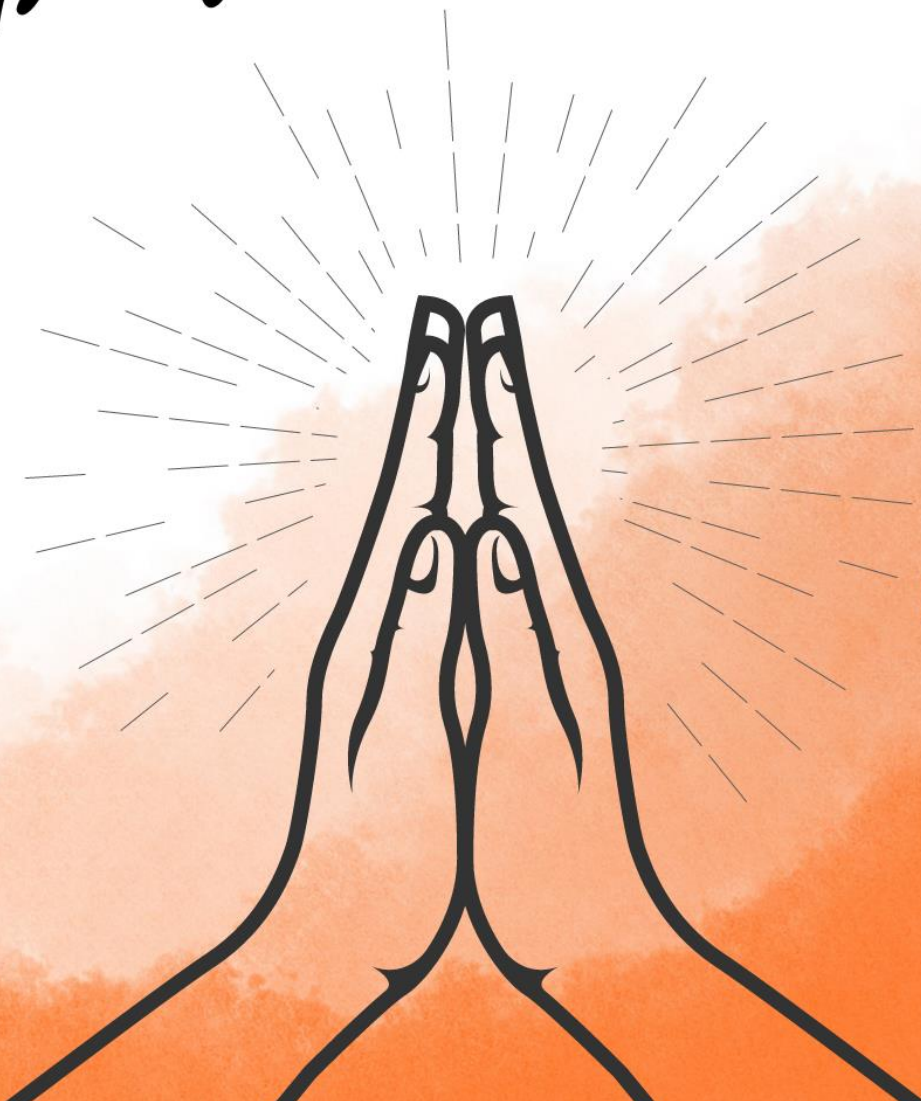


Psalms

Feb to Mar 2024



Psalms. 2024.

From Dave.

Why are we doing the Psalms as a church? What is the big “why” behind reading these ancient worship songs?

Ever since the rebellion of Adam and Eve, humanity constantly seeks to create our own “God”, one that we are happy to worship. The Psalms give us a true picture of God and who we are as we walk through the joys and challenges of following Jesus. I hope it will help you in your prayer times with God, to find Him in the Psalms and in your circumstances in a new way.

From February to March, we will look at the Psalms and a couple of stories from the book of 2 Samuel. These stories provide the backdrop for Psalms 34, 51 and 57.

I’ll finish with a comment by John Stott, who in a book titled *Favourite Psalms*, wrote,

“The reason why Christian people are drawn to the Psalms is that they speak the universal language of the human soul. The Book of Psalms,” wrote Rowland E. Prothero, contains the whole music of the heart of man.” Whatever our spiritual mood may be, there is sure to be a psalm which reflects it—whether triumph or defeat, excitement or depression, joy or sorrow, praise or penitence, wonder or anger. Above all, the psalms declare the greatness of the living God as Creator, Sustainer, King, Lawgiver, Savior, Father, Shepherd, and Judge. As we come to know him better through the Psalter, we fall down and worship him.”

John Stott, (Mill Hill, London; Grand Rapids, MI: Monarch Books, 2003), 5.

Feb 4th- 10th. 1 Samuel 20 &21. Pretending.

These two chapters describe the events in David's life that describe the background for Psalm 34, which we will look at next week.

Read both chapters.

Q 1. What stands out about these events in David's life?

Comment. David pretends to Ahimelech that he's on a mission for Saul and pretends to be insane before King Achish. These were the acts of a desperate person trying to preserve their life. I wonder, what was David thinking as he wrote on the door posts and intentionally dribbled saliva to appear insane? Psalm 34:1 says, "I will extol the Lord at all times; his praise will always be on my lips." Perhaps he wrote this as he remembered what he was prepared to do to preserve his life.

Q 2. When have you "pretended"? It might have been you pretending to be something, or it might have been something you pretended you weren't. What dangers are there in pretending?

Q 3. David says in Psalm 34:6. *"This poor man called, and the Lord heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles."* Looking back as David did, when have you been in trouble and God showed you a way out?

Q 4. Perhaps you're currently facing something that you can't see a way out of; perhaps you are looking back on an event where God brought you through impossible situations. What does it do in us when we worship God in the face of the impossible?

Spend some time "extolling the Lord at all times..."

Feb 11th-17th. Psalm 34. Boasting in God.

Read the Psalm together, slowly and out loud.

C.H. Spurgeon said that Psalm 34 is divided in two. “ The first ten verses are a hymn, and the last twelve a sermon.” We tend to think of a sermon as something delivered on a Sunday as someone stands in front of us and speaks. But some of the greatest “sermons” are delivered without words, or perhaps by someone lying down, not standing up.

Liane Foord, Rex’s wife, passed away in 2016. I remember seeing Liane a few days before she died. She had in her hand our annual church Partnership covenant. She was adamant that despite her impending death, she was still a part of us, still committed to us as a community. Liane gave me a sermon that day, lying down. Amongst many other things, she showed me what persevering love in the face of pain looked like. She also showed me what it means to worship and trust God despite pain and disappointment.

In the first half of Psalm 34, David reflects on desperate times in his life and boasts about how God delivered him. But this isn’t just for him. Vs 2&3 he invites others who are “Afflicted” to rejoice with him.

Take some time to reflect on your life with your Cluster and boast in God how he answered you (vs 4) and delivered you (4b).

Vs 11-22. David starts to instruct children in the “Fear of the Lord.” David says, “Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies.” Looking at the events this Psalm was drawn on, David told several lies to save his life. He clearly doesn’t want the “little children” to do the same. When I run our Warriors for a Weekend or Dad’s and Kids Weekend, I will always invite someone to share about their life where they trusted God or when they didn't trust God. The hope is that this will encourage the “little children” to see how God meets us. Have you ever sat down with a “little child”, someone younger in their faith (not necessarily in years), and shared with them the times that God has “delivered you” (vs 4)?

Having these conversations is a part of what Jesus meant when he told us to “make disciples of all nations, teaching them all that I’ve commanded you.” Liane gave me a great sermon lying down when she had every legitimate excuse not to.

Q 1. Who has taught you to “Fear the Lord?” (Vs 9)

Q 2. How did they do it?

Q 3. Who are you teaching to fear the Lord? Who could you teach? Write down a name and plan when you could contact them.

Feb 18th- 24th

Psalm 40 From Pit to Praise.

I remember listening to Horst Schulze, a hotelier who told an interesting story about waiting; it went something like this. At the peak check-in time, they would have a green, yellow and red-light system. They noticed that if a guest had to wait more than seven minutes to check in, they risked moving into the red zone, where the customer would begin to get angry. So, just before the seven-minute mark, waiters were instructed to come around with a complimentary drink. **When smartphones were invented, they saw a steady decrease before customers hit the “red” zone, so waiters were eventually told to bring out complementary drinks after 90 seconds.**

We’re not good at waiting yet, the bible makes it clear that “waiting” is one of the ways God tests us to trust him. The bible is full of stories of those who could and couldn’t wait, and the results.

David, who wrote this Psalm, clearly was going through events where he had to “Wait.” God used the circumstances to teach David.

Read Psalm 40 together.

Q 1. What stands out to you?

Comment. As David is lifted out of the pit, he responds in three ways.

Gratitude: God hears, lifts and rescues David, and he is so grateful! Vs 1&2

Worship: receiving God’s deliverance moves David to worship. “He put a new song in my mouth.” Vs 3

Witness: David can’t help but want to tell others about what God’s done. “Many will see and fear the Lord and put their trust in him.” Vs 3b

Take thanksgiving and praise, worship and witness out of being a disciple of Jesus and what do you have left? Not a lot...

Is it any wonder that Yahweh works through waiting?

In verses 11 and 12, David speaks of his “iniquities.” It seems the mud and mire are David’s doing, and now he must wait for God. We don’t always have to wait because of things we’ve done.

Q 2. What are the other things you have had to “wait” for?

Q 3. When did you wait impatiently or patiently? What happened in and around you?

Q 4. Where do you need to call on the Holy Spirit’s patience to continue to wait and trust?

Spend some time praying for each other in the areas you are having to wait.

Feb 25th - March 2nd

Psalm 42 & 43 Drought and Deliverance.

When you look in the margins of your bible, it might say that Psalms 42 and 43 constitute one psalm, so let's read both psalms together.

The Psalmist, drawing on the desperation of a deer about to collapse because of dehydration, likens this to our souls when they are spiritually dry. Two thoughts come to mind. First, without the "living water" of a relationship with Jesus, we can't survive. Second, we try to fill our souls with "dead" water.

I remember taking a group of young people up to the Grampians in the 90's. We hiked the Elephant hide, before making our way to the Boroka Lookout. It was a hot day and I remember climbing up one particularly tough section. We rounded a corner, and there, to our delight, was a trickling waterfall. The water was under a shaded overpass and was delightfully cool, clear and sweet tasting. Next to it, just off to the side was a stagnant pool of water. Some leaves were floating on the top and some scum around the edges. I remember thinking how crazy it would be to drink from the stagnate pool when the fresh water of the waterfall was on offer. But in some ways, that's exactly what the psalmist says is going on. They traded living water for stagnant water, resulting in a spiritual drought.

Q 1. Was there a time you tried to satisfy your soul with "dead water?" How did you do that and when did you realise it was doing you no good?

Here are some signs of spiritual thirst.

- Heart despair. "My tears have been my food." Vs 3
- Nostalgic faith of what 'used to be. "How I used to go to the house of God under the protection of the Mighty One with shouts of joy and praise." Vs 4
- Feeling like God has forgotten you. "I say to God my Rock, "Why have you forgotten me? Vs 9

The psalmist breaks the drought with a few things.

- he chose to "remember You." Vs 6
- He calls out to God "in" the waterfall of feeling overwhelmed (Vs 7)
- Despite how he "feels" he chooses to "put your hope in God for I will yet praise him, my saviour and my God." Vs 5.

Q 2. When did you, or when did you see someone choose God despite their soul being downcast?

Q 3. What changed in you or them as a result?

Psalm 43

The psalmist continues a mixture of great hope in God, "Send me your light and your faithful care, let them lead me...You are God my stronghold" and honesty about their sense of abandonment.

"Why have you rejected me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?"

Q 1. What does this teach us about what to do and not to do when we are working through our droughts?

Spend time praying for those in droughts, and praising God that we can still praise him in a drought as we wait for his deliverance with expectation.

March 3rd- 9th.

Psalm 46 God with us.

Do you remember how you felt when...

- John F Kennedy was assassinated?
- The Berlin Wall came down?
- The invasion of Kuwait?
- You heard your friend had died in an accident?
- September 11th occurred?
- Hamas' attacks against Israel?

Apart from some of these events showing your age, these are some of the significant events of the past 50-60 years. They remind us, like the Psalmist, that there are things that seem permanent and strong, and yet they are vulnerable. When things that seem strong fall, and we've put our trust in them, we will be shaken.

Psalm 46 draws on the real events of 701 BC. Hezekiah was King of Judah; he was a vassal of Sennacherib and was obliged to pay tribute to him. When he rebelled, a massive Assyrian army swept west and south like the irresistible waves of the sea. Jerusalem was surrounded. Sennacherib boasted that he had shut up Hezekiah "like a caged bird" and demanded surrender. (John Stott, 2003).

The situation seemed hopeless as Sennacherib's army surrounded Jerusalem. To put it in context, imagine being in Mosul, in Iraq, as a Christian or Yazidi waiting to see if Isis would conquer your territory. Desperate, Hezekiah sought God through the prophet Isaiah. Speaking through Isaiah, the word of the Lord came to Hezekiah." Do not be afraid ... for I will defend this city to save it." That night, suddenly and dramatically, God intervened. "The angel of the Lord went out and put to death 185,000 men in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up early the next morning—there were all the dead bodies!" So, Sennacherib withdrew. (See 2 Kings 18 and 19.)

Water is a theme throughout the bible that conveys both chaos and trouble, peace and life. In vs 3 the waters that "roar and foam". But in vs 4, it is the 'river whose streams make glad the city of God.'" Hezekiah and Jerusalem went from the stormy waters of the Assyrians to the life-giving waters of God speaking and delivering.

It might be tempting to think God was only in the water of deliverance, but God is sovereign over all things. In Isaiah 10:8-22 God clearly says Assyria was a tool in his hand- even though they failed to recognise it.

Q 1. When has God worked sovereignly through disaster or great difficulty in your life? How did that event change you or those around you?

Psalm 46 reminds us that God is sovereign over all things. The famous vs 10 says we must be "Still and know that I am God." But the next part is saying, "I will be exalted among the nations".

As a nation, we don't exalt God. As believers, we're told to pray for our leaders. Spend some time praying for our national and state politicians. Pray that they will recognise God.

Before you pray, as a group ask “who” of that list God would have you pray for. Then ask the Holy Spirit how you should pray for them.

Allison Marchant. State MP for Bellarine.

Libby Coker. Federal Member for Corogamite.

Richard Marles, Deputy Prime Minister, Member for Corio

Anthony Albanese, Prime Minister of Australia

Jacinta Allan, Victorian Premier.