
Day 118 – April 28

Israel as a Monarchy (1100 – 930 BCE)
Psalms About Righteousness and Wickedness

Readings: *Psalm 76, 82, 84, 90, 92, 112, 115*

Reflections:

- Psalm 76: A psalm about the rule, greatness and power of God.
- Psalm 82: This is a psalm directed at other kings or leaders who claim they are gods. They stand under judgment for not caring for the poor and needy. The psalmist declares they are children of God in terms of being made in his image but they stand under judgment for failing to reflect his character in their leadership.
- Psalm 84: This is one of the most beautiful psalms. The picture is of the most weak and insignificant finding a home in God's presence. The psalmist uses a sparrow that is nesting in the Tabernacle as an example of someone making a home in God's presence. He adds a beautiful image of God's provision for those who remain completely dependent on him. "Blessed are those whose strength is in you alone, who have set their hearts on a long journey with you. As they pass through the valley of tears, it will become a place well watered with God's grace, pools will form from the falling rain (tears become the rain that waters the desert). They will have the experience of being renewed daily in their strength until each reaches their goal and receive what is promised to them." He cries out to God again for help and then concludes the psalm by saying, "Better is a moment with you than a lifetime elsewhere, it is better to be the least in God's presence than to party with the wicked. God is my light for my path and my protector and my only source of blessing and honor. No good thing will he withhold from me because I walk in his way of righteousness and humble dependence. This is how a woman or man is blessed as they trust in You, O Lord the mighty one!" What a great psalm! Again it affirms the main themes we have been discovering in the meta-narrative.
- Psalm 90: A song by Moses (which is interesting). Here he reminds God and the singers of the frailty of humanity (Moses saw a lot of that) and the power and righteousness of God (again he saw a lot of that too). After all this acknowledgement his prayer condenses down to two main points, "after a long night of weeping, weakness and waiting, satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love" and "Under your blessing,

establish the work of our hands, make our lives truly productive for your purposes.”
Again, a good place to focus our prayers as we walk through difficult times.

- Psalm 92: A psalm that promises God's ongoing blessing for a life of complete dependence and ongoing worship. The image is one that is commonly used throughout Scripture: a tree planted by the water that always bears fruit. This psalm affirms that even into old age you will bear fruit, which is a great reminder that God loves to use people at all stages of life. This image of a tree planted by water will appear again in the prophecy of Ezekiel 47 as well as in Revelations. God envisions a people so rooted in his life that they in turn become life giving people, just like trees rooted by streams produce life giving fruit for people to enjoy.
- Psalm 112: The contrast in this psalm between the righteous and self-centered is severe. The righteous or God honoring follow the pattern we have seen: full of grace and compassion, generous and lends freely, does everything with a sense of justice and rightness before God. These are all within the understanding of caring for the poor in the land. He has no fear of bad news. His heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord. His heart is secure, he will have no fear. In the end he will look in triumph on those that oppose him.” Why? He has given generous gifts to the poor. But look out if you are self-centered! Vexed, teeth gnashing, wasting away, and left with nothing. We definitely don't want that!
- Psalm 115: A psalm that points out the complete foolishness of worshipping idols and calls people to worship God alone, to praise him for all the days he gives them breathe. This psalm helps us have a glimpse into the mindset of the Israelites about life after death. They did not have a well developed understanding of life after death. It was a mystery to them. And so their focus is really on living their life to full before God right now.