

Sermon Guides for The Psalms

Series Title: God's Favorite Playlist

Tag Line: The Beauty of the Psalms

Dates (2020): May 3, 10, 17, 24, 31

Key Verse:

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come into his presence with singing. (Psalm 100:1-2)

Series Overview

The Psalms are the greatest collection of poetry in the Bible, and they were the source of much of the Jewish people's liturgical life. But they aren't just beautiful poetry. They give us permission to relate to God in the raw, authentically praying, crying, and celebrating throughout the highs and lows of life. Often we feel like we have to put on a mask, acting and speaking in just the right kind of way. We might find it hard to be our truest selves, out of fear that we will upset God or cause ourselves harm. But the Psalms give us a model for talking to and listening to God, together with others in Christian community, so that we can feel free to come to God just as we are.

Colors, Images, Mood, Vibe

Green, (pastoral), gray (lament and confession), gold (celebration) colors.

Images of a playlist of songs, music notes, musical instruments, people at a concert.

Feelings of hope, joy, lamentation, confession, celebration, honesty, authenticity.

Sermon 1

Title: A Song of Help

Scripture: Psalm 7

Key Word: Help

Theme: Calling to God for Deliverance.

Main Idea: We can take refuge in God.

Sermon Description:

Psalm 7 is one of many psalms that resonate with us in times of duress, in which we find ourselves calling out to God for help. It begins with a confident declaration (“O Lord my God, in you I take refuge”), and ends with a word of thanksgiving and celebration for God’s deliverance. It is also one of many “imprecatory” songs, in which the psalmist asks God to destroy his enemies. We may find such a notion unsettling, given that Jesus calls us to love and pray for our enemies. But we can also find these psalms liberating, in that they allow us to feel angry and explore healthy ways to express our anger. We are not called to violence or revenge, but these psalms may provide a healthy outlet to externalize those feelings, and allow God to transform us.

Ultimately, this is a psalm of confidence, that no matter how badly things might be going, God is our refuge and strength.

Sermon 2

Title: A Song of Comfort

Scripture: Psalm 23

Key Word: Comfort

Theme: God gives us what we need.

Main Idea: God is our good shepherd, who provides for us and strengthens us when we are fearful and weak.

Sermon Description:

Psalm 23 is one of the most famous and beloved of all the psalms. It envisions us as sheep, under the watchful care and guidance of God, our shepherd. While the sheep and shepherd imagery may seem outside our context, each line provides timely and deeply resonant comfort for us:

“I shall not want.” – God provides for our needs

“You lead me beside still waters.” – God calms our troubled waters and enables us to be nourished.

“Though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I need not fear.” – God is with us in our grief, and provides us courage.

“You prepare a table before me, in the presence of my enemies.” – God calls us together in a holy, loving feast, even when the world seems at its worst.

“Goodness and mercy will follow me ... and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” – God offers us everlasting hope, and the promise of goodness.

Sermon 3

Title: A Song of Confession

Scripture: Psalm 51

Key Word: Confession

Theme: God hears our repentance and offers forgiveness.

Main Idea: When we sin, we can call on God through repentance and confession, and experience not only God's forgiveness, but the power to restore our relationships with those whom we have wronged.

Sermon Description:

Psalm 51 is attributed to David, in the wake of his affair with Bathsheba and his coverup involving the murder of her husband. When the prophet Nathan confronts David, the king immediately confesses his sin in this psalm, producing some of the most painfully authentic words in the entire Bible.

Confession and repentance should not be equated with a kind of self-flagellating, "woe is me," self-shaming. Instead, it ought to be an earnest desire to name the fullness of our wrongs to God and others, and a clear-eyed determination to make things right for the future.

Psalm 51 carries a vivid promise: that God is faithful to forgive, to "wash us with hyssop, and make us clean." It is a reminder that no matter what we have done, God's grace and mercy is greater, and we can live a fully forgiven and transformed life.

Sermon 4

Title: A Song of Praise

Scripture: Psalm 100

Key Word: Praise

Theme: God is worthy of our praise.

Main Idea: No matter what we are going through, we should offer God our joyful praise.

Sermon Description:

Psalm 100 is a powerful, vivid song of celebration, with essentially four parts: 1) *Make a joyful noise to the Lord*: Mitigate words of grumbling and dissatisfaction with God, and increase your sentiment of joyful thanksgiving and praise of God. 2) *Know that the Lord is God*: Acknowledge God as your first and foremost priority, setting aside other influences that might get in the way. 3) *Enter his gates with thanksgiving*: Come into the worship experience with a spirit of expectation, in which you will offer yourself to God with gratitude. And 4) *God's steadfast love endures forever*: This is a common phrase throughout the Bible, reminding us that God's love is not only deep and unconditional; it is long-lasting and secure.

Sermon 5 (Pentecost)

Title: A Song of Celebration

Scripture: Psalm 150, Acts 2:1-12

Key Word: Celebration

Theme: The Spirit of Pentecost empowers us to live lives of joy and celebration.

Main Idea: There is always a reason to celebrate, because God's love is real and alive, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Sermon Description:

The Psalms conclude with a wild and exciting symphony of joyous sounds, much like there had to have been during the apostles' experience of Pentecost. The diversity of noises both in this psalm and during Pentecost may have seemed cacophonous, but they were all unified in praise and thanksgiving for the one who came to earth in such a vivid way.

How might Pentecost Sunday be an invitation to us to "praise the Lord?" And how might we live so as to allow other people, "everything that has breath," find their voice and praise the Lord?