

AT THE
FOOT
OF THE
CROSS

**TREASURES
FROM THE PSALMS**
(Part 3)

Diocese of West Malaysia

Archdeacon Eddie Ong
(Editor)

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Foreword



*Archbishop Datuk Ng Moon Hing
Province of South-East Asia
Diocese of West Malaysia*

I am so pleased that we have now completed this three-part series of Lenten Meditation on the Psalms with so many willing writers and contributors. But our Lenten Mediation series of 'At the Foot of the Cross' has crossed its 30th year of existence and production. It is a dual-fold resource for our church where we can produce affordable Lenten Meditation lessons for our parishioners and beyond, and at the same time encourage our local clergy and lay leaders to write relevant and contextual messages relating to our joy and struggles in our walk with the Lord Jesus Christ. This tool is meant to encourage many to meditate, ponder and receive messages from God as well as to install prayer habits daily. It can be used anytime of the year, particularly during lent.

This series of Psalms sets the tone of prayer and praise. Our lives are full of episodes which need to be covered by lots of prayers and lots of praises. We are so privileged to know Christ and become God's children. This is an added dimension to our lives with special unction and assistance from on high, without which we can be quite vulnerable and lonely. Our constant seeking and abiding in God's word and teaching becomes essential for our healthy and peaceful growth. We do not only wish to strengthen ourselves but also to encourage and help others to grow together in mission, evangelism and discipleship.

May this Lenten Meditation booklet be a source of encouragement and help in your growth and journey of life to fulfil his mission and ministry joyously and willingly.

Shalom!

+ mpmoonhing

DIOCESE OF WEST MALAYSIA
(DIOCESAN STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION COMMISSION)

Diocesan Theme 2011-2020
Decade of Mission and Networking

Mission Challenge
One in Christ

Our Mission & Themes

In response to the Gospel and the Mission Mandate of our Lord Jesus Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we seek to make disciples, to bring wholeness in the midst of our changing society and to grow our dioceses to the glory of God.

2011 Sowing the Seeds
2012 Nurturing the Shoots
2013 Optimising God's Vineyard
2014 Guarding the Yield
2015 Fostering Ventures

Enriching Partnership 2016
Enhancing Ownership 2017
Releasing Talents 2018
Bringing in the Sheaves 2019
Blowing the Trumpet 2020

DIOCESAN THEME 2019 - BRINGING IN THE SHEAVES

Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. He who continually goes forth weeping bearing seed for sowing shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him. (Psalm 126:5-6)

“Bringing in the Sheaves” is a follow up from “sowing, nurturing, optimising and guarding the yield” (2011-2014), working together “fostering, enriching, enhancing and releasing talents” (2015-2018). Next year, we will “blow the trumpets” of celebration, thanksgiving and praise to our God, who through the Holy Spirit enabled the Diocese of West Malaysia in the last 40 years-plus to multiply in worshippers, congregations, church buildings, finances and enough clergy and deaconesses to pastor the growing diocese. As we bring in the sheaves, we bring in with tears of joy, sacrifices of praise, and hearts of thanksgiving. In the words of Archbishop Ng Moon Hing, “As God has blessed us, we are to bless others. We must continue our Mission in faith to partners in Bangladesh, Myanmar, the deaneries in the Province of South-East Asia, and even beyond. The work at our door step must also be a priority. Discipleship, equipping the lay people must also be our attention.”

Archdeacon Eddie Ong

LENT 2019

What is Lent?

The word 'Lent' originates from the Latin word '*quadragesima*' or Greek '*tessarakoste*' which is the 'fortieth' day before Easter. In old English, Lent simply is springtime (or '*lenz*' in German and '*lente*' in Dutch). In the early years of the Church it was confined to a few days before Easter. But by the Fourth Century it was extended to forty days before Easter, a period associated with the forty days and nights that Jesus spent fasting in the desert just after his baptism. Lent is still observed for this duration today.

When is Lent?

Ash Wednesday heralds the start of the season of Lent. There are six Sundays in Lent, all of which are distinguished as celebrations of the Resurrection on which Christians feast. Six days are added to complete the original forty days of the season.

Why Lent?

The main purpose of Lent is to enrich our awareness of the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps the individual four letters, L, E, N, T, will assist us in appreciating the significance of his mission.

Listening & Learning

Lent is primarily about our walk with the Lord – to listen, to learn and to obey the words of the Lord. For 2019, we will reflect on 48 psalms. The Psalms is like a medicine chest for the heart and a good guide for practical living. Psalms anticipate and train you for every possible spiritual, social, and emotional condition—they show you what the dangers are, what you should keep in mind, what your attitude should be, how to talk to God about it, and how to get from God the help you need. They put their undeviating understanding of the greatness of the Lord alongside our situations, so that we may have a due sense of the correct proportion of things. Think of the psalms as Jesus' songbook. The early Christians sang and prayed the psalms as well (Colossians 3:16; 1 Corinthians 14:26). At the time of the Reformation, the psalms played a major role in the reform of the church. Martin Luther directed that

“the whole Psalter, psalm by psalm, should remain in use.” John Calvin prescribed metrical psalms as the main diet of song in worshipping congregations. Charles Spurgeon called the Psalms, “The Treasury of David.” Psalm 119:162 expresses, “I rejoice in your word like one who discovers a great treasure. (New Living Translation).

Examination

Lent is a contemplative preparation for seeking spiritual renewal. “I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting and self-denial.” (*Liturgy of Ash Wednesday - Book of Common Prayer*)

Needs

Lent exalts compassion-in-action in response to Divine love. Jesus said, “When you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honoured by others.” Instead, we are to take care not to practice righteousness in front of others.

Thanksgiving

Lent is a time of Thanksgiving to the Lord for the blessings of life. If not for his grace, there will be no conversion, no abundant life, no forgiveness of sins, and no eternal life. Thanks be to God for his great love and mercy.

Remain blessed in Christ Jesus our Lord!

Archdeacon Eddie Ong

Collect for Ash Wednesday

Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing you have made and forgive the sins of all who are penitent: create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

THE CHARGE TO A FAMILY AND TO A KINGDOM

I will walk with integrity of heart within my house.

(Psalm 1:2)

Anglicans are familiar with the Bishop's Charge where, during the evening of the ordination of the postulants, the Diocesan Bishop charges the postulants to share in his ministry in the Diocese. Psalm 101 is the charge given by David to himself and future kings as well to the families and the nation. Apparently he failed in his own charge, but the redeeming point is that he repents and that relates directly to us as we begin the season of Lent.

This psalm was meant to offer support and encouragement to the faithful people by criticizing the apostate Judean aristocracy of its time. It also serves as a prayer with which Yahweh could establish his righteous rule. This is to be manifested by judging evildoers and thus vindicating the faithful. Thus, it is both secular and spiritual.

In this psalm, two types of consecration are mentioned. The first is about personal consecration. Verses 1-2 make two promises about personal conduct and behaviour. This is in preparation for a visit by Yahweh. The psalmist thus undertakes to "consecrate" his personal living space so that Yahweh will feel at home; as it were. The psalmist then proceeds to express disassociation from all things wicked and evil (vv.4-6).

In the public sphere, he pronounces the desire to sanctify his 'house' (v.11). Eventually, this consecration also extends to the 'city of Yahweh' (v.13) and to further extend to the 'land' as a whole. PJ Botha, an Old Testament scholar wrote that this created concentric spheres of the "king's" personal space, his palace, the city of Yahweh, and the land as a whole.

In many parts of Asia, including Malaysia, we have leaders who make all kinds of promises in their election manifestos such as to care for the poor and those who are marginalized, etc. But some of them turn out to become corrupt and greedy

leaders who cheat and steal from their citizens. We have violent leaders who carry guns with them and we have leaders whose own households question their integrity. Psalm 101 stands against all these and looks forward to a righteous King who will be a king of justice. All these point to Jesus, who is the only true king who will do all these things. As we begin this Lenten season, we consecrate ourselves in the personal as well as the public spheres. Where we fail, as we often do, we repent time and again. We hear God saying to us, 'when will you come to me?' (Psalm 101:2).

Ponder

"We are each made for goodness, love and compassion. Our lives are transformed as much as the world is when we live with these truths." (Archbishop Desmond Tutu)

Promise

"I will look with favour on the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me; those who walk in the way that is blameless shall minister to me." (Psalm 101:6)

Prayer

Abba, your Church is a garden of your grace where both personal and public spaces are consecrated. It is a place where great sanctity keeps blooming. Help us always to listen to you telling us, "Come to me." In Jesus' name. Amen.



Article by the Right Reverend Dr Jason Selvaraj, Area Bishop of Southern Peninsula in the Diocese of West Malaysia. Bishop Jason is also the Vicar of Christ Church, Malacca.

Day 2 – Psalm 102

THE BIRTHDAY OF HOPE

He will respond to the prayer of the destitute; he will not despise their plea.
(Psalm 102:17)

Easter has been described as “the birthday of hope”. My grandmother lived through two World Wars, lost family members and faced the real threat of Nazi occupation. When I asked her how she managed to get through it all, her answer was simple – “Two things, prayer and hope”.

Do you need some hope? Are you experiencing personal affliction or feel overwhelmed by the tragedy and uncertainty in the world around you? If so, then you are in good company. The writer of Psalm 102 is at a low point.

Firstly, he is experiencing personal affliction. He feels that God is hiding his face from him (v.2). He is physically ill, “my bones burn like glowing embers” (v.3). He knows emotional pain, “My heart is blighted and withered like grass” (v.4). He is struggling to sleep (v.7). He is lonely “like a bird alone on a roof” (v.7). His enemies taunt him (v.8) and he is mourning hence the reference to ashes and tears (v.9). Are you experiencing any such personal affliction?

On top of that, the psalmist is distressed at the state of Jerusalem that lies in ruins. This psalm was either written from Babylon after the Exile when Jerusalem had been destroyed or it is a figurative or prophetic comment made before the Exile. Do you also worry about the state of the nation and the problems in the world? If so, then let us respond in the same way as the psalmist did and as did my grandmother – in prayer and with hope.

The psalmist begins to list the reasons to be hopeful: God is in control and is everlasting (v.12). God will have compassion (v.13) and rebuild Zion revealing himself, “for the Lord will rebuild Zion and appear in his glory” (v.16). God will be worshipped by all nations (v.15) and he will be enjoyed by future generations. “Let this be written for a future generation, that a people not yet created may praise the Lord.” (v.18)

This psalm contrasts the weakness of humankind with the strength and faithfulness of God.

Ultimately, the reason why we can have hope is because of one person, Jesus. He was personally afflicted, experiencing the physical, emotional and spiritual pain of the cross, knowing isolation from the Father as his enemies taunted him. He also took all of the sin, distress and darkness of the world upon himself on the cross, to deal with it once and for all for our sake. He rose from the dead to show that death is not the end; that one day we will be resurrected and all the world will be redeemed. He shows us that there is always hope!

In the meantime, when facing affliction or uncertainty, we can pray. The psalm begins with a plea, "Hear my prayer, O Lord" and in verse 17 answers it with a promise, "He will respond to the prayer of the destitute; he will not despise their plea." This promise is for you too.

Ponder

Where in your life do you need hope and to be reminded that God is in control and will ultimately put all things right?

Promise

"He will respond to the prayer of the destitute; he will not despise their plea."
(Psalm 102:17)

Prayer

Lord, thank you that you hear my prayer. You know my affliction and I thank you that because of Jesus all will be put right one day. In the meantime, please give me strength and fill me today with your hope. In Jesus' name. Amen.



Article by the Reverend Miles Toulmin, Vicar of Holy Trinity Bukit Bintang, Kuala Lumpur. Miles is also the Executive Director of Alpha Asia Pacific.

Day 3 – Psalm 103

BLESSINGS OF GOD

But the steadfast love of the Lord
is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him.
(Psalm 103:17)

“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his blessings” (vv.1-2). These two verses bring back fond memories when the Priest in the Tamil Church where I grew up, proclaims them. It came back to life again when I was in Taizé in 1989, when we sang the song “Bless the Lord, my soul, and bless his holy name, bless the Lord, my soul, he rescues me from death.”

This psalm speaks about David giving thanks to God for the many things God has done in his life. Looking at the psalm, David speaks about three blessings which are very much relevant to each one as we walk through the Lenten season.

Firstly, the *forgiveness* which God gives to each one of us as we come before him. Our God is seen here as an ever-forgiving God. No matter who you are or what you have done, you can always come before him and seek his forgiveness (1 John 1:9).

Secondly, we are *redeemed* from destruction and eternal punishment. The gift of Jesus as our Redeemer speaks volumes to this. Looking at the Cross during this Lent season should remind us what Jesus went through to redeem us. People speak about religion but I speak about a relationship with the Redeemer, the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

Thirdly, David speaks about being *satisfied* (v.5). I must confess that during my pilgrimage to Israel in October 2018, I wondered how David could have been satisfied looking at the barren land, the desert and the hills! But David was simply satisfied with what God had promised him. It was his relationship with God that made him satisfied with what God had given him, done for him and will do for him.

We need to be thankful to God with what he has done, what he is doing and what he will do in our lives. We can become like leeches which are never satisfied with blood and want more and more and more. However, Paul reminds us that 'godliness with contentment is great gain.' (1 Timothy 6:6)

Beloved, as we walk through this Lent season, let us be thankful to God for his great blessings, his forgiveness, his redemption and the satisfaction he gives us as we look up to him with a grateful heart; just as how David looked up to God.

Ponder

Am I leading a thankful and grateful life? Am I thanking God for all the great blessings he has showered upon me?

Promise

"Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." (Colossians 3:17)

Prayer

Dear Lord Jesus, I thank you for forgiving my many sins. Thank you for redeeming me from eternal punishment and for assuring me of eternal life. Thank you Lord, for satisfying me with all that I need in my life by dwelling with me. Amen.



Article by the Venerable Jacob George John, the newly appointed Archdeacon for the East Coast. Archdeacon Jacob is also the Priest at All Souls' Church, Cameron Highlands, Pahang.

Day 4 – Psalm 104

HIS GLORIOUS CREATION – A CAUSE TO PRAISE

O Lord, how manifold are your works!
In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.
(Psalm 104:24)

Have you experienced times when you find it difficult to praise God? We either cannot praise God or have to literally force ourselves to do so. This psalm will help us in such times. We see how the psalmist began and ended this psalm with a pleasant and firm resolution to continue praising God from his deepest being. In his approach to praising God, he had both the right attitude of rejoicing and the right practice of meditation (v.34) and it will do well for us to have both of these.

The psalmist meditates on what he sees in God's beautiful and bountiful creation, reminiscent of Genesis 1. Combined with his sense of sight and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he saw beyond the horizons of the world. To begin with, his spiritual eyes saw God clothed in splendour and majesty. This set the trend of his thoughts, resulting in this magnificent hymn of God in relation to the wonders and diverse aspects of his creation. It is described as "comprehensive in its survey of earth and space, flora and fauna, topography and geology." (Cameron Howard)

Apart from the beauty, I see in this psalm completeness and accomplishments of his creation, the sovereign *power of God* in creating and over life and death (vv.29-30), the *provision of God* to all the created beings, and the *protection* accorded to them despite the presence of evil (v.35). His power sets the creation of heaven and earth into order and stability (vv.2-6). The clouds and winds come under his control (vv.3b-4) and his rebuke divided the land from water (vv.7-9).

This Creator God is also benevolent, described by the psalmist as providing constantly and generously to all of his creation (vv.10-16), such that the earth is satisfied by the fruits of his work (v.13b). He gave them food at the proper time (v.27), even wine to gladden the human heart and oil to make the face shine (v.15), and they are satisfied with good things (v.28). Having created and provided for them, he also protected them. The birds nesting on the top of the towering cedar trees and the goats making their homes in the high mountains (vv.17-18) are in

safe havens, far away from their predators. The creation of the moon to bring darkness, allowing the lion to catch its prey at night (vv.20-21), and the sun to bring light, allowing the safety of the day for people to work (v.23), again show God providing his gracious protection to all. God in his wisdom made all of these (v.24) for us to enjoy his creation, much like the whale frolicking in the vast ocean (vv.25-26).

Ponder

May we spend some time away from the concrete jungle we live in, and go to the quieter surroundings of nature, to reflect and meditate on his glorious creation, so that we can be spiritually refreshed. Then, like the psalmist, we will be able to glorify, praise and worship the Lord God as long as we live (v.33).

God is the same today and has the *power* to create new life in Christ (John 3:5-6), to *empower* every believer through his Holy Spirit (Psalm 104:4 cf. Acts 2:3-4), to *provide* sufficiently so that we do not have to be anxious or worry (Luke 12:24,28), and to *protect* so that we can become more than conquerors (Romans 8:37-38).

Promise

“When you send forth your Spirit, they are created and you renew the face of the earth.” (Psalm 104:30)

Prayer

Lord, may the beauty of your creation evoke in me an overwhelming sense of awe and let this forever overflow with abundant praise and thanksgiving to you. I praise you that you give me new and abundant life in Christ, provide for my daily needs and protect me constantly from my enemies. In Jesus name. Amen!



Article by the Reverend Dato’ Dr Yeoh Beng San, Priest at Parish of Cornerstone Sanctuary, Ipoh. Rev. Yeoh is also a medical doctor.

Day 5 – Psalm 105

PRAISE THE GOD OF HISTORY

Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name.
Make known among the nations what he has done.
Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts.
(Psalm 105:1-2)

During my schooldays, History was definitely not my favourite subject. It was challenging trying to understand and memorize events, names of people and locations. Later on while undertaking theological studies, I started to enjoy biblical history. I was able to see the connection between what took place to the current times and how it relates to my personal walk and relationship with God.

Psalm 105 attempts to do exactly the same by helping the Israelites then, and we, as the people of God now, to reflect and connect with the God of history. The psalmist begins with a call for us to praise and sing unto God (vv.1-4) for his works, wonders and judgments (vv.5-7). We are reminded about the reasons for Israel's adoption and his faithfulness to them – his covenant with Abraham and his future generations. Our God is a God who makes and keeps his covenant with his people: "To you I will give the land of Canaan, as the portion you will inherit." (v.11)

The psalm continues to highlight what transpired from the time God made the covenant to the time the Israelites received the land that was promised to them. The 'journey' was not as smooth as they may have expected it for they encountered various challenges and issues along the way. There were period of wanderings by the Patriarchs (vv.12-15), the unjust suffering of Joseph (vv.17-18), and the migration of Israel into Egypt due to famine in Canaan (v.23). However, through all these unexpected turns of events, God, and his commitment to his covenant, did not change, for he remained faithful to his promises. He intervened at every point to ensure that his loving purposes for his chosen people would not be thwarted. He orchestrated the miraculous release of Joseph and his elevation to a position of authority (vv.17-22). And, about 400 years later, he performed greater signs and wonders through Moses and Aaron in Egypt (vv.25-38) to ensure that Israel as a nation was allowed to leave freely. As they journeyed

through the wilderness – a dangerous and challenging terrain – he continued to lead and protect his people to ensure that they received the promise of the covenant (vv.37-43).

Our God is the God of Israel – a God who keeps his covenant throughout the generations: “For he remembered his holy promise given to his servant Abraham” (v.42). He fulfilled his promises so we can continue to rely on his faithfulness no matter what we have gone through or will go through. Our God has fulfilled his promise to save us through the work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We thus entered into a new covenant with God through Christ (Luke 22:19-20) and we can be absolutely sure that God will remain faithful. Whatever challenges we may endure on our journeys, we can trust in the Lord of history to be with us and to take us through to our final destination, to be with him forever. Praise the Lord!

Ponder

Why are we shaken every time we face challenges and forget the God of history who has always been faithful to his promises?

Promise

“He remembered his holy promise given to his servant Abraham. He brought out his people with rejoicing, his chosen ones with shouts of joy.” (Psalm 105:42-43)

Prayer

Father, help us never to forget what you have done through history and especially for what you have done for us through Christ. Help us to remain faithful to your eternal covenant. Amen.



Article by the Reverend Jesvinder Singh, Vicar of St. James' Church, Kuala Lumpur and Priest-in-Charge of St. Matthew's Church, Selayang.

Day 6 – Psalm 106

A PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the nations
that we may give thanks to your holy name and glory in your praise.
(Psalm 106:47)

Psalm 106 opens with a call to praise the Lord for his goodness and steadfast love expressed through his mighty deeds (vv.1-2). The psalmist affirms the blessedness of those who are righteous (v.3) and implores God to remember him when he saves his people so that he would eventually enjoy God's inheritance (vv.4-5). He prays for that salvation because he is currently part of Israel under God's judgement. Most of Psalm 106 is his confession that Israel as a nation is wicked and thoroughly deserve God's punishment (v.6).

The psalmist recounts how Israel rebelled, even as they left Egypt. Yet God graciously saved them (vv.7-12). They repeatedly sinned in the wilderness, on the way to the Promised Land (vv.13-23), forgetting that God had rescued them (vv.21-22). God would have destroyed them if Moses had not become the mediator (v.23). They sinned again at the edge of the Promised Land (vv.24-31 cf. Numbers 25). Throughout their history, they repeatedly fell into idolatry (vv.32-39). In judgement, God sent enemies to defeat them (vv.40-43). But each time they cried out to him in distress, he relented and saved them (vv.44-46) because of his covenant and steadfast love. But now they were finally exiled: scattered among the nations. The psalmist, counting on God's character, begs God to save them again that they may once again give him thanks (v.47). Anticipating that salvation, he calls God's people to join him in praising the Lord (v.48).

The exile of Israel pictures our bigger exile from the Garden of Eden. Israel's recurring rebellion shows the seriousness of sin in the fallen human heart. We cannot solve the problem of sin by our own efforts. Like Israel, we deserve God's judgement. So, like the psalmist, we confess that we are sinners and that our only hope is that God, in his steadfast love, would remember his promises and save us. And with the psalmist, we cry to God for his salvation.

God has answered these prayers through his Son. Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty of our sin and rose again to be our King. The ascended Christ is our true Mediator who pleads his death on our behalf. God is now gathering people into Christ's Kingdom from all nations. He gives us his Spirit that we might obey him from the heart. And though we still battle with sin, he will one day take us to our inheritance where sin will be gone, and we can truly enjoy him forever. Anticipating that salvation, we join with the psalmist in praising the Lord (v.48).

Ponder

It is only when we realise the depth of our sin do we realise the depth of God's steadfast love in saving us from it.

Promise

"God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

Prayer

Almighty and most merciful Father, we have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done; and there is no health in us. But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders. Spare thou them, O God, who confess their faults. Restore thou them that are penitent; according to thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord. And grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake; that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of thy holy Name. Amen. (Book of Common Prayer 1662)



Article by the Very Reverend Dr Andrew Cheah, Dean of St Mary's Cathedral, Kuala Lumpur and a member of the Diocesan Standing Committee.

Day 7 – Psalm 107

GOD'S STEADFAST LOVE ENDURES FOREVER

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his love endures forever.
(Psalm 107:1)

Does the sun stop shining when it is dark? All our senses may say 'yes', but we know for a fact that it is still shining even on the darkest night! We may have asked the same thing about God. Has God stopped loving me? All our circumstances sometimes may say 'yes', but the psalm today reminds us that the Lord is good and his steadfast love endures forever! The psalm gives four scenarios where people were in trouble, but in the end God saves them.

In the first scenario, some were lost in the desert without food and water. They cried to the Lord and he led them to a city to dwell while providing for their needs.

In the second scenario, some were in darkness and were prisoners of death because they rebelled against the words of God. When they cried to him, he set them free.

In the third scenario, some of them, out of their folly and sinful ways, suffered affliction. Again they cried to him and he healed them.

Finally, some were in the sea facing a dangerous stormy wind. They too cried to the Lord and he delivered them from death.

At the end of these stories they are repeatedly called to thank God for his steadfast love.

The stories may relate to Israel's history of failures as well as our personal struggle with the sinful nature. However there is always hope and redemption in the Lord. At the cross we find Jesus redeeming the world, so that whoever seeks him is delivered from the power of darkness and sin. Today, if we seek him, he embraces

us with his unfailing love too. He is able to change “desert” into “springs of water” in the life of anyone who is wise enough to trust in his love.

Will you trust in his love even in the darkest moments of your life?

Ponder

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20)

Promise

“Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress.” (Psalm 107:6)

Prayer

Father, who is merciful and kind, in many ways I have failed you and gone far away, yet your everlasting love calls me home through Jesus, who died and rose again. I come to you today to give you thanks as I put my trust in your unfailing grace. In Jesus name. Amen.



Article by the Reverend Gerrad Emmanuel, Vicar of Holy Spirit Church, Ipoh.

Day 8 – Psalm 108

A STEADFAST HEART

My heart, O God, is steadfast;
I will sing and make music with all my soul.
(Psalm 108:1)

At Wellspring, the Diocesan Retreat Centre, the words from Proverbs 4:23 are always before us: “Guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life”. Once again, in 1 Samuel 16:7b, in choosing David as King, God says, “People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart”. It is so true that “the heart of the matter is the heart.” Psalm 108 begins by talking about the heart.

Sometimes problems, troubles and cares can disturb and unsettle our hearts. Our faith may waver. But the psalmist says, ‘My heart, O God, is steadfast’ (v.1), meaning, my heart is settled or fixed firmly. Though many cares may disturb us daily, we can consciously set our minds to fix on God. This may seem difficult when we are going through tough times, but the psalmist sets the example by praising God and remembering God’s love and faithfulness in the past. Remembering God’s past dealings with us will build up our faith and settle our hearts to trust him in the present situation.

‘I will awaken the dawn’ (v.2) shows that this is a morning psalm. The psalmist wakes up early, not because he is troubled by cares and worries, but so that he can adore and praise God. Praise and adoration early in the morning can strengthen our heart before the day’s troubles begin. We have the example of Jesus who woke up early to commune with God (Mark 1:35).

Today, with modern technology, I find that I am often awakened early by WhatsApp messages. But forwarding WhatsApp messages about God cannot substitute for our personal time to pray and read the Bible (not just a verse or a good saying). We need to have that personal experience rather than a second hand “forwarded” message.

It is a matter of the heart – we should have our own experiences that we can draw on to share with others and remind ourselves of this wonderful God we serve.

The opening of Psalm 108 is so filled with praise that we do not even realize that David was in trouble (v.6). He only mentioned his need for deliverance after fixing his heart and mind on praise of God. Only then does he pray for God to deliver him. Once again a reminder that we need to set our hearts on God.

There are so many things going on in our lives daily that we can be easily swerved and be distracted. We need to consciously focus on God and set our hearts and minds to stay firm on him. And whatever happens, we can depend on him to take us through.

Ponder

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in his wonderful face.
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of his glory and grace.

Promise

"With God we will gain the victory, and he will trample down our enemies."
(Psalm 108:13)

Prayer

"Give us aid against the enemy, for human help is worthless." Amen. (Psalm 108:12)



Article by Ms A Annamaney, Chairperson of the Diocesan Anglican Care and Anglican Alliance Regional Facilitator for East and South-East Asia. She is a member of St Paul's Church, Petaling Jaya.

Day 9 – Psalm 109

WHICH SONG WILL YOU SING?

But you, O Lord my Lord, act on my behalf for your name's sake
because your steadfast love is good, deliver me.
(Psalm 109:21)

“Nobody likes me, everybody hates me. I think I'll go and eat worms” is a song we sang in the playground when we were little when we felt that the world was against us; if we had fallen out with our friends; were left out of the team or the club; were too old or too young to join in with whatever game *everyone* else was playing; when life just wasn't fair!

In Psalm 109, King David is in a similar situation. He has been betrayed by those he loves, they have repaid evil for good and hated instead of loved (vv.2-5). In fact, nearly half of the psalm is a litany of the curses and accusations brought against him (vv.6-19). In the face of all this hatred, I can imagine David, with all his power and wealth, being tempted to follow Job's example and wallow in self-pity. Remember how Job sat among the ashes scraping away at his sores with a broken piece of pottery (Job 2:8)? But, even if David did feel sorry for himself, he didn't succumb to temptation; instead of looking down, he looked up. He called out to the Lord for help; he trusted in the name of the Lord; he trusted God to deliver him (Psalm 109:21 cf. Romans 12:9).

King David is having a really tough time of it, his heart is broken, his strength is gone; he is physically, mentally and emotionally exhausted. Some of us know exactly how that feels, either because of what has happened in the past or what is happening right now, and some of us may have to face similar situations in the future. What do we do? Where do we turn?

One of the songs our children learned comes from Proverbs 18:10, “The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous run into it and they are saved.” The Bible is full of stories of men, women and children who trusted in God - Daniel, Elijah, Esther, Joseph, Nehemiah, Paul, Philip, Ruth, Samson - who ‘ran’ to the Lord in times of trouble and have much to teach us. Maybe there's a particular person the Bible whose story you find helpful or encouraging?

But, David did more than that, despite everything that has happened, he makes a declaration of defiance “I *will* give thanks to the Lord, I *will* praise him in the midst of the throng” (v.30). His cry is not just one for help, but a song of praise in the midst of and in spite of everything that is happening. A sentiment which Habakkuk also expressed some 400 years later (Habakkuk 3:17-18).

Ponder

What is your reaction when the world seems to gang up against you? When friends, colleagues or family members gossip about you, accuse you unfairly or exclude you? Do you look down or look up? Do you sing a pity song or sing a praise song?

Promise

Scripture teaches us that God will *never* leave us, nor forsake us (Deuteronomy 31:6, Joshua 1:5, Hebrews 13:5).

Prayer

Father God, when I’m facing difficulties and life seems unfair, please help me to trust you and teach me to praise you. Amen.



Article by the Reverend Jacqueline Rodwell, an ordained Priest in the Church of England, currently living in Malaysia. She assists at All Souls’ International Community Church, Desa Sri Hartamas, Kuala Lumpur.

Day 10 – Psalm 110

SOMEONE GREATER THAN KINGS

Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.
(Psalm 110:1)

Almost no one in Malaysia was interested in politics prior to the 2008 General Election (GE). Yet, the destiny of our country took a turn in that fateful year. The 2008 GE birthed instant political commentators who mushroomed in almost every corner of this nation. Perhaps expecting the pendulum to swing farther in the next GE, most Malaysians raised their anticipation high for a complete “make-over” and were devastated at the outcome of 2013 GE. I remember many of my friends grieved terribly and many visibly expressed their anger. Some even vented out their frustration at God. “Where are you, God?” someone exclaimed in an angry note. Suddenly, Facebook profiles were replaced with mournful black. I cannot deny that I too shared the frustration. But, in the midst of that, the Lord spoke to me and comforted me. “He will judge the nations ... and crushing the rulers of the whole earth” (v.6). God is in control and in his time we will see nations bow before his Lordship. In an effort to visibly comfort myself, I extended these comforting words to my friends: As long as the church of Jesus Christ stands on the soil of Malaysia, there is hope for our nation.

We continued our prayers and we experienced a new birth in the 2018 GE. There were many encouraging stories as Malaysians did their part to “ensure” our nation could be renewed. Maybe we were too frustrated at the way things were and strived to make a difference at the one opportunity we had to make it count? The day after the 2018 GE the whole nation was in jubilation and members of each religion claimed their part. So, we have had “a wish came true.” Do we now rest on our laurels? God forbid! The Bible tells us that God inhabits the praises of his people (Psalm 22:3). We need to continue to pray, worship, and praise him. We need to continuously exhort him to reign over our nation. We need to consistently seek for God’s will to be done in our midst. Whatever the circumstances, we must be confident to trust that God is in charge and “... that for those who love God, all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8.28)

Many months on and we have been politically educated and empowered - it is no bed of roses in our “renewed nation” today. While we may be anxious over many unfolding events around us today, remember to “be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.” (Isaiah 35:4). Pertinent to the church is to uphold Jesus as Lord over our nation – for all eternity – only then can we see that our Lord truly and continually reigns in this nation.

Ponder

Are we as a church and through our lifestyle, exalting Jesus as Lord over us, here in Malaysia?

Promise

“The Lord is at your right hand; he will crush kings on the day of his wrath.” (Psalm 110:5)

Prayer

Jesus, we surrender to your Lordship, individually and corporately – as a church and as a nation.



Article by Deaconess Dr Tan Swee Bee, lecturer at Seminari Teoloji Malaysia (Bahasa Malaysia Department). She works closely with indigenous people groups.

Day 11 – Psalm 111

HOW AWESOME ARE GOD'S WORKS

Praise the Lord! I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart.
(Psalm 111:1)

In Psalm 111, the psalmist leads others to engage in praising God. We praise God for his “work(s)”, even “his wonderful works”. Praising God consists of two parts: celebrating God's praises passionately with all our heart and celebrating it publicly, in the assembly of the faithful. There are ample reasons for praising God – for his great wisdom, goodness, justice, and power, which reveal themselves in his works. Failure to study the works of God is the reason why so many people wander around blind amidst a flood of God's light.

The beauty and magnificence of God's works are conspicuous by the truth of his justice; that there are moral absolutes of righteousness ought to bring us delight. Having previously reminded us of God's justice, the psalmist continues with the grace and mercy of God; making the connection with God's care of his people, particularly his unmerited favour towards them. If, in former times, God showed loving-kindness towards Israel, similarly, the goodness which we receive from him is the result of our adoption into his family; and because God is always eager in showing kindness to his people, the psalmist says that God's commitment to us shall never cease. Moreover, as God daily provides for our ‘portion’, so our faith must respond appropriately: it must not fail, but must rise above life's challenges.

God's truth and uprightness is ever present. God through Christ keeps the people united to him by the new covenant of grace, by Christ's blood that brought redemption - the means of imparting eternal life. The psalmist's previous reference to redemption is further repeated in verse 9, but differently.

As the deliverance of the Israelites was the beginning of their salvation, its confirmation was followed by the giving of the law. Long prior to the Sinai covenant, God had established his covenant with Abraham, which looked forward to the

redemption of all the peoples of the world. Thus, there was only ever one plan of redemption for all peoples.

Having referred to the kindness of God, and made known the relevance of God's commandments, the psalmist goes on to exhort the faithful to revere God and be zealous in keeping his commandments. In closing, the psalmist warns that submission to the regulations of God's word is sure evidence of our living in the fear of God.

Finally, the psalmist wants to inculcate upon the faithful that nothing is more profitable for them than to spend their lives in the celebration of the praises of God.

Ponder

Are the works of Christ 'real' to me? Is there any 'fear of God' to regulate my daily living? Is every day a celebration of praise to God?

Promise

Jesus answered, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him" (John 14:23, HCSB).

Prayer

Lord, show me where I have failed to live in fear of you. Help me to recall your works of grace in my life. I want to praise you with thankfulness every day. Amen.



Article by the Reverend Lee Kon Yim, a Chartered Quantity Surveyor by training and an Assistant Priest at St Barnabas' Church, Klang. He helps out at St Peter's Church, Kuala Lumpur.

Day 12 – Psalm 112

FEAR THE LORD, DELIGHT IN HIS COMMANDS

Blessed are those who fear the Lord, who find great delight in his commands.
(Psalm 112:1)

We are called to fear the Lord and delight in his commands. What are God's commands? Jesus puts it in a nutshell, 'love God love your neighbours' (Matthew 22:37-39). In his sermon "On Being a Good Neighbour," Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. speaks of Christian altruism from three perspectives. Firstly, the concept of "*universal altruism*", that is, the need to care for the well-being and welfare of everyone who is in need irrespective of race, religion, colour, creed, nationality, religious persuasions, political inclinations or socio-economic background. Secondly, the concept of "*dangerous altruism*" wherein we may have to endure some hardships and some difficulties in our pursuit to help people in need. Finally, the concept of "*excessive altruism*" which would require us to go the extra mile to help people in need. He commends his hearers, in obedience to God's commands to love our neighbours, to "go out with the conviction that all men are brothers, tied in a single garment of destiny." ¹

All who fear the Lord and find great delight in his commands will be blessed. "Their children will be mighty in the land" (v.2). They will be a people of great positive influence in society. The generation of the upright will be blessed with 'wealth and riches' (v.3). Blessings flowing from God need not necessarily be material wealth and riches. There are many faithful and diligent Christians who do not have much yet their hearts are "richly" filled with love, joy, peace, grace, compassion, generosity, fairness and justice. People are able to gather in their homes for fellowship, to share meals and to resolve conflicts. There is "abundance in the midst of poverty". When we are "upright" in the sight of our Lord, we will be able to experience 'wealth and riches' which money cannot buy.

What about difficult moments in our lives? "Even in darkness light dawns for the upright, for those who are gracious and compassionate and righteous" (v.4). "The righteous will have no fear of bad news" (v.7). "Darkness" and "bad news" can come at any time to any believer of Christ. There could be family breakdowns, diseases, bereavements, misfortunes, business failures, pecuniary losses and evil

people and powerful irritants lurking around causing untold miseries to us. In all these circumstances if we are upright, gracious, compassionate and righteous, 'light' (v.4) will dawn upon us. Our Lord will grant us wisdom to manage wisely in such hopeless and painful situations. Bad news will not cause us to be weary as our hearts will be steadfast, trusting in the Lord (v.7). Good will come to us if we are generous, lend freely and conduct our affairs with justice (v.5). Our righteousness will endure forever. That is the legacy we shall leave behind. Our 'horn will be lifted high in honour' (v.9). We will live in great dignity before God. However, the wicked will be doomed eventually (v.10).

Ponder

The recent disproportionate ugly response to the proposed intention of the Malaysian government to ratify "The International Convention To Eliminate All Forms Of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)" bears testimony that we are a very "fragile" nation ready to be exploited by some for their personal agenda. Amid such disconcerting realities, can we still be a people of God, obeying his commands to love our neighbours, despite?

Promise

"Even in darkness light dawns for the upright, for those who are gracious and compassionate and righteous." (Psalm 112:4)

Prayer

Dear Lord Jesus, inspire us to take great delight in your commands and to put them into practice in our challenging socio-political environment. Amen.

¹ <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/draft-chapter-iii-being-good-neighbor>



Article by Mr D Raja Singam, the Diocesan Registrar and a member of the Provincial Synod. He is a member of the Church of the Holy Spirit, Ipoh.

Day 13 – Psalm 113

TEN THOUSAND REASONS TO PRAISE THE LORD

Blessed be the name of the Lord both now and forever.

From the rising to the setting of the sun is the name of the Lord to be praised.

(Psalm 113:2-3)

“Praise the Lord? How could I praise the Lord?” I remember uttering these words during a very difficult period in my life. It was difficult for me to count my blessings and to praise the Lord. Our reading today reminds us that there are many reasons to praise the Lord, even in moments of difficulty, doubt, and sorrow. Psalm 113 is the first of six psalms (Psalms 113-118) that were sung during the Feast of Passover, remembering God’s greatness and faithfulness in delivering his people from Egypt. The psalmist begins Psalm 113 by summoning us to praise the Lord, not once but three times (v.1)! We are not only to praise him daily (v.3) but also for all times (v.2).

Why does the psalmist exhort the people to praise the Lord always? Firstly, the Lord is like none else. He is exalted high above the nations and he reigns supreme (vv.4-5). No ruler or king of this world is higher than him. Secondly, the Lord cares for us and never abandons us (vv.6-9). Even though he is the Lord of the universe, he is with us and hears our every cry. The Lord is not like other deities and idols who can neither speak nor hear and are detached from the suffering and pain of human lives (cf. Psalm 115:4-8). Neither is he like many kings and rulers who live in lavish palaces and forget the suffering of their subjects.

The psalmist lists three groups of people the hand of the Lord is never too short to save—the poor, the needy, and the barren woman (vv.7-9). While this list is not exhaustive, these groups of people represent those who are often neglected and marginalised in our community. We are comforted that the Lord hears our every cry of affliction.

The Israelites recited this psalm to praise God for delivering them from slavery in Egypt. Likewise, we recite this psalm to remind us that God has delivered us from slavery to sin by sending his Son. Therefore, we could lift up our eyes and praise

the Lord. This was what I learned during my difficult moments in life. I can still praise the Lord because nothing is too great for him, and no one is too small for him. There are ten thousand reasons and more to praise the Lord.

Ponder

Do you find it difficult to praise the Lord? Take a moment to reflect on God's faithfulness and greatness, and give him praise.

Promise

"He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes, with the princes of his people. He settles the childless woman in her home as a happy mother of children." (Psalm 113:7-9)

Prayer

Lord, I praise you for sending Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, not only for helping the poor but becoming poor for our sake, so that we might be reconciled to you (2 Corinthians 8:9).



Article by the Reverend Dr Lim Kar Yong, Lecturer in New Testament Studies, Director of Postgraduate Studies, and Director for the Centre for Bible Engagement at Seminari Theoloji Malaysia, Seremban. He was ordained to the Diaconate on 31st October 2018. His membership is at St Paul's Church, Petaling Jaya.

Day 14 – Psalm 114

GOD WITH US

Tremble, earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob.
(Psalm 114:7)

Psalm 114 is one of the most beautiful psalms in its poetic language and though only eight verses, it packs within it a wealth of eternal truths and fundamental principles that guide all ages and nations. The psalm, characterised by joy, recounts the power of God in the deliverance of his people of Israel from the bondage of Egypt, his provision for their wilderness journey and their entrance into the Promised Land. Always recited before the Passover meal, the whole purpose of the psalm is to call upon Israel not to forget God's grace in that day of mercy and to recount it in worship to God. Though written to the children of Israel, this psalm is applicable for us today.

Divided into four segments, each segment has an application to the Christian life. In verses 1 and 2 we see the children of Israel leaving Egypt, a land in which they had been under bondage. The chains of slavery have been broken and they are on their way to freedom and to the Promised Land. This is a beautiful illustration of us Christians who were once in bondage and slavery to sin but now have been redeemed and purchased from sin and well on our way to our Promised Land. However the journey is by no means free from obstacles. Verses 3 and 4 say that the Red Sea stood in the way of the children of Israel at the start of their journey and the Jordan River at the end of their 40 years of wandering. This tells us that the Christian life, from its beginning to its end, will be filled with obstacles. We are going to face obstacles when serving the Lord. Sometimes these obstacles will come through people, sometimes it will be circumstances, sometimes it will be attitudes but the point is, properly responded to, we have the promise of God that he is able to deliver us.

In verses 5 and 6 we see the sea and the river recognised their Master and got out of the way. They saw God coming and they parted. Nothing can stop God. Nature moves at his command. The same Lord who spoke and calmed the storm is able to speak when our soul is agitated in the middle of the night. We go to the Word of

the Lord seeking strength, help and encouragement and he is able to still those waters. He will alter and intervene in the matters of nature and circumstances of our lives. Yes, there will be the obstacles when we are involved in service for the Lord. Every movement is going to involve some amount of friction and the devil will oppose us and there will be obstacles but we have an overcoming power. The Lord overcomes. His strength and omnipotence, seen in verses 7 and 8 when he turned the rock into a pool of water and provided refreshment to his thirsty people, is readily available to all who will call upon his name.

We may have opposition, persecution, difficulties but in the place we have been put by God, if God is for us nothing can be against us; nothing can stop us. Make up your mind today to go his way and to do what he wants you to do. Never compromise.

Ponder

If God be for us – and with us – and over us – and before us – who can be against us? (cf. Romans 8:31)

Promise

“Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me.” (Psalm 23:4)

Prayer

Heavenly Father, help us to remember that as you are an omnipotent God all nature glorifies and submits, so must our chief aim be - to glorify and exalt you.



Article by Ms Esther Richards, Editor of the Diocesan Anglican Messenger.

Day 15 – Psalm 115

FAMILY PRAYER AND PRAISE

Our God is in heaven; whatever he wills, he does.
(Psalm 115:3)

This psalm describes a liturgy including a prayer, litany, blessing, and song. Most of the psalms are set in the context of communal worship.

Who do I and my family trust in?

Today, success is measured in money. Companies are being forced to report gender pay gaps. Countries focus on the growth of GDP in US\$ per capita. The Stock Market looks for higher earnings quarter after quarter after quarter. Our own self-worth is defined by how much we earn relative to our peers and friends. The recent film, *Crazy Rich Asians*, is filled with people who value themselves and others according to whether they can spend enough to be part of the “in-club”.

But in Psalm 115, God says that those who worship the things made by human hand will be like them - unable to see, hear or talk, unable to feel with their hands, walk with their feet or speak with their throats. Of course, people can do these things, but metaphorically, they are meaningless in God’s sight if not done with the right motivation.

Psalm 115 goes on to advise us to trust in God, as he is “our help and shield”. Like a Star Wars spaceship, God surrounds us with a “force field” which helps to protect us from the attacks of the enemy, the devil. And God provides us with practical help – to take the Star Wars analogy further, God provides us with a hyperdrive which we can use when needed to obtain further help and protection.

Finally, Psalm 115 has a prayer, that God will cause “both you and your children” to flourish. And that “he will bless those who fear the Lord – both small and great alike”. This is a promise to hold on to – and enables us to let go of the silver and gold which we might otherwise be tempted to chase after.

Ponder

Do we trust in the Lord, or in “idols of silver and gold”? Do we expect to be glorified, or do we glorify God?

Promise

“But we bless the Lord, both now and forever.” (Psalm 115:18)

Prayer

Father, as a people we praise you as Father of the family.



Article by Edward Clayton, Lay Reader at All Souls’ International Community Church, Desa Sri Hartamas, Kuala Lumpur, and Partner and Head of Strategy Consulting at PwC Strategy& SE Asia.

Day 16 – Psalm 116

THE LORD IS FULL OF COMPASSION AND GOODNESS

Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live.
(Psalm 116:2)

In this thanksgiving psalm, the psalmist tells us that, in distress, he called on the Lord, who heard his prayer. He is now at peace and will love the Lord all the days of his life. He had, he says, been brought very low - near to death. However, believing that the Lord is gracious, merciful and full of compassion, he did not lose faith but turned to God in prayer. Now, he says, the Lord has delivered him from death, his eyes from tears and his feet from stumbling. He can walk before the Lord in the land of the living! So how shall he give thanks for this deliverance? He will lift up the cup of salvation and fulfil his vows in the presence of all his people. He will give public witness to what the Lord has done for him in 'the courts of the house of the Lord' (v.19).

The psalmist gives us a remarkable insight into his living relationship with God. In great distress, he did not look for human help, or lose faith ('I trusted in the Lord' in verse 10) and now he has found peace. There is no guarantee that the Christian's path through life will be an easy walk, but there is the promise of God that all who call on his name will be saved (Joel 2.32).

Now, the intention of the psalmist is to 'lift up the cup of salvation' (v.13). The cup is a strong biblical image. The Scriptures speak of God sending a 'cup of wrath' or a 'cup of blessing'. Jesus challenges his disciples with the words 'Can you drink the cup that I drink?' He also asks, in Gethsemane, that the 'cup may be removed', but adds 'your will be done'. Whatever cup we receive, we must trust in God, then.

The cup image is also found in the cup shared at feasts. At Passover, there are four cups and when the fourth is filled, for the '*Hallel*' ('praise and thanksgiving'), the fourth Exodus promise of God is recalled, 'I will make you my people'. A cup is also filled for Elijah, and this links Passover with the longed for Day of the Lord and the coming of the Messiah (Malachi 3:23). No wonder then that we use this psalm on Maundy Thursday, anticipating Good Friday and Easter Day and our own

redemption. And, of course, at each Eucharist, we, like the psalmist, receive the cup of blessing and offer our 'cup of thanksgiving' and loving service.

Two final thoughts. Prayer is not just about asking God for a particular outcome, it is about renewing our trust in God and saying with Jesus 'not my will but yours be done'. It is also about being thankful for the loving care of God in our lives.

Ponder

How easy is it to trust God in times of trouble?

Promise

I will always offer to God my sacrifice of thanksgiving and call upon his name.

Prayer

Merciful and caring Lord, when I feel under stress or in distress, grant that I may continue to trust in your redeeming love, continually give thanks for your presence in my life, and strive to walk the way of love in the pattern of Jesus Christ.



Article by the Reverend Canon Tony Barnard, former Canon Chancellor of Lichfield Cathedral, England. Tony and his wife Anne, hosted many Malaysians when they visited Lichfield, England.

Day 17 – Psalm 118

HIS STEADFAST LOVE ENDURES FOREVER

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.
(Psalm 118:1)

This psalm is a testimony of the Lord's faithfulness, protection and deliverance. The psalmist had been through some enormous crisis in his life almost to the point of death (vv.5,11,12,18) but the Lord had delivered and shielded him from his adversaries. It is a public declaration of the steadfast love of God.

Who amongst us has not gone through some difficult trial and then experienced the Lord's deliverance in some remarkable way?

One incident that I vividly remember was when I was 13-years-old. It was the Christmas holidays and I was travelling alone from my boarding school in Ooty to the international airport in Madras, where I was to board a flight home to Malaysia early the next morning. However, at the train station in Coimbatore, I discovered that there was a railway strike and all the trains were stationary on the tracks. How was I to make the 500 km, eight-hour journey to Madras and not miss my flight?

I was anxious, frantic and afraid. I only had a little cash with me and definitely not enough for a taxi to Madras. I took an auto-rickshaw to the bus terminal only to discover that because of the rail strike all the buses to Madras were full. I went back to the train station, chose a train (there were other trains scheduled to depart to Madras) and just prayed that I was on the right train and that I would reach the airport on time. It wasn't long before someone said the strike was over, and our train was the first to leave the station that night! When the train arrived at the station in Madras, I hopped onto another auto-rickshaw and made it to the airport just in the nick of time!

Give thanks to the Lord for he is good; his love endures forever! He is surely always with us and is indeed our helper in our time of need (v.7). Proverbs 18:10 says, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe." This is indeed the psalmist's experience. Twice in this psalm he declares that he "cut down" his enemies "in the name of the Lord"! (vv.11-12)

Ponder

Where, who or in what does your hope and trust lie in? Is it in a person? A political party? Yourself? “It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in humans, it is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trusts in rulers”. (Psalm 118:8-9)

Promise

“The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid...The Lord is with me; he is my helper...he is good...he is my strength and defense; he is my salvation.” (Psalm 118:6-7,14,29)

Prayer

Father, may we be able to declare today, with the writer of this psalm, that, “You are my God, and I will praise you; you are my God, and I will exalt you!” (Psalm 118:28). There is no God like you. We worship, praise, magnify and exalt you! Thank you, heavenly Father, for your steadfast love and protection.



Article by the Reverend Dr. Vijendra Daniel, Vicar of St Barnabas' Church, Klang. In his teenage years, Viji was in a boarding school in India. Later on, he studied medicine, worked as a doctor in Philadelphia, USA, before he joined the seminary.

Day 18 – Psalm 119

WALKING THE WAY OF THE WORD

Happy are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord.
(Psalm 119:1)

At 176 verses long, Psalm 119 is the longest of all the psalms. In English it is over 2,500 words long. The word “way” occurs a remarkable eighteen times, the word “law” some twenty-five times, and the word “word” a staggering twenty-seven times! So although you’d be forgiven for thinking this mammoth psalm would be impossible to memorize, there’s a poetic repetitiveness that aids in memorization. Additionally, the alphabetical acrostic shape to the poem, with twenty-two sets of eight verses each beginning with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet: *aleph*, *beth* through to *tav*, shows that, long though it is, it was designed to be memorized.

If you were a Jew living somewhere in the Ancient Near East sometime between 1000BC and 70AD you’d need to memorize it, for it provided the soundtrack for your pilgrimage to Jerusalem, written to be sung as you ascended the heights up to the Holy Temple.

In the Western Monastic tradition, this psalm was regularly recited during Tierce, of the Third Hour of the Daily Office, at 9am, during a rest break from toiling in the fields. Again, this wordy psalm would have been memorized, and its recitation would have provided welcome rest from your monastic labour. We may never find ourselves walking the pilgrim journey to the Holy City of Jerusalem. And we may never receive the monastic vocation to renounce all worldly pursuits. But the Christian life is still a journey, and the calling of all Christians, like those in Holy Orders, is to live a life of *ora et labora*, a life of prayer and work along the way. What will sustain us on the way? The answer in Psalm 119 is simple. It is the law of God, his holy word. His “word” is a treasure (v.11), trustworthy (v.42), a lamp and a light (v.105). His “law” is a delight (vv.77, 92, 174), truth (v.142), and peace (v.165). This is exactly the kind of nutritional spiritual food we need to sustain us on the way, to feed us on the journey.

Ponder

Psalm 119 was a personal favourite of George Wishart, Bishop of Edinburgh in the 1660s. Wishart had been condemned to death for his support of the Scottish during the English civil war. Legend has it that as the noose was placed around his neck, he requested to sing a psalm from memory. His executioners agreed, and the wily Bishop began to recite Psalm 119. A rider was dispatched to petition for his release, and before two-thirds of the psalm had been sung, a pardon arrived, and Wishart's life was spared. Psalm 119:77 "Let your mercy come to me, that I may live; for your law is my delight," was certainly true for Bishop Wishart! You may never find your own life in physical danger, but when it feels like a noose is around your neck, how can reciting the life-giving words of Psalm 119 bring freedom to you?

Promise

"Let your steadfast love come to me, O Lord, your salvation [the Hebrew here points to the name of Jesus] according to your promise." (Psalm 119:41)

Jesus is the salvation promise of the Lord's steadfast love for you.

Prayer

v.62a 'at midnight I rise to praise you.'

v.164a 'seven times a day I praise you.'

Why not set your alarm and try this?



Article by the Reverend Dr James Harding, Director of St Paul's Theological College, Kuala Lumpur. He is also a Priest at Holy Trinity Bukit Bintang, Kuala Lumpur.

Day 19 – Psalm 120

DEALING WITH DECEIT AND LIES

I call on the Lord in my distress, and he answers me.
(Psalm 120:1)

It's not uncommon that kids in school call each other names and tell tales about each other. They then get saddened and angered, sometimes ending up crying, or fighting. It is vital that they learn how to handle the name-calling and tale-telling since these will probably not stop, even in adulthood! Our psalmist is in such a situation. He strives to live peaceably and harmoniously with those around him but they attack him with deceit and lies (v.7). He lives in a hostile environment, without anyone to turn to, alienated from godly people. In this regard, the psalmist names Meshek and Kedar (v.5) - places remote and far away - to depict how alienated he feels. Meshek is in the north near the Black Sea and Kedar is in the south in the Arabian Desert. Both these foreign places are hundreds of miles away from Jerusalem. Incidentally, this psalm begins a series of psalms known as the Song of Ascents, which pilgrims would recite as they made their way up to Jerusalem for the yearly feasts. So, as the pilgrims recite this psalm in their journey together, it would bring to their minds their distress of being attacked with deceit and lies, and help them lay their troubles before God.

We can outline three things that the psalmist does when attacked with deceit and lies. Firstly, the psalmist calls out to God, knowing that the living God answers, and that his cries will not fall on deaf ears (v.1). Secondly, the psalmist trusts God to save him from his distress (v.2). Despite the continued attacks and being alienated from godly people, the psalmist trusts that God will in time deliver him. Thirdly, the psalmist trusts God to punish those who attacked him (v.4). Because God is just, justice will be done. The psalmist does not retaliate nor take matters into his own hands; he leaves it to God. Besides that, during the season of Lent, we are reminded that Jesus himself endured them all: deceit, lies, verbal abuse, and hostile situations. He faced false accusations from the crowds and the religious authorities even while he hung on the cross. Therefore, we can rest assured that Jesus understands perfectly the distress that we go through when we are attacked with deceit and lies. We can look to him for help, and we can trust him. We can draw strength from him in the trying situations that we face.

So, how should we deal with deceit and lies? Like the psalmist, we should turn to God for help (v.1), and trust that God will vindicate us, as he promised, and will deliver his judgement on those who have wronged us (vv.3-4) either in our lifetime or when he returns in glory. In the meantime, we should persist in remaining upright and seeking peace. Let us remember that as he hung on the cross, to save the very people who were mocking and even crucifying him, Jesus called out to the Father, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34). As followers of Jesus, and having received forgiveness, we are to be forgiving and to embrace reconciliation.

Ponder

Have we taken matters into our own hands when dealing with deceit and lies? Let us seek God’s forgiveness, and think of some practical steps that can help us turn to God for the future.

Promise

“If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord.” (Romans 12:18-19)

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank you that you hear us when we cry out to you in distress and that you have shown us, through your Son, to love and forgive even those who wrong us. Help us, through your Spirit, to always seek peace so that we may honour you with all our lives, to the glory of your name.



Article by Mr Daniel Chai, a member of the Diocesan Standing Committee. He worships at St Paul’s Church, Petaling Jaya.

TRUST

My help comes from the Lord.
(Psalm 121:2)

Where do we go when we need help? Most of us either go to our families or church elders. We get insurance policies, security systems, take precautions, exercise, eat healthy food and yet things can go wrong. It's good to have a support system, but we need to look further than that. Because history and experience teach us that no safety plan is perfect. That is why we need to look to God for our help. The Scriptures teaches us that God helps those who seek his help. None of us are safe until we take refuge in God.

Psalm 121 is a good one to memorize and handy for the journey of life. It teaches us 3 big truths about God's help and care for us.

1. *The Creator is our helper.* Psalm 121:1-2 bring comfort to us. Many of us quote these verses in times of need. These verses give us encouragement. The hills in the verse depicts a symbol of strength and stability, their great size, long lasting and unchanging sight reflects the Creator. The words of a song, "He's got the whole world in his hands," remind us how powerful God is.

2. *The God of Israel is our protector.* Psalm 121:3-6 tell us that our God is not only our Creator but also the protector of Israel and is our protector as well. The key word in these verses is the word "watches". It means "to watch over, to guard or to protect". If we are in Christ, then he who watches over Israel also watches over us. God never lets us slip nor stumble because the Lord upholds us in his right hand. The Lord is our shade and he accompanies us in every step of the way.

3. *The Lord will keep us from all harm.* In Psalm 121:7-8 we are given promises for the future, telling us what God will do for us. He watches over every aspect of our life. God is with us in our problems and he turns our problems for our good. In Romans 8:31, "What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for

us, who can be against us?” Jesus said in Matthew 28:20 “.....and surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age”.

We are on a journey to God, and Psalm 121 is a wonderful song for the journey. The maker of heaven and earth watches over every aspect of our life. He protects us from all harm.

Ponder

To lift up your eyes to the hills is to be reassured that God is all-powerful and in control. He’s got the whole world in his hands.

Promise

“The Lord will keep you from all harm, he will watch over your life. The Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.” (Psalm 121:7-8)

Prayer

Father, teach us to trust you completely and depend on you for all things and help us continue to have an everlasting relationship with Jesus our Saviour.



Article by Veni Selvam, Chairperson of the Diocesan Women’s Conference. Veni is also the Hon. Treasurer for Council of Churches Malaysia Women’s Work and a Lay Reader at St Katherine’s Church, Kajang.

Day 21 – Psalm 122

SOMETHING TO BE EXCITED ABOUT!

I rejoiced with those who said to me, “Let us go to the house of the Lord.”
(Psalm 122:1)

Have you ever felt excited when you received an invitation to a gathering? The invitation could have been to the wedding of a close friend or a reunion of former school mates.

This psalm was written prophetically by David and sung by pilgrims as they made their way to Jerusalem for certain appointed feasts. It echoes with excitement! The psalmist recalls rejoicing when invited by his fellowmen to go up to the house of the Lord, the temple in Jerusalem. His anticipation is fulfilled as they stood within the gates of God’s city (vv.1-2). As all the tribes of Israel gathered in the city, this was a fulfilment of what had been decreed in the law by God during the days of Moses (cf. Deuteronomy 12:5, 14:23). Why were they gathered? To praise the name of the Lord! (v.4). This is where kings from the line of David would rule with justice over God’s people (v.5). The last 4 verses end with a call to pray for peace in Jerusalem for the sake of the people of Israel and the temple, which in those days was where God met with his people (vv.6-9).

What then does this psalm mean for us today? On this side of salvation history, we, as people who trust in Jesus, have an even greater reason to rejoice! For the temple in Jerusalem was only a shadow of the true temple which was to come. Jesus declared that he himself was the temple (John 2:19-22). He is God become flesh who came to dwell with mankind (John 1:14), and even when “torn down” by death on a cross, he was “raised up” to life in 3 days. It is through Jesus that we as God’s people can offer worship and praise that is acceptable to God. Furthermore, the Scriptures tell us that God’s people are joined together as a temple with Christ as our cornerstone (Ephesians 2:19-22). God’s Spirit lives in us, and whenever God’s people gather together, he is with us. We don’t need to go to specific building or place to meet God. This should fill us with joy, each time we come together on Sundays (or any other day for that matter) to sing praises to God, hear from his Word and enjoy fellowship. God is with us by his Spirit!

And there's *much more* to look forward to!

When the Apostle John saw a vision of the new heavens and the new earth, he saw the heavenly Jerusalem (Revelation 21:1-2). And within that city, there is no more temple. Why? Because God's immediate presence is with his people (Revelation 21:22). Christ, the victorious Lamb will rule as king over God's people for all eternity. God's people from every nation, tribe, people and language will gather before the throne of the Lamb to offer unending worship to him (Revelation 7:9-10). Isn't this something to be excited about?

Ponder

Do you rejoice whenever you gather with God's people for corporate worship?

Promise

One day, all of God's people will be gathered unto him to offer unending worship to the Lamb who sits on the throne

Prayer

Lord, help me to rejoice each time I meet with my brothers and sisters in Christ around your Word and to look forward to the day when Jesus returns.



Article by Marianne Liaw Sook Huei, a youth ministry worker with Scripture Union Peninsular Malaysia. She is a member of St Mary's Cathedral, Kuala Lumpur.

Day 22 – Psalm 123

LOOK TO THE LORD IN PRAYER

I lift up my eyes to you, to you who sit enthroned in heaven.
(Psalm 123:1)

Today's psalm describes a certain waiting. The Israelites cry out to God for mercy and likened their wait to those of servants waiting on their master, not for orders on what to do next but to relieve them of their duties. As we read on, we find that the Israelites were being treated with contempt and endured the ridicule and scorn of, presumably, unbelieving Gentiles who lived near or among them.

The Israelites in this psalm had a firm trust in God. Many times in their history they have called out to him and he answered their cries, most notably their rescue from slavery in Egypt (Exodus 2:23-25). Although we do not know if and how God answered their cry for mercy in this psalm, we do know of someone who cried out to God for mercy two thousand years ago in Gethsemane.

In Matthew 26:36-46, we read of Jesus feeling sorrowful to the point of death and praying to the Father to take the cup from him, yet also willingly submitting to his Father's will. We know how this ends – Jesus was betrayed by his own disciple and crucified on the cross. It seemed as if God did not answer his own Son's prayer for relief.

But Hebrews 13:12-14 shows us the bigger picture; Jesus suffered scorn and contempt in order to sanctify his people by his blood. His death was necessary to atone for our sin and make us his own and his resurrection from the dead proves his victory over the power of evil and death. It is not that God did not answer his Son's prayer for relief but he was working out his plan of salvation. Through Jesus' death on the cross, we are made righteous and now have a place in the heavenly city.

Have we experienced ridicule and contempt for being a Christian? Most likely if we have tried sharing the good news of Jesus with our unbelieving friends and family. In some circles, even to admit that we are Christian is to invite mockery. We know this to be normal because the world is at odds with God's ways.

Have we cried out to God in prayer? We can do so confidently knowing that God whose throne is in heaven is in control of all things and will provide mercy and relief, even if not in this life.

Ponder

Let us continue to look to the Lord our God by putting our trust in Jesus and live as he has called us to, not fearing ridicule and contempt because this world is not our own, but trusting that he is in control of everything.

Promise

“Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore. For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.” (Hebrews 13:13-14)

Prayer

Thank God that we can call out to him in prayer any time, and ask God to help us keep looking to him and fixing our eyes on the heavenly city where we belong.



*Article by Mrs Melissa Raj, the Chairperson of the Diocesan Youth Council.
Melissa worships at St Mary's Cathedral – SMACC, Kuala Lumpur.*

Day 23 – Psalm 124

EXCEPT FOR THE LORD

If it had not been the Lord who was on our side!
(Psalm 124:2)

When do you most feel crushed in life? Was it during a time of family sickness or troubles in your work place or a difficult relationship with a fellow brother or sister at church? These are the common and painful realities that we still endure on this side of eternity. But what brings you strength and hope in the midst of such troubling times?

Israel of old had known troubling times in their own journey with the Lord. It's possible that the flood waters of verse 4 allude to the waters of the Red Sea by which the Lord delivered Israel from their brutal enemy in Pharaoh and his army during the exodus from Egypt. Israel had real enemies that sought her destruction as God's people.

But this psalm is not one of lamentation but praise; where Israel praise the Lord for his unyielding faithfulness to them as his people. Israel can sing of how they escaped like a bird from the snare of the fowlers (v.7) because their help came from the Lord who made heaven and earth; the Lord in whose hands all things are contained. Like Israel, we will face troubling days as we look forward to our full redemption in Christ. But until that day, we have Christ as our rock who said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5)

As God's people today, we can rejoice that our help is in the name of the Lord Jesus who made heaven and earth (v.8). The Lord who has dealt with our greatest enemies, the Lord who died our death for sin, who crushed Satan's power over us, that we might know the certain hope of his heaven no matter what we face today. Except for the Lord Jesus, we would be truly lost.

But now that God has brought us new life through the death and resurrection of his Son Jesus, we who trust in him will always have reasons to rejoice and to endure for him no matter what trials we face.

May this truth strengthen you as you face another day in his blessed service.

Ponder

When I feel crushed in life do I look to Christ and his cross to know that the Lord is with me and will never forsake those who hold fast to his Son

Promise

Jesus said to his disciples, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."
(Hebrews 13:5)

Prayer

Lord, help me to remember that if it were not for your love to me in Christ I would be lost. Help me to endure all things faithfully for his sake; knowing he will never forsake those who belong to his kingdom



Article by the Reverend Tim Philips, Associate Pastor of St Mary's Cathedral, Kuala Lumpur.

Day 24 – Psalm 125

STANDING FIRM IN THE LORD

Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion,
which cannot be shaken but endures forever.
(Psalm 125:1)

Psalm 125 is a beautiful psalm that reminds us of God's protection for those who trust in him. A beautiful psalm to preach on, but in reality, it may be very difficult to accept. How do we go to parents who have just lost their child or to a young God-fearing girl who had been brutally gang raped or to someone whose house had been broken into or to someone who had lost everything in a fire or to a wife who is abused by her husband (sadly sometimes by husbands who are respected elders in the church), and say, "As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people both now and forever" (v.3)?

I have come across Christians who brag about their faith and preach to others, but when something bad happens they are nowhere to be found in the Church. They just disappear into the thin air. They become bitter towards God. This is because they trusted the mountain (blessings) and not it's Creator. But when one's trust is in the Lord, one will stand firm in times of tribulation.

Job was a righteous man (Job 1:8); he lost everything including his children. His wife lost her trust in the Lord (Job 2:9) but Job's trust in the Lord stood firm (v.10). This is because he looked beyond the earthly blessings (vv.25-27). When my daughter Rebecca was called home to be with the Lord, psalms like Psalm 91 and Psalm 125 were a great challenge to preach on. My trust in his promises was shaken to its foundation. I had always trusted in our Lord Jesus to protect my children from all evil and danger. (As I reflect, today I realised that during that time as always, it was my Lord Jesus who was holding my hand, and not the other way around).

Trusting in the Lord in good times is easy but not during challenging times. But the Bible has good examples. Moses was confronted with the Egyptian soldiers behind and the sea in front. He trusted Yahweh will protect the Israelites and deliver them

(Exodus 14:13-14). King Saul and the Israelite soldiers lost their guts to speak when they were confronted by Goliath but David demonstrated his trust in Yahweh (1 Samuel 17: 45–47). He stood firm and defeated Goliath. When Judah was attacked by the Moabites and Ammonites during the time of King Jehoshaphat, he stood firm (2 Samuel 20:17) because he believed the battle was the Lord's (v.15).

When we have a personal relationship with Jesus, we too can stand firm in times of tribulation because he will never leave us. You can be assured he will hold your hands tight and nothing can pull you away. Put your trust in Jesus and not on your earthly possessions nor on pastors, evangelists, *bomohs*, mediums and amulets.

Ponder

Trusting in the Lord in good times is easy but not during challenging times. Who can you encourage today with the reminder of God's continual presence?

Promise

"As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people booth now and forevermore." (Psalm 125:2)

Prayer

Dear Lord Jesus, I thank you for your promise to watch over me and all my loved ones. It is so assuring to know that just as Mount Zion cannot be moved, so your love and protection for me cannot be moved. I may not see you, but you are always with me. Thank you for putting my feet on a firm rock in times of tribulation. In Jesus' name. Amen.



Article by the Venerable Edward John, Archdeacon of the Southern Archdeaconry. He is also the Vicar of St Christopher's Church, Johor Bahru.

Day 25 – Psalm 126

A DREAM COME TRUE

The Lord has done great things for us; we are glad.

(Psalm 126:3)

This favourite psalm is one of collection called “A Song of Ascents” used by Israelites when making their pilgrimage to the three annual feasts in Jerusalem. This psalm clearly referred to the “second exodus” when the Israelites were brought back from captivity of the Assyrians and Babylonians. It is such an appropriate psalm for pilgrimage for the purpose of worship and thanksgiving.

The “second exodus” was such a miracle! The impossible had happened! And to the Israelites, a dream came true (vv.1-3). They couldn’t stop smiling, laughing and singing. It’s their Lord God who had done this (v.3), a fact that even non-Israelites had to admit (v.2b). Isn’t the same holds true for us today?

When God acts, nothing is impossible to him. When it happens, we are dumbfounded and confess that only he alone could have made this happened. Think of that job opening, examination results, healed sickness, marriage saved, accident averted, and a relative becoming Christian. Truly God is such a gracious and merciful redeemer and provider to us, individually and as a church.

But ‘continue to save us’ we prayed. “Our Lord, we ask you to bless our people again, and let us be like streams in the Southern Desert” (v.4 CEV). This will be our heart’s attitude. We are deeply humbled by what God has done for us that we realize we are still unfinished work of grace and mercy. We still need his grace and mercy continually until we meet him face to face on that Day (Philippians 1:6). Southern region or Negev is a desert and dry land devoid of streams. Only God alone can make water flows in desert. Thus to our Lord God alone, we turn our hearts and minds. We don’t depend on our own human endeavours. We pray and humble ourselves.

This is God’s promise to us. When we sow in tears and weeping (whether in prayer, worship, trust, or obedience), we will reap with joy, laughter and shouting! He hears and sees us. He will never forsake us or leave us (Hebrews 13:5). He loves us with

an everlasting love (Jeremiah 31:3). Don't quit. Don't stop trusting him. Pour out your heart's desire and prayers to him. Stay obedient in all things.

Ponder

Is there anything too difficult for our God? "With God, all things are possible." (Matthew 19:26).

Promise

"The Lord has done great things for us" (Psalm 126:3). Wait upon him. Only be faithful and stay obedient.

Prayer

"Restore our captivity, O Lord" (Psalm 126:4 NASB). Give us your grace and mercy more each day, Lord.

"May I know thee more clearly, love thee more dearly and follow thee more nearly, day by day" (Prayer by Bishop Richard of Chichester, 1253 AD).



Article by the Reverend Dr Richard Loh, an Anglican priest at St George's Church, Penang (Locally Ordained Minister). He works full time as an academic Professor of Medicine in RCSI-UCD Malaysia Campus, Penang and as a practicing Chest Physician.

Day 26 – Psalm 127

IT IS USELESS UNLESS

Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labour in vain.
Unless the Lord watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain.
(Psalm 127:1-2)

“Unless the Lord builds the house ...unless the Lord watches over the city...” emphasising the key theme of the psalm that human endeavour is in vain unless the Lord is in it.

We are reminded that it is God’s plans that will succeed. No matter how daunting and insurmountable the odds, success is certain in the Lord’s hands. Jesus taught us, “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.” (Mark 10:27)

Thus the psalmist begins by pointing out that while humanity may seek to build a house for the family, true success lies with the Lord (v.1). For it is only in God that men will find the true meaning of shelter and security. A house can be rent asunder by internal disunity and distrust. A home can be destroyed by the ravages of sin that lurk in every member. Thus the word of the Lord guides the godly family to domestic harmony and love (Colossians 3:8-4:1; Ephesians 5:21-6:9). In the same way, the psalmist warns of the futility of watching over the city against external threats, when it is most often the internal ungodly strife and enmity that will bring about communal destruction. This reminds us that the church faces the same dangers without unity in Christ (John 11:11,21; 1 Corinthians 1:10,13; Ephesians 4:1-6; Philippians 2:1-5).

Among the things that God has given for humanity to be busy with is toil, plant and harvest (Ecclesiastes 3:2). Yet God has put eternity in humanity’s heart (Ecclesiastes 3:11). Humanity knows that it is the Lord who gives true rest from human labour (Psalm 127:2 cf. Hebrews 4:9). All of humanity’s worry and anxiety serves for nothing. Long hours striving for the necessities and rewards of human

labour are useless without trusting and resting confidently in the Lord's providence and care (Matthew 6:25-34; Luke 12:22-31).

The blessing of children is from God (vv.3-4). Alongside providing shelter, security and the necessities of life for them comes the responsibility to bring them up to know and trust in the Lord (Proverbs 1:7; 9:10; Ecclesiastes 12:13). This makes them suitable inheritors and credible witnesses of God's legacy in an often hostile world (v.5).

It is in Christ that we, our past and our future generations find, have found and will find our ultimate blessing of God being with us. For God loved us so much that Jesus died so that we may live. And one day he will return for us and bring us as co-heirs of God's kingdom, to our true inheritance in heaven.

Ponder

As 'children are a heritage from the Lord' (Psalm 127:3), how may we ensure that our succeeding generations will walk rightly with God in Christ Jesus?

Promise

"Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails."
(Proverbs 19:21)

In all things we know that the Lord will provide for us in his time and in his way.

Prayer

Father, teach me to trust and love you more, through your Spirit, in Jesus' name.
Amen.



Article by the Reverend Gordon Kong, Priest at St Mary's Cathedral, Kuala Lumpur. Gordon assists in the Liturgical services and oversees the Nepali ministry of the Cathedral.

Day 27 – Psalm 128

BLESSINGS FROM THE LORD

Blessed are all who fear the Lord; who walk in his ways.
(Psalm 128:1)

God's blessing in a household is based on the fear of the Lord. A good family life is a result of the fear of the Lord. To fear the Lord is to revere and to obey him.

Psalm 128 is called the marriage prayer and was often sung at Israelite marriages. The values outlined in God's Word include love, service, honesty, integrity and prayer. If a man seeks all these values and passes them to his family he would have fulfilled God's purpose for his life.

I grew up in a family where the Lord Jesus was our God and Saviour. There were six of us children who were guided by our parents to fear and honour the Lord. During our family prayer meetings which were in the nights, we read this psalm numerous times. As we read this psalm, we marvelled at the way a man who fears the Lord will be blessed. As he receives his blessings, his wife will be 'like a fruitful vine' and 'his children like olive shoots around his table' (v.3). All in the family were blessed because of the obedience of the head of the family! God's plan is amazing as he seeks to see the church being built up through spiritually strong families. I thank the Lord for my father who brought us up in the fear of God. I can safely say that I am able to serve the Lord faithfully because of my upbringing and the support I get from my family. But it was different for my spiritual daughter who came from a dysfunctional family. She became a victim of abuse and finally ended up in drugs. When she came to know the Lord and gave her heart to him, she was transformed through the power of the Holy Spirit. Today she is blessed with a family and is able to enjoy the Lord's blessings. As she was growing up spiritually, she used to tell me that if only she had a family like mine, she would not have made a mess out of her life.

The Lord loves us all unconditionally and is faithful as he tells us in Isaiah 45:5, "I am the Lord and there is no other; there is no God besides me". Jesus Christ further says in Matthew 28:20, "I am with you always even to the end of age." We need

these assurances as we live in a fast moving age where we observe the religious belief system eroding away and family relationships being threatened.

This psalm is a timely reminder to all of us to fear the Lord and receive his blessings. In verse 5 it says, “May the Lord bless you from Zion all the days of your life; may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem.” May our dear Lord gives us the desire to fear him all the days of our lives!

Ponder

Do I strive to fear God and receive all his abundant blessings for myself and my family?

Promise

“May you see your children’s children. Peace be upon Israel.” (Psalm 128:6)

Prayer

Father, may I see your Kingdom and see everything else provided for my family. (Matthew 6:33)



Article by Pastor Nesam Ebenezer of St Paul’s Church, Petaling Jaya. Nesam is also the Chairperson of St Paul’s Day Training Centre (DTC), a ministry to people with learning difficulties.

Day 28 – Psalm 129

PERSEVERING THROUGH PAIN

They have not gained the victory over me.
(Psalm 129:2)

Psalm 129 is about persevering through pain and gaining the victory in Christ over the pain. It is divided into two sections. The first section talks about persevering through the pain, and the second section talks about praying through the pain.

In the *first section* (vv.1-4) there are principles applicable to us.

Firstly, we can suffer pain without suffering defeat. The psalmist recalls the long years of suffering Israel has experienced, stretching back even to their early days as a nation. Yet Israel persevered and survived. All of us can say, whatever the source of our pain: 'but they have not gained the victory over me' (v.2).

Secondly, God has set a limit for our suffering. Verse 3 shows the first of two striking visual images in the psalm. The picture here is of the wicked running their plows over the backs of the righteous. However, God cuts Israel free from the cords of the wicked (v.4).

Thirdly, in Christ our victory is assured (v.2). "I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it." (Matthew 16:18)

For the *second section* (vv.5-8), praying through the pain is one of the most important ways we can persevere. These are a special type of prayer called imprecations, which literally means "a spoken curse." The psalmist knew he who has been wronged is not to right that wrong by his own hand but to leave redress to the Lord, who says "It is mine to avenge" (Deuteronomy 32:35). The focus is praying against God's enemies and against their success.

Firstly, we pray for the persecutors to be turned back in shame (v.5). We pray these persecutors would fail in their plots against God and his people.

Secondly, we pray for the wicked to be stopped in their tracks (vv.6-7). This is the second of the two images of the withered grass growing in a thin layer

of soil. We pray for the wicked to wither away like grass, that none of their plans might come to fruition.

Thirdly, we pray for discernment and recognition of evil (v.8). This was the standard blessing during harvest time in Israel where they would greet each other with blessings from the Lord (cf. Ruth 2:4). But here the prayer is that we would not bless that which God has called wrong or sinful.

We are to love and pray for our enemies (Matthew 5:44). When we pray against evil men and their ways, we are actually praying for God's kingdom and his ways. We are praying for them to come and know Christ because that is the very best way to stop the evil in this world. With Christ we can persevere and pray through the pain, knowing that victory awaits us. And with the psalmist we can testify, whatever our pain: "It has not gained the victory over me."

Ponder

When we are suffering pain, do we persevere and pray through the pain?

Promise

"We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body." (2 Corinthians 4:8-10)

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we honestly share with you our pains. We trust you to do what's right. Help us to trust that in Christ victory is assured. Amen.



Article by the Reverend Dr. James Low Seang Gip, a Dermatologist in private practice and a Priest at Good Shepherd Church, Johor Bahru.

Day 29 – Psalm 130

HOPE

Out of the depths I have cried to you O Lord; Lord, hear my voice!
(Psalm 130:1-2)

The picture is that of a person drowning and unable to stand on the bottom. The writer has been crying in the past and continued to cry as he wrote the psalm; and he would die without God's intervention. It reminds me of Jonah, crying out to God from the belly of a great fish or John Newton who literally fell into the depths of the ocean. Five times the psalmist addressed *Jehovah* and three times *Adonai*, the Master (Lord). We too can cry out from depths of disappointment and defeat or from depths of fear and perplexity. Sin drags its victims, like a huge weight, to the depths but God made us for the heights (Isaiah 40:31; Colossians. 3:1).

The psalmist then moves from the sea to the courtroom. Here the sinner could not understand because of guilt. The only way we can remove this sin is to come to God for his gracious forgiveness. And that is only possible through the work of Christ on the Cross (Romans 4:1-8). Sinners cannot stand before the holy Judge and argue their own case based on their own perceived merits. He is holy but he is also a forgiving and a gracious God. Our faith in his Son Jesus brings forgiveness to the soul. God blots them out of his book (Isaiah 38:17; 43:25; 44:22), carries them away as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:11-12), and remembers them no more (Jeremiah 31:34). It cost God, his Son; and we must take seriously the grace of forgiveness. Salvation is a serious and costly transaction.

From the courtroom (vv.3-4) we move to the city walls (vv.5-6), where the watchmen are alert as they peer through the darkness to detect approach of danger. When dawn breaks, the guards rejoice that the city has been safe for another night. When the Lord forgives us, it is like dawning of a new day! God is not only a cheerful Giver but a cheerful Forgive – he forgives with great pleasure. For the sinner, he waits on the Lord. This is not waiting in hopeless resignation but hopeful anticipation; for each day brings new blessings from him (Lamentations

3:22-26). And if you find yourself forgiven but still in darkness, wait on the Lord and trust his Word. Do not try to manufacture your own light (Isaiah 50:10-11). So the first rung of the ladder of Hope is to put our trust in God's Word.

Our final visit is to the slave market and the theme is redemption. It means "setting someone free by paying a price". Israel knew the meaning of redemption – exodus is one example. They had no hope and could not free themselves but the Lord did it for them. Freedom from slavery, victory over the enemy and assurance of a Promised Land! And so are we, free from sin, victors over schemes of the evil one and looking forward to our heavenly home. The slave has no hope but sons/daughters of the Most High God will receive an inheritance. The psalmist saw a future redemption for the people of Israel, as did Paul (Romans 11) and the prophets (Isaiah 11; 60; Zechariah 12:10 - 14:21). We look forward to his (Jesus) coming and the full redemption and reward kept for us. So let us put our hope in God's Word, not our feelings; and in God's character, reputation and past works of redemption. For when we wait with anticipation, we get to practice patience, prepare for the coming gift, enjoy the blessing when it arrives and acknowledge his sovereignty on timing and the gift itself.

Ponder

Have you confessed your sin but still feel guilty? Do you feel like God did not hear your prayer? Has God turned away in silence and walked off?

Promise

"And in his Word I do hope..."

Prayer

Father, give me the patience to wait and trust wholly on your Word.



Article by Mr Jaccob Thomas, a member of Peace Community Church, Bukit Jalil and a Lay Reader at St Paul's Church, Petaling Jaya.

Day 30 – Psalm 131

THE MAN THAT SOUGHT-AFTER GOD'S HEART

My heart is not proud, Lord, my eyes are not haughty;
I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me.
But I have calmed and quieted myself, I am like a weaned child
with its mother; like a weaned child I am content.
(Psalm 131:1-2)

David wrote this as a song for the Israelites while ascending the mountains of Jerusalem on their pilgrimage. How can these three verses written thousands of years ago help us in our contemporary times? There are three things to learn.

First, learn Humility. David told the Lord, 'My heart is not proud, and my eyes are not haughty' (v.1a). He knew and understood what God really desired – humility! David's heart is not proud "in his opinion of himself, neither contemptuous of others, nor self-righteous before the Lord; neither boastful of the past nor proud of the present" (Spurgeon). The Lord lauds humility like David's. In 1 Samuel 16:7, the Lord said to Samuel the prophet, "Do not consider his appearance or his height... people look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." Having an inordinately high opinion of oneself (pride) and showing arrogance (being haughty) are certainly not pleasing to the Lord. Christ Jesus our Lord himself showed us what true humility is when he washed the feet of his disciples. Before we come into the presence of God, our hearts and eyes need to be freed from pride and haughtiness.

Second, learn Simplicity. David said, "I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me" (v.1b). In this world things are always complex, complicated and confusing; "many through wishing to be great have failed to be good: they have rushed at grandeur and power and found destruction where they looked for honour" (Spurgeon). As for the phrase "things too wonderful," it usually speaks of "God's wonders and mighty deeds...things that are too high for us, things that are beyond our power or too difficult for us to understand." (Ray Fowler).

To such amazing wonders of God, David in awe quietly bowed his knee, “I have calmed and quieted myself” (v.2a).

Finally, learn Childlikeness. “I am like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child I am content” (v.2b). This picture of the weaned child is a picture of perfect peace and contentment. We need to learn to quiet ourselves in the presence of the Lord. “Be still and know that I am God.” (Psalm 46:10).

David concluded the psalm by asking the people of God to always hope and trust in their Lord God (v.3).

Ponder

“Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.” (Romans 12:16)

Promise

“Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.” (Matthew 18:4, 23:12)

Prayer

“Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.” (Psalm 46:10)



Article by Mr Michael Foo. Michael is the Lower North Archdeaconry Golden Circle Chairman and the Diocesan Golden Circle Northern Region Vice-Chairman. He is a PCC member of St Peter’s Church, Ipoh.

Day 31 – Psalm 132

FOREVER IN ZION!

For the Lord has chosen Zion, he has desired it for his dwelling, saying,
“This is my resting place for ever and ever;
here I will sit enthroned, for I have desired it.”
(Psalm 132:13-14)

Psalm 132 is another Song of Ascent. It is a glorious psalm when we think of our eternity with the Lord forever. The psalmist is recounting the faithfulness of David and the oath he made to God regarding his desire to build a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob. God responds to David's oath by promising him eternal lineage to the throne of David. How can this be? Is there a descendent of David sitting on the throne today? Yes, there is! This psalm has a two-fold meaning. Not only was God promising to be faithful to the Israelites, but he was also promising faithfulness to his people forever. Zion here represents not only the physical resting place of the Ark of the Covenant in the days of David and Solomon, but also the eternal resting place for all true Christians in the eternal Zion built for us where we will worship God in heaven forever.

How then can this be God's answer to the oath he made with David? Jesus Christ as a man was of the house of David; the lineage of Mary is traced for us back to David (even back to Adam) in the New Testament. Jesus Christ as God was able to fully cover the debt of our sins with his own perfect blood. Jesus Christ is the eternal King of the Throne of Israel where all true Christians will worship him forever.

In the same way, verses 13-18 also have a two-fold meaning - a literal meaning given to Israel and recorded by this psalmist, and also an eternal meaning regarding the eternal Zion. How does this relate to us?

Psalm 132:14-18 directly alludes to the blessing of God upon his true Saints from now until the end of time, and then the eternal blessing of God upon his people for eternity. In our lifetime we do not always experience a sense of the blessings given

in these verses, but they are ours to claim forever. They will be perfectly fulfilled by God in our eternal dwelling place with him in Zion. There, truly, his saints (the true believers) will shout for joy.

Our worship of God always has a historical context. Regardless of who we are or of our understanding of the context, we are aware of what God has done for people before us. This provides us enough faith to approach God in worship hoping he will do for us what he has done for others. As we continue to worship him, we build our own historical context which adds our own experiences with God to those that came before us. History is important in our worship whether we acknowledge it or not. This psalm was establishing a context for worship on the foundation of God's historical relationship with David and with Israel.

Let us shout for joy not only today, but forever in Zion; if you are not sure you are numbered among God's people, go to Christ and cry out to him to redeem you from the eternal debt of sin you can never repay by yourself.

Ponder

When we put the Lord first in our lives, we inherit God's precious promises.

Promise

"The Lord swore to David a firm promise from which he will not withdraw."
(Psalm 132:11)

Prayer

Father, by faith may I inherit your kingdom.



Article by Reverend Christopher Dalie, Priest-in-charge of ARCH (Anglican Revelation Church, Shah Alam, Selangor).

Day 32 – Psalm 133

HOW GOOD AND PLEASANT

How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!
(Psalm 133:1)

Psalm 133 is a Song of Ascents – a song for going up to a high place. For the Jewish people, that high place was the Temple which stood on a “mount” in Jerusalem, which is itself on a hill. As the worshippers ascended to meet the Lord, they expressed their joy of coming together for worship. The KJV translates as “Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together.” Even nowadays, the song in Hebrew is sung as the Jews walked up the steps on the hill to the Western wall.

David used two metaphors to illustrate how good and pleasant is the unity among God's people. Firstly, it is like oil poured over Aaron, so abundant that it overflowed down his beard to the hem of his gown. It was special oil mixed with perfumes, precious herbs and spices which Moses used to anoint Aaron as the first High Priest. It was holy, sweet, fragrant and precious. Aaron, the older brother of Moses, was his spokesman and great supporter and encourager to Moses. He helped to implement God's laws received by Moses and formalized the temple worship.

The second metaphor was the dew from Mount Hermon which descended on to the hills of Zion. Mount Hermon is the highest mountain in Israel, about 9,232 feet high. Its snow-capped peak could be seen by King David 120 miles away. The amount of rain, snow and dew on the mountain was, and still is, the main source of water flowing into River Jordan, supplying valuable water to the farms in the Jordan Valley. Though much of Israel is arid, God has provided enough water to sustain the people.

It is just as good and pleasant that Christians lived together in unity. The church is the new God's family. It is the most ethnically, socially and linguistically diverse organization in the world.

As followers of Christ, we ascend to the cross on the hill of Calvary to worship with joy and thanksgiving to the resurrected Christ. For Christians, the oil signifies

worship, feasting and celebration in unity. As we worship in unity, we received the holy oil of the Holy Spirit in abundance to anoint us. We also received the living waters of Christ to nourish us and satisfy our thirst. God is so generous that he provides abundance of oil and water which reach beyond its origin and gives life to faraway lands.

As the Psalm 133 ended, the Lord gave his blessing of Life forever. In Christ, we shall certainly live forever.

Ponder

Is the world church of Jesus Christ united? Is our church united? How can we foster unity among God's people?

Promise

"Love one another. As I have loved you, so must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:34-35)

Prayer

A Song¹ -

Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together (twice).

Hinei ma tov (behold how good)

Lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai lai

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I0D4sqCzRig&list=RDT01g6glvRjc>



Article by Lay Canon Emeritus Dr Teoh Soong Kee, a Consultant Obstetrician & Gynaecologist in Ipoh. Canon Teoh worships at St Peter's Church, Ipoh.

Day 33 – Psalm 134

BLESS THE LORD

Behold, bless the Lord, all servants of the Lord,
who serve by night in the house of the Lord!
Lift up your hands to the sanctuary and bless the Lord.
(Psalm 134:1-2)

In Psalm 134, the last of the song of ascents (Psalms 120-134), the annual pilgrimage to the Tabernacle of the Lord in Jerusalem is ending. As the pilgrims make their descent to return home, they exhort the ‘servants of the Lord’ - priests, Levites, musicians and singers (1 Chronicles 9:33) – serving at the Tabernacle to lift up holy hands in prayer, in praise and keeping diligent watch through the night. They exhort them “to fill the night with prayer as well as watchfulness, and to let their hearts go up in blessing to Jehovah. The voice of praise should echo through the silent night and float over the sleeping city” (Maclaren). This reminds me of our Lord Jesus, who watched and prayed through the night for the disciples at the Garden of Gethsemane. He still watches over you today as the Great High Priest (Hebrews 4:14).

The tasks of the priests of Psalm 134 include renewing the altar fire, feeding the lamps, and guarding the sacred structure from intrusion and from plunder. “They were to put their hearts into all their duties and worship spiritually in the whole course of their duty. It would be well to watch, but better still to be ‘watching unto prayer’ and praise.” (Spurgeon). Likewise, as we serve the Lord, we must serve wholeheartedly, without compulsion but with joy, diligence and thankfulness.

The Hebrew pilgrims envied the ‘servants of the Lord’ for being chosen to serve in his holy tabernacle. They exhort them, “behold, bless the Lord.” (vv1.2), and the priests responded pronouncing upon the pilgrims a blessing (v.3). Go not away unblest. Go not without a token of divine favour. You have desired us to bless the Lord, and now we pray, ‘the Lord to bless you from Zion’ (v.3). “Zion cannot bless us; the holiest ministers can only wish us a blessing; but Jehovah can and will bless each one of his waiting people.” (Spurgeon)

To bless the Lord does not mean to bestow a blessing upon God. The Lord is infinitely greater than us and we could never give a blessing to God. The idea is that it blesses and honours the Lord when his creatures praise and thank him. We bless the Lord through obedience, gratitude and love for him.

Ponder

“It is comparatively easy to bless the Lord in the daytime, when sunshine lies like his smile on nature, and all the world is full of music, and our lives flow on quietly and peacefully. It does not take much grace to bless the Lord then. But when night has draped the earth and hushed the homes of men to solitude, and we stand amid the shadows that lurk around us in the sanctuary, facing the inexplicable mysteries of Providence, of history, of life and death; then the song falters on our lips, and chokes our utterance.” (Meyer) Will you still be able to stand steadfastly to bless the Lord even in your nights of life?

Promise

“By faith the pilgrims of today have access to this fellowship every night. There is one Watcher in the Holiest, who never slumbers and through him our worship is perpetual.” (Morgan) The Lord ‘neither slumber nor sleep’ (Psalm 121:4).

Prayer

Psalm 134 teaches us to pray for those who are servants of the gospel of our Lord and it invites them to pronounce benedictions upon their parishioners.



Article by the Venerable Eddie Ong, Archdeacon of Upper Central Archdeaconry and Vicar of St Gabriel’s Church, Kuala Lumpur.

Day 34 – Psalm 135

WORTHY TO BE PRAISED

Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good; sing praise to his name, which we love.
(Psalm 135:3)

Psalm 135 begins and ends with a call to “Praise the Lord”. This psalm has often been called a mosaic, with almost every verse attributed to the words or the idea of another Old Testament passage. Within this psalm alone there is reference to four different psalms, two passages from Deuteronomy, two from Jeremiah, and two from Exodus! And it seems that repetition is important in this psalm: the phrase “Praise the Lord” occurs ten times while the depiction of idols and the description of the works of the Lord are done in recurring fashion. And yet, the psalmist’s artistry maintains all the continuity and freshness of an original poem. Why might this be so? We see in the teachings of Jesus that repetition is often used in conveying an important message. For example, Jesus spoke of his death and resurrection over and over again (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33–34).

What do you think the psalmist is trying to convey through this psalm?

Firstly, we praise him because of *who he is*. Throughout the Old Testament, the name was understood to represent the nature of the person. And so to praise the name of the Lord meant to honour God in all his character and attributes: He is good (v.3), powerful (v.6), and everlasting (v.13).

Secondly, we praise him for *what he has done*. In verse 4 it is written, “For the Lord has chosen Jacob to be his own, Israel to be his treasured possession.” We are his special treasure. The Hebrew word for treasured possession, *segullah*, is used to refer to the most precious and costly jewels that kings would store among their most valued property. Within this verse we see two important truths: not only are we treasured by God, we also belong to him.

While the idols of this world (vv.15-18) are made by human hands – unable to see, to speak, or to hear, the reality in God’s kingdom is the reverse: our God is all-seeing, all-knowing, and all-powerful. And because we are fashioned by God, we

can not only see, speak, or hear – we can have access to the fullness of life offered to us through Christ's finished work on the cross. With all of our beings and for the rest of our days, may we praise the Lord.

Ponder

How might God be good to you in your life? List the ways he has shown you his goodness, and offer your thanks to him in praise.

Promise

"The Lord does whatever pleases him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all their depths." We can trust God to act with justice, mercy, and righteousness, in his perfect time.

Prayer

Lord, may my words, thoughts, and actions praise you today.



Article by Mrs Jacintha Tagal Cheah, Assistant College Director at St Paul's Theological College Malaysia. Jacintha is married to Abel Cheah, and together they serve at Holy Trinity Bukit Bintang and lead the Youth Ministry.

Day 35 – Psalm 136

HIS LOVE HAS NO ENDING!

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.

(Psalm 136:1)

Many refer to Psalm 136 as the “Great Psalm of Praise”. Our response to God’s revelation of himself and his works of grace and mercy for his people must envelope our wills, minds and hearts. As you read the psalm, note how a truth is expressed followed by the response to be said by all - ‘His Love Endures Forever’. All of God’s attributes are equally true. God’s greatness and power is clear for all to see in creation. Only the Holy Spirit can open our eyes to see that what underpins everything is his ‘love’. When we sing this response, God is reminding us that we are bound together in a deep personal relationship with him. ‘Give thanks to the Lord for he is good; he is God of gods; he is Lord of lords’. This we confess and testify. God is good *all* the time! He is the *only* God and Lord!

Verses 4 to 9 turn our eyes to the wonder of creation. God alone is eternal and he alone created the heavens and earth by his word. We are part of God’s creative activity. None of us were there to witness God creating. Unbelievers will continue to devise many theories concerning creation in an attempt to prove there is no God. However, we know that God has revealed that he brought all the created order into being. Read these verses again, see God’s wisdom, control, and handiwork. His continuing commitment to the whole of creation, including us!

Verse 10 to 21. God’s promise to Abraham to bless him and make him a blessing (Genesis 12:1-3) is fulfilled in God raising up a people for himself who would know and love him. From the beginning to the present time, our Lord Jesus Christ told us that Satan would work to block this plan. Pharaoh, great and mighty kings, tried to wipe out God’s chosen people. The same is happening around the world today! Professing Christians gaoled, disowned by their families, mocked by secular society. Do you remember what Jesus said to Peter; that his confession that Jesus is both Lord and Christ was revealed by the Father in heaven and that Jesus will build his church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it (Matthew 16:17-20).

In verses 23 to 26 it is clearly stated that it is God who 'remembered us', 'freed us' and 'gives food'. 'He remembered us in our low estate', that is, we are justly under judgment for our sin and rebellion against the One who created and who sustains us. He has not left us with no hope and no future. But he has 'freed us from our enemies' - bondage to sin and judgment - through the cross and resurrection of his one and only Son. 'Give thanks to the Lord for he is good.' 'Give thanks to the God of heaven.'

Ponder

How aware am I that Jesus has saved me from judgment and death, and sustains me, because 'God's love endures forever'? Grace alone, faith alone. "Give thanks to the God of heaven." (Psalm 136:26)

Promise

Jesus promised that he would build his church with people from every nation, tribe, tongue, language and that no one on earth or in heaven will be able to separate his people from himself. He has fulfilled this promise in the past and we have confidence he will continue to do so until he returns. We are secure in Christ.

Prayer

Dear Father, whose love endures forever, give us hearts filled with thankfulness and praise acknowledging you as the one who made heaven and earth, who in Christ Jesus our Lord continues to draw a people to yourself from every nation, tribe and tongue. The one who promises to keep your people secure in Christ until our Lord Jesus returns in glory. Keep our eyes focused on the fact that 'your love endures forever.' Amen.



Article by the Right Reverend Peter Tasker, the Archbishop of Sydney's Bishop for International Relations. Bishop Tasker was once the Vicar of St George's Church, Penang.

Day 36 – Psalm 137

THE LORD'S SONG IN HARD TIMES

How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?
(Psalm 137:4)

A quick Inductive Bible Study on Psalm 137: Who are the different groups of people mentioned in the psalm? Where are they? What emotions do they express? When is it right to express our hurt and anger? How did the tormentors and tormented respond? What do you think God is saying to your strong emotions now? What would you like to say to God about all this? Why don't you spend some time praying before you proceed?

If we are honest with ourselves, when overcome with loss, grief and hurt, we also tend to have hateful and vengeful thoughts and emotions. Is it un-Godly to express these feelings and thoughts?

Tormented by enemies in a foreign land (vv.1-4). The Israelites were deported to Babylon as slaves. Their temple destroyed, families, homes, lands and kingdom decimated. These events were still fresh and they remembered them vividly. To add salt to injury, the captors now goaded them to sing a happy song. How can they sing the Lord's song in such challenging circumstances? Can a grief-stricken heart burst out in songs of happiness? How do we respond in similar situations?

Remembering the Covenant (vv.5-6). The Jerusalem temple is a symbol of God's favour, presence and covenant with his people. It reminds them of the covenant they made at Mount Sinai; that they are a chosen people called to be nation of priests to the gentiles, and that the Lord is their God. Though the temple is destroyed, yet in the remembrance of Jerusalem their hope in God and the covenant is not forgotten. When all external evidence of hope is lost, our hope in God is never lost. In remembering, we express our hope with stronger conviction in defiance of the oppression and persecutors.

Imploring God to Remember (vv.7-9). Now, the psalmist pleads to God, to remember the sin of the enemies towards his people. What he intentionally asks of God is to rain judgement that seems so inhumane to us but was the normal

practise of warfare in ancient times, especially the killing of women and children. The psalmist struggles to forgive the enemy and ends with a curse for them, "Blessed shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock!" (v.9).

Ponder

The struggle to trust God with our desire for vengeance and our need to forgive our enemies and ourselves is real, and difficult. Like the psalmist, somehow even in the storms of strong emotions, we are aware that vengeance is God's prerogative alone (Deuteronomy 32:35, Romans 12:9). The psalm gives us permission to admit, express and take responsibility for our hateful and vengeful thoughts. It also invites us to leave them at God's feet and to trust God to act.

Promise

"For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you." (Matthew 6:14)

Prayer

Pray then like this:

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,

And forgive us our debts,

as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation

but deliver us from evil." (Matthew 6:9-13)



Article by the Rev Canon Dr Steven Abbarow, Vice-Principal of Seminari Theoloji Malaysia and Team Vicar of St Mark's Church, Seremban.

Day 37 – Psalm 138

WOULD YOU JOIN ME?

On the day I called, you answered me; my strength of soul you increased.
(Psalm 138:3)

The previous psalm is one of sadness and despair and the psalm after this particular psalm is one of confession. Sandwiched between these two psalms is a psalm of praise.

The psalmist praised the Lord God for his love, faithfulness, decrees and answered prayers (vv.1-3). His focus is on who God is and what he has done.

He is God who has spoken (vv.4-5). This is one clear reason for the all people (including the kings of the earth) to praise and worship him. As the title of one of Francis Schaeffer's books suggests, *"He is there and He is not silent"*.

God is not silent. He spoke through creation, through the prophets of the Old Testament and finally through his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ who is the Word. The "silence" of God becomes acute when seemingly he does not answer our prayers. We asked, where is God when we need him the most?

So, the psalmist emphasized that God has spoken, and that there is reason to sing of God's ways. He is God who has spoken and who acts in history. He did not create the world and leave it to its own devices. He is God who continues to intervene on behalf of his people, "When I called, you answered me" (v.3). He is still the God who answers the prayers of his people, in accordance to his will and purposes.

What is the picture that the psalmist painted of the Lord God?

He is one who is merciful, providentially protects and watches over his creation. What a strong reminder to sing and praise the Lord. It is a call to walk in a journey of trust and obedience.

The psalmist has an open invitation for the people to join him in this same journey.

Ponder

When I feel the “silence” of God, he is nevertheless still there with me.

In my pain, I rest that the Lord is still speaking in my situation.

In all things, there is still reason to praise and worship him.

Promise

He says, “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.” (Psalm 46:10-11)

He is there and he is not silent!

Prayer

Thank you, Lord for this invitation to praise and worship you, the one true God of creation who continues to speak to us in the Holy Scripture.



Article by the Reverend Tan Meng Poo, Pastor of Hosanna Anglican Church, Johor Bahru. A lawyer by training, he is also the Vice President, Ministries Operations Asia Pacific, Our Daily Bread Ministries.

Day 38 – Psalm 139

RELATING TO OUR CREATOR GOD WHO KNOWS ALL

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting”
(Psalm 139:23-24)

“My God knows everything, present everywhere, all powerful and totally righteous, so I feel ...” I wonder how you would complete the sentence? In today’s psalm, David reflects on our wondrous God and it sets him on an emotional roller coaster.

In verses 1-6, he reflects on how God sees and knows everything about him; his movements and his ways. Even his thoughts are transparent to God so that his words are known even before they are uttered. David is blown away by how the God of the universe knows him so personally. Not a thought or action is unknown to him. Neither is this knowledge incidental. He realises that every intricate detail is known because God chose him and created him awesomely (vv.13-16). These thoughts are enough to humble a king. How magnificent and precious are these thoughts to the stately and ordinary alike – God knows *me*. Such is his commitment to me (vv.6,17,18).

But a moment’s pause would help us understand the equally strong complementary idea that is contained in the words of verses 7-12. David realises that if this God knows him so thoroughly then it conversely means that there is nowhere that he can go to get away or hide from him. Neither height nor depth nor the farthest corners of the earth, neither light nor darkness, would be able to conceal him if he tried to hide. The final stanza of the psalm helps us to see why this is a concern.

Verses 19-22 would probably offend modern sensibilities. How could a believer think of asking a loving God to slay the wicked? However, the clarity that David has gained in his vision of God reinforces the holiness of God for him and sets the heinousness of sin in stark contrast. It reorients his thinking so that any evil or enmity towards God is loathsome to him. Someone has said, ‘For all its

vehemence, the hatred in this passage is not spite, but zeal for God'. Furthermore, David realises that his own sins cannot be hidden from God either.

Ponder

Our idolatrous hearts are forever straying from God. The result? Maybe it is some unfaithfulness in a relationship we are in. Perhaps it is anger that we harbour. Could it be pride? Maybe it is greed? What idol do you store in your heart? What do you really worship besides God? Being reminded of how intimately God knows us ought to strip away all pride in whatever accomplishments that we might have boasted in (which might have enabled us to overlook our sins?) and drive us to our knees in repentance before him.

Promise

Then as this sinks in, meditate on the words, "But God demonstrates his own love to us in this, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him" (Romans 5:8-9). The miracle of Good Friday. And may that gladness in Christ's redeeming work turn the frightful thought that 'nothing can hide me from God's gaze' to 'nothing can separate me from the love of God in Christ' (Romans 8:38-39). What Amazing Grace!

Prayer

Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.
(Psalm 139:23-24)



Article by the Reverend Nick Loi is the Pastor of Christ Church, Ipoh.

Day 39 – Psalm 140

ASSASSINS ON THE PROWL.

Rescue me, O Lord, from evil men; protect me from men of violence,
who devise evil plans in their hearts and stir up war every day.
(Psalm 140:1-2)

Jamal Kashoggi entered the Saudi consulate in Istanbul and was never seen again. Kim Jong Nam's poisoning was openly captured in airport security camera. There is a very popular RPG game 'Assassin's Creed' of a lone assassin on mission to put right a corrupt empire. The mainstay of crime thrillers have always been the dark fascination of savage political plots annihilated by bloodthirsty factions.

So, here we have an individual lament of David in which he cried in despair at the evil threatening him. In particular, poisonous speech (v.9) and destructive slander (v.11). As a political figure, there is always potential enemies both from within and from without. David prays that God will thwart and frustrate their evil intentions.

He trusts God to be his ally who will justify his innocence, "I know that the Lord secures justice for the poor and upholds the cause of the needy" (v.12). He ends his lament with soaring conviction that God's righteousness will prevail through all who trust him, "Surely the righteous will praise your name and the upright will live before you" (v.13).

I have no guts to kill anyone. Neither am I of any interest for anyone to kill. But there is something 'murderous' we can all do. It is called Gossip. David complained, "They make their tongues as sharp as a serpent's; the poison of vipers is on their lips" (v.3). We know gossip is terrible, but people enjoy it - "Gossip is so tasty – how we love to swallow it!" (Proverbs 18:8). Gossip is described as a kind of "moral assassination". It is like "a fly seeking sore spots" infesting and ingesting the victim. If you listen to gossip, you encouraged the defamation of a neighbour and at the same time you expose yourself to danger.

A Spanish proverb warned: "Whoever gossips to you, will gossip about you." Gossip would include sharing falsehood, exaggeration, half-truths and especially fake news (electronically speaking). Even more dangerous is revealing truth that is best not told that serves no purpose at all. Malicious sharing of truth does not set anyone free. The poet William Blake said: "A truth that's told with bad intent, beats all the lies you can invent."

Ponder

Why do dogs have so many friends? Because they wag their tails and not their tongues! (Author Unknown)

Promise

"From the fruit of his mouth a man's stomach is filled; with the harvest from his lips he is satisfied. The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit." (Proverbs 18:20-21)

Prayer

Heavenly Father, may my conversations be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that I may know how to answer everyone. Keep me from the sins of gossiping and slandering. In Jesus' name. Amen.



Article by the Reverend Joshua Ong, Vicar of St Paul's Church, Petaling Jaya.

Day 40 – Psalm 141

WHICH WAY DO WE TURN WHEN IN A TIGHT SPOT?

But my eyes are fixed on you, Sovereign Lord;
in you I take refuge—do not give me over to death.
(Psalm 141:8)

“Lord, help! Please help! Please, please help!!!” We have all probably cried that prayer many times! David’s Psalm 141 is an urgent prayer for God’s attention and help, for deliverance from his problems (v.1). He is in a tight spot but he turns to God in prayer.

We see that the psalmist trusts that his prayer will be the right kind of prayer, one that will be heard, rising like sweet smelling incense (v.2), and he turns to God for help, knowing who to ask. We have the assurance that our heavenly Father hears our prayers when we ask, and with him we find grace and mercy in our time of need.

We notice too that the psalmist wants to do the right thing but realises he is vulnerable to error, the risk of being drawn to what is evil. He asks that God will guard his mouth and his speech (v.3), so that he will not go astray; and that his heart will not be drawn to joining in the ways of evil people (v.4). He knows his own weakness. He even welcomes the rebuke and correction of a righteous person, whose striking blow would be soothing to him like anointing oil on the head (v.5), because it would keep him from evil ways.

He recognises that there is another path he could go in life that would be easy to slip into; it appears to be attractive but hides a pitfall and a disastrous outcome, even death (v.8), and he wants to avoid it; whereas those who choose this path will fall into their own traps (vv.6-7,10).

Of course, in life we will inevitably meet and mix with many people with different outlooks on life whom we may have to work alongside; we will be faced by people or situations from time to time that potentially could lead us into trouble if we get

involved with the wrong kind of people. The challenge is to be 'in the world', but not 'of the world' because we are called to be involved in this world to make a difference, not to isolate ourselves from it completely. This can be a dilemma for Christian parents wondering how to prepare their children to face the big wide world, its attractions, pleasures and temptations without being drawn into them.

But the psalm ends by reminding us that the key to living the Christian life for each one of us is to keep our eyes on God (v.8), and to trust in him for protection.

Here is wise advice for everyday living that will keep us from wandering off the straight and narrow path. Looking to Jesus will help us navigate our way safely through the twists and turns and pitfalls in life. And trusting in him, we will enjoy the help and protection of the Sovereign God.

Ponder

"Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in his wonderful face ..."

Promise

"I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my right hand."
(Isaiah 41:10)

Prayer

Father, keep me from loving the things of this world that may lead me away from you.



Article by the Rev David Cox, head of the Diocesan Spiritual Formation Platform and Spiritual Director of Wellspring Retreat House, Rawang. David was Vicar of All Saints' Church, Taiping (1983-1988 and 2013-2015).

Day 41 – Psalm 142

FACED WITH ANGUISH, WHAT DO WE RESORT TO FIRST?

I cry aloud to the Lord: I lift up my voice to the Lord for mercy.
(Psalm 142:1)

Let's, first of all, place Psalm 142 in its proper context. Running from King Saul who had wanted to kill him, David had escaped into a cave (1 Samuel 22:1) where he, in utter desperation, said Psalm 142 as a prayer for God's mercy.

Surrounded by enemies and hemmed in by his circumstances, David turned to God for help. As he experienced the solitude of that cave, David cried out to the Lord and lifting his voice to the Lord (v.1), he poured out his troubles and complaints (v.2).

Even in his loneliness, David seemed to be aware of the One who is everywhere. For those of us who have experienced the power of the Almighty, our first inclination often will be to cry out to God.

David acknowledges in verse 3 that sometimes the path of life seems impossibly steep and lengthy, making him feel he has no energy or will for the journey. Then, it suddenly dawns on him that God knew of this path long before he was called to walk it. God has always known the "hidden snares" that David would experience. David humbly took the path God had marked for him and he did in absolute trust in his infinite wisdom and love. David trusted that God would never lead him down a wrong path.

David felt lonely and uncared for in the cave and so he asked for refuge (vv.4-5). David's situation was desperate, so he pleaded for rescue (v.6). David was trapped, so he begged for freedom and desired fellowship with fellow believers, promising to use his eventual freedom as a way to praise God (v.7).

Are we, like David, trapped in a cave today? Perhaps, a cave of despair brought on by grief or illness? A cave of difficulties caused by our own poor decisions? A cave of questions and doubts that rob us of joy and confidence in the Lord? Perhaps, we are overwhelmed with sorrow today. It may be the weight of difficult

ministry; the worry of a hard marriage, the sorrow of a struggling handicapped child or the care of aging parents. What will we do? What is our first reaction or response? David was desperate but before doing anything else at all, he turned to God in prayer which reflected his unwavering faith in the ability of his God to somehow save him from his predicament.

Ponder

When we are desperate, as David was in verse 6, when we are frightened out of our wits, when we are pushed beyond our limits, when we are pulled out of our comfort zones, when our well-being is challenged or endangered do we, reflexively and involuntarily, burst into prayer and spontaneously cry out, "Have mercy on us, O Lord!", as the first thing we do?

Promise

The next time, when we are faced with tight spots, meagre resources, a vast army of problems or seemingly dead-end solutions, let's not panic. Instead, let's like David, turn to God who fights for his people and gives them victory. Let's not pray when there is nothing else we can do but let's pray before we do anything at all and, in time, it becomes our habitual response to every issue we face in life.

Prayer

Dear Lord, in my moments of anguish, help me to trust you with my life more than I trust myself. Lord, I acknowledge you as the Holy One who can meet all my needs at all times. Amen.



Article by Mr Philip Nainan, a Lay Reader at St. Christopher's Church, Johor Bahru. Philip is a lawyer.

Day 42 – Psalm 143

WHAT A MESS!

Teach me to do your will, for you are my God!
(Psalm 143:10)

As we meditate on this psalm, we will realize that it was a personal lament of David, which brings him to the knowledge of God's faithfulness and righteousness. Indeed here, David like many of us pleads to God not to judge him as no one can ever stand perfect before a sinless God.

This psalm stands as a prayer for deliverance and guidance from God. Undeniably there is a connection to the previous Psalm 142:3. There is reason to believe that David may have been fleeing from King Saul or some other enemy - giving him great trouble and distress. We also encounter enemies of this kind that overwhelms us with stress and desolation. It is best to look to God in prayer with outstretched hands and in total surrender whenever we are in a total mess or hardship of any kind.

Henceforth, God Almighty is a refuge and portion in the land of the living (v.9). We may arrive at a different conclusion - that David may also have written this psalm as and when he was fleeing from Absalom, his son. There is a small hint in verse 2 of the great sin by David with Bathsheba – the double sin of adultery and murder.

David was in a “total mess” in his life and appealed to God to render him mercy and not judgment, for he understood that his present trouble may have been a consequence of his sin.

In any case, David wrote Psalm 143 when he was in trouble and experiencing much difficulty. We too may be in David's situation at any given time in life and this psalm will be a great comfort and strength to us.

We need God to show us the way wherein we should walk, to teach us his will and grant us deliverance from our enemies.

Ponder

Whatever mess we may have made in our lives, it's best to make peace with our Maker and "get on track" to quickly do the will of God and not our will anymore. Jesus is indeed our bright Morning Star (Revelation 22:16). He only can mark the end of our nights of darkness and brings into the beautiful first rays of morning light. From the Word of God, "Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies: I flee unto thee to hide me." (Psalm 143:8-9)

Promise

Psalm 143:8, "Cause me to hear thy loving-kindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee." As in verse 4, we should no longer be thinking of the grave as David did, but our thoughts (like David) are now to live for God and to be his servant all the days of our life on earth

Prayer

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). We come to you O Lord, pleading to forgive us and cleanse us from all our unrighteousness and presumptuous sins. As it is written in Psalm 143:10, "Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness." So also, "Lord, we beseech Thee, to grant us your loving guidance and the knowledge of your will in all circumstances of life and to be obedient to you. In Jesus' name. Amen."



Article by the Right Reverend Dato' Charles Samuel, Area Bishop of Northern Peninsula in the Diocese of West Malaysia. Bishop Charles is also the Vicar of St George's Church, Penang.

Day 43 – Psalm 144

OUR GOD: THE LORD AND PROTECTOR.

He is my loving God and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer,
my shield, in whom I take refuge, who subdues peoples under me.
(Psalm 144:2)

We all know that God protects us. Do we know that God also fights the battle for us? David in his opening words of Psalm 144 proclaimed his gratitude and trust in God as his protector and teacher in battle, “Praise be to the Lord my Rock, who trains my hands for war, my fingers for battle. As a shepherd boy, David would have encountered many wild animals and have defeated them. His famous battle with Goliath and the other battles with Saul’s army would have greatly strengthened his faith in God. Yet David was aware that he was insignificant without God. He asked, “Lord, what are human beings that you care for them, mere mortals that you think of them? They are like a breath; their days are like a fleeting shadow” (vv.3-4).

David recognized that he won his battles because God fought for him and he was not hurt because God protected him. We may not have to fight physical battles like David, but nevertheless, each of us has our own battle. Whether it is spiritual, emotional or otherwise, we need God to protect us and to fight for us.

The other day I was asking a Christian friend this question, “Who is the first person you go to if you encounter a problem in life? He replied, “that depends on what sort of problem I am facing; if I face a financial problem, I will go to my brother or sister to borrow money, if it is a medical problem, I will go to my family doctor, a spiritual problem I go to my pastor and other problems, I go to my friends for solutions. I asked again, “Do you pray first to God before asking help from your friends and relatives? “Oh no, he said. I will only pray when my friends and relatives cannot help me. Prayer would be my last resort!

I do not wish to judge my friend for his faith or the lack of it. It is not easy to put our trust in God whom we cannot see. We rather put our faith in someone we can touch and see.

Prayer is like warfare. The book of Daniel and the epistle to the Ephesians remind us of that. When we pray and put our trust in God, he will take care of us and fight the battle for us. With God at our side, victory is assured.

What, then, shall we say in response to these things? “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31)

David ended the psalm with an affirmation that the community of God will be truly blessed when they choose to acknowledge God the Lord. “Blessed is the people of whom this is true; blessed is the people whose God is the Lord.” (Psalm 114: 15)

Let us then continue to exercise our faith like David did and allow God to fight the battle for us and constantly declare that he is indeed our Lord and Protector.

Ponder

Think about the time you encountered difficulties in life, be it physical, spiritual or emotional. Was God the first person you sought for help? Do we put *really* our trust in him?

Promise

“Blessed are the people whose God is the Lord.” (Psalm 144:15b)

Prayer

Father, thank you for keeping me, my family and my possessions under your protection. Help me to acknowledge that you are the true Lord of my life and to remember that you are my refuge, my strength and my ever-present help in trouble.



Article by the Reverend Soong Hoe Pin, Vicar of St Mark's Church, Butterworth.

Day 44 – Psalm 145

PRAISED BE YOU, MY LORD

Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised.
(Psalm 145:3)

“Do we know what it means to praise? To adore? To give glory? Praise is cheap, today. Everything is praised. Soap, beer, toothpaste, clothing, mouthwash, movie stars, all the latest gadgets - everything is constantly being praised. ... Praise has become empty.” (Thomas Merton)

About sixty years ago Merton highlighted the superficial way that we used the word ‘praise.’ He considered it overdone, sickening and empty. It seems as though there are no words left to express our adoration of God who alone is Holy, who alone is Lord. In fact, the word ‘praise’ is even used lightly in the church today.

Psalm 145 is one of the most vibrant and expressive hymns of praise in the Hebrew Bible. It can roughly be divided into four main sections, plus a concluding summary: (1) Praise God because He is so great (1-7); (2) Praise God because of His grace (8-9); (3) Praise God because of His glorious kingdom (10-13); (4) Praise God because of His goodness toward all who call upon Him (14-20); and, (5) Praise God forever and ever (21). This beautiful, comforting and reassuring psalm begins and ends with praise.

Not only does the Psalm provide a marvellous declaration of the majesty and incomparable greatness of God, it also instructs us on our responsibility to worship God as God deserves. However, it does not command or tell its reader, listener, or singer to praise the Lord. Instead, it is a proclamation of a present and future reality characterized by the praise of God. According to Psalm 145, all people and all creation will find their end in the praise of God.

So how does one respond to such a God? Needless to say, such splendour, majesty, mercy and might call for the loudest and most passionate of praise. We are to extol Him. We are to acknowledge and declare God to be above all others and pre-eminent over every other thing. We are to bless and praise, to commend and declare, to meditate and speak and pour forth praise of God’s abundant

goodness. Moreover, we are to sing aloud and give thanks and make known God's mighty deeds. And we must do it diligently everyday forever and ever. And how do we make praise part of our daily walk with God? Besides the exalting, proclaiming, and praising, we should regard this psalm as a cry to God from the neediest in the world. We should allow God to work through us to answer that cry. Being created in God's image, we are called to respond to the groans of this world by being gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

Ponder

We measure God's greatness by who he is and what he has done. We become aware of God's goodness when we experience his mercy. And so shouldn't praise be spontaneous? And how can we serve God best by demonstrating praise for him every day? Our challenge is to rediscover what it means to praise God genuinely.

Promise

God is the Provider. The Lord exercises his supreme authority in merciful and gracious deeds. God helps the inadequate. God gives food to all his creatures. God answers those who pray. God protects those who are his people.

Prayer

Lord God, we praise you for all the wonderful things you have done. We thank you for being gracious and merciful, slow to anger and steadfastly faithful. We praise you for your great love for us. Teach us Lord to exalt you as our King and help us to find ways to praise you every day. Give us the ear to hear and the will to respond to the cries of your people. Amen.

¹ Thomas Merton: *Praying the Psalms* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1956)



Article by the Reverend Dr Albert Sundararaj Walters. Albert is the Vicar General in the Diocese of Iran, in the Province of the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East.

Day 45 – Psalm 147

IT IS GOOD TO PRAISE FOR HIS GOODNESS

The Lord delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love.
(Psalm 147:11)

The Book of Psalms ends with praise. Praise and thanks remain suitable responses to the Lord for all that he has done for us. The Holy Spirit inspires God's people to give praise to God even when the circumstances are difficult (see Habakkuk 3.17). How much more, when there are many things for which to praise God. We are called to be Easter people.

It is likely that the psalm was written when many of those who had been taken into exile in Babylon (modern Iraq) were able to return to Jerusalem. It is a time of restoration, presaging the Easter Hope. In verses 2 and 3 the psalmist rejoices in the reversal of events as the exiles return and form part of a renewed community. The object of their praise is not just in their turn of fortune but in the Lord who has healed the broken-hearted and has bound up their wounds.

In verse 19, the psalmist rejoices in the Lord because God has shown him his laws and decrees. The praise arises from an obedient heart. For indeed the Lord delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love. Fear here means respect, adoration and obedience.

Much however has been learnt in the exile. The people of Babylon had focused their religion on the wonders of the heavens, so that psalmist not only praises God for his work of healing but also for the stars. God has numbered the stars (v.4). Perhaps only in very recent times have we learnt something of the expanse of the heavens, including thousands of galaxies. Our God knows each of them and determines their character calling them all by name.

Yet at the same time his provision extends to his care of the land. The psalmist knew the relief that rain could bring in a parched land. God's blessing, a product of his word included rain: by his command come also snow and frost and by his word snow and frost are melted and the waters flow.

God has a special care for his own people. God delights in those who fear him, in those who put their hope in his unfailing love, more than those who look good and have a fine physique.

Jerusalem is entering a time of prosperity, in which there is the finest of wheat and true peace. The psalmist urges people not to take this for granted but to praise God for his provision.

The praise is to be given not only by individuals but by the whole community. Jerusalem is to be a city of praise. So too the church of today called to be a community of praise. The praise includes music. Christian people are caught up in the joy of Easter. .

Ponder

Where today, do we see signs of God's goodness to us and to our church? How do we praise God today as individuals and as congregations? Can we still praise God when the circumstances are very tough - even in the midst of great suffering?

Promise

That God truly delights in us as we learn to respect and reverence him, as we are led to be obedient in our walk with him.

Prayer

Lord God, to the many blessings that you give us day by day, we ask for one thing more, a heart full of praise for you and your ways.



Article by the Reverend Canon Richard Kirton, one of the pioneer lecturers of Seminari Theoloji Malaysia (1979 – 1981). Canon Kirton is also the Bishop's Canon Commissary in England.

Day 46 – Psalm 148

LET ALL CREATION PRAISE HIM

Let them praise the name of the Lord: for his name alone is excellent;
his glory is above the earth and heaven.
(Psalm 148:13)

Africa enjoys a lively spirituality; especially the Christians in their singing and praises to God. Anytime, in a choral group, if one starts a song on an uncertain pitch, four different parts roll in harmony. How marvellous for listening pleasure.

The primary reasons for praise are based on God's attributes of goodness, mercy and steadfast love. Praise in the Old Testament also identifies with joy and thanksgiving. Praise is acknowledging our worth before God. The journey that we make, the path that we walk all depend on our spirituality. In our endeavour's we often crave the need for words of praise and encouragement, or at least a thank you. When this is not forth coming, we can be shattered hopelessly. However, true praise is reserved for Christ alone and is ultimately what matters.

God alone is worthy of all praise. We are justified before God, not through our worth before God but rather, God's acceptance of our worthlessness. One does not need to blow one's own trumpet to boast of one's worth, as we are reminded that we are only sand and dust.

Praises proclaim the greatness of God and what he has done in our lives. However, sometimes because of the difficult situations we are in, we don't feel like praising God. But in this psalm, we are reminded to praise God at all times. It is perpetual. Just like Jesus continually offered to God a sacrifice of praise, through him therefore, let us also offer our sacrifice of praise to God (Hebrews 13:15).

Praise recognizes and acknowledges that we are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, belonging to God. Therefore, it is only right for us to declare the praises of him, who called us into the light.

Why do we think less of ourselves? Humiliation ridiculing and ostracizing, all brings out the worst in us which can result in loneliness, pain and heartache. It is at these

moments, we remind ourselves that we are no lesser being. We have a worth and identity before God who alone is worthy of all praise.

Praise is the counterpart of thanksgiving and being thankful. As the psalmist reminds us, "...to enter his gates with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name" (Psalm 100:4). May this Lent not only bring us closer to God but help us to be mindful of our praises and thanksgiving before God.

Ponder

Unworthy as we are, can we praise God who alone is worthy of praise?

Promise

"Giving thanks to God our Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light." (Colossians 1:12)

Prayer

"O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall show forth thy praise." (Psalm 51:15).

Teach me O Lord, to bring praises to you no matter what life holds for me. Amen.



Article by the Venerable Charles Fraser Devadason, Archdeacon of Lower Central Archdeaconry. He is also the Vicar of St Aidan's Church, Bahau, Negri Sembilan.

LET EVERYTHING PRAISE THE LORD

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!
(Psalm 150:6)

Today when we open the pages of the newspaper or click onto the news report in the internet, there is virtually nothing worthy of praise. In fact, it only saddens and pains us more. None of us can continually live in a life surrounded by negativity without the light of 'positive-ness'. When the world does not provide positive news or an optimistic atmosphere to breathe in, the Scripture has an answer for us. It tells us to create one ourselves by "*Praising the Lord always*", both in season and out of season.

We can praise God for *who he is* – good, no evil intent, true, always positive, does what he says, always loves, gives hope and strength, always protects, always there for us, and many more commendable attributes. We can praise God *anytime* for he is – faithful, never absent, omniscience, always eager to hear us, always interested in us, loves and cares for us more than we love and care for ourselves.

We can praise God in *whatever circumstances* we are in for he is our strength and shield when we are down, he gives us sufficient grace when we are weak, he is our refuge, our pillar, our shield, our rock, and he understands and knows what is best for us. He holds our hand and walks with us even through the valley of the shadow of death. He stays with us in the lion dens, fights with us when meeting Goliath and comforts us, like Martha and Mary, in our bereavement. We can praise God *even when we cannot see him* for he is – always close to us and stays in our hearts, hears our prayers, heals and comforts us, equips and trains us, plans and helps us to execute the vision he has given to us. He strengthens and encourages us to run and complete the race or mission that he has entrusted to us.

There is no reason why we should not praise him always. The transformation of our lives by the renewing of our minds is crucial. Without it, we will be staying in the darkness of negativism. The power of praise is within our reach and it can create and promote life and life to its fullest.

For every pain, it is a sign of growth; every fall, a chance of picking up and start again; every mistake, a channel for improvement; every error, a designation of truth; and every failure, a pathway to success.

Ponder

Has any good resulted from staying in negativism? Why are there so many people still caught in the gloom of despair, hopelessness, self-destruction, joylessness and illusion? Have they not tasted the Power of Praise – which can energise the cells in our body and help set a positive mind-set and outlook? Quickly get out and stay positive.

Promise

Praise releases positive energy. It contributes confidence, courage, hope, vision, self-worth, a healthy outlook, revitalization and joy. There is no need to have any operation manual or self-learning course or certification to start praising God day and night. Just start and do it, you will surely see and experience the positive adrenaline in you flowing to its fullest. You may even start to feel younger and positive.

Prayer

Dear Lord, create in me a habit of praise and instil in me a sense of awe in my praising moments that I may not wander off to negativism which neither pleases nor brings honour to your Name. Clothe me with hope, joy, peace and serenity daily that I may always worship, obey and trust you, the One who creates, calls, saves, equips and leads. Together with all creation, I thank you in Jesus' Name. Amen.



Article by the Most Reverend Datuk Ng Moon Hing, Archbishop of the Province of South-east Asia and the Bishop of the Diocese of West Malaysia.

Appendix 1 – Psalm 146

THE LORD SHALL REIGN FOREVER

The Lord reigns forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations.
(Psalm 146:10)

Psalm 146 is the first of the “Hallelujah” psalms, the last five psalms of the 150 that make up the psalter. It begins and ends with a shout of “Hallelujah” or in English “Praise the Lord”. It proclaims both the might and the goodness of the God and incites us to worship him.

Psalm 146:2, “Lord, I will praise you while I live, I will sing your praises while I have my being.”

Prayer: Precious Lord, you have given me so much to be thankful for, you are the giver of life and the new life you have given me has one purpose – to thank and praise you. As long as I live, for eternity, I will sing your praises.

Psalm 146:3, “Do not put your trust in princes.”

Can our presidents, politicians, heads of commercial organisations, be relied on to help in times of trouble, when a financial meltdown or similar catastrophe happens? We thank God for the well principled leaders we sometimes see, but there are many who are motivated by self-interest or just plain cowardly. And when the crisis happens even the best can be swept away by the flow of events. But God is unwavering, he keeps truth forever.

Prayer: Thank you Lord Jesus that when it came to the crunch you didn’t back down, you loved me to the end. And thank you that you reign over all things, you have the power to redeem the worst of situations.

Psalm 146:5, “Happy is the man who has the God of Jacob for his help” (v.5).

The same unchanging God who created the furthest galaxy and gives life to the tiniest microbe has a compassionate heart for his people. He executes justice for the oppressed, he gives food to the hungry, he watches over strangers, he brings relief to those in difficult circumstances - the orphan and widow. When we read ‘the

Lord loves the righteous' (v.8), we know that he watches over the righteous who are persecuted or exploited in this evil world. But there is a second angle, that God also expects his people to be his agents, to execute justice for the oppressed, to give food to the hungry etc. By contrast the way of the wicked – those who exploit or ignore the plight of those in need - he will turn upside down. Isn't this the meaning of the frightening parable of the sheep and the goats?

Prayer: Lord, on that day when I answer to you for my actions, may I be found to have loved you and my neighbour, to have followed your heart and your way. Even though I may not have known it at the time. I am saved through your redeeming grace, may I now do those good works that you have prepared for me to walk in.

Promise: "The Lord shall reign forever, even your God O Zion, to all generations" (v.10). God's reign is all powerful, unwavering, and righteous. Let us obediently accept his reign in our day to day lives, and walk as his sons and daughters.



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Appendix 2: Collects (Holy Week & Easter)

Palm Sunday

Almighty and everlasting God, who in your tender love towards the human race sent your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ to take upon him our flesh and to suffer death upon the cross: grant that we may follow the example of his patience and humility, and also be made partakers of his resurrection; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Maundy Thursday

God our Father, you have invited us to share in the supper which your Son gave to his Church to proclaim his death until he comes: may he nourish us by his presence, and unite us in his love; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Good Friday

Almighty Father, look with mercy on this your family for which our Lord Jesus Christ was content to be betrayed and given up into the hands of sinners and to suffer death upon the cross; who is alive and glorified with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Easter Eve

Grant, Lord, that we who are baptized into the death of your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ may continually put to death our evil desires and be buried with him; and that through the grave and gate of death we may pass to our joyful resurrection; through his merits, who died and was buried and rose again for us, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Easter Day

Lord of all life and power, who through the mighty resurrection of your Son overcame the old order of sin and death to make all things new in him: grant that we, being dead to sin and alive to you in Jesus Christ, may reign with him in glory; to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be praise and honour, glory and might, now and in all eternity.