

Bible Study on Psalms

Individual Lament Psalms – Help in Our Darkest Hour

Psalm 27

1. The Lord
2. Evil doers attacking him (v. 2) and an enemy army surround him (v. 3).
3. Confidence in the Lord
4. The psalmist asks the Lord for help.
5. The psalmist praises the Lord for his help.

Psalms 42-43

1. The psalmist asks himself three times, “Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me?”
2. The phrases from these psalms that show the psalmist’ longing for God’s presence include “my soul pants for you, O God” (42:1); “my soul thirsts for God” (42:2); “my tears have been my food day and night” (42:3); “I say to God my Rock, ‘why have you forgotten me?’” “Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?” (42:9)
3. Phrases that show the psalmist’s joy in being with God at the temple include, “these thing I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go with the multitude, leading the procession to the house of God, with shouts of joy and thanksgiving among the festive throng” (42:4); “then will I go to the alter of God, to God, my joy and my delight. I will praise you with the harp, O God my God” (43:4)
4. As we worship in God’s house, God’s Word guides and empowers us. We also receive the Sacrament through which the Holy Spirit strengthens our faith. In public worship, we witness to one another and encourage one another in our Christian faith.

Psalm 71

1. Phrases from this psalm that tell of God’s safety and strength include “You are my rock and my fortress” (v. 3b); “You have been my hope...my confidence” (v. 5); “You have done great things” (v. 19); and “You will restore my life again from the depths of the earth you will again bring me up” (v. 20).
2. Through the power of God’s Word and Sacrament parents can teach their children to pray and have confidence in God. We can also share the good news of what Christ has done for us with anyone around us.

Psalm 77

1. Words or phrases from verses 1-4 that indicate the pain of the psalmist include “cried out, in distress, groaned, grew faint troubled.
2. The psalmist feels God has rejected him and his people. He feels forsaken. He feels God has forgotten the promises he made to protect his people.
3. When people encounter troubles and heartaches (illness, death,, financial problems) in life they may question or doubt God’s presence.
4. The psalmist remembers and meditates on God’s goodness to Israel in the past.
5. This calls for individual responses.
6. The psalmist recalls God’s deliverance of his people from slavery in Egypt at the crossing of the Red Sea.
7. The psalmist points to a shepherd image. John 10:11-18 reassures us that Jesus knows each one of us. He laid down his life for us. He cares for us as no other. When we feel helpless, we can rest safely in our Savior’s arms, certain that he will protect and care for us just as a shepherd cares for his sheep.

After reading and rereading a psalm, ask yourself these questions. What words or phrases stick out to you? How do these words or phrases reveal the poet’s purpose for the psalm? What effect does this psalm have on you as you meditate on it?

