetite (v4b), he groans with pain and is “reduced to skin and bones” (v5). As is often the case with those seriously ill, he feels so very lonely and isolated from the rest of the world as he “lies awake” alone on his sickbed (v6-7). Ashes and tears, the symbols of grief, are his daily diet (v9). Illness thrusts before us the stark truth of our mortality. How, then, should we respond and where can we find security and hope when life seems so fleeting? Let us learn from the Psalmist in:

- Pouring our hearts out to God – when hit by difficult and challenging times, we either run towards God or away from him. The Psalmist runs towards God and his spirit finds help in turning around from the depressive pull of a downward spiral. We are so much better off turning to God to meet the deepest needs of our hearts, as only He can.
- Fixing our eyes on Christ – the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross...consider Him...so that you will not grow weary and lose heart (Hebrews 12:2-3). “Therefore, we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So, we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.” (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)
- Remembering God’s everlasting love for us – How can we know that God loves us with an everlasting love and is unchangingly committed to us regardless of what we may go through in our lives? We know it because of Jesus. Remembering that helps us to put our trust in him, come what may. Yes, we may persevere in prayer for resolution and healing. When that happens, we praise God. When it doesn’t, we may grieve, but not as those without hope, for we know that when Christ returns we shall have our ultimate healing.

Family/Group Moments

- How do we help a brother or sister who is clearly in distress? What messages from this psalm can we use to sooth their fear and heart filled with troubles?

5. What is required of those who receive and enjoy God's steadfast love (vv. 11, 13, 17, 18)?

6. What does fearing God mean, in biblical terms? See, e.g., Exodus 20:18-20, Proverbs 9:10.

7. What does this psalm tell us about our corporate worship and church life? Would an outsider attending our usual Sunday worship service be able to tell that we are gathering to bless God? Next, would an outsider who starts attending our church activities, e.g. fellowship after Sunday service, small group meetings, church camp, etc., be able to look at our lives and tell whether we have been blessed by God?

Discipleship Pointers

- Just as God's blessings on Israel depended on their obedience in response to His covenant, we today must also be obedient to God's will if we are to enjoy God's best.
- This psalm admonishes us not to forget the blessings after we receive them and enjoy them.

Family/Group Moments

- Recall in your group or family God's blessings for you as individuals and as a group or family.
- What can you do as a group, in order that we remember and not forget God's benefits to us?

Tell of God's Wonderful Works

PSALM 105

GENERAL SURVEY

TOPIC

KEY VERSE

MAIN PERSON/S

KEY IDEAS & QUESTIONS

Introduction

The last psalm in this series celebrates God's faithful dealings with his people. The tone of this psalm is one of gratitude as each singer testifies of the great deeds God has done indicating how each is part of the contribution to the whole. While this psalm and many other psalms of similar theme testify to God's wonderful deeds in the past, it has a forward-looking purpose. The testimonies of God's obedient followers serve to draw people to know God Himself. How may our worship services be testimonies to others that they too may know of our God?

For Study and Discussion

Think about and share an act of great kindness someone did for you (or your loved ones).

- How did you respond to him? Did you tell others about it?
- What did you learn about yourself or the one who helped you?
- How did it shape your attitude or behaviour going forward (e.g. "I shouldn't take this thing for granted"; "Next time I will or will not ..." etc.)?

1. Recalling God's Wonderful Works (vv8-45)

What we recall about acts of kindness and help done for us at the individual or family level, Israel did so at the national and foundational level. They speak and sing to one another and to others about the 'Hero' who dealt kindly and faithfully with them – Yahweh their God.

- a. Imagine you were one of the Israelite worshippers invited to revisit key moments in your national history from promise to possession of the land. What impresses you most? Record them below.

| Israel's Journey | Key Figures | What were God's great deeds? | What did these deeds reveal about God? |
|-----------------------------|---|--|--|
| Among the nations (vv.8-22) | Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Genesis 12-35) Joseph (Genesis 41-45) | • God promised to give the land of Canaan. • God... | God is... |
| In Egypt (vv23-38) | Moses & Israelites Exodus 1-12) | • God made Israel fruitful and strong. • God... | God is... |
| In the desert (vv39-43) | Israelites (Exodus 13-17) | • God... • God... | God is... |
| In Canaan (vv44-45) | Israelites (Joshua 24:13) | • God... • God... | God is faithful to fulfill His promise, to finish what He started. |

- b. Imagine that you are an Israelite returning from exile. How would recounting God’s deeds in your history help in your own faith journey? As a Christian disciple, would your answer be the same or different?
2. Responding to God’s Wonderful Works (1-7)
- a. What are the various ways in which the psalm encourages us to respond in light of the history tour above? What emotions and convictions does it arouse and build in you?
- b. Consider the exhortation to “proclaim”, “make known”, “tell” (vv1b, c, 2b).
- i. What are we to proclaim?
 - ii. To whom are we to proclaim?
- c. Read Genesis 12:3; 1 Kings 8:41-43; Psalm 67:1-4. What is the Old Testament vision for “nations” and “peoples” of the earth?
3. Retelling God’s Wonderful Works
- The twin elements of God’s wonderful deeds and Israel’s responsive proclamation in Psalm 105 anticipate the story of redemption that climaxes in the new covenant.
- a. What is the climax of God’s wonderful deeds for humanity? (Galatians 4:4; Ephesians 1:3-10)
 - b. How does the church respond to and participate in God’s saving work? (Acts 13:47; Romans 15:8-12; 1 Corinthians 14:22b-25)
 - c. Reflect on the many elements in our worship services and our involvement in them (e.g. call to worship, songs, prayers, welcoming new visitors, baptism, new member’s testimony, the Lord’s Supper, sermon, Gospel Sunday, prayer support after service, special occasions etc.).
 - i. Do people learn about who God is, what He has done and will do, through the content and manner of our worship? How?
 - ii. Do we use them as vehicles to convey the gospel story and to invite others (explicitly or implicitly) to turn to the Lord, or to explore more about our faith?

- d. Today, many churches talk about designing services to be seeker-friendly (usually with good intent). Advocates see potential benefits. Critics warn of potential dangers. Is there a biblical approach to being seeker-sensitive in our services, and in our attitude and disposition as church members? What would it look like in our church?

Discipleship Pointers

While Psalm 104 celebrates God's wondrous work in creation and providence, Psalm 105 invites Israel to celebrate God's wonderful works in redemption - promise, preservation, provision and possession - by praise and proclamation, worship and witness, trust and obedience. It now

- invites us to reflect on God's climatic work of salvation in Christ as the sole basis of our reconciled relationship with Him.
- inspires us to praise, be grateful, be glad, trust and seek Him as our one and only God.
- spurs us to retell the old gospel story in ever new ways so others may also experience His salvation.

Hindsight:

- God's mighty acts are universal, covenantal, providential, supernatural, personal and redemptive. They reveal His grace, commitment, power, mercy, justice and faithfulness.
- God sent His servants - Joseph (v17), Moses (v26), His Son (Gal 4:4; Heb 1:1-2).

Foresight:

- Israel's history is part of the unfolding of "His-story" of grace and goodness, revealed climatically in Christ, to bless all nations through the church's gospel witness.

Insight:

- Be humbled by a deep sense of gratitude and need for Him (Like Israel, we cannot begin and finish the journey of faith with all its obstacles without His faithful safeguarding).
- Be encouraged with hope that He who performed mighty deeds in the past is still the same God today and forever. He will act on our behalf while we seek and follow Him. We confess "He is the Lord our God" (v7). All others are poor and fake substitutes - idols (Ps 96:5).
- God now sends us to the unbelieving, including those who are right here with us in the church.
- Be heralds of God's present, gospel work now that we are heirs of God's past, gracious work.
- Seeking God: Seek His strength, empowerment; trust Him, intercede for others.
- Seeking others: Testify of God's salvation, presence; invite them to know God.

Family/Group Moments

Spend an A.C.T.S moment in prayer:

- Adore God for His mighty, gracious and faithful works in Israel, in Christ, in the church, in the many concrete ways we see Him intervene in our lives.
- Confess we often forget what He has done for us, or go through the motion to recall them; we easily doubt and disbelieve Him; we fail to respond rightly to His grace (this theme of persistent human unfaithfulness is absent in Psalm 105 but rises up in Psalm 106).
- Thank God for making us beneficiaries and heirs of His salvation (we belong to the Gentile nations v1 speaks about); for His faithfulness and patience in our long journey of faith, despite the many flaws and failures in our individual and corporate lives.
- Supplicate to God to shape our services and outreach to be a blessing to us and to visitors / seekers in our midst; that believers may be encouraged with help and hope in Him; that unbelievers may see and hear the gospel "live" and seek God, through the way we worship.