

Psalms In Real Life
By
Matt Dabbs
Mattdabbs.wordpress.com

Lesson 1 – Introduction to the Psalms

What is your favorite psalm?

- Spend time reading a few of these
- Mine - Psalm 139
 - I remember reading that while sitting on the beach alone at night during a college trip to Daytona
 - Powerful and moving...like God was right there

What are some times/events you can think of that are associated with the Psalms?

- Funerals
- Church service
- Worship

What are some reasons you have turned to them?

- Comfort
- Worship/praise

Who wrote the psalms?

- David – wrote 73 psalms total
- Asaph – 12 (50, 73-83)
- Sons of Korah – 11 (42, 44-49, 84-85, 87-88)
- Jeduthun – 39, 62, 77
- Solomon – 72, 127
- Moses – 90
- Heman – 88
- Skeletor – Psalm 151 (joke!)
- Ethan – 89

What are the Psalms?

- Song book of the Old Testament
- Poetry

Different genres in the Bible – knowing that helps us read them better.

What is a genre?

- Different styles

- Newspaper reads differently than a Romance Novel (so I have been told) reads different than a joke book which reads different than a weather report.
- Knowing how to read each one helps you understand it better
- The Psalms are not Law
 - Poetry is not legal language. Not everything that is said in a poem is a law to be obeyed (10 commandments)

From Dr. McMillon on genre in the psalms

Example of two descriptions of a sunset.

Scientific: sunlight reflecting off of moisture and dust particles in atmosphere produce light waves of a certain band producing unusual color patters visible to the human eye.

Poetic: As the fiery torch sank below the horizon, it set the sky ablaze with crimson.

Is one of those more or less true than the other? No, they are two different ways of describing the same thing.

The Psalms are a poetic expression

When you think about poetry, what types of different devices or tools do poets use to make poetry?

- Rhyme -
- Imagery
- Metaphor/Simile
- Repetition

Here are the main tools in the toolbox of the Hebrew psalmists (written 3000 years ago!)

1. Repetition/recurring refrains (like a chorus)
 - a. Psalm 46:7, 11
 - b. Psalm 49:12, 20
2. Acrostic (22 letters in Hebrew Alphabet)
 - a. Psalm 119 – 8 verses each
 - b. Psalm 111, 112 & 145 (each have all 22 letters)

Aside - Alphabet

- By the way, Alphabet comes from 1st 2 letters of Greek (Alpha + Beta)
- Borrowed from Hebrew (Aleph, Bet)
- Letters in Hebrew came from shapes of various things
 - “B” looks like a little house – Bayit/Bet Bethlehem – house of bread
 - “M” looks like a little wave of the sea – Mayim (Sea)

Back to poetry tools in the psalms

3. Parallelism
 - a. Psalm 18:5 – two lines that say basically the same thing
4. Comparisons

- a. Simile – Ps 42:1
- b. Metaphor – Ps 3:3

Types of Psalms:

That is zooming in a bit...let's zoom out

- Lament Psalms – Roughly 80
- Praise – Roughly 100
- Wisdom – 20

The psalms reflect everything it means to be human. There is victory and defeat. There is anger, compassion, love, humility, bitterness, rage, sadness, and joy. There is a psalm for every occasion in life. The psalms show us how to live in total openness to God with our feelings. We learn how to deal with sin (Psalm 51). We learn how to rejoice in God (Psalm 68) and so many other good and practical things.

Lesson 2: Psalms of Comfort

One of the primary reasons we turn to the psalms is to find comfort and assurance.

Best known – Psalm 23

(Say it together...(have handout they can read it off of if necessary))

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures,

he leads me beside quiet waters,

³ he restores my soul.

He guides me in paths of righteousness

for his name's sake.

⁴Even though I walk

through the valley of the shadow of death,^[a]

I will fear no evil,

for you are with me;

your rod and your staff,

they comfort me.

⁵You prepare a table before me

in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil;

my cup overflows.

⁶Surely goodness and love will follow me

all the days of my life,

and I will dwell in the house of the LORD

forever.

Was there a time in your life where you turned to those words for comfort?

Why have countless generations found those words comforting?

Metaphor – God is our shepherd'

What actions does God do as our shepherd? Look for verbs

- Makes me lie down
- Leads me
- Restores my soul

- Guides me
- Stays with me in the valley of death
- Prepare a table
- Anoint my head with oil
- Allow me to dwell in his house

Those are shepherding actions at their best...they are pastoral.

What is David's response?

- Wanting nothing
- Restored soul
- No fear of evil
- Comfort in the presence of God
- Etc

This seems tangible (touchable) to David.

When was a time in your life God's comfort seemed tangible?

What made that time so different?

Let's read a few more psalms of comfort together and learn about the God who brings us comfort in our time of need

Psalm 27

Of David.

¹The LORD is my light and my salvation —
whom shall I fear?

The LORD is the stronghold of my life—
of whom shall I be afraid?

²When evil men advance against me
to devour my flesh,^[a]

when my enemies and my foes attack me,
they will stumble and fall.

³Though an army besiege me,
my heart will not fear;

though war break out against me,
even then will I be confident.

⁴One thing I ask of the LORD,
this is what I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD
and to seek him in his temple.

⁵For in the day of trouble
he will keep me safe in his dwelling;
he will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle
and set me high upon a rock.

⁶Then my head will be exalted
above the enemies who surround me;
at his tabernacle will I sacrifice with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make music to the LORD.

⁷Hear my voice when I call, O LORD;
be merciful to me and answer me.

⁸My heart says of you, "Seek his^{1b} face! "
Your face, LORD, I will seek.

⁹Do not hide your face from me,
do not turn your servant away in anger;
you have been my helper.

Do not reject me or forsake me,
O God my Savior.

¹⁰Though my father and mother forsake me,
the LORD will receive me.

¹¹Teach me your way, O LORD;
lead me in a straight path
because of my oppressors.

¹²Do not turn me over to the desire of my foes,
for false witnesses rise up against me,
breathing out violence.

¹³I am still confident of this:

I will see the goodness of the LORD
in the land of the living.

¹⁴Wait for the LORD;

be strong and take heart
and wait for the LORD.

Psalm 30

A psalm. A song. For the dedication of the temple.^[a] Of David.

¹I will exalt you, O LORD,

for you lifted me out of the depths
and did not let my enemies gloat over me.

²O LORD my God, I called to you for help

and you healed me.

³O LORD, you brought me up from the grave^[b];

you spared me from going down into the pit.

⁴Sing to the LORD, you saints of his;

praise his holy name.

⁵For his anger lasts only a moment,

but his favor lasts a lifetime;

weeping may remain for a night,

but rejoicing comes in the morning.

⁶When I felt secure, I said,

“I will never be shaken.”

⁷O LORD, when you favored me,

you made my mountain^[c] stand firm;

but when you hid your face,

I was dismayed.

⁸To you, O LORD, I called;

to the Lord I cried for mercy:

⁹“What gain is there in my destruction,^[d]

in my going down into the pit?
Will the dust praise you?
Will it proclaim your faithfulness?
¹⁰Hear, O LORD, and be merciful to me;
O LORD, be my help. ”
¹¹You turned my wailing into dancing;
you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy,
¹²that my heart may sing to you and not be silent.
O LORD my God, I will give you thanks forever.

Psalm 34^[a]

Of David. When he pretended to be insane before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he left.

¹I will extol the LORD at all times;
his praise will always be on my lips.
²My soul will boast in the LORD;
let the afflicted hear and rejoice.
³Glorify the LORD with me;
let us exalt his name together.
⁴I sought the LORD, and he answered me;
he delivered me from all my fears.
⁵Those who look to him are radiant;
their faces are never covered with shame.
⁶This poor man called, and the LORD heard him;
he saved him out of all his troubles.
⁷The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him,
and he delivers them.
⁸Taste and see that the LORD is good;
blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.
⁹Fear the LORD, you his saints,

for those who fear him lack nothing.

¹⁰The lions may grow weak and hungry,
but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.

¹¹Come, my children, listen to me;
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

¹²Whoever of you loves life
and desires to see many good days,

¹³keep your tongue from evil
and your lips from speaking lies.

¹⁴Turn from evil and do good;
seek peace and pursue it.

¹⁵The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous
and his ears are attentive to their cry;

¹⁶the face of the LORD is against those who do evil,
to cut off the memory of them from the earth.

¹⁷The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them;
he delivers them from all their troubles.

¹⁸The LORD is close to the brokenhearted
and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

¹⁹A righteous man may have many troubles,
but the LORD delivers him from them all;

²⁰he protects all his bones,
not one of them will be broken.

²¹Evil will slay the wicked;
the foes of the righteous will be condemned.

²²The LORD redeems his servants;
no one will be condemned who takes refuge in him.

Psalm 142

A *maskil*^(a) of David. When he was in the cave. A prayer.

¹I cry aloud to the LORD;

I lift up my voice to the LORD for mercy.

²I pour out my complaint before him;

before him I tell my trouble.

³When my spirit grows faint within me,

it is you who know my way.

In the path where I walk

men have hidden a snare for me.

⁴Look to my right and see;

no one is concerned for me.

I have no refuge;

no one cares for my life.

⁵I cry to you, O LORD;

I say, "You are my refuge,
my portion in the land of the living."

⁶Listen to my cry,

for I am in desperate need;

rescue me from those who pursue me,

for they are too strong for me.

⁷Set me free from my prison,

that I may praise your name.

Then the righteous will gather about me

because of your goodness to me.

As you hear those psalms, what stands out to you about God's comfort?

What makes it easy to relate? Hard to relate?

What are you needing comforted in, in your life right now?

Lesson 3 - Psalms of Praise

Reverse order of class this week...

1 – Read psalms first and experience them

2 – Then unpack the following...

This goes back to N.T. Wright/Eric Brown's point of experience should proceed discussion. That way the discussion is informed by experience and is not just an intellectual game.

What is praise?

What is it about God that should make us want to praise him?

Big idea - Praise doesn't put God in the center...He has always been there. Praise recognizes that God is in the center of everything whether we realize it or not.

What is Worship?

Exo 20:1-6? – Worship God, not idols

Worship – ascribing worth or value to someone or something.

- Matt 4:10 – worship God alone
 - Quotes Deut 6:13
 - Deut 6:13 – serve God alone

Worship = **serve**

Another word for worship – **prostrate**

What does prostrate mean?

Attitude, physical position or both?

Why should worship give you that attitude/position?

Listen to each of these psalms and listen for a couple of things:

- *What is the attitude of the psalmist toward God?*
- *What does he praise God for/Why is God to be praised?*
- *How can we develop the same attitude toward God as they had?*

Read each psalm through at least twice and let them sink in and then ask those questions.

The whole point here is to let the psalms have the effect/response they were written to evoke in the reader and to God.

Psalms of Praise

Psalm 145^[a]

A psalm of praise. Of David.

- ¹I will exalt you, my God the King;
I will praise your name for ever and ever.
- ²Every day I will praise you
and extol your name for ever and ever.
- ³Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise;
his greatness no one can fathom.
- ⁴One generation will commend your works to another;
they will tell of your mighty acts.
- ⁵They will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty,
and I will meditate on your wonderful works.^[b]
- ⁶They will tell of the power of your awesome works,
and I will proclaim your great deeds.
- ⁷They will celebrate your abundant goodness
and joyfully sing of your righteousness.
- ⁸The LORD is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and rich in love.
- ⁹The LORD is good to all;
he has compassion on all he has made.
- ¹⁰All you have made will praise you, O LORD;
your saints will extol you.
- ¹¹They will tell of the glory of your kingdom
and speak of your might,
- ¹²so that all men may know of your mighty acts
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.
- ¹³Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and your dominion endures through all generations.

The LORD is faithful to all his promises
and loving toward all he has made.^[c]

¹⁴The LORD upholds all those who fall
and lifts up all who are bowed down.

¹⁵The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food at the proper time.

¹⁶You open your hand
and satisfy the desires of every living thing.

¹⁷The LORD is righteous in all his ways
and loving toward all he has made.

¹⁸The LORD is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth.

¹⁹He fulfills the desires of those who fear him;
he hears their cry and saves them.

²⁰The LORD watches over all who love him,
but all the wicked he will destroy.

²¹My mouth will speak in praise of the LORD.
Let every creature praise his holy name
for ever and ever.

*What is the attitude of the psalmist toward God?
What does he praise God for/Why is God to be praised?
How can we develop the same attitude toward God as they had?*

Psalm 138

Of David.

¹I will praise you, O LORD, with all my heart;
before the “gods” I will sing your praise.

²I will bow down toward your holy temple
and will praise your name
for your love and your faithfulness,
for you have exalted above all things

your name and your word.

³When I called, you answered me;

you made me bold and stouthearted.

⁴May all the kings of the earth praise you, O LORD,

when they hear the words of your mouth.

⁵May they sing of the ways of the LORD,

for the glory of the LORD is great.

⁶Though the LORD is on high, he looks upon the lowly,

but the proud he knows from afar.

⁷Though I walk in the midst of trouble,

you preserve my life;

you stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes,

with your right hand you save me.

⁸The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me;

your love, O LORD, endures forever —

do not abandon the works of your hands.

What is the attitude of the psalmist toward God?

What does he praise God for/Why is God to be praised?

How can we develop the same attitude toward God as they had?

Psalms of Lament

Start by reading some of these psalms and let them sink in so we can discuss them.

Read Psalm 13, 88, 109

What do we do with psalms like these?

These psalms make us a little uncomfortable...So does life.

These are the psalms of the downtrodden, the seasons of life that are dark and there isn't much light to find hope in.

Do we sing these songs? Do we sing positively in spite of the darkness that can characterize our lives at times.

What do you do with these songs?

What does it mean to you that these exist?

Does talking like this mean you are less faithful to God? Why or why not?

Orientation – Disorientation – New Orientation (Baptism)

- If you leave someone under the water, it doesn't turn out well
- If all you did was study these psalms to the exclusion of the others it wouldn't be good for your soul
- We need balance.

Once you have gone through dark times, it helps you appreciate the good ones.

Key – 99% of the time these psalms result in hope, in answered calls of distress

Personal Lament – Psalm 13, 86, 35

Communal Lament – 74/79, 88 (troubling – absence & silence of God), 109 (vindictiveness of God)

Lament lays out the problem, expresses specific need, calls upon God's faithfulness, expresses the worthiness of the psalmist for redemption, etc.

Personal Lament

No lecture...just let these sink in and process them together. It is so easy to talk about Psalms rather than experience them.

Psalm 13

For the director of music. A psalm of David.

¹How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me?

²How long must I wrestle with my thoughts
and every day have sorrow in my heart?

How long will my enemy triumph over me?

³Look on me and answer, O LORD my God.

Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death;

⁴my enemy will say, "I have overcome him,"
and my foes will rejoice when I fall.

⁵But I trust in your unfailing love;
my heart rejoices in your salvation.

⁶I will sing to the LORD,
for he has been good to me.

Psalm 86

A prayer of David.

¹Hear, O LORD, and answer me,
for I am poor and needy.

²Guard my life, for I am devoted to you.
You are my God; save your servant
who trusts in you.

³Have mercy on me, O Lord,
for I call to you all day long.

⁴Bring joy to your servant,
for to you, O Lord,
I lift up my soul.

⁵You are forgiving and good, O Lord,
abounding in love to all who call to you.

⁶Hear my prayer, O LORD;
listen to my cry for mercy.

⁷In the day of my trouble I will call to you,
for you will answer me.

⁸Among the gods there is none like you, O Lord;
no deeds can compare with yours.

⁹All the nations you have made
will come and worship before you, O Lord;
they will bring glory to your name.

¹⁰For you are great and do marvelous deeds;
you alone are God.

¹¹Teach me your way, O LORD,
and I will walk in your truth;
give me an undivided heart,
that I may fear your name.

¹²I will praise you, O Lord my God, with all my heart;
I will glorify your name forever.

¹³For great is your love toward me;
you have delivered me from the depths of the grave.^[a]

¹⁴The arrogant are attacking me, O God;
a band of ruthless men seeks my life—
men without regard for you.

¹⁵But you, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God,
slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.

¹⁶Turn to me and have mercy on me;
grant your strength to your servant
and save the son of your maidservant.^[b]

¹⁷Give me a sign of your goodness,

that my enemies may see it and be put to shame,
for you, O LORD, have helped me and comforted me.

Psalm 35

Of David.

¹Contend, O LORD, with those who contend with me;
fight against those who fight against me.

²Take up shield and buckler;
arise and come to my aid.

³Brandish spear and javelin^[a]
against those who pursue me.

Say to my soul,
“I am your salvation. ”

⁴May those who seek my life
be disgraced and put to shame;
may those who plot my ruin
be turned back in dismay.

⁵May they be like chaff before the wind,
with the angel of the LORD driving them away;

⁶may their path be dark and slippery,
with the angel of the LORD pursuing them.

⁷Since they hid their net for me without cause
and without cause dug a pit for me,

⁸may ruin overtake them by surprise—
may the net they hid entangle them,
may they fall into the pit, to their ruin.

⁹Then my soul will rejoice in the LORD
and delight in his salvation.

¹⁰My whole being will exclaim,
“Who is like you, O LORD?”

You rescue the poor from those too strong for them,
the poor and needy from those who rob them.”

¹¹Ruthless witnesses come forward;
they question me on things I know nothing about.

¹²They repay me evil for good
and leave my soul forlorn.

¹³Yet when they were ill, I put on sackcloth
and humbled myself with fasting.

When my prayers returned to me unanswered,

¹⁴ I went about mourning
as though for my friend or brother.

I bowed my head in grief
as though weeping for my mother.

¹⁵But when I stumbled, they gathered in glee;
attackers gathered against me when I was unaware.
They slandered me without ceasing.

¹⁶Like the ungodly they maliciously mocked^(b);
they gnashed their teeth at me.

¹⁷O Lord, how long will you look on?
Rescue my life from their ravages,
my precious life from these lions.

¹⁸I will give you thanks in the great assembly;
among throngs of people I will praise you.

¹⁹Let not those gloat over me
who are my enemies without cause;
let not those who hate me without reason
maliciously wink the eye.

²⁰They do not speak peaceably,
but devise false accusations
against those who live quietly in the land.

²¹They gape at me and say, “Aha! Aha!
With our own eyes we have seen it.”

²²O LORD, you have seen this; be not silent.

Do not be far from me, O Lord.

²³Awake, and rise to my defense!

Contend for me, my God and Lord.

²⁴Vindicate me in your righteousness, O LORD my God;
do not let them gloat over me.

²⁵Do not let them think, “Aha, just what we wanted!”
or say, “We have swallowed him up.”

²⁶May all who gloat over my distress
be put to shame and confusion;
may all who exalt themselves over me
be clothed with shame and disgrace.

²⁷May those who delight in my vindication
shout for joy and gladness;
may they always say, “The LORD be exalted,
who delights in the well-being of his servant.”

²⁸My tongue will speak of your righteousness
and of your praises all day long.

Communal Lament

Psalm 74

A *maskil*^[a] of Asaph.

¹Why have you rejected us forever, O God?

Why does your anger smolder against the sheep of your pasture?

²Remember the people you purchased of old,
the tribe of your inheritance, whom you redeemed —
Mount Zion, where you dwelt.

³Turn your steps toward these everlasting ruins,
all this destruction the enemy has brought on the sanctuary.

⁴Your foes roared in the place where you met with us;
they set up their standards as signs.

⁵They behaved like men wielding axes
to cut through a thicket of trees.

⁶They smashed all the carved paneling
with their axes and hatchets.

⁷They burned your sanctuary to the ground;
they defiled the dwelling place of your Name.

⁸They said in their hearts, "We will crush them completely!"
They burned every place where God was worshiped in the land.

⁹We are given no miraculous signs;
no prophets are left,
and none of us knows how long this will be.

¹⁰How long will the enemy mock you, O God?
Will the foe revile your name forever?

¹¹Why do you hold back your hand, your right hand?
Take it from the folds of your garment and destroy them!

¹²But you, O God, are my king from of old;
you bring salvation upon the earth.

¹³It was you who split open the sea by your power;
you broke the heads of the monster in the waters.

¹⁴It was you who crushed the heads of Leviathan
and gave him as food to the creatures of the desert.

¹⁵It was you who opened up springs and streams;
you dried up the ever flowing rivers.

¹⁶The day is yours, and yours also the night;
you established the sun and moon.

¹⁷It was you who set all the boundaries of the earth;
you made both summer and winter.

¹⁸Remember how the enemy has mocked you, O LORD,
how foolish people have reviled your name.

¹⁹Do not hand over the life of your dove to wild beasts;
do not forget the lives of your afflicted people forever.

²⁰Have regard for your covenant,
because haunts of violence fill the dark places of the land.

- ²¹ Do not let the oppressed retreat in disgrace;
may the poor and needy praise your name.
- ²² Rise up, O God, and defend your cause;
remember how fools mock you all day long.
- ²³ Do not ignore the clamor of your adversaries,
the uproar of your enemies, which rises continually.

Psalm 88

A song. A psalm of the Sons of Korah. For the director of music. According to *mahalath leannoth*.^[a] A *maskil*^[b] of Heman the Ezrahite.

- ¹ O LORD, the God who saves me,
day and night I cry out before you.
- ² May my prayer come before you;
turn your ear to my cry.
- ³ For my soul is full of trouble
and my life draws near the grave.^[c]
- ⁴ I am counted among those who go down to the pit;
I am like a man without strength.
- ⁵ I am set apart with the dead,
like the slain who lie in the grave,
whom you remember no more,
who are cut off from your care.
- ⁶ You have put me in the lowest pit,
in the darkest depths.
- ⁷ Your wrath lies heavily upon me;
you have overwhelmed me with all your waves. *Selah*
- ⁸ You have taken from me my closest friends
and have made me repulsive to them.
I am confined and cannot escape;
- ⁹ my eyes are dim with grief.

I call to you, O LORD, every day;
I spread out my hands to you.
¹⁰Do you show your wonders to the dead?
Do those who are dead rise up and praise you? *Selah*
¹¹Is your love declared in the grave,
your faithfulness in Destruction⁽⁴⁾?
¹²Are your wonders known in the place of darkness,
or your righteous deeds in the land of oblivion?
¹³But I cry to you for help, O LORD;
in the morning my prayer comes before you.
¹⁴Why, O LORD, do you reject me
and hide your face from me?
¹⁵From my youth I have been afflicted and close to death;
I have suffered your terrors and am in despair.
¹⁶Your wrath has swept over me;
your terrors have destroyed me.
¹⁷All day long they surround me like a flood;
they have completely engulfed me.
¹⁸You have taken my companions and loved ones from me;
the darkness is my closest friend.

Psalm 109

For the director of music. Of David. A psalm.

¹O God, whom I praise,
do not remain silent,
²for wicked and deceitful men
have opened their mouths against me;
they have spoken against me with lying tongues.
³With words of hatred they surround me;
they attack me without cause.
⁴In return for my friendship they accuse me,

but I am a man of prayer.

⁵They repay me evil for good,
and hatred for my friendship.

⁶Appoint^[a] an evil man^[b] to oppose him;
let an accuser^[c] stand at his right hand.

⁷When he is tried, let him be found guilty,
and may his prayers condemn him.

⁸May his days be few;
may another take his place of leadership.

⁹May his children be fatherless
and his wife a widow.

¹⁰May his children be wandering beggars;
may they be driven^[d] from their ruined homes.

¹¹May a creditor seize all he has;
may strangers plunder the fruits of his labor.

¹²May no one extend kindness to him
or take pity on his fatherless children.

¹³May his descendants be cut off,
their names blotted out from the next generation.

¹⁴May the iniquity of his fathers be remembered before the LORD;
may the sin of his mother never be blotted out.

¹⁵May their sins always remain before the LORD,
that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth.

¹⁶For he never thought of doing a kindness,
but hounded to death the poor
and the needy and the brokenhearted.

¹⁷He loved to pronounce a curse—
may it^[e] come on him;
he found no pleasure in blessing—
may it be^[f] far from him.

¹⁸He wore cursing as his garment;
it entered into his body like water,
into his bones like oil.

- ¹⁹May it be like a cloak wrapped about him,
like a belt tied forever around him.
- ²⁰May this be the LORD's payment to my accusers,
to those who speak evil of me.
- ²¹But you, O Sovereign LORD,
deal well with me for your name's sake;
out of the goodness of your love, deliver me.
- ²²For I am poor and needy,
and my heart is wounded within me.
- ²³I fade away like an evening shadow;
I am shaken off like a locust.
- ²⁴My knees give way from fasting;
my body is thin and gaunt.
- ²⁵I am an object of scorn to my accusers;
when they see me, they shake their heads.
- ²⁶Help me, O LORD my God;
save me in accordance with your love.
- ²⁷Let them know that it is your hand,
that you, O LORD, have done it.
- ²⁸They may curse, but you will bless;
when they attack they will be put to shame,
but your servant will rejoice.
- ²⁹My accusers will be clothed with disgrace
and wrapped in shame as in a cloak.
- ³⁰With my mouth I will greatly extol the LORD;
in the great throng I will praise him.
- ³¹For he stands at the right hand of the needy one,
to save his life from those who condemn him.

We can feel like lament means we are faithless, when really the reverse is true. We cry out to God, even complain sometimes because we believe He is the one who can do something about it. *What difficulties are you facing that you feel like lamenting over? What would you like to tell God?*

Wisdom Psalms

We are going to listen in on two wisdom psalms. As you listen to them write your thoughts/underline any key phrases that jump out at you. Could be something you really needed to hear.

Read Psalm 1 through twice and then discuss

Psalm 1

¹Blessed is the man

who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked
or stand in the way of sinners
or sit in the seat of mockers.

²But his delight is in the law of the LORD,

and on his law he meditates day and night.

³He is like a tree planted by streams of water,

which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither.

Whatever he does prospers.

⁴Not so the wicked!

They are like chaff
that the wind blows away.

⁵Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

⁶For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.

Discussion

Notice the progression of behavior...walk, stand, sit (what does that mean)?

What is the difference between the wise and foolish man?

- Delight

What do you delight in and why?

Print copies of Psalm 119 and hand out to the class (see below to print pages).
Read Psalm 119 and have them write notes/underline things that jump out
What stood out?

Key words – obedience, desire...anything else?

Matt 4 – God’s word is our response to temptation

2 Tim 3:16- God’s word is powerful

Heb 4:12

Psalm 119^[a]

א Aleph

- ¹ Blessed are those whose ways are blameless,
who walk according to the law of the LORD.
- ² Blessed are those who keep his statutes
and seek him with all their heart—
- ³ they do no wrong
but follow his ways.
- ⁴ You have laid down precepts
that are to be fully obeyed.
- ⁵ Oh, that my ways were steadfast
in obeying your decrees!
- ⁶ Then I would not be put to shame
when I consider all your commands.
- ⁷ I will praise you with an upright heart
as I learn your righteous laws.
- ⁸ I will obey your decrees;
do not utterly forsake me.

ב Beth

- ⁹ How can a young person stay on the path of purity?
By living according to your word.
- ¹⁰ I seek you with all my heart;
do not let me stray from your commands.
- ¹¹ I have hidden your word in my heart
that I might not sin against you.
- ¹² Praise be to you, LORD;
teach me your decrees.
- ¹³ With my lips I recount
all the laws that come from your mouth.
- ¹⁴ I rejoice in following your statutes
as one rejoices in great riches.
- ¹⁵ I meditate on your precepts
and consider your ways.
- ¹⁶ I delight in your decrees;
I will not neglect your word.

ג Gimel

- ¹⁷ Be good to your servant while I live,
that I may obey your word.
- ¹⁸ Open my eyes that I may see
wonderful things in your law.

¹⁹ I am a stranger on earth;
do not hide your commands from me.
²⁰ My soul is consumed with longing
for your laws at all times.
²¹ You rebuke the arrogant, who are accursed,
those who stray from your commands.
²² Remove from me their scorn and contempt,
for I keep your statutes.
²³ Though rulers sit together and slander me,
your servant will meditate on your decrees.
²⁴ Your statutes are my delight;
they are my counselors.

7 Daleth

²⁵ I am laid low in the dust;
preserve my life according to your word.
²⁶ I gave an account of my ways and you answered me;
teach me your decrees.
²⁷ Cause me to understand the way of your precepts,
that I may meditate on your wonderful deeds.
²⁸ My soul is weary with sorrow;
strengthen me according to your word.
²⁹ Keep me from deceitful ways;
be gracious to me and teach me your law.
³⁰ I have chosen the way of faithfulness;
I have set my heart on your laws.
³¹ I hold fast to your statutes, LORD;
do not let me be put to shame.
³² I run in the path of your commands,
for you have broadened my understanding.

7 He

³³ Teach me, LORD, the way of your decrees,
that I may follow it to the end.^[b]
³⁴ Give me understanding, so that I may keep your law
and obey it with all my heart.
³⁵ Direct me in the path of your commands,
for there I find delight.
³⁶ Turn my heart toward your statutes
and not toward selfish gain.
³⁷ Turn my eyes away from worthless things;
preserve my life according to your word.^[c]
³⁸ Fulfill your promise to your servant,
so that you may be feared.

³⁹ Take away the disgrace I dread,
for your laws are good.
⁴⁰ How I long for your precepts!
In your righteousness preserve my life.

י Waw

⁴¹ May your unfailing love come to me, LORD,
your salvation, according to your promise;
⁴² then I can answer anyone who taunts me,
for I trust in your word.
⁴³ Never take your word of truth from my mouth,
for I have put my hope in your laws.
⁴⁴ I will always obey your law,
for ever and ever.
⁴⁵ I will walk about in freedom,
for I have sought out your precepts.
⁴⁶ I will speak of your statutes before kings
and will not be put to shame,
⁴⁷ for I delight in your commands
because I love them.
⁴⁸ I reach out for your commands, which I love,
that I may meditate on your decrees.

י Zayin

⁴⁹ Remember your word to your servant,
for you have given me hope.
⁵⁰ My comfort in my suffering is this:
Your promise preserves my life.
⁵¹ The arrogant mock me unmercifully,
but I do not turn from your law.
⁵² I remember, LORD, your ancient laws,
and I find comfort in them.
⁵³ Indignation grips me because of the wicked,
who have forsaken your law.
⁵⁴ Your decrees are the theme of my song
wherever I lodge.
⁵⁵ In the night, LORD, I remember your name,
that I may keep your law.
⁵⁶ This has been my practice:
I obey your precepts.

ח Heth

⁵⁷ You are my portion, LORD;
I have promised to obey your words.
⁵⁸ I have sought your face with all my heart;
be gracious to me according to your promise.
⁵⁹ I have considered my ways
and have turned my steps to your statutes.
⁶⁰ I will hasten and not delay
to obey your commands.
⁶¹ Though the wicked bind me with ropes,
I will not forget your law.
⁶² At midnight I rise to give you thanks
for your righteous laws.
⁶³ I am a friend to all who fear you,
to all who follow your precepts.
⁶⁴ The earth is filled with your love, LORD;
teach me your decrees.

‡ Teth

⁶⁵ Do good to your servant
according to your word, LORD.
⁶⁶ Teach me knowledge and good judgment,
for I trust your commands.
⁶⁷ Before I was afflicted I went astray,
but now I obey your word.
⁶⁸ You are good, and what you do is good;
teach me your decrees.
⁶⁹ Though the arrogant have smeared me with lies,
I keep your precepts with all my heart.
⁷⁰ Their hearts are callous and unfeeling,
but I delight in your law.
⁷¹ It was good for me to be afflicted
so that I might learn your decrees.
⁷² The law from your mouth is more precious to me
than thousands of pieces of silver and gold.

‡ Yodh

⁷³ Your hands made me and formed me;
give me understanding to learn your commands.
⁷⁴ May those who fear you rejoice when they see me,
for I have put my hope in your word.
⁷⁵ I know, LORD, that your laws are righteous,
and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me.
⁷⁶ May your unfailing love be my comfort,
according to your promise to your servant.

⁷⁷ Let your compassion come to me that I may live,
for your law is my delight.
⁷⁸ May the arrogant be put to shame for wronging me without cause;
but I will meditate on your precepts.
⁷⁹ May those who fear you turn to me,
those who understand your statutes.
⁸⁰ May I wholeheartedly follow your decrees,
that I may not be put to shame.

➤ Kaph

⁸¹ My soul faints with longing for your salvation,
but I have put my hope in your word.
⁸² My eyes fail, looking for your promise;
I say, "When will you comfort me?"
⁸³ Though I am like a wineskin in the smoke,
I do not forget your decrees.
⁸⁴ How long must your servant wait?
When will you punish my persecutors?
⁸⁵ The arrogant dig pits to trap me,
contrary to your law.
⁸⁶ All your commands are trustworthy;
help me, for I am being persecuted without cause.
⁸⁷ They almost wiped me from the earth,
but I have not forsaken your precepts.
⁸⁸ In your unfailing love preserve my life,
that I may obey the statutes of your mouth.

↳ Lamedh

⁸⁹ Your word, LORD, is eternal;
it stands firm in the heavens.
⁹⁰ Your faithfulness continues through all generations;
you established the earth, and it endures.
⁹¹ Your laws endure to this day,
for all things serve you.
⁹² If your law had not been my delight,
I would have perished in my affliction.
⁹³ I will never forget your precepts,
for by them you have preserved my life.
⁹⁴ Save me, for I am yours;
I have sought out your precepts.
⁹⁵ The wicked are waiting to destroy me,
but I will ponder your statutes.
⁹⁶ To all perfection I see a limit,
but your commands are boundless.

מ Mem

- ⁹⁷ Oh, how I love your law!
I meditate on it all day long.
- ⁹⁸ Your commands are always with me
and make me wiser than my enemies.
- ⁹⁹ I have more insight than all my teachers,
for I meditate on your statutes.
- ¹⁰⁰ I have more understanding than the elders,
for I obey your precepts.
- ¹⁰¹ I have kept my feet from every evil path
so that I might obey your word.
- ¹⁰² I have not departed from your laws,
for you yourself have taught me.
- ¹⁰³ How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!
- ¹⁰⁴ I gain understanding from your precepts;
therefore I hate every wrong path.

נ Nun

- ¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp for my feet,
a light on my path.
- ¹⁰⁶ I have taken an oath and confirmed it,
that I will follow your righteous laws.
- ¹⁰⁷ I have suffered much;
preserve my life, LORD, according to your word.
- ¹⁰⁸ Accept, LORD, the willing praise of my mouth,
and teach me your laws.
- ¹⁰⁹ Though I constantly take my life in my hands,
I will not forget your law.
- ¹¹⁰ The wicked have set a snare for me,
but I have not strayed from your precepts.
- ¹¹¹ Your statutes are my heritage forever;
they are the joy of my heart.
- ¹¹² My heart is set on keeping your decrees
to the very end. ^[d]

ס Samekh

- ¹¹³ I hate double-minded people,
but I love your law.
- ¹¹⁴ You are my refuge and my shield;
I have put my hope in your word.
- ¹¹⁵ Away from me, you evildoers,
that I may keep the commands of my God!

¹¹⁶ Sustain me, my God, according to your promise, and I will live;
do not let my hopes be dashed.
¹¹⁷ Uphold me, and I will be delivered;
I will always have regard for your decrees.
¹¹⁸ You reject all who stray from your decrees,
for their delusions come to nothing.
¹¹⁹ All the wicked of the earth you discard like dross;
therefore I love your statutes.
¹²⁰ My flesh trembles in fear of you;
I stand in awe of your laws.

‣ Ayin

¹²¹ I have done what is righteous and just;
do not leave me to my oppressors.
¹²² Ensure your servant's well-being;
do not let the arrogant oppress me.
¹²³ My eyes fail, looking for your salvation,
looking for your righteous promise.
¹²⁴ Deal with your servant according to your love
and teach me your decrees.
¹²⁵ I am your servant; give me discernment
that I may understand your statutes.
¹²⁶ It is time for you to act, LORD;
your law is being broken.
¹²⁷ Because I love your commands
more than gold, more than pure gold,
¹²⁸ and because I consider all your precepts right,
I hate every wrong path.

‣ Pe

¹²⁹ Your statutes are wonderful;
therefore I obey them.
¹³⁰ The unfolding of your words gives light;
it gives understanding to the simple.
¹³¹ I open my mouth and pant,
longing for your commands.
¹³² Turn to me and have mercy on me,
as you always do to those who love your name.
¹³³ Direct my footsteps according to your word;
let no sin rule over me.
¹³⁴ Redeem me from human oppression,
that I may obey your precepts.
¹³⁵ Make your face shine on your servant
and teach me your decrees.

¹³⁶ Streams of tears flow from my eyes,
for your law is not obeyed.

ז Tsadhe

¹³⁷ You are righteous, LORD,
and your laws are right.
¹³⁸ The statutes you have laid down are righteous;
they are fully trustworthy.
¹³⁹ My zeal wears me out,
for my enemies ignore your words.
¹⁴⁰ Your promises have been thoroughly tested,
and your servant loves them.
¹⁴¹ Though I am lowly and despised,
I do not forget your precepts.
¹⁴² Your righteousness is everlasting
and your law is true.
¹⁴³ Trouble and distress have come upon me,
but your commands give me delight.
¹⁴⁴ Your statutes are always righteous;
give me understanding that I may live.

ק Qoph

¹⁴⁵ I call with all my heart; answer me, LORD,
and I will obey your decrees.
¹⁴⁶ I call out to you; save me
and I will keep your statutes.
¹⁴⁷ I rise before dawn and cry for help;
I have put my hope in your word.
¹⁴⁸ My eyes stay open through the watches of the night,
that I may meditate on your promises.
¹⁴⁹ Hear my voice in accordance with your love;
preserve my life, LORD, according to your laws.
¹⁵⁰ Those who devise wicked schemes are near,
but they are far from your law.
¹⁵¹ Yet you are near, LORD,
and all your commands are true.
¹⁵² Long ago I learned from your statutes
that you established them to last forever.

ר Resh

¹⁵³ Look on my suffering and deliver me,
for I have not forgotten your law.
¹⁵⁴ Defend my cause and redeem me;

preserve my life according to your promise.
¹⁵⁵ Salvation is far from the wicked,
for they do not seek out your decrees.
¹⁵⁶ Your compassion, LORD, is great;
preserve my life according to your laws.
¹⁵⁷ Many are the foes who persecute me,
but I have not turned from your statutes.
¹⁵⁸ I look on the faithless with loathing,
for they do not obey your word.
¹⁵⁹ See how I love your precepts;
preserve my life, LORD, in accordance with your love.
¹⁶⁰ All your words are true;
all your righteous laws are eternal.

ש Sin and Shin

¹⁶¹ Rulers persecute me without cause,
but my heart trembles at your word.
¹⁶² I rejoice in your promise
like one who finds great spoil.
¹⁶³ I hate and detest falsehood
but I love your law.
¹⁶⁴ Seven times a day I praise you
for your righteous laws.
¹⁶⁵ Great peace have those who love your law,
and nothing can make them stumble.
¹⁶⁶ I wait for your salvation, LORD,
and I follow your commands.
¹⁶⁷ I obey your statutes,
for I love them greatly.
¹⁶⁸ I obey your precepts and your statutes,
for all my ways are known to you.

ת Taw

¹⁶⁹ May my cry come before you, LORD;
give me understanding according to your word.
¹⁷⁰ May my supplication come before you;
deliver me according to your promise.
¹⁷¹ May my lips overflow with praise,
for you teach me your decrees.
¹⁷² May my tongue sing of your word,
for all your commands are righteous.
¹⁷³ May your hand be ready to help me,
for I have chosen your precepts.
¹⁷⁴ I long for your salvation, LORD,

and your law gives me delight.

¹⁷⁵ Let me live that I may praise you,
and may your laws sustain me.

¹⁷⁶ I have strayed like a lost sheep.
Seek your servant,
for I have not forgotten your commands.

Lesson 6 - Finding God in the Psalms

Temptation: Find yourself in the psalms

- Psalms for when you are up, down, etc

Main thing: Find God there

- Who is God
- How does He “show up”
- What is He up to, etc

Psalm 3 – God is our deliverer & sustainer

- *What does he compare God to?*
- *How has God been like a shield to you?*
 - Carjack story
- *What will he not do? Why?*
- *Do you struggle with fear? How does seeing God as your deliverer and sustainer help?*

Psalm 47 - The Lord who reigns

- *What does it mean that God reigns?*
- The sovereignty of God
- God calls the shots...God is in charge
- God has authority
- *What does it mean that God is lifted up? Exalted?*
- *What does it mean to you that God has authority over all?*
- Everything on the earth has been subdued (Phil 2:9-11)

Psalm 11 & 15 & 16 – Our refuge/security

- *What is a refuge?*
- *How is God a refuge for the righteous?*
- *Does that mean we will never have trouble if we find refuge in God?*
- *What does it mean that the upright will see his face?*
- *Does that give you hope?*
- *What have you made your refuge/where do you find comfort?*
- *How would you like to never be shaken? Why?*
- *How does God provide that kind of foundation?*
- *How do we find security in a God like that?*
- *What does all that result in?*

Psalm 18 – Rock, fortress, deliverer

- God is someone to be called on at all times
- God hears (18:6)
- *How does God respond to the cry of the righteous/upright in heart?*

- Contrast that with the wicked enemies who had no one to save them (18:41)

Psalm 24 – Our light, salvation and stronghold...the one we wait for and the one we seek

- *If you had a mighty fortress full of walls, guards, and protections would you sleep at night fearing for your life?*
- *How is God like our fortress who gives us confidence?*
- He says of all the things he can seek he wants to seek being in God's presence
- *If you could seek one thing what would it be?...what if I had asked you that question without having read this psalm? Or asked you that question over lunch and not in Bible class?*
- After all that...all that confidence, he still is waiting for the Lord. Wow!

Psalm 30 – The one who lifts us from the depths

- Notice...I will exalt you God because you have exalted me
- I called and you answered
- *What contrast do we find between 6 & 7?*
- *How has God lifted him from the depths?*
- *What is his response?*
- *What has God lifted you out of? What was your response?*

Lesson 7 - Finding God in the Psalms Part 2

Psalm 50, 57? 63, 65, 66, 84, 85, 93, 97, 100 (our response) 111, 113, 137,

Looking for God in these psalms

Read Psalm 139

139:1-4 – God knows everything about you.

- *What do you think about that?*
- *Is that comforting or troubling? What makes the difference?*

139:5-10 – God is ever present

- *Have you ever thought about God's presence in your life?*
- *How do you think God is present?*
- Point – there is no place you can go where God is not
- Ancient world – “gods” were the gods of various geographical locations.
- Not our God!
- *What does it sound like the writer is trying to do here? – Get away*
- *Have you ever tried to run away from God? Were you successful?*
- *Anyone in the Bible tried to run from God?*
- *How did that turn out?*
- 139:10 – Not scary – no matter where you go, God's hand can hold you fast
- *What does it mean for God to hold you fast? (repetition of line before – guide/protect)*
- *If you had to pick someone to protect you from harm...what would your criteria/qualifications be for that person?*
- *Why is it awesome that God is guiding and protecting you?*

139:11-16

- Turning from God's presence back to how well God knows you.
- *What would you think if a total stranger came up to you and knew everything about you?*
 - David Suggs – Brightouse example
- *Does it bother you that your parents know so much about you?*
- *What is the difference?*
 - One has known you since you were born...relationship
 - The other person has no need to know all that (creepy and weird)
- *Why does God know so much about you?*
 - God created you!
- *Why is that important?*

139:17-18 – He doesn't think it is creepy...he praises God instead!

139:19-24 -The turn

- The psalm takes what seems on first glance like an unwarranted turn. It sounds harsh. It sounds unchristian. It makes you want to look for a footnote that says, “the following verses were not in many early manuscripts.” But the footnote is not there. These words are well-attested to be a part of this psalm. They are not there by accident. They are an **expression of brutal honesty on the part of David – God this is how I feel. This is**

where I am at. I am in need of justice. You know me. You have searched me out. You know my thoughts and my words. You made me! You also know my enemies Lord and you know how they have treated me terribly wrong. Lord, let's see some justice take place in this wicked world.

- The psalm turns from what feels like a philosophical treatise on God's knowledge to a practical plea for help in an all too real situation.
- Notice how he concludes laying it all before God – **139:22-24**
- *What will God find when he searches David's heart?*
 - He will find anger
 - He will find hatred
 - He will find a follower who is honestly seeking justice and honestly seeking help in dealing with his problems.
 - **David seeks God out for help because God knows him best and God knows the right answer. It may not be what David wants. The answer may not be destruction of his enemies. It may be a change of heart for David to have mercy on his enemies. We aren't told the conclusion of the matter.** But we do know that David honestly puts his life before God's eyes and God will be faithful to help David grow and mature through that process.

What will God find when he searches our hearts, your heart?

Honesty can be a coverup to make excuses – “at least I am honest about it”

- *Is saying things like that a problem?*
- Still have to be repentant

Some times we are afraid to be honest about how we feel with God. When David was angry he let God know. When he was sad he told God about it. When he felt hopeless he sought God out. God was faithful to David.

So, David lays his raw emotion before God and concludes by saying, “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...” **Here is where I am at Lord. Test it, try it, change it to your desires and your will. Deal with it how you will and change me from the inside out. Bottom line he knows everything – even our dirty laundry.** Brutal honesty of our emotions and feelings to God – lay it all before him and let him work it out. Do you have hatred in your heart? Do you have malicious thoughts? Are you angry at your brother? How do you treat your enemies? Lay it before God. Take a step out of the darkness and bring it before the throne and hand it to him and recognize that he will deal with you perfectly because he knows you perfectly and he has walked with you before.

Exercise: Give a few minutes for people to tell God how they feel and ask God to work with them on it

Read Psalm 97

Psalms in Real Life – Conclusion

Last class – practice the psalms through singing.

Let people write numbers of songs from the book (we have our own devo song book. Email me if you want the pdf) on the board and we will sing them at the end of the class. Will (our song leader) is going to join us with his class and sing the second half of class

After looking at some psalms over the past two months, what have you grown to appreciate about the psalms?

How might you use these psalms at different points in your life to bring you closer to God?

How have you found God in the psalms?

How have you found yourself in there?

Singing time!