*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

August 6 - 11

*Summer in the Psalms*

**Monday, August 6 Psalm 113 - 115**

*“Praise the name of the Lord”*

For an Israelite family, great sadness attached to a woman’s not being able to have children. Equivalent sadness attached to a man’s not being able to make the family farm work. Psalm 113 declares that God enables the childless woman to become a youthful mother of children, and the failed farmer to gain a new start. Psalm 114 offers a parallel encouragement to Psalm 113, but one oriented to the community rather than the individual. It recalls the exodus, God’s deliverance of his people at the Red Sea, and God’s taking them across the Jordan into their new country.

Psalm 115 points out that when God chooses to act in the ways of Psalms 113 and 114, then all the glory and honor should go to him. We should not take credit for these gracious gifts from God as if we earned or deserved them, but give him thanks and praise for his loving care. And, remembering his past gifts will help us to trust him that in the future he will continue to watch over us.

*Heavenly Father. You are the Almighty Maker of Heaven and Earth, yet you stoop down to lift me up and to bless me. I praise your name. Amen.*

**Tuesday, August 7 Psalm 116 - 118**

*“Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good”*

Psalm 116 is an example of a psalm that is at the same time a thanksgiving and a testimony. When God has reached out to us personally, our response is to express our gratitude to God and to talk to other people about what God has done. What often convinces people that the Christian story is true is to hear how God is involved in the lives of his people. This is also the message of Psalm 117 which, in its brevity, summarizes the message of Psalms 116 and 118.

Like Psalm 116, Psalm 118 is a thanksgiving and testimony psalm. It involves the whole congregation, and it particularly involves the voice of an “I,” someone such as the worship leader. The leader recalls some crisis, combining past recollection with affirmations about the ongoing significance of what has happened. Because he has experienced God’s act of deliverance, he has built up his trust in God and he can approach the next crisis with less fear.

*I will speak your mighty acts, O God, that the world may know your love for your people and your ability to meet their needs. Amen.*

**Wednesday, August 8 Psalm 119:1-56**

*“Walk according to the law of the Lord”*

Psalm 119 displays enthusiasm for God’s rules which were not merely random taboos or prohibitions designed to keep us from doing wrong, but were given to help us live a truly godly life. This is an alphabetic psalm of twenty-two sections, each with eight verses, and each of the eight verses beginning with the same letter – so verses 1 to 8 all begin with the Hebrew equivalent of “A”; verses 9 to 16 all begin with the Hebrew equivalent of “B”; and so on. This makes the lengthy psalm easier to remember.

The first thing the psalm teaches is that adhering to God’s rules is the way of blessing. You can expect God to be with you and not to abandon you. While the psalmist does not go around with eyes shut to the realities of life, he declares his commitment to sticking by God’s rules even when doing so brings him grief from an unbelieving world. The psalmist finds joy in God’s law. It is a pleasure to know what God desires from us and to live a life of obedience. This does not mean that we perfectly understand everything God asks of us, but the more we give ourselves to God’s law the better we will comprehend its purpose in our lives.

*O Lord, teach me your law that I may follow it and be blessed. Amen.*

*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

August 6 - 11

*Summer in the Psalms*

**Thursday, August 9 Psalm 119:57-120**

*“Teach me your laws”*

When the speaker in Psalm 119 requests “Teach me your laws,” we assume the request does not merely mean “tell me the content of your laws.” The Israelites knew God’s Commandments: to worship God alone, to reject the making of images, to be careful about what they attached God’s name to, to keep the Sabbath, and so on. Further, if they had a question about a detail such as which animals they could eat and which they could not eat, not having memorized the lists in their Bible, they could go and ask a priest.

God’s commands go against the grain. It is more natural to attach God’s name to your favorite projects so you can claim them to be more important than the projects of others. It is more natural to work 24/7 so as to be sure that your family has enough to eat than to rest on the Sabbath. In the end, it all comes down to trust. Do we trust that it is better to obey God’s laws than to rely on our own understanding? If so, we are being taught by God.

*Loving God. Your commands are good and I commit to following them. Amen.*

**Friday, August 10 Psalm 119:121-176**

*“I am your servant”*

The psalm makes it clear that the relationship of God to us is that of master to servant, and one might think that this model for a relationship puts us firmly in our place. This assumption is encouraged by the fact that the word for servant is often translated “slave.” But the Old Testament describes the relationship of master to servant in much warmer terms than is implied by that understanding, and the Old Testament shows virtually no knowledge of slavery in our sense of one person owning another person for life and being free to do as one likes with that person.

When Psalm 119 appeals to the servant status of the one praying to God, it implies that the servant indeed has obligations to the master, but that the master also has obligations to the servant. It means that when the servant is in trouble, the master is obligated to offer protection and rescue when necessary. At the same time, the relationship implies that the servant is obliged to listen for what his responsibilities are and be willing to fulfill them. Thus, one of the reasons for God giving us his law is that we may know our responsibilities.

*Master God. I will fulfill my responsibilities to you according to your law. Amen.*

**Saturday, August 11 Psalm 120 - 122**

*“Where does my help come from?”*

Psalm 120 follows a common pattern in which one begins by recalling the way God has answered prayer in the past, which gives one renewed confidence to pray for God to act in that way again. Psalm 121 complements Psalm 120, pointing to who God is as a second basis for trusting that God will answer prayer. He’s got the whole world in his hands; therefore he’s got you and me sister, you and me brother, in his hands. He is not the kind of guard who drops off to sleep in the middle of the night when everything seems quiet. He is alert 24/7, day and night, watching over us both now and forever.

Psalm 122 urges us to pray for the *shalom* of Jerusalem. The word *shalom* has two main connotations: one is peace, as the parallel talk about security implies; the second is a broader well-being, as the parallel talk about good things implies. Today, we pray for the *shalom* of the world and for the *shalom* of our individual lives.

*My help comes from you, Lord. You have helped me in the past, and you will continue to bring me shalom. Amen.*