

The Psalms: Songs For The Journey

What does a well-grounded faith look like? You might want to answer that question in many ways, but some of the answers would certainly include a vibrant life of prayer and worship, and the capacity to be honest with God: to have the sort of robust relationship of love we would all like to have with our own parents. Right in the middle of the bible – and this is perhaps no coincidence – is a book to help us do just that.

The psalms formed the heart of Israel's own worshipping life, but they are more than just 'songs for the sanctuary'. They describe life with God as it really is: its ups and downs, its joys, wonders, anxieties and failings. The psalmists didn't cower before a distant deity, they worshipped a loving Creator with whom they could share their whole life. The psalms teach us what and how to pray, as well as how to worship God with our masks off.

Over these 5 weeks we will explore different psalms and discover how they both speak to us, and can shape how we speak to God. My prayer is that the book of Psalms – and there are 150 jewels to discover – will become for each of us, and for our church, a bedrock in our personal prayer lives and public worship.

May 4th: Psalm 116 – God saves us
(other lectionary readings: Acts 2:14a,36-41, Luke 24:13-35)

A psalm which praises God for his power to rescue. Written after the storm has passed, the psalmist looks back on a difficult time in his/her life and reflects on how God rescued him/her. 'I love the Lord, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy.' (v1)

May 11th: Psalm 23 – God shepherds us
(other lectionary readings: Acts 2:42-47, John 10:1-10)

The most famous psalm of all: but what does it mean for God to be our shepherd? In six short verses, King David describes God's work in our lives with delightful simplicity and beautiful imagery. A psalm for all occasions.

May 18th: Psalm 31 – Comfort in the crisis
(other lectionary readings: Acts 7:55-end, John 14:1-14)

Unlike Psalm 116, this psalm is written in the midst of a storm. The writer pleads for God's presence in the crisis, and finds hope. A psalm which speaks especially to all facing trials at the moment.

May 25th: Psalm 66 – Abundant praise
(other lectionary readings: Acts 17:22-31, John 14:15-21)

It is tempting sometimes to see the psalms as all about us. Our relationship with God, whatever we need for our lives right now. But the psalms – as with every book of the bible – are ultimately about God: who He is, His greatness and glory. This psalm puts God at centre stage and praises Him extravagantly. It uplifts and also challenges us: are we as extravagant in our praise as the psalmist?

June 1st: Psalm 68 (v1-14,32-35) – God's power and justice
(other lectionary readings: Acts 1:6-14, John 17:1-11)

God's power and justice has consequences for our world. This psalm both testifies to God's power to save and bless his people: but also his judgement of the wicked. It is this aspect of the psalms that sometimes troubles people: how do we interpret such texts today, and integrate them in our praise and prayer lives?