*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

July 23 - 28

*Summer in the Psalms*

**Monday, July 23 Psalm 90 - 91**

*“Live in the shelter of the Most High; find rest in the shadow of the Almighty”*

Psalm 90 reminds us to set our experience of time into the context not only of our own lives but in light of God’s “age” which goes back to before the world came into existence and which will go on into eternity – “from age to age God is still the same.” This psalm has traditionally been used at funerals, solemnly reminding us that no matter how well we are doing, our strength will eventually be spent. This is not to depress us but to give us a true perspective on life.

Five young men went into the rainforest of Ecuador to share the Gospel of Christ with the Auca tribe. All five were killed by the Auca. Some years later Elisabeth Elliot, the wife of one of the young men, wrote a profile of her husband, Jim, which she called *Shadow of the Almighty.* The profile was based on her husband’s diaries, which included the much-quoted line “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.” The title of the book was taken from the opening line of Psalm 91, a psalm declaring trust in God.

*Lord. My time is in your hands. Make me an instrument of your Gospel. Amen.*

**Tuesday, July 24 Psalm 92 - 93**

*“It is good to sing praises to the Most High”*

Psalm 92 opens with thanksgiving, rejoicing in what God has recently done for an individual or the community. It goes on to chastise the foolish person who refuses to acknowledge God’s power and goodness, and who instead relies on their evil deeds to get ahead in the world. It then returns to the situation of those who are faithful, expressing their strength and victory over those who oppose God. In the end, the righteous will be vindicated. They will flourish and be fruitful, even into their old age.

Psalm 93 looks at all creation and declares that God is its sovereign Lord and Master. Therefore the earth is securely founded; it is safe in God and nothing will be able to move it away from God’s purposes. There are forces that seek to resist God’s authority, but none will prevail for God is greater than them all.

*Creating God. When you made the world – when you made me – you created with a purpose. May I know and live that purpose, safe in the knowledge that no power can separate me from your will for my life. Amen.*

**Wednesday, July 25 Psalm 94 - 95**

*“Don’t harden your hearts”*

Psalm 94 speaks for the powerless and helpless. The people the psalm complains about are important, powerful people, who are faithless before God. Their faithlessness expresses itself in the way they treat ordinary people, and specifically in the way they ignore the needs of the vulnerable or even take advantage of their weakness. In their faithlessness toward God they assume that God is not taking any notice of what they are doing. The psalm says that they are foolish to make such an assumption.

In contrast to the self-worship of the faithless in the previous psalm, Psalm 95 calls the faithful to worship God through loud and enthusiastic acclamation of God as well as through quiet and worshipful prostration before God. Such outward and bodily worship of God is a wonderful antidote for the deadly “hard heart” which is cold and unfeeling toward God.

*O Lord, my God. Soften my heart that I may worship you in spirit and in truth, and that I may reach out to others in love. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

July 23 - 28

*Summer in the Psalms*

**Thursday, July 26 Psalm 96 - 97**

*“The Lord is King”*

2,000 years ago Jesus declared that through him the reign of God was coming near; to many living in our modern world the reign of God seems to be far away. Watching the news and reading the paper can make it hard to believe that God reigns in the world. The conflict between the Palestinians and Israelis, the nuclear sable rattling of nations like North Korea and Iran, the promise of militant Muslim groups to wipe the infidel from the face of the earth, just to name a few, leads us to wonder whether God is really in charge.

Yet Psalms 96 and 97 declare that God does indeed reign, not only in the realm of creation and nature but also in the realm of politics and history. The author(s) of these psalms was well aware of the realities in his time that seemed to bring such faith into doubt, yet he held true to his belief and acclaimed God as the supreme ruler of the world. Today many in the world may scoff at the notion of God’s reign in the world, but the godly know that He will come to judge the earth.

*You are my King, O Lord God. You reign and I praise you for your righteousness which will judge the nations. Amen.*

**Friday, July 27 Psalm 98 - 100**

*“Let the nations tremble”*

The theme of “the Lord is King” in Psalms 96 – 97 leads to the response of the people of the world in Psalms 98 – 100: “let the nations tremble.” The reference to people trembling corresponds to the story of God’s victory at the Red Sea in Exodus 14 – 15, where Israel declares that God will reign forever and pictures the nations of the earth, who have thought they were in charge, trembling in response. The kingship of God was then further expressed in his taking hold of the land of Canaan and giving it to Israel.

The story comes to a climax with the eventual taking of Jerusalem and the building of the temple there, the place that became or housed God’s footstool. This kingship is expressed again in making it possible for the people of God to return from exile and to rebuild the temple after it had been destroyed. Worship involves the extraordinary privilege of coming to God’s home, entering his gates, bringing gifts of praise and thanksgiving.

*I come into your presence, Lord, with joy and gladness because you are God. You made me and I belong to you; I am the sheep of your pasture. Amen.*

**Saturday, July 28 Psalm 101 - 102**

*“I will lead a life of integrity”*

David, as Israel’s leader, shows his need for God’s intervention in Psalm 101. He is committed to ruling God’s way but he needs God’s help to do so. Most of his leadership commitment is expressed in negatives. Leadership involves taking tough action, stopping things that ought to be stopped. He is intolerant of wrongdoing and (moral) worthlessness among his leadership team. As well as being tough with himself and with his staff, he is prepared to be tough with his people as a nation.

This stance on a leader’s part will always bring about pushback from those who don’t like to be called out for their lack of integrity. Psalm 102 is the prayer of a person who is suffering at the hands of others. He is alone, like an owl or an isolated bird. He withers like grass in the summer heat. Still, God is in charge of the present as well as the future, and in God he will find rest for his soul. In God he will live in security and he will thrive in God’s presence.

*Lord. I pray for those in leadership. It can be a hard and lonely task, so give them strength to do your will with integrity. Amen.*