

In Our Own Words



Christ Lutheran Church
Route 27 & Davis Mill Road (2.5 miles north of Rt. 355)
Germantown, MD



Lenten Devotional Booklet

2023

Our Look Into The Book of Psalms

In our past Lenten devotional booklets, we've looked into the Gospels and a couple of St. Paul's letter to churches he has established. For the 2023 Lenten Season we are writing on selected Psalms. The Book of Psalms has been described as one of the greatest collections of songs, prayers, and poetry ever compiled. The Psalms were a part of Jew's life and worship from childhood. The verses run the gamut of emotions from joyous worship and thanksgiving, to tears of great pain and pleading for help.

Perhaps more central from our viewpoint is the prophetic and descriptive aspects of verses pointing forward to the plan God had for the people He created and the Messiah He would send to redeem them by offering the perfect blood sacrifice for the remission of their sins.

We believe the Bible is the revealed word of God as Paul taught his spiritual son Timothy. "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;" (2 Timothy 3:16) This is also underscored by the last words of King David from whose heart many of these verses come. "The God of Israel spoke, the Rock of Israel said to me: 'When one rules over people in righteousness, when he rules in the fear of God, he is like the light of morning at sunrise on a cloudless morning,,,,,'." (2 Samuel 23:1-4)

As you read the Psalms look for these expressions of our true relationship with the living God, our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier.

Pastor Emeritus Irvin Stapf

**Wednesday, February 22 Ash Wednesday Joel 2:12-13
"Rend your heart and not your garment"**

The universal love of Jesus Christ is the motivating force behind all that He has done for us. We know that it is this same love that God has for us, because Jesus Christ, God's son, humbly taught that He and the Father "are one," unified in purpose. In the 2nd chapter of the book of Joel, Joel prophecies of the calamities that will come upon humanity prior to the second coming of Jesus Christ. Joel shares how God often uses events like famine, plague, violent weather, invading armies, and celestial phenomena to get our attention. Sometimes it works; sometimes it doesn't. National disasters or personal challenges can either turn our hearts to focus back on God or blind us and lead us further into despair.

The important thing is that we pay attention to the events going on around us or affecting us. It will help us understand how any form of physical calamity pales in comparison to God's love for us. Joel counsels that if people repent, fast, return to the Lord, and "rend your hearts and not your garments" they will feel the fullness of God's love for them. God is ready to succor and relieve each of us of the burdens we carry. He awaits to be gracious to us as we humble ourselves to pray and seek His loving mercy. When we seek Him, He immediately meets us where we are in our life with His love and promised blessings. When our hearts are rent from sin, then we are prepared to turn entirely to God and to be devoted entirely to goodness. The goodness of God, as we rightly understand it, is the most powerful inducement to repent and change our lives. Therefore, let us repent of our sins and be united in our love for His grace and enjoy His promised blessings.

Prayer: I prayer that as Lent begins, each of us can use the time to focus our attention and actions on the life of Jesus Christ and His goodness. Amen. Chris Mathews

Thursday, February 23

Psalm 51: 1-6

Have mercy, O God

On December 24, 2022, I unexpectedly had a stroke and thanks to God's mercy, my son's quick thinking and my husband's fast response, I have recovered with little or no ill effects! Since that time, I have been thinking a lot about God's power and mercy towards us. He often will take us through harrowing experiences, just to get our attention and remind us again that He is willing to forgive our sinful ways if we only confess our sins and pay attention to what He is telling us to do. Over this time, I came across an article by [Josh DeGroot](#). He said, "Psalm 51 brings together the painful reality and depth of sin and the wonder of divine mercy." It comes to us in the form of lament; it is a psalm of repentance. It's written by King David, a man after God's own heart. For a year David went on like nothing happened, until the prophet Nathan came... and this Psalm is the result of the Lord's dealing with David's sin. You might be thinking, what does this have to do with me? This psalm is for someone who has really blown it. But it isn't just for that person.

(Read today's verses.) This Psalm is for you, it is for me, and helps us to understand what true and genuine repentance is. Repentance is not something we do once and then we are done. In fact, Luther said all of life is repentance - turning from and forsaking sin and turning to Christ. He said: "**When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said 'Repent', he wanted the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.**" So, what can David teach us about true and genuine repentance? David appeals to God's love and mercy; he is brutally honest about his sin; he pleads for mercy and he resolves to obey. This may be the missing ingredient to a work of renewal in our hearts. Let's be humble and bow low before the Lord and his word."

**Prayer: Dear Father, thank You that we can thank You for the forgiveness and blessings You bestow on us each and every day!
Amen. Sue Geiger**

Friday, February 24

Psalm 51: 7-13

“Create in me a pure heart, O God”

When considering this passage, King David was in sorrow over sinning with Bathsheba. In his grief while dealing with consequences following his actions, his first response was to turn back to God and pray for a renewed mind, pure heart, and a right spirit. In this way, it can be a similar thing when we consider different struggles or temptations each of us have in our lives.

We are often faced with daily struggles that can prohibit our relationship with God. However, like David, we have a choice to turn back and repent. In the Psalm, verse 10 says, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." As followers of Christ, we are not expected to be perfect, but always be confident in our relationship with God. When we separate ourselves from Him in any aspect of our lives, we are prone to fall and experience sin.

God certainly desires us to be like David in understanding that we are always able to come back and renew our relationship with Him. Living out the truth of God's grace to us allows others to see His love for us and pursue a life that includes Him.

Prayer: Lord God in Heaven, hallowed be Your name. Thank You for the sacrifice of your son, Jesus. We thank You for understanding and knowing that we cannot walk this life alone, as we are prone to disobey and sin apart from You. You have made us to need a relationship with You, and understand as well that You are always ready to forgive and renew our spirits with Your grace and compassion. Thank You for always being there for us, even when we are not. Amen.

Jeremy Depp

Saturday, February 25

Psalm 51: 14-19

“My tongue will sing”

Like our confession at the beginning of our Sunday worship we confess that we are sinful and deserve God's judgement of death, eternal separation from Him. But then we hear that because of Jesus' sacrifice, He has delivered us and forgiven us all our sins. Therefore, we can sing, rejoice, and praise our God.

Prayer: Good Lord, in all our hymns “open my lips and my mouth to declare Your praise.” Amen.

Audrey Stapf

Monday, February 27

Psalm 32: 1-5

“Confess your transgressions”

1 Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. 2 Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit. 3 When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. 4 For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer 5 Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord. And you forgave the guilt of my sin.

Psalm 32, verses 1-5 are a part of a longer song/poem; the entire chapter pertaining to placing faith, forgiveness, and reliance in God, along with a few examples and instructions on how to do so. Verses 1-5 mainly describe the criteria for God’s forgiveness and how to pardon guilt.

Verses 1-2 discuss how to obtain God’s forgiveness by illustrating what a forgiven person looks like; one who has their sins covered, and sins that are not executed with deliberation in the eyes of the Lord. Verses 3-4 explain what happens when one tries to keep these sins hidden; the heaviness of silence, and how lack of communication with God will eat away at a person- guilt. Verse 5 wraps up these concepts by showing how one absolves themselves of guilt via admission and declaration to God of one’s sins.

I personally interpret these passages as guilt being one of the largest sins, not necessarily the actions themselves. This would make sense as the emotion and heaviness of guilt, as well as other negative emotions, are what keep a person from making honorable well-suited choices which keep them in connection with God, the lack thereof (distance/disconnection from God) being the gravest sin of all.

Prayer: Dear heavenly father, please keep us close to You throughout our life’s walk. Help us always find our way back to You when we stray from the righteous path, which is where we will always find peace, comfort, and connection with you. Amen.

Ashley Gray

Tuesday, February 28

Psalm 32: 6-8

“Pray to the Lord”

A godly one has obtained a state of consciousness that is not divided, but that is unified and whole. We each are capable of reaching this state, but it takes discipline and concentration to achieve. It is in this state when it is possible to pray unto thee. This is the time when thou mayest be found. When we are connected to the divine and united within. We can feel your love and rejoice in your presence.

Floods of great waters are tragedies and hardships that bring about extreme emotional pain where we struggle to move on. We allow fear to control us and prevent us from reaching that godly state of wholeness. In this state we are unable to come nigh unto you, because we are separated from the holy state of love consciousness.

It is possible to escape the tragedies and hardships abound in this world simply by focusing, centering and reconnecting with source love. In this state you are free from worry, fear, and shame. You can feel the presence of the divine and fear not. This is your shelter from In the storm of the divided world.

In the absence of fear, love will lead you through any troubles. It’s as if the songs are already written, and you just need to tune into the right frequency to listen and be guided where to go next. You are freed from sorrow and despair by the lyrics of a great artist that leads the way.

All you need to do is open your heart, connect your mind and listen. You will receive the wisdom and love that teaches you everything you need to know and will guide you to your destiny.

You see the world with your two eyes, but it takes a singular eye to see with the wisdom of the divine. This third eye sees only the light and radiance of the heavenly realm. If you observe the world through this eye, you will be guided with love and compassion.

Prayer: Dear Lord, please unite us in Your love. Amen. Brian Gray

Wednesday, March 1

Psalm 32: 9-10

“Trust the Lord”

Trust the Lord is about you have to trust God and forgive your sins so that God will protect you like it says in psalms 32 7, "you are my hiding place: you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance".

Prayer: God will show you the way to be like him and watch over you with his very special loving eye. Amen. Stephen Gray

Thursday, March 2

Psalm 32: 11- 33: 5

“God’s Unfailing Love”

Many sorrows come to the wicked, but abiding love surrounds those who TRUST in the Lord. So, rejoice in, all those who are his, and shout for JOY, all those who try to obey him.

He loves whatever is just and good; the earth is filled with his tender Love. Being lost in the woods as a child, God's light guided me safely home. Falling 30 feet down a mountain between my horses' front and back legs unharmed, God shielded me with his arms.

Escaping a situation in the middle of the night in a foreign country, a light from an acquaintance house was on. God protected me from danger. While on a riding trip in Jordan a Sheik and his caravan approached us in the middle of nowhere questioning the leader of our group about me, the embassy in Amman was alerted and we were escorted via another route back to the stables. Things could have gone so wrong, again, God rescued me.

As I got older, I became aware that God was always saving me from one thing or another and I continued to get anxious or stressed out. It all came down to me not TRUSTING God. I began questioning myself, do you trust God, of course I said yes, so I had to continue to live with my trials and tribulations with anxiety and stress until I truly knew what it meant to truly Trust God. I had to and have to take my worries and concerns to him, then give them to him say Thank you God and LET IT GO, JUST LET IT GO. When I do that life is so much more enjoyable.

After all GOD is GOD, he says it so many, many times TRUST ME and HAVE FAITH. Yes, life is trying, life is messy and painful and I have proof and history to testify of GOD'S UNFAILING LOVE JOY! JOY! JOY!

Prayer: Thank You Lord Jesus for showing me more of Your ways. Amen. Carol Bartels

Friday, March 3

Psalm 33: 6-11

“The Lord stands firm”

“The plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of His heart through all generations”.

As we go through this life here full of trials and tribulations, we all have a tendency to try to find fault with our God and become slowly critical of Him.

However, it is our great duty to examine the creations of our magnificent Lord and kneel to Him in awe and wonder. Verses 6-10 of this wonderful Psalm say that he spoke and all was created. By the word of the Lord, the heavens were made. He commanded and all stood firm. Our Lord has the power to thwart the nations and its peoples, then at the same time He blessed us with the ability to make our own choices and major life-changing decisions. We then turn around and blame Him for the bad outcomes that we receive.

We have a glorious creator and redeemer and He deserves our love and devotion every day. We can read the Psalms of David and immediately sense his love and praise for his Lord. We are living in a dark place filled with Satan’s evil desires. We must recognize this and make our plans to live in a way to condemn his evil ways. Jesus is always stronger than he and Jesus proved it during His 40 days of temptations. If we stay focused on praising our God, we can all be joyful overcomers as Jesus.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we love how you command and everything around us remains firm. How awesome is your great power and love. Amen

Bruce Gladhill

Saturday, March 4

Psalm 33: 12-22

“Put your hop in the Lord”

In this psalm, the author encourages the people of God to worship Him as the only One Who can save and Who knows everything in the human heart. Specifically, verses twelve through seventeen sets the scene, as the author first notes how blessed the nation is who relies on the Lord as their God, then contrasts his observation with that of the surrounding pagan nations who trust in material assets. Verses eighteen through twenty-two then wrap up the passage with the psalmist encouraging the people of God’s love and care for them, if they will look to Him for rescue and assurance. In this day and age, we may not have physical assets like chariots or horses which we rely on for protection, but we do have other substitutes, such as our bank accounts, relationships, status in society, and so on. As the world’s shadows deepen and everything seems to darken as wars rage, economies teeter on the brink of collapse, and evil appears to continue to get the upper hand, we need to ask ourselves, “Where do we place our true and ultimate hope?” Surely it won’t be put in things that are finite, as those are corruptible, but the Lord can never be corrupted, and He continues to hold the world in His hands, despite how horrible circumstances may appear.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, there are days when the evil of the world appears to block out all the good, and it seems that the sun will never shine again. However, we know that You are ultimately in control; You know the hearts and minds of all men, better than they know themselves. We ask that when dark days come, we could fix our eyes on You, our true and only Hope, remembering Your sacrifice for us and hoping for the day when You will make everything new. As the psalmist aptly writes, “Let Your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us, even as we hope in You.” We love You, and we pray these things in Jesus’ name. Amen. Rachel Depp

Monday, March 6

Psalm 121

“Help comes from the Lord “

As Christians we face many problems during our life, but with God by our side we will always be safe from evil and harm. If we truly love the Lord, we do not need to be afraid. God will never abandon us, even in the most difficult times in our lives. We will have times in our lives when we suffer and feel alone, we must always turn to Jesus our guardian. We must never forget that God is and will always be our refuge and security.

" Do not be afraid trust your life in the hands of God because he cares for you."

Prayer: Father, I thank You for You are my present help in times of my needs. In Jesus name. Amen. Helen Gibson

Tuesday, March 7

Psalm 122

“Peace be with you”

During our worship times together, our Lutheran Liturgy mentions several times about being at peace or Jesus says, “my peace I give unto you”. In our everyday lives, we very rarely think about peace or even seek it out for its great pleasure. I must admit when I was helping to raise my four children, peace hardly ever came to mind. Our family started thinking about peace when we had visions about our big one-week vacation every year. Even then, that was only seeking out some days of fun together and lack of our regular work and study times.

Now when God says, “My peace I give unto you,” we are talking a different concept that we don’t really understand. This is deep serenity. It is from God himself and it becomes paradise. Our God is a God of order and not chaos. He wants us to know peace and a sense of proper order and firmness. Our God says that He will be with us always, even to the ends of the earth. How many times do we forget about His peace when get into trials? He wants us to think about Him immediately and call upon Him, trusting Him and His Son. Mercy is continually given to us for our misgivings, and He loves us and blesses us. For the sake of my brothers and friends, He says “Peace be within you”.

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Prayer: Lord, You are the peace within my walls. Please keep me ever mindful of Your presence and love. Amen Bruce Gladhill

Wednesday, March 8

Psalm 123

“Have mercy on us, O Lord”

Psalm 123:

1. Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens.
2. Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that He have mercy upon us.
3. Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us: for we are exceedingly filled with contempt.
4. Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud.

Psalm 123 is one of a series of psalms categorized as “Songs of Degrees” or “Songs of Ascent.” It has been speculated that they are called so because they were sung by pilgrims enroute to Jerusalem and priests on the steps leading up to [ascending] the Temple. It is a song of relationships: our relationship to Our Maker.

In this psalm the poet tells us where God is: above us. The psalmist uses analogy to explain the relationship between we mortals and The Almighty. It accepts our dependence on God, recognizes our sinful nature, and pleads that God will have mercy on us so we can enter His House.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, We are but the children of Adam and so share from him the stain of his great sin. We beg that You will cleanse of this ignominy so that we may be prepared to join You in your House of many rooms. Amen.

Mack Brooks

Thursday, March 9

Psalm 124

“Help is in the name of the Lord”

God is the great rescuer. In combat situations, there is an acronym called a Nine Line which is used to call in a medical evacuation (MEDEVAC). There are nine different elements to this rescue, and it is detailed and very intentional. In the same way, God is detailed and intentional about our lives, and is dedicated to freeing us from the snares of life. He is our lifeboat when flood waters sweep over our souls. When people would tear us to shreds with their words, when they would seek to trap us in snares of gossip, malice and deceit, our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

Prayer: Father, Son and Spirit, preserve and protect us through the various trials that life throws at us. Keep us from the snares of Satan and from the plots of harmful men. Amen.

Cameron Swanson

Friday, March 10

Psalm 125

“Trust in the Lord”

The Psalm says “Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken but endures forever. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people both now and forever.

I had some thoughts on these words in the Psalm:

Those who have faith and trust the Lord are unmoved by any circumstances. The Lord surrounds and protects His people. Those whose hearts are right with God will live eternally.

God did not promise we would not experience hardships. There will be temptations and there may be rough times (illness, financial problems, family issues, etc.) but God did promise he would never leave us. Sometimes, we need to “let go” and “let God”.

We need to have faith and trust God in all things. Some of our difficulties are designed to bring us closer to our heavenly Father. Good can come out of unwanted circumstances.

Waiting and trusting God are closely connected.

“No matter what is happening, trusting God and drawing close to him are your best strategies for living well.” Quote from Book, “Jesus Lives.”

In Psalm 84 it says, “.... blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord.”

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I always have faith and trust in You. Amen.
Janice Delagrange

Saturday, March 11

Psalm 126

‘SONG OF TRUST’

When we are filled with despair, we remember today much better than the happy days in the past. The minutes of today creep by like they will never end and we find comfort and solace is so very hard to find. But IF we can put our trust in God and remember His promises to us AND the fact that He has never failed us, then we can find a way through God to look ahead of our struggles and sin to ensure His everlasting promise that good will come out of evil.

Hard, you bet! But, God loves us so much that when all we can do is cry, then our tears can become a prayer because God will reward our faithfulness even when times are so gut-wrenching tough that we can’t ever verbalize a prayer.

My mother taught us faith through hymns. Mainly she taught us what she knew to be true for herself. So when sorrow and despair overcome me, I rely on hymns and the hymn **Abide With Me**. Verse 1 is so easy to remember and in itself is a truly comforting plea to God to stay with me.

“Abide with me fast falls the eventide

The darkness deepens; Lord with me abide.

When other helpers fail and comforts flee,

Help of the helpless, oh, abide me with me.”

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, Thank You for giving me so many ways to come to you and share my joy or my sorrow. Thank you for restoring my faith through hymns that give me the words. AMEN
Jeane Flesch

Monday, March 13

Psalm 95: 1-7

“God is always with us”

Today we read that God is always with us. We are his sheep, and we need to sing with joy because He is our Father. He always takes care of us.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, I know how much You love us. Thank You for always taking care of us, even though we can't see You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Will Stapf

Tuesday, March 14

Psalm 100

“Worship the Lord with Gladness”

Today we read that Jesus loves the whole world. We love Jesus and we shout to the Lord to show our love. We are His people and we give Him thanks and praise every day, in everything we do and everywhere we go.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, Thank you that You care of the whole world. We love You; and give You thanks and praise. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Remi Stapf

Wednesday, March 15

Psalm 103: 1-10

“The Lord loves and takes care of us”

Today the Bible says that Jesus’ name is Holy. We praise Him because He takes care of us and heals our sickness. We talk to Him and say thank you and tell Him that we love Him.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, Help us have a good day today. Help us to praise You all day. In Jesus name we pray. Amen. Lani L.

Thursday, March 16

Psalm 103: 11-

“Keep God’s covenant”

This Bible passage says that Jesus helps us and loves us when we respect Him. He takes care of us forever when we keep our promise to him.

Prayer: Dear Lord, Thank you for the respect You have for us; and that You love us. Help us to love You and live for You every day. In Jesus’s name we pray. Amen. Jasmine L.

Friday, March 17

Psalm 105: 1-7

“God judges all the earth”

In this particular psalm the people recall God’s promises ... promises of old for rescue and salvation. For without such divine intervention, the people will perish in their sin, as only judgement awaits those who are unrepentant; judgement that God alone will utter.

Interestingly, the origins of this particular psalm were first proclaimed as a song of the people as recorded in 1 Chronicles 16:8-22 when King David brought forth the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. God resided there above the Ark, and so the people rejoiced. With song the people remember the wondrous works that the LORD had done. God is near and the people our saved.

In this season of Lent, we remember God’s judgment ... we acknowledge that He alone is judge. And more important, that in our brokenness, just like these people of old, judgment awaits all of us. For that is what sin does, it brings forth judgement.

But our Lord and Great Judge, Christ Jesus, has interceded on our behalf. In our baptism He has taken away our sin and any divine judgement against us, placing it all upon Himself ... paying the price of our sin with the judgement of His own death.

So, in the midst of penitent reflection, let us also sing praises to the LORD. Let us glory in His name. For God is near in His Son Jesus Christ, and in Him, has come to save.

Prayer: Precious Savior, in obedience to the will of Your Father, You came into this fallen world to save us from our sins. You are the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Lead us to that narrow way to the worship of Your Father. In Your name we pray. Amen.

Rev. Dean Stoner

Saturday, March 18

Psalm 106: 4-8

“Make God’s power known”

Our God is an all-powerful God! Even when we sin against the Lord and do whatever we want to do. God has a plan and in spite of the fact, we ignore His great goodness and Power. When His children were led out of Egypt and shown many miracles before them, they still sinned and complained about all their discomfort. In the same breath, they begged for God’s prosperity and joy.

When their fathers were in Egypt, they gave no thought to the Father’s great miracles. They easily forgot His many kindnesses. Their rebellion was great, even by the Red Sea. Yet He saved them for His namesake to make His mighty Power known.

Our Father’s great mercy and power should never be forgotten and we need to trust and rely on Him for everything.

Prayer: Oh, gracious Lord, please continue filling us with your blessings and mercy. Blessed be your name! Amen. Jan Gladhill

Monday, March 20

Psalm 142

“Cry aloud to the Lord”

At times we believe we don't need to pray; we think we can handle our problem without praying about it. This is when the Lord puts us in a situation that overwhelms us, we hit a brick wall, we realize we can't handle our problem without praying. In Psalm 142 David was hiding from Saul, he was losing hope and was deeply depressed. At times we may become depressed and unable to pull ourselves out. These are the times we can come to the Lord and like David express our true feelings and be assured the Lord is our refuge.

Psalm 142 teaches that we must first know God personally through repentance and faith. We must have a personal commitment to Christ. There will be times when our Christian friends and family will not stand with us, we must follow Christ no matter what anyone says. We must never forget the commitment we have made to Jesus Christ.

Prayer: Lord, you are our refuge at all times. Help us to always seek You in all our peaks and valleys. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Helen Gibson

Tuesday, March 21

Psalm 143: 1-7

“Meditate on all God's works”

There are so many things in life that we do not understand. Situations, events, and happenings that we wish were different. Trials, sickness, even our own responses that aren't as we want them. At times, even as verse 4 declares, our spirit is overwhelmed and our heart is appalled. There is so much in us and around us in life that we know is not as our gracious Lord created it. Yet in our Christian faith we are told “give thanks in all things”.

In verse 5 we are called to “remember the days of old”, to look back at mankind's creation. We meditate on how our Lord has worked in His world through all of mankind's unexplainable, undesired happenings. These meditations often happen lying in bed in the dark of night before we fall off to sleep. We consider all that God has done in all these times past. It is why our continual reading of Holy Scripture, God's inspired word, is so important for our lives.

We begin to comprehend more fully that this is God's world, not ours'. “It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves: We are His people and sheep of His pasture.”(PS.100:3) And even though we have done our sinful best to take over and destroy His creation He will complete all He has begun. This does not give us all the answers to our questions, but it does absolutely assure us that we can trust our gracious Lord to bring all things to their right conclusion and for our good.

Prayer: Holy Lord God, my Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, quite my soul. Help me to leave all the unexplained trials and directions of life in Your hands. Deepen my love for Your Holy Word. Bring from it the fruit of my meditations. As I see Your hand at work in all life let me rejoice and give thanks in all things. Only through the merits of Christ my Savior. Amen.

Pastor Emeritus Irvin Stapf

Wednesday, March 22

Psalm 143: 6-12

“Teach me to do your will O God”

According to Augustine of Hippo. this psalm was likely written during the period of the rebellion of David's son Absalom. So, this is a Penitential Psalm. The type that might be used by kings as they were leading their troops into battle. An urgent and deeply repentant plea.

Oh my, what despair David is feeling when he wrote this psalm. It clearly appears he was terrified of God turning His face away from him. Especially terrifying when one considers both the things that David did that were indeed sinful but also the love David had for the Lord. It is like the worst thing you have ever done that reflected so horribly on a loving parent. We are given everything and then behave in the worst possible way. So how do we get out of that mess? We confess and plead for mercy. We can't defend our behavior as we clearly knew better.

Throwing yourself on someone's mercy is a painful heart and gut-wrenching thing to do. But what else is there? We know that God will forgive us BUT we have to confess our sins and beg for His forgiveness. Only then is it freely given.

So how do we not recreate our current disaster? We pray for wisdom, discernment, and courage to do God's will. And as David, we implore God to teach us how to do HIS will.

PRAYER: David said it best in verse 10, “Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground.” Amen.
Jeane Flesch

Thursday, March 33

Psalm 145:1-7

“Meditate on God's Word”

The notes in my Bible state this is a hymn to the Lord for his mighty acts and benevolent virtues, which are the glory of His kingdom rule. And we are to praise Him for all He has done.

I read in verses 5 and 6, “...and I will meditate on your wonderful works. They will tell of the power of your awesome works, and I will proclaim Your deeds.” This makes me think of all God created, not only all of its beauty, but how difficult it is to comprehend how He did it all!

On Thursday, July 28, 2022 I was sitting at the kitchen table around noon. It had rained and when I looked out there was a complete, beautiful rainbow in our back yard, just below the trees!! Art and I couldn't believe it.

On Saturday, December 3, 2022 Art and I were eating lunch when we noticed that in the left side of our backyard there was bright sunlight: however, in the right side there was rain coming down!

Only God could do this! That is why I will do what verse 1 of Psalm 145 says, “I will exalt your, my God the King, I will praise your name forever and ever.”

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may I always praise You in my thoughts, words, and deeds. Amen.

Janice Delagrance

Friday, March 24

Psalm 145: 8-13

“God slow to anger and rich in love”

As I read the Psalms telling of God’s goodness towards us, it bothers me that they appear to be speaking almost entirely of our life here on earth, which is short compared to the eternity we will spend afterward with God in Heaven.

Perhaps this is excusable, I don’t think we can really imagine what life in Heaven is like. If it is just time going on and on and on, that doesn’t sound like a big improvement. If it is no time: living in the past, the present, and the future all at once, it is something we have not experienced and cannot imagine.

I expect it is bet to leave it up to God. He knows better than we do what’s good for us. Think the best you have ever experienced, plus some, lasting forever.

Prayer: Thank You, God. You are better than the Best. Help us place our trust in You and do Your will. Amen. Art Delagrang

Saturday, March 25

Psalm 145: 14-21

"Speak the praise of the Lord"

Why did God create us? I often ask that question sarcastically, as: did He make a mistake? But God doesn’t make mistakes. I know sometimes it’s hard to believe that (i.e., politics), but it’s true. Here the Bible says He did it out of love. Unrequited love is the most sincere form of love, perhaps the only true form.

I think God has tried to instill it in us. Has it worked? Looking around at the world you can find a few examples, but on the whole, I would say we haven’t done very well.

He has given us an example in His Only Son. Could you live like that? It doesn’t make sense in today’s reality. I try, but I have trouble, even with my friends, who are less perfect. Sacrifice? I have trouble even giving up candy for Lent, unless it is a kind I don’t like.

How should we approach God, knowing that we are far from perfect? Don’t worry: He knows that. Jesus’ Apostles were far from perfect, and look at what they accomplished!

Prayer: Dear Lord, assist us on the path you have given us. We know that we cannot accomplish what You want from us without Your assistance. Help us receive it graciously, and then pass it on to others. Amen. Art Delagrang

Monday, March 27

Psalm 130

“Hope in the Lord”

God knows our suffering, misfortunes and feelings of hopelessness. He is merciful, loving and attentive to our needs. No matter what we've done or what we are facing God is there showing his compassion and love. If we believe and confess our sins, we are assured of the Lord's forgiveness. God is holding nothing against us, we can talk with him about anything, he is always there for us.

**Lord, I thank you for always being there for me in my time of need, never judging me, but offering me love and forgiveness.
Amen.**

Helen Gibson

Tuesday, March 28

Psalm 131

“The Joy of Worship”

The city of Jerusalem was located within the Tribe of Judah. Along with the Tribe of Simeon these were the southernmost of the twelve tribes of Israel. The Temple of Solomon, Israel's worship center, was located in this city. It was the place God had commanded all male Jews to come for worship on three great festival occasions annually. Passover being one of them. Jerusalem is on a hill about 2000 feet in elevation. Wherever anyone lived in Israel they were said to “go up to Jerusalem”. Hebrew families would make their three annual pilgrimages to the city for worship. Psalms 120 to 134 are called “Songs of Ascent”. From memory travelers would chant these Psalms as they walked the well-worn road.

Psalm 131 speaks of the heart attitude with which they came before the Lord. They've known of His gracious provision throughout their history, protection from enemies, forgiveness of their sins, provision for daily life, and the promise of a coming Redeemer. There are many matters and situations of life hard to understand, some “even too wonderful” to comprehend. Because the God they worship has chosen them and shown Himself trustworthy they could “still and quiet their souls like a weaned child with its mother”. With closing declaration, “O Israel, put your hope in the Lord both now and forevermore.”, they made clear this composure of a God trusting life, and joy of worship was for all people, including you and me.

**Prayer: Father of all grace, when we gather for worship stir our hearts with the joy of coming before our living Lord. Grant us the same quietness of soul, sense of gratitude, celebration, and anticipation as our brothers and sisters of Israel. In knowing Jesus we have even more reason to trust and praise Your Holy Name.
Amen.**

Pastor Emeritus Irvin Stapf

Wednesday, March 29

Psalm 132: 1-9

“Saints Sing for joy”

This is a beautiful Psalm making memory of David’s endurance and hardships and makes mention of his vow to erect a dwelling place for the Lord. We know it was David’s desire, but his son Solomon who actually built it. It was David’s great desire to have a worship place for the Mighty One of Jacob. He mentions Ephrathah or the area close to Bethlehem, and all the Lord’s people seeking a place to worship at His footstool.

I remember in my early life of having the absolute joy of worship and new relationship with the Lord. There is great strength in that joy we have for Him and David saw it also with his desire to build the Lord’s House.

Prayer: Lord, we seek out a place that is Holy, where we may worship at Your footstool. Blessed be Your Holy Name. Amen.

Jan Gladhill

Thursday, March 30

Psalm 132: 10-18

“A lamp for the anointed one”

When King David retrieved the Ark of the Covenant, he vowed to build a house for God. He wanted to make a permanent dwelling place for God, where he could be honored and glorified. Also, so Israel could experience God’s blessing.

God relieved David of his vow. Then God made a promise to David that he will never take back: “I will place one of your descendants on your throne. (v. 11-12).” David’s royal line would never end. If the kings obeyed God (“keep My covenant and My testimony which I shall teach them”), their dynasty would continue forever.

God also promises to protect the sanctuary and mount Zion which would be blessed with food for the poor, salvation for the priests and joy of the saints (v. 15-16).

Verses 17;18 promise a Messiah coming from David. The horn to grow for David refers to one of his mighty descendants. The horn is a symbol of strength. David’s son, Solomon who was indeed, a glorious king. But these verses look ahead even further to another descendant of David, Jesus Christ the Messiah who reigns forever. The power, might, and glory of the Messiah will last forever.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you for David and his faithfulness that blessed us. We thank you for his descendant, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the fulfillment of your promise to David to give him an everlasting dynasty, a descendant who would sit on his throne forever. Amen.

Jane Simcox

33-Mar 31

Psalm 138

“The Lord Endures Forever”

This psalm of David is a psalm of Thanksgiving, a declaration of the goodness of God, to the saint and sinner alike.

The psalm is situated with such precision in its placement aside psalm 137, where in scripture we see an excellent blend of boldness to confess before God and humility to kneel before him. David opens this passage up by declaring his entire heart of praise to God. This means David consciously pushed aside everything of this world, to enable him to rightfully give thanks to God. We cannot rightfully praise or devote ourselves to God with a divided or broken heart. David did not send up empty praises, as he knew and respected the great lovingkindness of God toward him. The psalm indicates the presence of trouble, and promptly recognizes the need of God’s hand to intervene where he is weak.

The psalm teaches us to praise God in the presence of an unbelieving and wrongly believing world. Adversity will present itself in various forms throughout our lives, but our answer will always be in one form, God. The heavens and earth declare the glory and expanse of God’s divineness, and our humble praise places us in position to receive God’s grace. God’s covenant with us dates back to Abram, and we may struggle with the tension between belief and unbelief, but God is ever faithful and just. We need but to devote ourselves to him, as he shown through to shed blood of Jesus Christ.

Prayer: Dear heavenly Father, we thank You for Your loving kindness and for sharing Your truth. All the earth shall praise You, from the peasant to the king. We humbly sing Your praise and shout hallelujah. We place our full faith in Your grace, mercy, and love. Use us for the glory of Your will. In the holy and precious name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

Kris Johnson

Saturday, April 1

Psalm 139 :1-12

“The Lord is Always near His Children”

No matter where you go, even to the farthest reaches of the world; you will not be without God. The Psalm also speaks beyond geography; this includes the emotional or even spiritual. There are times each of us does not feel close to God. We feel, due to a perceived silence, that God is distant. However, if we make God's proximity based on our feelings, we will find that our God is untrustworthy and fleeting. It may compel us to think that we are responsible for drawing this deity closer, perhaps by the genuineness of our prayers, the reverence of our worship, or the sincerity of our hearts. This is not the God of this Psalm nor all of Scripture.

God is so close that He even took on our flesh and dwelt in our midst (John 1). He became one of us and for those who call upon Him, He is ever-present. Once, a young man came to my office. He knew the pain of self-destructive choices and behaviors. He said, “Pastor, I have to find Jesus!” Knowing he was baptized in the living and Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, I said, “Son, your God has never left you nor abandoned you; you just turned your back away from Him. He is beside you and has sustained you in all things.”

By your baptism, you are a child of God; no matter where you are, He speaks to you consistently through His inerrant and infallible Word and His holy Sacraments. He is not only ALWAYS present, but He will uphold you! Even in the farthest reaches of mind, body, or spirit, His right hand of favor will give you all that you need to sustain not only this body and life but provides and sustains saving faith in Him.

Prayer: O God, teach us to always remember, at all times and all places, Your eyes are upon us and that all our deeds are recorded in Your book. Blot out all our sins with the blood of Christ Jesus and cause us to walk in Your fear and love knowing that You are always near. Amen Rev. Dr. Cary Larson Presiding Pastor, TAALC

“In You Lord I have taken refuge”

King David has taken refuge in the Lord. He is enduring hardships and struggles, yet he begins with praise and confidence in God.

Let me never be ashamed. David trusts that he was not ashamed to call upon the LORD. God answers by never allowing His servant to never be ashamed before his enemies and adversaries. Jesus conquered our shame when he died on the cross.

Deliver me in Your righteousness. David is under attack, he trusts in God, he asks God to act righteously on his behalf, and to deliver him.

Keep me from the trap which they have secretly laid for me. It's clear David is in anguish and feared for his life. He knew that God sees his anguish. He knew his enemies wanted to trap and destroy him, but he also trusted that God could rescue him from his enemies. Here David calls upon others to praise God too, and encourages them to trust in him.

Into Your hand I commit my spirit. David unconditionally commits himself to God. Jesus spoke these same words before he died on the cross. Because of Jesus' resurrection, we can approach God in prayer the same way as David, in confidence that God is our refuge.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we pray that you are our rock and our refuge. We commit our spirit to you. For Your righteous name's sake we pray that your will be glorified that we may serve you. In Jesus name we pray. Jane Simcox

“Trust in the Lord”

In this passage (Psalm 31:9-16) David is pleading for God's help in his life situation. This past year I had the privilege of seeing the Sight and Sound production of “David”—twice. When I read the Psalms, it helps me visualize David's anguish in my mind's eye. I remember that he sincerely asked for God's forgiveness when he sinned and that he sought God as the answer to all of his distress. He trusted God for what he needed. He sang praises to God for His unfailing love. He also sang praises to God for His past, present and future help!

I am reminded of a song we sing:

My hope is in You, Lord!

My trust is in You, Lord!

My strength is in You, Lord!

Prayer: Lord God, I want to do the same and be a woman after Your own heart always! Amen. Carolyn Shriver

Wednesday, April 5

Psalm 31: 19-24

“He preserves the faithful”

This psalm reminds us that the Lord provides so many things in this life for us that it’s hard to comprehend sometimes. Oftentimes, the gifts that we have received can be overshadowed with the trials and tribulations of this world. One thing is for certain though, and that he does preserve His faithful.

No matter the difficulties of this life, we have the promise of eternal life, free of the trials that we encounter in this world. Words may slander us, we may even feel alone or abandoned by others, but we know that with a strong heart full of faith, that He will give us the strength to preserve and He will preserve us in eternal life.

Prayer: Lord, there is nothing in this world that we can offer You other than our praises and thanks to You for all that You provide for us. No matter our status in life, rich or poor, whether we are in sickness or in health, You are there for Your children. Lord, we ask that You preserve us, Your faithful, and continue to provide for us in all that we do. You give us peace, not a kind of peace that this world can give, but only the kind of peace that comes through belief in You and in the life everlasting. Please bless us in all that we do, we ask this through You son, Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever, amen.

Chris Clarke

April 6, Holy Thursday

Psalm 116: 1-9

“O Lord save me!”

Today’s Verses:

1 I love the Lord, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy.
2 Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live.
3 The cords of death entangled me; the anguish of the grave came over me; I was overcome by distress and sorrow. 4 Then I called on the name of the Lord: “Lord, save me!” 5 The Lord is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion. 6 The Lord protects the unwary; when I was brought low, he saved me. 7 Return to your rest, my soul, for the Lord has been good to you. 8 For you, Lord, have delivered me from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling, 9 that I may walk before the Lord in the land of the living. The Lord will not forsake you.

As Martin Luther wrote in the hymn, A Mighty Fortress is Our God, “The Body they may kill, God’s Truth Abideth still, His Kingdom is Forever.”

This Psalm reminds us that no matter the troubles that we may encounter in this life, His Kingdom is forever and He will never leave us. He is with his faithful, He will be there in our hour of need and give us that which is forever, His Kingdom.

Prayer: Lord, we come to You as poor miserable sinners and ask that You grant us peace and salvation from the toils and pain of this world. Be with us in all that we do. We pray to You that You would not forsake us, but redeem us and grant us life everlasting. We know that without You we are nothing. We humbly ask for Your saving grace in our hour of need. We ask all of these things through Jesus Christ, Your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever, Amen.

Chris Clarke

Good Friday, April 7

Psalm 22:1, 9-18

“Bulls surround me”

I’ve recently come home from a brief stay in the hospital. When we are ill, or in pain for any reason we rightly want to be made well as soon as possible. An extended time in pain is not a natural or God-desired state for us. Yet the Roman capital punishment was intentionally designed to inflict the greatest physical suffering. Even to draw a next breath the crucified one had to put horrible pressure on nail-pierced feet in order to relieve pressure on his chest.

The words of this Psalm were written hundreds of years before Christ, yet a clear prophetic description of the event on the Jerusalem hill called Golgotha. The Psalm goes on to speak of God being involved in the person’s birth, his relationship to the Lord, and the depth of his later suffering by crucifixion, those causing his pain, the proper religious leaders, the Jewish law scholars, are described as “bulls”, “lions”, and “dogs”.

We need to take this picture very seriously each time we confess at the beginning of our worship service, “I am by nature sinful and unclean. I justly deserve Your present and eternal punishment.” That is the pain, suffering, and death you and I justly deserve. There is no way to sugar-coat it. We deserve eternal separation from God! Yet, the awesome depth of God’s love caused Him to receive *our* punishment into *His* own being. In Christ, and Christ alone, we are cleansed and given a new live.

Prayer: Father God, we cannot repay You. We can only say, “Thank You”, and ask of Your grace to help us live to the honor of Your Name through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Pastor Emeritus Irvin Stapf

Saturday, April 8

Psalm 23

“Fear no evil”

Psalm 23 today ‘s reading is a song of David. The motif is that in life or death; In times of want or plenty God is good and worthy of our trust. He is our shepherd and takes care of us.

It is a short psalm that is familiar to multitudes of people. For me this is a special psalm in that I memorized it early in life. On my first combat tour in Vietnam as a young 1st Lieutenant commanding a small Long-range reconnaissance patrol company, I was ordered to make an assault up a jungle covered mountain to silence enemy anti-aircraft machine guns, firing at supporting aircraft from reinforced caves. I knew we would take heavy casualties and many of us would be killed or wounded. After putting the unit in assault formation and starting up the mountain, I was reciting this psalm to myself, when I got to the part of walking in the valley of death and fearing no evil because our Lord was with me -**it was my epiphany**. I suddenly understood that the Lord was with me and it did not matter whether I lived or died then and there. It was the most freeing thought I ever had. My task was to execute this mission and I needed to focus on my men and try to keep casualties as low as possible. We had gone a couple of hundred yards, when I received an order to abandon the attack and bring the company back to link up with the battalion. Since that time, I walked many valleys of death without fear of evil. I know that many times evil wins, but that is no reason to fear or be to subject to the evil. As we are told in Proverbs 9: 10, “Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”

This psalm assures us that the Lord will take care of us (his flock). If we truly trust Him, we are assured in verse 6 that ...surely goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our lives and we will dwell in the house of the Lord – forever.

Prayer: Lord God Almighty, let us be always mindfully that Your love for us is so great that You sent Your only begotten Son Christ Jesus to become one of us and through his shed blood on that cross He paid the ultimate price for our sins. Jesus is indeed the Way, Amen.

Joe Flesch

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