

Devotions – June 28-July 4, 2009
By, Pastor Bill Jacobson
Zion Metropolitan, Felch
Fortune Lake Camp Board President

Sunday, June 28

Psalm 8

¹O “Lord , our lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

I love the Psalms. The psalms reveal God in so many different ways and speak to so many of the ways that we experience God in the midst of living life. This week I invite you to join me in reflecting on a few of my favorite psalms. I invite you to not just read the verses that I have chosen, but to read the whole psalm and allow the scriptures to have their way with you. I would classify Psalm 8 as a creation psalm. It speaks of God's awesome majesty and glory. Fully beyond my comprehension God has created the universe and all that is in it – visible and invisible. I am in wonder, as is the psalmist, how God has created and holds human beings in such high esteem in the midst of all of creation.

God has set humans above creation and given them dominion over all of creation. This psalm recognizes the great gift that God has given us in the world around us and all that is in it. This psalm speaks to the radical generosity of God and the blessings that flow into our lives out of that generosity. Having been created in God's image we are called to treat, care for and share all that is with the same radical generosity with which it has been shared with us.

God's majesty and glory are beyond our comprehension we can however live our lives keeping in mind the nature of God that we are able to see and to understand – God's gracious generosity to others. May we live lives worthy of the creation gifts that God blesses us with.

Creator God, you have blessed us with all of creation. May our witness of generosity and care for others proclaim your name in majesty through all the earth. Amen.

Monday, June 29

Psalm 27

*¹The Lord is my light and my salvation: whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid*

The psalms are full of encouragement. Having recognized that God is the creator of all things and understands things in life in ways in which I am not able, it would follow that God is the one to whom I would trust my life in the midst of the chaos of living life. God sheds light on the chaos revealing it for what it is. Even the most challenging and frightening occasions of life become manageable in our own reality when we look to God to put it into God's frame of reference for us.

¹⁴Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord.

God of light and salvation, reveal the struggles of this world and our lives to be what they are within the greater reality of your kingdom. Encourage us in our faith, strengthen us in our witness and grant us the willingness to wait on you. Amen

Tuesday, June 30

Psalm 121

*¹I lift up my eyes to the hills – from where will my help come?
My help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth.*

Psalm 121 speaks to me of God's constant watchfulness and presence in the midst of the joys and challenges of living life. God's promises continue to remind us that we will not live without the challenges of life, but that God journeys with us through all of life – the good as well as the bad. I find the first verse of this psalm to be a reminder that God does not just automatically insulate us from the challenges of life, rather God is seen as present when we look for God in faith, knowing that God is there and will accompany us in the midst of the challenges. All that is important is important to God and God will not allow those who look to God in faith to be drawn away.

Faithful God, grant us the faith to look to you in times of challenge and struggle. Grant us courage to go forth in the midst of doubt and misunderstanding trusting in your gracious love and faithfulness. Amen

Wednesday, July 1

Psalm 109

*³¹ For he [the Lord] stands at the right hand of the needy,
to save him from those who condemn him to death.*

I find Psalm 109 to be an interesting psalm, that is after I get over the graphic call for God to ruin and destroy the one(s) responsible for the psalmists feelings of oppression and mistreatment. Sometimes we just need to vent! Sometimes we need to feel like someone is on our side and will take up our case in the midst of life's chaos.

Sometimes when my children call me in frustration and hurt they just need to talk. We have determined that sometimes they don't want any answers they just want to say things and need someone to listen. Sometimes they begin to talk in ways that I find disturbing and unsettling, much like the psalmist in Psalm 109. At these times they will say, "I'm just talking here."

Psalm 109 allows me to address God and to say, "I'm just talking here." Psalm 109 allows me to talk "trash" with someone that I can trust, someone who will listen without judging or telling me what to do. God gives me the opportunity to "vent." Next time you need to vent about someone or something, try Psalm 109 and then thank God for a connection that allows you to turn that anger over to one better equipped to handle it than you are.

God of the needy, take from my heart all anger and malice toward those that speak against me. Thank you for the opportunity to share my deepest pain and struggles in the midst of this life and the cleansing flood of your forgiveness and peace. Amen

Thursday, July 2

Psalm 46

¹God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

^{9a}“Be still, and know that I am God!”

While Psalm 109 gives me the opportunity to vent and to carry on about my struggles in life, Psalm 46 is a reminder that God is also the place to seek quiet and refuge. It is too easy to obsess over things in life that we have no control over. Sometimes we just need to “Get over it, get on with it.” At some point in time we have to just spend time in God's presence knowing that this is where we recharge for living life.

One of my favorite Bible stories is the story of Elijah running from Queen Jezebel (1 Kings 19:1-18). After having defeated the prophets of Baal as an instrument of God, we find Elijah hiding in a cave, fearing for his life. As he encounters God once again in the stillness, he is renewed, encouraged and sent forth as God's prophet.

So too it is with us when we stop long enough to listen to God or to just be in God's presence. It is here that we are encouraged as ministers of God's Word and promise that we take that presence with us into the places where we live out our lives of faith. We take the promise into our homes, our places of work and recreation. Encouraged and refueled we once again become the voice of God in the hearts and minds of those we engage with in the midst of life.

God of refuge and strength, calm our spirits and open our hearts to your renewing presence. Help us to set aside the rapid pace of our lives to rest in your presence and know your peace. Equip us to share your promise in all that we do. Amen

Friday, July 3

Psalm 91

*⁹Because you have made the Lord your refuge, the Most High your dwelling place,
¹⁰no evil shall befall you, no scourge come near your tent.*

Psalm 91 is the source of a popular hymn (ELW 787) that reminds us God is indeed the ultimate place to live out our lives. Once again a psalm that invites us to trust in God even though the world around us seems to be coming apart. There is the constant reminder that in the midst of the chaos that surrounds us God will provide refuge. In the midst of worry and concern God keeps our spirit calm and focused.

Life contains its traps and struggles yet the faithfulness of God is revealed in the psalms and the rest of the scriptures. Living in the midst of God's faithfulness builds in us a faith that becomes more and more difficult to shake. God as refuge allows us to watch the chaos of the world around us from a safe place and to trust that nothing of this world can keep us from the love and protection of God.

*Saving God, we give you thanks for your encouragement and refuge in times of challenge.
May we see your faithfulness as promise that we can live faithfully in you. Amen*

Saturday, July 4

Psalm 150

‘Let everything that breathes praise the Lord

More often than not I turn to the psalms when I need encouragement or need to offer encouragement to others. Likewise the psalms that become familiar are those that address those needs most clearly. Yet in the midst of living a full life in the fullness of God's grace there also needs to be a time of praise, a time of recognizing that mere words can never express that which is appropriate in appreciation for all that God has done, is doing and will do in the lives of God's people.

And so I end this week of reflection by offering Psalm 150 which lifts God's name in praise continuously. O that our weekly worship experiences could be like this. And they are as God's faithful share their praises for God's goodness throughout the past week as God's grace has been experienced in so many ways. That we might share them together and out loud in voices that make a joyful noise in all of the various ways that we have been given. Let us give thanks and glory to God together.

God of the universe, we give you thanks and praise for blessings and mercies that you continue to pour into our lives each day. Give us voice that together we might lift our praise to you in all of the ways that you have provided us as people and community of faith. Amen.