

Friday: Logical...

Read: Psalm 42:1-2, 11 ¹ As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. ²My soul thirsts for God, for the living God...¹¹Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.

Reflect:
You may recall when we looked at Psalms 42 and 43 together as one psalm; it was the model for our own laments. The psalmist longed for communal worship with fellow believers (e.g., vs2b, 4). In fact he missed it so much he fasted (e.g., 42:2). Do we miss worship on Sunday mornings that much if we are gone from New Life?

The imagery is unmistakable; animals must have water to survive. Similarly, humanity must have God in order to survive. The problem is many are blind to this reality. The world offers (temporary) satisfaction in all areas. Yet only God truly satisfies (i.e., *Image is nothing...thirst is everything! Obey your thirst!!* – in the 7/4 sermon).

Since we know God will never leave us we know we will never be disappointed if we make following Him the true desire of our heart. Yet in order to do this we need to be honest with ourselves. What do we really desire? Is it God? Are we content with just a little God or do we want as much of Him as we can comprehend...and then more beyond that? Pursuing the things of this world will leave us asking the first part of 42:11 over and over again. Thank God He is always there for us when we come to our senses and realize our true thirst.

Pray: Pray for *Emporia Christian School & Shiloh Home of Hope* – missions New Life supports. Pray to have your desires be those of God. Confess to God anything for which you thirst that is not Him; ask for His perspective on it...

Respond:
Remember, sin is not to be ignored in the life of a Christian (cf. Heb12:1-2). How might sin be leading you to thirst for the wrong things?

When was the last time you fasted? Does the thought of going without food bother you? How about the thought of going a day without feeding on God’s word?

Take a minute to list your desires. Now pray to have God’s desires. Return to these lists often.

Saturday: His Works...

Read: Psalm 105; 106

Reflect:
Psalm 105 recounts God’s amazing works on behalf of His people. The choosing of Abram (e.g., vs8-9), His mighty acts in Egypt (v27ff), and His provision for them after they left Egypt (vs39ff). These are things only God can do. They are some of the many reasons why He was worthy of their worship. Sadly, God’s people so often do not give Him what He deserves.

This is where Psalm 106 comes in. It is a blunt recounting of how the Hebrew people failed to live their lives appropriately in response to what God had done. The list of Israel’s shortcomings in this psalm is disheartening. How could people for whom God had done so much neglect their responsibility to Him?

Truthfully I do not know...but I know I struggle with this same tension in my life as well. God is so good to me. Sadly I know the decisions I make are not always His best for me. Why do I do this? Perhaps it is because I am selfish. Perhaps it is because I do not know better. Perhaps it is because I am enacting what our culture teaches as the norm. There is truth in all of those. Yet a deeper truth sheds light on all of that. It is because I do not fully grasp who I am...I pray this next sermon series will help me out.

Pray: Pray for *Strong Tower Ministries* and *LCREF* – missions New Life supports. Pray for someone you know who needs to know Jesus. 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.

Respond:
Psalms often recount Creation, Exodus, and Covenant(s). What should our focus be from a NT point of view?

Pray for the upcoming sermon series which starts tomorrow.

How can you prepare yourself today for our corporate worship tomorrow?

Only the Beginning...

July 25 – 31

Our short journey of looking at some psalms is over this week. My prayer is we have seen that indeed “God is **NOWHERE**” – the undeniable picture painted in Scripture; instead of **NOWHERE** – which is what the world wants us to believe. God is a loving God who is always with His people, despite circumstances which often say otherwise. In that light, I pray whatever impact this journey has made so far is only the beginning...

Unless something unexpected happened, you heard some laments written by some members of your own family this past Sunday. While they may have been moving and perhaps even inspiring, do not make the mistake of not writing your own. If you have not, I hope you make time for it. Do not worry if you are not poetic (your lament does not need to rhyme). Do not worry if you are not ready to share with others what you believe God is calling you to put in your lament (allow the Spirit to direct you for both if and when to share). Do not worry if you have so much to vent about that one lament cannot possibly contain it all (write multiple laments).

The reality is God has not worked in your life for your benefit alone. Another reality is you are not the only one to experience your current or past struggles. In other words, while your experience may be unique to you, the “theme” of the struggle is universal (e.g., abuse, doubt, financial stress, etc.). As I have said in one way or another numerous times recently **a**) we need to be honest with God (hence laments) and **b**) we need to be telling our story (allow God to work through us for His glory).

Remember, a basic pattern which can be followed in order to write a lament is:

- 1) Address to God, 2) Complaint, 3) Statement of Trust, 4) Petition, 5) Thanksgiving or Vow of Praise

If you complain three or four separate times in your lament that is fine...just be sure to include statements of trust as well. After all, we do believe God is **NOWHERE**.

Perhaps the following prayers can be useful as you continue the Christian life...

Teach me to seek You and reveal Yourself to me as I seek; for unless You instruct me I cannot seek You and unless You reveal Yourself I cannot find You.

Let me seek You in desiring You; let me desire You in seeking You.

Let me find You in loving You, let me love You in finding You.

- Anselm of Canterbury

Teach me, o God, so to use all the circumstances of my life today that they may bring forth in me the fruits of holiness rather than the fruits of sin.

- Let me use disappointment as material for patience;
- Let me use success as material for thankfulness;
- Let me use suspense as material for perseverance;
- Let me use danger as material for courage;
- Let me use reproach as material for longsuffering;
- Let me use praise as material for humility;
- Let me use pleasures as material for temperance;
- Let me use pains as material for endurance;
- Let me use anxiousness as material for trust;
- Let me use doubt as material for being still...

Monday: Remember...

Read: Psalm 46:10 ¹⁰ “Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!”

<p>Reflect: We live in an extremely fast-paced culture. How many nights were you on the go in the last week? What about the last month? When was the last time you were still (besides sleeping at night)? By and large, being still is not valued in our culture...though it may be making a comeback among some.</p> <p>God guarantees what the writer of Psalm 30 personally wants to do will happen; only on a broader scale (Ps30:1). How broad? The word for “the nations” indicates people who were not of Jewish ancestry; the Greek word for it is used in the NT to speak of “Gentiles”. Remember God’s desire (Gen12:3).</p> <p>While many believe Psalm 46 was written after a military victory by the Southern Kingdom of Judah, the truth it proclaims was not invalidated even when they went into exile for disobedience. Verse 11 mentions “the LORD of hosts” (YHWH Sabaoth). This indicates YHWH is in control of heavenly powers and angels. It is commonly understood in terms of military might. Are you ready for some irony? Of the 245 times these two words occur together in the OT none of them occur around the Exodus; i.e., when His “military might” was evident. The majority of the uses occur in the prophets...which is the time when Israel was anything but a world superpower. It is instructive to consider when YHWH uses this title and whom it is He addresses...</p>	<p>Respond: How is 46:10 comforting ?</p> <p>Will you make time for five minutes to “be still” (relax) and ponder the glory of 46:10?</p> <p>Here are some uses of “LORD Almighty” Isa5:20-25; Jer6:6ff; Jas5:4). Read the context; what concerns God?</p>
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Pray: Pray for Ryan Nelson and 33 Church in Olathe, KS (who is supported by the CEA, a mission New Life supports). Ask God to help you discipline yourself to “be still” for at least five minutes a day this week. Thank God for the time of corporate worship yesterday.

Tuesday: For...

Read: Psalm 23:4-5 ⁴ Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. ⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

<p>Reflect: Throughout the psalms many reasons are given which show how we can in fact “be still”. A great number of these reasons are introduced by the little English word “for”. In linguistic terms it is called a <i>ki-clause</i> (because of the Hebrew word pronounced “key” which forms these 371 clauses in the book of psalms).</p> <p>In Psalm 23 we see the reason sheep (us) do not live in fear; “for” the shepherd (YHWH) is with them (us). It is beyond comforting to know our Owner is with us no matter what. Now if we would only become more content with His ownership of us and not look for “greener” pasture...</p> <p>You likely remember from the week we looked specifically at this psalm how the anointing of the sheep’s head with oil helped to protect them from parasites. Sheep are virtually defenseless, and some of the parasites they get can kill them. Other parasites make life so miserable some sheep will beat their heads on rocks because of the pain. What a picture of us as humans huh (cf. “beating your head against a wall”)? This is one of the many reasons we are so dependent on the Holy Spirit...</p>	<p>Respond: What might happen if you did a search for all the <i>ki-clauses</i> in the psalms? How could it be helpful?</p> <p>What gives you the most comfort in life – your house, money in the bank, friends, God, addictions, what?</p> <p>How has thinking about the anointing of your head been helpful for you lately?</p>
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Pray: Pray for LCS, MCC, and OCC – missions New Life supports. Pray Brent McCrory – the Preaching Minister of New Life – will not fear for God is with him. Confess to God the things from which you seek comfort that are not Him; ask Him what He wants you to do about it...

Wednesday: Tension...

Read: Psalm 30:5 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.

<p>Reflect: Again, with the use of “for” (the Hebrew <i>ki-clause</i>), we see a reason to praise YHWH (cf. 30:4), because He is gracious. You likely remember from last week how Psalm 30 is a chiasm (a-v1, b-v2, c-v3, d-v4, e-v5, d¹-vs6-7, c¹-vs8-9, b¹-v10, a¹-vs11-12; match up a and a¹ (and so on) to see the similar or opposite statements). Again, God’s anger is real, we must not downplay it. However His grace is what is unpredictable – and exhilarating.</p> <p>As we noted while looking at this psalm, it is one of a commitment to praise God because of what He has done. In this instance He had physically healed the psalmist. This is very informative for us as we pray for others. If we want God to help anyone get well...why? Our why ought to be so their life can continue to glorify our God.</p> <p>Due to the structure of this psalm (i.e., a chiasm) v4 matches up with vs6-7. Here we see a danger for all Christians in an affluent society. Namely, do we think our “success” is due to our hard work or God’s blessing (cf. v6)? When we realize it is due to God’s blessing we will be moved to make His name known (i.e., give thanks to His holy name). Remember, this word for “name” (in v4) is often translated as “remembrance”. In other words, part of our response to God’s grace is telling others what He has done for us.</p>	<p>Respond: What angers God? Be specific, find Scriptural support. Do these same things anger you?</p> <p>How can you be sure to include the “spiritual” side of any “physical” prayer request?</p> <p>Is God honored in your finances? What would a family member (i.e., Christian) in China or Iran think? (consider Lk12:13-21)</p>
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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. Pray for a heart that is angered by what angers God; ask Him how to respond...

Thursday: The Truth...

Read: Psalm 22:1,3 ¹ My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me... ² you do not answer... ³ Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel...

<p>Reflect: Remember, “Context is King”. Even though Jesus quoted v1 on the cross (cf. Mt27:46; Mk15:34) we must not mistakenly think this is the point in time when God the Father turned His back and left His only Son, all alone, to pay the price for the sins of the world. It is true Jesus “paid the price” – but He was not abandoned.</p> <p>Once again, the use of “for” (<i>ki-clauses</i>) helps us to see the beautiful truth of how God is always with His people. In v9- yet (for) You are He who took me from the womb; v24- for He has not despised... v28- for kingship belongs to YHWH, v31- that (for) He has done it. God is always faithful. Even when it seems as if everything is falling apart all around you – He is faithful. Even when friends turn their back on you – He is faithful. So what is our response to His faithfulness? We need to make sure He is made famous in our words and deeds (e.g., “enthroned on the praises of Israel”) so others can learn of our Awesome God.</p> <p>Many Jews wanted Jesus dead because He was a threat to their religious establishment and He claimed to be God. The Romans killed Jesus because He was a political threat. Ready for some more irony? Many today think He was just a “good man”. The truth is found toward the end of this psalm (vs25ff); only a single kingdom and religion will endure forever. No wonder they killed Him...</p>	<p>Respond: Read Psalm 42:11 and Mt26:38. What do you think of that?</p> <p>How has God been with you lately?</p> <p>Have you written your own lament yet? Will you share it?</p>
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Pray: Pray for Cookson Hills – a mission New Life supports. Pray Ed Asbury, Keith Krause, & Mike Haag – deacons of New Life – will continue to grow in their trust of God. Praise God for His faithfulness to you lately; ask Him with whom He wants you to share it...