

Daily Devotions

August 28 – September 3, 2022

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Sunday, August 28, 2022

Seven Psalms for Late Summer: Psalm 1

Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers;

but their delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law they meditate day and night.

They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper.

The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;

for the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

My eyes are drawn to the first verse “Happy are those who do not...sit in the seat of the scoffers.” It is a big seat and lots of people sit in that seat! I am too often in that chair too! So easy to criticize, ridicule and laugh at others who are living out their lives as best as they can. And there is always a critic when anyone casts a vision or invites change. The Psalmist calls us to a different perspective.

We are told by Scripture that we will be happy or blessed by a focus not on our own personal opinion but on the Word of God, “and on his law (we are called) to meditate day and night.” The Psalmist here is an optimist and challenges us to be Godly, positive and alert to what the Lord is doing in our lives.

As the days begin to grow shorter remind yourself that we worship a God in Christ who has called us to a life of hope and of happiness in him.

LET US PRAY: *You, O God, supply all we need and have allowed us to live in the law and Gospel of Jesus. You, O God, have planted us near the Word of God. Help us to grow in it every day. In the Name of Jesus. AMEN.*

Monday, August 29, 2022

Seven Psalms for Late Summer: Psalm 25

To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.

O my God, in you I trust; do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me.

Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame; let them be shamed who are wantonly treacherous.

Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths.

Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long.

Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old.

Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness' sake, O LORD!

Remember the excitement of the first day of school. When we had young boys in our house, the first day of school was great fun. The twins were in high school and the young guys were in grade school—it was an exciting time. What adventures would those four guys face in the first day of the new school year? What would they learn in this year that would be important and impact their life? As the boys grew into men their mother and I knew that those days in school, taught by some very fine teachers and coaches, were powerful and important. Teachers make a difference and they add so much to our lives and to the lives of our children.

God is our great teacher. We want to learn the lessons of life from God. “Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths.” Can we seek out God’s Word and cling to his truth? In the Scriptures we see God’s plan for all of us. We see the person of Jesus who lived and died that we might know the truth. There is an old saying in the education world, “When the student is ready to learn, the teacher will appear.” Are we ready to learn? Are we a student of God’s Word even at age 60 or 80?

LET US PRAY: *In our communities and schools, teachers and students are eagerly waiting for school to begin. Bless all our students and teachers and help us to learn from the great teacher Jesus Christ. In his name we pray. AMEN.*

Tuesday, August 30, 2022

Seven Psalms for Late Summer: Psalm 34

**I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth.
My soul makes its boast in the LORD; let the humble hear and be glad.
O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.
I sought the LORD, and he answered me, and delivered me from all my fears.
Look to him, and be radiant; so your faces shall never be ashamed.
This poor soul cried, and was heard by the LORD, and was saved from every trouble.
The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them.
O taste and see that the LORD is good; happy are those who take refuge in him.**

This is it—my favorite Psalm! I admire all the Psalms, including Psalm 23, 51, 91, and 121. But Psalm 34 is at the top of my Psalmody hit parade. This is the Psalm I want read at my funeral—this is the Psalm I have prayed, reflected upon and enjoyed a hundred times in a hundred different situations.

Psalm 34 is honest. It is authentic to my experience. “I sought the LORD, and he answered me, and delivered me from all my fears.” How many times has God come to the rescue? I have had those Emergency Room situations, those close calls on the highway, and those moments of deep anxiety in life’s walk. Yet, God has made it good.

The Psalmist makes God’s deliverance a real physical experience. “The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them. O taste and see that the LORD is good; happy are those who take refuge in him.” In this Psalm we have a God who makes himself an agent of intervention and yet invites us to be a part of him through actually tasting him. We have a God who loves us so much he lives with us. This is a Psalm of Holy Incarnation. Love it—Love God!

LET US PRAY: *What a joy to live with God. Thank you for blessing us with your presence. Teach us to lean into your never-failing love and to hold on to you no matter the cost or the struggle. Let us be radiant in the refuge he offers. In the Name of Jesus. AMEN.*

Wednesday, August 31, 2022

Seven Psalms for Late Summer: Psalm 93

The LORD is king, he is robed in majesty; the LORD is robed, he is girded with strength. He has established the world; it shall never be moved;

Your throne is established from of old; you are from everlasting.

The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their roaring.

More majestic than the thunders of mighty waters, more majestic than the waves of the sea, majestic on high is the LORD!

Your decrees are very sure; holiness befits your house, O LORD, forevermore.

Kings and Queens are not what they used to be! The constitutional monarchies of the United Kingdom, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and other lands are a far cry from the dictatorships centuries ago of Henry VIII and Gustavus Adolphus. That change in world politics is a good thing! Psalm 93 is telling us of God who is very much depicted in what we would say would be an “old-fashioned” monarchial pattern. God is here portrayed as more like Queen Elizabeth I than her distant descendent Queen Elizabeth II.

The Psalmist is pointing us to a great leader and Lord. He tells us of God who is ready to take charge and to prevail. He is robed in majesty and girded for strength. And God is seen here as having the largest voice in the universe and more majestic than any of the seas. But now the important part. This is what the Psalm is about: The King has sure decrees and he is Holy! God can be trusted because his Word is true and his will does not change. God is with us and he lives over us forever. His Kingdom is not of this world. He is from and goes into everlasting. And we are on God’s side.

LET US PRAY: *We give you thanks Almighty God that you have called us out of death into life. Protect us and make us a part of your Kingdom, your dominion forever. AMEN.*

Thursday, September 1, 2022

Seven Psalms for Late Summer: Psalm 122

**I was glad when they said to me,
‘Let us go to the house of the LORD!’
Our feet are standing
within your gates, O Jerusalem.**

**Jerusalem—built as a city
that is bound firmly together.
To it the tribes go up,
the tribes of the LORD,
as was decreed for Israel,
to give thanks to the name of the LORD.
For there the thrones for judgement were set up,
the thrones of the house of David.**

**Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
‘May they prosper who love you.
Peace be within your walls,
and security within your towers.’**

For the sake of my relatives and friends

I will say, ‘Peace be within you.’

For the sake of the house of the LORD our God,

I will seek your good.

How has the “house of the Lord” shaped and changed you? What are your first memories of Church? Perhaps it is a white frame building surrounded by a cemetery, like my memory of the house of the Lord which is Bristol Lutheran Church in rural Sun Prairie, Wisconsin. Perhaps it is a building in Ewen or Felch or Marinette. Perhaps it is like the Gloria Dei congregation in Hancock, a fifty-year-old building serving a 150-year-old congregation. Places and buildings are important and Christianity has a geography about it. Born in Bethlehem, growing up in Nazareth, doing his ministry in Judea and Galilee, Jesus was connected to houses of worship and the great Temple in Jerusalem. Jerusalem is the center city of the Scriptures and its Temple the place of peace and hope.

Even as buildings for congregations can become a burden if they are underused or not managed with an eye for mission, the Christian faith is largely taught and God is worshiped within church buildings. Like the Psalmist, we are called to pray for the peace of Jerusalem and to pray for peace and unity for all congregations. Pray for the peace of Marquette, the peace of Mohawk, the peace of Rhinelander and the peace of Ironwood. Pray for the peace of all of God’s people everywhere.

LET US PRAY: *We seek you, O Lord, and we know that you can be found in many places. Help us to share the faith that has been handed down to us. Let us sing the song of Jesus within the sanctuary of God. Help us lift up God’s people as we gather soon in our church building around Word and Sacrament. In God’s peace and in the Name of Jesus we pray. AMEN.*

Friday September 2, 2022

Seven Psalms for Late Summer: Psalm 142

**With my voice I cry to the LORD;
with my voice I make supplication to the LORD.
I pour out my complaint before him;
I tell my trouble before him.**

**When my spirit is faint,
you know my way.**

**In the path where I walk
they have hidden a trap for me.
Look on my right hand and see—
there is no one who takes notice of me;
no refuge remains to me;
no one cares for me.**

**I cry to you, O LORD;
I say, ‘You are my refuge,
my portion in the land of the living.’
Give heed to my cry,
for I am brought very low.**

**Save me from my persecutors,
for they are too strong for me.
Bring me out of prison,
so that I may give thanks to your name.
The righteous will surround me,
for you will deal bountifully with me.**

One time when I was grieving for a friend who had died in a car accident, my pastor reminded me that God will listen to and understand my grief. “God has big shoulders,” he said. Early in my parish ministry, I visited a lady in the hospital who told me that she knew why we are called by God to pray for each other. “I was so sick,” she said, “I could not even pray for myself.”

This is a psalm that speaks to all of us who have endured difficult, painful and impossible situations. I once spoke to an 80-year-old man who had tears in his eyes. It was the anniversary of a car accident that he was in almost 60 years before. A boy had died and even as the accident was not in any way his fault, this tragedy was still a great burden on him decades later. Even after all these years he was in pain.

The Psalmist knows us in our situations when he writes, “I cry to you, O LORD; I say, ‘You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living.’ Give heed to my cry, for I am brought very low.”

The comfort of this psalm is that we have a God who listens to us and who understands us. He has “Borne our sins and carried our sorrows.” He has experienced betrayal, pain and suffering and has given us hope in the midst of our own disasters and tragedies. Jesus Christ has experienced all that we endure and in the midst of our human experience loves us. It is enough to hold on to him.

LET US PRAY: *God, you are worthy to be praised. You listen to us and hear our stories of struggle. Help us to cling to the Cross. Give us a sense of quiet peace that even as we live out our lives, we will boldly follow your path. You understand us and we seek to serve you and all people. In the Name of Jesus. AMEN.*

Saturday, September 3, 2022

Seven Psalms for Late Summer: Psalm 148

**Praise the LORD!
Praise the LORD from the heavens;
praise him in the heights!
Praise him, all his angels;
praise him, all his host!**

**Praise him, sun and moon;
praise him, all you shining stars!
Praise him, you highest heavens,
and you waters above the heavens!**

**Let them praise the name of the LORD,
for he commanded and they were created.
He established them for ever and ever;
he fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed.**

**Praise the LORD from the earth,
you sea monsters and all deeps,
fire and hail, snow and frost,
stormy wind fulfilling his command!**

**Mountains and all hills,
fruit trees and all cedars!
Wild animals and all cattle,
creeping things and flying birds!**

**Kings of the earth and all peoples,
princes and all rulers of the earth!
Young men and women alike,
old and young together!**

**Let them praise the name of the LORD,
for his name alone is exalted;
his glory is above earth and heaven.
He has raised up a horn for his people,
praise for all his faithful,
for the people of Israel who are close to him.
Praise the LORD!**

It is a great day! These last days of summer can be spectacular. People are gathering in the north woods of Wisconsin and around all the lakes and streams of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan for the Labor Day holiday. It is a time of family and friends and great food and plenty of conversation.

It is also a time of memories and remembrances of people not with us this year at the camp or cottage. We see around us the beginning of the changing leaves season and we know the reality

that autumn and winter will soon be with us. Yet we rejoice! In the midst of all this change, there is the distinct presence of God. The Lord God creator of the universe has given us this land, these days, our families and friends and all that surrounds us. And the promise of life together! We have so much to praise God for in our daily walk. So let us praise the name of the Lord with joy.

LET US PRAY: Praise you, O God! Praise you for each and every moment. Praise you, O God, for the laughter of children, the smiles of their parents, the joy of grandparents and seniors. Praise you, O God, for the ministries of all the baptized, for the miracle of God's Church and for the beauty of people gathering in Christ's name. Praise you, O God, for what you are doing and for what you will do for the world. Help us to live in your Joy, O God forever.

Praise you Jesus!

AMEN.
