

Friday: Response

Read: Psalm 30:8-10⁸ To you, O LORD, I cry, and to the Lord I plead for mercy:⁹ “What profit is there in my death, if I go down to the pit? Will the dust praise you? Will it tell of your faithfulness?”¹⁰ Hear, O LORD, and be merciful to me! O LORD, be my helper!”

Reflect:

It sounds like the psalmist is bartering with God does it not? In fact, the verbs in v8 (cry and plead) indicate a continuous, ongoing prayer to God. Yet paired up with the matching sides of the chiasm (i.e., v2 and v3) we have a great reminder concerning any time we pray for physical healing.

The logic is obvious, ‘God if I die (and return to dust – cf. *will the dust praise You?*) You have one less person to make You famous. Therefore we should always accompany prayers for healing with a commitment to tell others about what God has done for us as we continue to serve Him. It makes sense does it not? After all, we tell people about good deals at the store – right? Why not tell them about our Healer? In addition to making sense, there is certainly biblical precedent for it (e.g., Mk5:19).

Yet we do not have to see these verses as “bartering” with God. Perhaps the psalmist has finally realized what should be the focus of his life – telling others what God has done for Him. In other words, regardless of being healed, I am quite certain God had showered grace on the guy – he needs to tell others of it.

Respond:

For what things are you currently crying and pleading to God about?

Have you made the time to write a lament? Have you shared it with others? Will you be willing to share it with the body of New Life? Why/why not?

Have you noticed how many times YHWH is used in these verses (count them if not)? This indicates a covenant relationship with God. If you are “in Christ” then you have one too and therefore a “green light” to cry out to Him.

Pray: Pray for *Emporia Christian School & Shiloh Home of Hope* – missions New Life supports. Cry out to God concerning the situation(s) you identified in the “Respond” section. Ask God to show You specific ways He would like you to praise Him today.

Saturday: Radical – Response

Read: Psalm 30:11-12¹¹ You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness,¹² that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever!

Reflect:

So much is implied in these verses. One thing is the radical nature of what has taken place. Mourning is what people did at the death of loved ones; it involved much weeping (e.g., Gen50:1-10). It was also done at the threat of death, often accompanied by fasting (e.g., Esther4:3). Yet the psalmist went from mourning to the joyous movements of dancing – like there was too much emotion to keep bottled up inside.

There are instances in Scripture where a physical healing did not result in God being praised forever. Hezekiah was healed (2Kgs20:1-11), but then he showed off the wealth of Jerusalem (2Kgs20:12ff). This move would cost future generations dearly, but sadly Hezekiah was unmoved. Let’s not be like him...

Let’s also not be like the psalmist who had been silent in the past about God’s goodness to him (cf. v6). We need to learn our lesson and match these verses with v1 to see God “seated up” where He belongs because of what He has done...which always flows out of who He is (v5). We must take note of this and join the psalmist in vowing to give thanks to God – He is deserving of it!

Respond:

How has God been with you this week?

Who needs to hear of what God has done for you?

Does God’s immense love for everyone shape how you view those around you?

Pray: Pray for *Strong Tower Ministries* and *LCREF* – missions New Life supports. Ask God to bring to mind instances of His faithfulness toward you. Ask God’s blessing on our time of worship tomorrow at the church building – ask Him what you need to do in order to be prepared.

Never-ending...

July 18 – 24

I have likely started and stopped...and re-started and stopped again close to a dozen times this week concerning what to do in both the sermon and this accompanying devotional guide. I do not want to think it is because I am indifferent; uncertain maybe, but certainly not indifferent. As you know, I care deeply about accurately representing the Word of God (e.g., preaching, modeling It in my life, in writing, etc.). So I started and stopped numerous times – truth be known I am not done yet. In fact, I do not think I will be done even after the sermon on Sunday because this psalm has resurfaced (and uncovered) some things which are perplexing for me (perhaps unsolvable). Yet lest I dwell on those right now (I may later in this guide, I do not know yet) I will simply let you see part of how I began to write...

Attempt One: [condensed from “How I Learned to Stop Hating and Start Loving the Psalms” an article by Philip Yancey]

The Psalms are personal prayers to God and we are in essence looking over the author’s shoulder as he prays. Three things they have done for him:

1. Helped him reconcile what he believes about life with what he actually encounters in life – both positive and negative.
2. Taught him how to praise – exuberantly and spontaneously.
3. Gave him a model for spiritual therapy. These are open to God and full of emotion – nothing is held back as God is in every aspect of life.

Attempt Two:

As we continue to progress through this sermon series of *God is NOWHERE*, what I am hoping continues to come across is our focus on and relationship with God makes all the difference in the world (e.g., *NOWHERE* or *NOWHERE*). The psalms give us both sides of that coin while (almost, cf. Ps88) always landing with the *NOWHERE* side of the coin face up. Actually, I should say placed up, because for the psalmists the nearness and involvement of God is a given. He is trusted at all times, indeed even in spite of circumstances...

There are a variety of ways we can “use” the psalms... (this is not exhaustive)

1. as is for our prayers
2. as models for our prayers
3. to trace the themes found in them throughout Scripture

Current Attempt: [showing a chiasm; note words missing (for space reasons only) ...]

¹ I will extol you, O LORD, for you have drawn me up and have not let my foes rejoice over me.

⁻² O LORD my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me.

• ³ O LORD, you have brought up my soul from Sheol; you restored me to life...

○ ⁴ Sing praises to the LORD, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name.

▪ ⁵ For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime.

Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.

○ ⁶ As for me, I said in my prosperity...I was dismayed.

• ⁸ To you, O LORD, I cry, and to the Lord I plead for mercy:⁹ “What profit...

⁻¹⁰ Hear, O LORD, and be merciful to me! O LORD, be my helper!”

¹¹ You have turned for me my mourning into dancing...O LORD my God, I will give thanks... to you forever!

Monday: Focus

Read: Psalm 30 Note the chiasmic structure on the front of this devotional guide

Reflect:

Remember, a chiasm (cf. *chiasmic structure* above) is a literary device commonly used in the ancient world to highlight what is important (e.g., Gen1:27 shows us all of humanity, man and woman, is made in God’s image). The word chiasm comes from the Greek letter “chi” (i.e., χ – pronounced similar to key). It places emphasis on the middle (i.e., the intersecting parts of the “x” or the tip of the arrow, →); the corresponding parts can be either synonymous or antithetical.

When we pair up the verses of Psalm 30 we see the concepts contained in them are both synonymous (i.e., v1 and vs11-12; v2 and v10; v3 and vs8-9) and antithetical (i.e., v4 and vs6-7). With this insight alone we can see being prideful (v6) is a direct contrast to praising YHWH (v4). This is a heavy realization indeed; to whom should the credit go in our lives?

I did not have the time to do an exhaustive study on pride and report the snippets here for you. Plus I know I still have much introspection to do in this area. So where does this leave us? Among other places, it leaves us with the tension in v5. God does indeed get angry; yet He is far more apt to bless. If the tension is a difficult one for you, well that is a reason for this series (e.g., be honest with God about it).

Respond:

List some concepts and insights based on the structure of this psalm.

What are some things which anger you?

What are some things you recall from Sunday’s sermon that anger God? How does your list and His match up?

Pray: Pray for Ryan Nelson and 33 Church in Olathe, KS (who is supported by the CEA, a mission New Life supports). Ask God for the things which sadden and anger Him to sadden and anger you. Ask God to increase your faith in Him – be open to how He wants you to express it.

Tuesday: For...

Read: Psalm 30:1-3 ¹ I will extol you, O LORD, for you have drawn me up and have not let my foes rejoice over me. ² O LORD my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me. ³ O LORD, you have brought up my soul from Sheol; you restored me to life from among those...

Reflect:

Since this is our third week looking at the psalms, by now you are starting to recognize some keys for understanding them. You know a major interpretive key is the tiny English word “for” – it is found after YHWH in verse one.

By noting this interpretive key we have insight as to why the psalmist wants to extol God (lift/set on high). Among other things YHWH has drawn him up and healed him. In short He has saved him from death – physical death. This is clearly a song praising God for His role as “Healer” in our lives. Yet this portrait of God does not sit well with our culture.

Our culture programs us to seek not God, but a doctor first if we are ill. Our culture thinks science and medicine can and will cure everything. Our culture places too much trust in what “man” can do (please note the use of “culture” and how I did not say all medicine is useless). We have all been impacted by this. Throwing more confusion into the mix for us is the reality of our experience and how God does not heal everyone. What are we to do with this reality? Will we let God be God?

Respond:

The word healed involved physical healing (e.g., Gen20:17; Numb12:13; 2Kgs20:5,8) and spiritual healing (e.g., Isa19:22; Jer3:22). While there is an apparent shift (i.e., from physical to *spiritual* in the prophets), are we comfortable with ambiguity here?

Proverbs warns us to not rejoice in the suffering of our enemies (e.g., Prov24:17), but why would we do that (cf. Mt5:43-48)?

Pray: Pray for LCS, MCC, and OCC – missions New Life supports. Pray Brent McCrory – the Preaching Minister of New Life – will continue to find peace in allowing God to be God. Praise God for any healing with which He has graced you – ask Him how He wants you to respond.

Wednesday: A Central Tension

Read: Psalm 20:5 ⁵ For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.

Reflect:

I am sure you noticed the word “for” appears at the start of verse five. It helps us to see why the psalmist encourages us (cf. His saints in v4) to praise YHWH. In addition to what YHWH already did (cf. Tuesday), He is also gracious (e.g., Exod34:6-8; Joel2:13; et al).

Since this is the center of the chiasm (or the ‘tip’ of the arrow, →), this is the central point of the psalmist’s thoughts. A reality we must face in our understanding of God is He does get angry. Currently I am rethinking some of my views concerning God and His anger (and I am not done yet...hence part of my struggle this week). I do not anticipate I will ever be done with this because I will never figure God out...but I trust Him.

Words for anger occur 518 times in the OT with YHWH as the subject. Yet lest we think He has an eternal frown on His face, we need to take note of what makes Him angry. I cannot and will not list them all here (truthfully I do not know them all), but for certain we know He is angry when His covenant is violated (e.g., Exod32:7ff). A reason for this is because then people are mistreated (e.g., Isa5:24-25; cf. Isa1:10ff). In short, God gets angry because of a lack of justice (His justice). Personally, I am glad to serve a God who is concerned about that...

Pray: Pray for King Solomon Christian Service Camp – a mission New Life supports. Pray Bob Griffin & Larry Hayes – elders of NLCC – will continue to develop a concern for God’s justice. Thank God His anger is not unpredictable; praise Him that His grace is.

Respond:

When was the last time you felt “lost” at night only to be refreshed in the morning?

Do you think the above event is merely due to sleep? What else may have taken place? How can you praise God for it?

Have you been angry this week? Is God angry with you (i.e., does it anger Him too)?

Thursday: Whoops...

Read: Psalm 30:4, 6-7 ⁴ Sing praises to the LORD, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name... ⁶ As for me, I said in my prosperity, “I shall never be moved.” ⁷ By your favor, O LORD, you made my mountain stand strong; you hid your face; I was dismayed.

Reflect:

You may recall (from last week) YHWH is “enthroned on the praises of Israel” (cf. Ps22:3); a figure of speech which indicates the memory of God is alive and well so long as His people proclaim His fame. It is much the same here as the structure of verse four shows us we (His saints) are to sing praises, which is the same as give thanks, because of what YHWH (the One who acts) has done.

Similarly, the word for “name” (used 23 times in the OT) in verse four is more commonly translated as memory (11 times in the NIV) or some form of remember (7 times in the ESV). While this may seem strange to us, for the Hebrew people a name identifies all that a person is (e.g., YHWH as the “living” or “existing” One – the I Am). Therefore God is worthy to be remembered.

Once again, the problem of the psalmist was pride (v6). Apparently not only did he think he was the source of the good things in his life, but he was also secure in himself. This same cycle repeats itself today, and when God “hides His face,” the results are terrifying. Often people are handed over to their own sin (cf. Rom1:18ff). A hard thing is this can be obviously hurtful (e.g., addictions – like drugs) or “accepted” but still hurtful (e.g., addictions – like to money).

Pray: Pray for Cookson Hills – a mission New Life supports. Pray Ed Asbury, Keith Krause, & Mike Haag – deacons of New Life – will continue to eradicate pride from their lives. Ask God to show you the ways in which He has been graceful to you – come full circle and “do verse four”...

Respond:

How can v4 keep you from making the mistake of v6?

Read Luke 12:13-21. How does it fit in with Wednesday?

What are areas of pride in your life? Would someone else have insight?