



Psalm 73

BOOK 10

1 *For I was envious and angry,
 as those who are pure in heart.
 How long for me, my pain had almost smothered,
 my steps had nearly slipped,
 for I was envious of the arrogant,
 I saw the prosperity of the wicked.*

2 *For their heart is righteous,
 their behavior is upright and their
 speech is not deceitful as others are;
 they are not plagued like other people.
 How they pride in their malice,
 how they speak with a boastful
 heart, they speak with such arrogance,
 their hearts are exalted with pride,
 they scoff and speak with malice.
 Surely they do not reckon upon sin,
 they say, "What trouble upon trouble,
 and their tongues sweep over the earth.*

3 *For they say, "We will never be troubled,
 and need we fret?"
 Yet they say, "How can we be troubled?"
 For they know the secret things;
 for they are not afraid.
 For they say, "We are secure because
 we have made our hands clean,
 and we will not be troubled."
 For all day long I have been plagued,
 and my pain has never ceased.*

4 *"If I had said, 'I will talk on in this manner,'
 I would have been untrue to the words
 of your children.*

5 *But when I thought how to understand this,
 it seemed to me a monstrous work,
 until I went into the sanctuary of God,
 then I perceived their end.*

6 *Finally you say them in slippery places,
 you make them fall in ruin.
 How they are distressed in a moment,
 they are utterly broken.*

7 *They are like a dream when one awakes,
 or like a vision when one awakes.
 When you are wakened, you despise these phantasms.*

8 *When you are wakened, you despise them,
 when you are wakened, you despise them.*

9 *They are like a dream when one awakes,
 or like a vision when one awakes.*

10 *When you are wakened, you despise them,
 when you are wakened, you despise them.*

ST LAWRENCE MARTYR CATHOLIC COMMUNITY
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THE PSALMS: TIMELESS PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

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Session 4

Tues., 9 Feb. 2010 / Sat., 13 Feb. 2010

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- 'Languaging': Christian, Jewish AND Jewish-Christian
- Forms of Psalms: Praise / Lament
- Spiritual reflection / Prayer

[For next session: read Brueggemann, Praying the Psalms, pp. 63-81 (chapt 5)]

Session 5: Tues., 16 Feb./Sat., 20 Feb. 2010

- Vengeance – Compassion – Intensity in/of the Psalms
- Psalms in the Canon / New Testament / Early Christianity
- Psalms in Worship and Prayer
- Spiritual reflection / Prayer

Principal *forms* of the Psalms:

- * Praise
- * Lament

- * when you write – you write *something* > ‘*form*’
- * every culture has recognizable forms
- * ancient cultures have forms not always familiar to us
- * identifying / recognizing form can tell us what kind of knowledge/information to expect

- * Hermann Gunkel > Claus Westermann
 - > 2 basic forms of Pss > Praise & Lament
- * Praise > ‘declarative’ or ‘narrative’
- * Lament > individual or communal

Praise

- * praise – life – grateful awe > connected / go together
 - * e.g. toddler given new toy > ‘whee!’
- * praise cries out to other(s) > focuses on source & gift
- * here a *religious* ‘whee!’ or ‘wow’
- * we must be taught how to thank, but not how to praise

- * language used > praise / thank / magnify / bless / exalt / glorify / sing to

- * reason is given (following *yk* ‘ki’=‘for/because/since/while ...’):
 - * for God’s regular, constant activity & care
 - > ‘declarative praise’
 - * for some special action or deliverance from God
 - > ‘narrative-thanksgiving’ song
 - * = an act of *memory* > important for identity & life

e.g. **Ps 148** (declarative praise – hymn)

* vss 1-6: praise from the *heavens*

* vs 7-10: praise from the *earth*

(note again: 'heavens & earth' = all of creation)

* vss 11-12: praise from *people*

* 'ki' / 'for' – vss 5 & 13

* all creatures/humans called on to praise God = Creator

* praise to God from whole cosmic 'temple'



Example of narrative praise-thanksgiving (individual) > **Ps 30**

* remembers distress/lament > return to praise

Lament

- * if praise is a religious 'whee!' > lament is a religious 'ouch!'
 - a cry of pain
- * over 1/3 of Pss (50+) are formally lament
- * also found in other OT books (e.g. Jer., Habakkuk, Job, Lam.) and in NT (e.g. Mk 10:47) and by Jesus (e.g. Mk 14:34ff, 15.34 (use of Ps 22))
- * 3-fold structure > You! (God) / I (we) / they (enemies)
 - * goes directly to God / 'head office'
 - w/ 'how long'/'why' (= cries of pain, not request for info)
 - * I/we (lamerter) – afflictions in broad, understandable terms (sickness / danger / aging / death)
 - * they/enemies – sometimes outside community, but more often w/in > plot – attack against psalmist
 - * psalmist sometimes suggest what God might do to enemies

- * Communal lament

 - > e.g. **Ps 74**

- * lament over destruction of Jerusalem

- * vss 1-11: why, God? – the temple is destroyed by enemies

- * vss 12-17: shifts to God as Creator subduing chaos & creating (old mythic language clear here)

- * vss 18-23: cry to God to remember and act

- * here again temple – creation – temple in structure

* Individual lament

> e.g. **Ps 22**

* one of best known in Xian 'world' – use in NT – on Jesus' lips

* vss 1: why? – psalmist 'forsaken' by God

* vss 2-21: lament – innocent suffering at hands of enemies / God is far off / enemies are close

* vss 21-31: hymn of praise / call to assembly of faithful / moves to include all people & generations

NEED TO RECOVER / RE-APPROPRIATE LAMENT

- * Costly loss of sense of lament – especially in our prayer
- * not comfortable with feelings (pleasant or unpleasant) & expressing > reflected in our prayers (from early Xian neo-Platonism?)
- * Our problems with lament
 - * against faith? > corrects naïve, overly rationalistic faith // biblical faith = whole person / not failure of faith, but rather act of faith
 - * pushes our limits? > strong desire to find meaning / temptation to settle for cheap, easy answers / need to speak confusion to God
 - * against charity? > corrects naïve, overly romantic charity / negativity, injustice brokenness part of real world / give it to God (more than others!) = big enough to handle / feelings real – in me & in psalms / often if express pain > healing can begin / may be that *failure* to lament is against charity!
- * Where settings for lament (personal & communal) today?

THE PSALMS: TIMELESS PRAYERS

*** OF CHRISTIANS**

*** OF JEWS**

*** OF JEWS & CHRISTIANS**

- * Pss are central to Christian liturgy & spirituality
 - * in the NT (esp. Paul / Hebrews / passion narratives of gospel accounts)
 - * in Eucharist & other liturgical settings
 - * in Liturgy of the Hours
 - * in religious hymnody & prayer forms

Dangers from Christian 'side':

- * to 'Christianize' (seeing the Pss as speaking of / presaging XC)
- * to spiritualize / sanitize / generalize Ps material
- * to 'weed out' the difficult / uncomfortable Ps material (e.g. parts of Pss 109 / 137) > stay on 'safe ground'
- * Xian prayer & spirituality are diminished & trivialized if we neglect the Jewishness of the Pss



- * Pss = a JEWISH 'collection of collections'
 - * from a variety of periods / places / experiences / 'theologies' of Israel > Judaism (which one(s)?)
- * JEWISH in expressing/languageing & in claims of faith
- * These prayers are 'incarnational' / very concrete and 'immediate' (> awkward for us)
 - > no room for slipping out from or around them
- * not 'serene' (like Greek Platonic influence for Xian tradition)
 - * immediate connection between thought-feeling < > speech
 - * > not 'polite' spirituality

- * liberated & liberating, passionate prayer
 - > transforming (of pray-er & 'Pray-ee')
- * hatred / anger / vengeance toward enemies & God!
 - real wrestling in a deep & honest love relationship

- * Zion (temple) / Jerusalem focus
- * Torah (in all meanings / aspects) at center
 - > obedience (moral underpinning) / fear of LORD / assurance

- * free choices given > consequences
- * God doesn't let us rest easily for long ('pioneer' rather than 'settler' theology)

Jewish < > Christian

- * Pss = timeless prayers of PEOPLE OF GOD
- * Praying with / for / as Jews
 - * stand alongside of
 - * conversion of our Xian oppressive / intolerant 'parts'
 - * do not be presumptuous when speak of praying as Jews
- * Dialogue / journey alongside each other
 - > must be real / honest / rough & tumble (wrestle)
- * Careful not mix together or water down
 - > 'lowest common denominator'
- * Take each other with a new kind of seriousness

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[For next session: read Brueggemann, Praying the Psalms, pp. 63-81 (chapt 5); also read scriptural texts treated and note any questions or observations]

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Psalm 42

A Psalm of David

Psalm 42

1 As the deer for the living waters,
so my soul longs for you, O God.

My soul thirsts for you, O God,
and my heart desires you, O God.

For my heart is parched,
and my eyes are weary,
because I have said,
“When will I come and see you,
O God?”

My tears have been my food,
and my hunger has been my bread,
because of your voice, O God.

My heart has said,
“When will I come and see you,
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