*DEVOTIONS*

May 29 – June 3

*Summer Psalms*

**Monday, May 29 Psalms 1 – 2**

*“Serve the Lord”*

Psalm 1 stresses the importance of choice and believes that the key choice we have to make is enormously important. The Psalm also tells us that it is straightforward. There are two ways that open up before us as individuals; Jesus takes up the idea in Matthew 7 when he speaks of the broad and narrow way. We are like people on a journey who face a split in the path and have to decide which way to take. One of these ways involves walking according to God’s standards, a way that is well signposted by God’s Word. The Bible is our spiritual GPS. The other way is the way of faithlessness, of taking no notice of what God says in Scripture.

Psalm 2 extends the idea to the nations of the world. As individuals have a choice, so nations have a choice. As individuals will be blessed when they submit to walking God’s way, so also will nations.

*Lord God. You have laid out your law in your Word. I choose to live according to it. I pray that our nation will choose to do likewise. Amen.*

**Tuesday, May 30 Psalms 3 - 4**

*“I cried out to the Lord”*

Have you ever watched a thriller such as one of the Jason Bourne movies and wondered what it would be like to have everyone against you and not be able to trust anyone? Psalm 3 is written with this scenario in mind. What do you do? First, face the facts and share them with God. Second, remember that God will always be true to his Word. Third, remind yourself of your past experiences when God helped you. He will do so again! Such a prayer to God will help you sleep at night and not be afraid.

Psalm 4 begins with a prayer asking God to be gracious. Interwoven with this request is the recollection that God has been gracious in the past. The psalmist is also talking to the members of his community, encouraging them to be faithful to God. The psalm concludes with a statement of confidence and hope that God will come through for his people.

*Faithful God. When I feel afraid and alone, I reach out to you in prayer for you are with me. With you near me I have nothing to fear and I am not alone. Amen.*

**Wednesday, May 31 Psalms 5 - 6**

*“Lead me in the right path, O Lord”*

As American readers of God’s Word, it is hard for us to imagine the kinds of persecution our Christian brothers and sisters currently suffer in other parts of the world. Psalm 5 was written in a time of persecution. Even if we do not need to pray the psalm for ourselves, it can help us identify with those who have the experience the psalm describes. We pray it on their behalf, not praying for “them” but thinking of them as “us,” as together we pray to God as our King.

The underlying idea that death means resting in *Sheol* is one that runs through the Old Testament - the difference between the Old and New Testaments is that Jesus’ death and resurrection means our stay in the house of the dead will be temporary. The trouble is (Psalm 6 says) that you can’t praise God while you’re in *Sheol*. The psalm thus uses a wily argument for God to deliver us when we are in trouble: “Deliver me; you get praise. Let me die; you get nothing.” Children use the sneakiest arguments to get their parents to do what they want, and sometimes the parents let themselves be persuaded. The psalm operates as if our relationship with God in prayer is like that of children with their parents. “Behold what manner of love the Father has for us, that we would be called his children.”

*Heavenly Father. I am your child. Hear me when I pray and I will be safe. Amen.*

*DEVOTIONS*

May 29 – June 3

*Summer Psalms*

**Thursday, June 1 Psalms 7 - 8**

*“If I have done wrong or am guilty of injustice”*

Psalm 7 speaks of someone falsely accused of having done wrong who calls on God to clear his name. This is a reasonable approach because God is, after all, a judge with authority. The psalm appeals to God to make a ruling about the case in question and to decide for the defendant in accordance with the facts of the case, which are that the accusations are false. The accused person is someone of uprightness, integrity and faithfulness. Boldly he says, “If I have done wrong, may I be punished,” because he knows he has not.

Psalm 8 declares that God’s name is mighty in all the earth – that is, that God himself is mighty. God has established his majesty in the heavens, indeed above the heavens. Furthermore, God has paid attention to humanity and given us a power in the world that is almost Godlike. In doing so he takes the risk that people will abuse their power, yet the psalm implies that in the end God’s majesty and might will have their way. God takes risks but is committed to bringing creation to its destiny.

*Righteous God. Our earthly way of justice doesn’t always bring about the right result, but we pray that in your divine justice the right will ultimately be done. Amen.*

**Friday, June 2 Psalms 9 - 10**

*“Arise, O Lord!”*

Psalms 9 and 10 are one psalm that has been divided into two, maybe so that they could be used separately in Israelite worship. In content, this psalm works by giving great prominence to God’s past acts. For most of the first eighteen verses, you could think it is simply a thanksgiving psalm, stating what God has done for the psalmist personally and inviting those who are praying with him to talk about the ways God has rescued them from people’s attacks in the past. But, there is more!

The second half of the double psalm, beginning in 9:19, challenges God to action. Human beings should not be allowed to do whatever they like in the world, and God has the capacity to take action. Instead, it seems as if God is doing nothing, letting events take their natural course, because God has delegated responsibility for the world to humanity. But, the psalm implies that it is quite in order for us to pray to God, “Can’t you see this situation requires your intervention?” The psalm closes with praise for what God always promises to do: bring justice.

*Dear God. I pray that you will act according to what is right for your people. Amen.*

**Saturday, June 3 Psalms 11 – 12**

*“I trust in the Lord for protection”*

Psalm 11 contrasts a threatening earthly administration with a much more impressive heavenly administration. The fact that you can’t see it doesn’t make it any less real and powerful. Second Kings 6 tells of an occasion when an army comes to arrest the prophet Elisha. His aide is naturally sacred stiff, but Elisha asks God to open his eyes to the existence of a heavenly army of fiery horses and chariots surrounding them and protecting them. The psalmist’s friends resemble Elisha’s aide; the psalmist can see things they cannot see.

Psalm 12 begins with a prayer in response to a problem, relates a word from God, and then closes with a reply to that word. The problem is a society where the social order is near collapse, and the prayer asks God to intervene. God responds by making a commitment to act to deliver those who are being abused by an out-of-control society. The psalmist replies by declaring his trust in God’s word and a confidence in the future, a different stance from the one expressed in the first part of the psalm.

*Lord Protector. I put my trust in you to care for me. Amen.*