



Cry of the Soul

Trusting God With
Our Difficult Emotions

Praying the Psalms

"Every emotion, though horizontally provoked, nevertheless reflects something about the vertical dimension: our relationship with God."

-The Cry of the Soul

What is The Cry of the Soul?

Can a book change your life? Around fifteen years ago I read a book entitled, *The Cry of the Soul*, by Dan Allender and Tremper Longman. The authors mine the Psalms for the range of difficult emotions (anger, despair, disappointment, anxiety, etc.) endemic to living a broken life in a messed-up world. The Psalms show us that these emotions aren't to be suppressed or merely vented. Instead, they are brought before God through these songs we sing and prayers we pray. And, through this practice, we grow in our ability to trust God with our difficult emotions.

This book helped me to break free of a stilted faith that can appear content and composed. Yet, underneath the poise can hide a vacant, flatlined faith (never a good thing on a heart rate monitor!). Since reading *The Cry of the Soul*, the Psalms have become my favorite Scriptures, inviting me to dive in deep with God.

As we work through the Psalms together this Lent (2023), I hope we will come alive to what God might teach us through our emotions when we take them to God in prayer. In this overview I borrow heavily from *The Cry of the Soul*, and with the attribution comes immense gratitude.

Before we explore further, I'd like to contend with a potential critique upfront: "In a therapeutic culture where validating and often affirming one's emotional impulses might be the highest form of worship, is it dangerous to give ourselves to such emotional introspection? Will we fall into our own belly buttons and never be able to extract ourselves?"

I don't believe so. And I lean upon *The Cry of the Soul* for further insight:

“Our focus on pondering what we feel might lead some readers to conclude that we are encouraging a self-directed introspection. This is not our intention in any respect. Self-absorbed preoccupation with our inner world runs contrary to spiritual maturity. Excessive introspection can lead to a false sense of independence by giving us the illusion that we can exert control over our lives and become the masters of our fate. This path too easily leads to arrogance or confusion. We encourage honest inward examination for the purpose of gaining wisdom—not only to explore the question ‘What’s going on here?’ but even more, to respond to what we discover as we ask, ‘What am I doing with God?’”

By the conclusion of Holy Week, my prayer is that a further understanding of your emotions will grant you wisdom and bring you closer to God. Along the way, you’ll be given tools to help you bring your whole self to God, and you’ll see the Bible less as a rule book and more as a prayer book.

Prayerfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bart Garrett". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Bart" and "Garrett" being capitalized and prominent.

Pastor Bart

Lent and Holy Week, 2023

What are the Psalms?

"Every situation in life is represented in the book of Psalms. 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."

-Tim Keller, *Praying the Psalms*

"The Psalms 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."

-Athanasius

"The Psalms are written to be prayed, recited, and sung—to be done, not merely to be read."

-Theologian Gordon Wenham

Having conversations with God can be difficult. Is God there? Does God care? Can God hear me? Can I hear God? I cannot see God. Can God see me? Throw in circumstances involving suffering or situations beyond our control and talking with God becomes even more difficult. Yet, people of Christian faith hold, right in the center of their Scriptures, 150 conversation starters with God. They are called Psalms. Compiled over a thousand years (between around 1500 BC and 500 BC), these Psalms, 3000 years later, are prayed daily all over the world by millions of people. They have stood the test of time, and what is more, Christians believe them to be a special revelation of God, uncovering who God is, how God operates, and what role God plays in each of our lives.

Human beings are designed to breathe, sleep, eat, and drink, and also, to pray! Prayer is no less a necessity than breathing, sleeping, eating, and drinking because conversation with God is no less necessary than air, rest, food, and water. Psalms can be our most accessible means of connecting and conversing with God. Praying the Psalms can truly become the ballast for your life and the anchor of your soul.

The early church father, Athanasius, describes the Psalms as the “Anthology of all Scriptures” and the reformer, John Calvin, describes them as the “Anatomy of all parts of the soul.” The Psalms somehow convey all of what Scripture is while uncovering all of who we are! In fact, before the printing press put the entire Bible in people’s hands, do you know which book was carried around by most Christians? That’s right...the Psalms! Modern prophet and U2’s point man, Bono, said this: “I remember learning the Psalms in my little church in Dublin as a boy. I thought: Great words, terrible tunes. But really, the rawness, the brutal honesty about life’s explosive joy & deep sorrow, that’s what sets the Psalms apart for me.”

Our journey begins on Ash Wednesday with Psalm 1. This Psalm is the natural introduction because it teaches us that the Psalter is written from the perspective of “living life under Torah,” more specifically understood as “living life in relationship with God.” On Easter Sunday, we will conclude with Psalm 150, recognizing the climax of that relationship with God is the experience of unencumbered praise. The “in-between,” the journey itself, is the cry of the soul, the horizontal experiences of our emotions in human relationships, experiences which serve to uncover the vertical reality—the relationship we have with God.

A Reflection on Psalm 1 and Psalm 150

- ¹ Blessed is the one
 who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
 or sit in the company of mockers,
² but whose delight is in the law of the Lord,
 and who meditates on his law day and night.
³ That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
 which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither—
 whatever they do prospers.
⁴ Not so the wicked!
 They are like chaff
 that the wind blows away.
⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
 nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
⁶ For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous,
 but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

-Psalm 1

- ¹ Praise the Lord.
Praise God in his sanctuary;
 praise him in his mighty heavens.
² Praise him for his acts of power;
 praise him for his surpassing greatness.
³ Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet,
 praise him with the harp and lyre,
⁴ praise him with timbrel and dancing,
 praise him with the strings and pipe,
⁵ praise him with the clash of cymbals,
 praise him with resounding cymbals.
⁶ Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.
Praise the Lord.

-Psalm 150

The journey into this Lenten season begins on Ash Wednesday with Psalm 1 and crescendos Easter Sunday with Psalm 150. Along the way we will traverse the Psalms that address many of our emotions (shame, despair, anger, envy, anxiety, etc.), inviting us to pray them to God. This practice will allow us to learn more about who we are and more about who God is.

Psalm 1 could be viewed as a trail map at a trailhead with two diverging trails: One leading to a flourishing life and the other, to a withering one. Psalm 1 is a Wisdom Psalm marking the Psalms as Ancient Near Eastern Wisdom Literature, a genre focusing on questions like: Why is life significant? How does one lead a life of wisdom?

In this Psalm, the one who will flourish is not the one who walks in the way of the wicked (1:1). “Walking on a path” is an ancient metaphor for pursuing a set of ethical or unethical choices in life. The Psalmist expounds upon the metaphor to include standing with the immoral or sitting around with those who are corrupt. This gives us the sense that this person is lingering on a path that will lead to destruction.

Instead, we are called to delight in and meditate on God’s way (or God’s law). The law of God reveals the plan of God. The law of God, Torah, is not only command, but also instruction, story, and the recounting of the great deeds and marvelous wonders of a God who shows up on behalf of his people.

To “meditate” is to flesh out its implications for all of life, and to “delight” in it means to not merely comply, but to love God’s instructions.

Dwelling in God’s provisions for wise living will produce a flourishing life which is described as a tree planted by streams of water (1:3). Perhaps you’ve hiked at Shell Ridge? Have you noticed how the trees situate themselves along the creek banks and away from the arid meadows? These trees produce their fruit in season. And, though there are fallow seasons too, the leaves of these trees never wither. This is a picture of a life of resilience, durability, stability, and contentment.

Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away (1:4). The Psalm is structured to demonstrate how fleeting is the wicked life: the poetry is pithy while the lines describing the flourishing life are more robust.

The Psalm concludes by describing a withering life as unable to withstand the company of the good and righteous. Because decisions were made to walk, stand, sit, and linger with the wicked, there is now no capacity to walk, stand, sit, or linger with the good (1:5,6).

As Christians reading, praying, and singing the Psalms, we understand that Jesus fulfills every Psalm. In Psalm 1, we see Jesus as the one who leads the ultimate, flourishing life. While on earth, Jesus was firmly rooted in God the Father, it was his food to his Father's will (John 4:34). He continually sought time with the Father in prayer (Luke 5:16, 6:12, 9:18, 28, 11:1, 22:41), and thought of his mission as the fulfilling of the Father's plan expressed in the Old Testament (Luke 24:44-47). His love was marked by his faithfulness (John 14:31).

And so, as we fall short of the flourishing life, every Psalm calls us to Jesus: Those who drink in the living water of Christ will bear much fruit (John 15:5,8,16), and will be marked by the Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22,23). Contrastingly, the withering have no roots because their lives are taken with cutting themselves off from the giver of life; they become ephemeral, lacking substance, blown away like chaff in the wind (see Luke 3:17).

After we traverse the Psalter throughout Lent and walk with Jesus during Holy Week, on Easter Sunday we will conclude with Psalm 150. This Psalm is the consummate Psalm of Praise. It is the jubilant praise of Almighty God from all breathing beings. Psalm 150 begins and ends with Hallelujah (Praise the Lord!). Dr. Tim Keller describes Psalm 150 thusly: "The psalms are, in the end, a miniature of life. Every possible experience, if prayed to the God who is really there, is destined to end in praise. Confession leads to the joy of forgiveness. Laments lead to a deeper resting in him for our happiness. If we could praise God perfectly, we would love him completely and then our joy would be full."

It takes a symphony of seven (representing “completeness”) musical instruments to hold the gravity of this Song of Praise. These seven instruments are mentioned throughout the Psalms, but often in the singular or paired tother. Here, they all extol the Lord in song!

It is no coincidence that the “mighty heavens” (or firmament) (150:1) and “breath” (150:6), relatively rare words in Scripture, are used to frame this Psalm. They allude to the creation story in Genesis 1 (“the mighty heavens”) and 2 (“the breath of life”). The world must be re-created to fulfill its original purpose: To praise the Creator of all things, the giver of life! Jesus will one day again marshal all the forces of creation into praise (see Ephesians 1:5-6; 10-12). This Psalm is a foreshadowing of the Resurrection of Christ and a summons of a New Creation right in the midst of an old one.

One day, the new heavens and new earth will be finally consummated. Everyone and everything will be glorifying God and enjoying God forever. Psalm 150 gives us a glimpse of this unimaginable future. We praise God everywhere (150:1) for everything (150:2) in every way (150:3-5). “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord” (150:6).

Our Journey Together

A Withering or Flourishing Life

Psalm 1

Ash Wednesday

February 22, 2023

Praying our Shame

Psalm 25

First Sunday of Lent

February 26, 2023

Praying our Despair

Psalm 6

Second Sunday of Lent

March 5, 2023

Praying our Anger

Psalm 37

Third Sunday of Lent

March 12, 2023

Praying our Envy/Jealousy

Psalm 73

Fourth Sunday of Lent

March 19, 2023

Praying our Anxiety

Psalm 23

Fifth Sunday of Lent

March 26, 2023

Praying our Contempt

Psalm 44

Psalm Sunday

April 2, 2023

Praying our Betrayal

Psalm 55

Maundy Thursday

April 6, 2023

Praying our Loneliness

Psalm 22

Good Friday

April 7, 2023

The Breath of Life

Psalm 150

Easter Sunday

April 9, 2023

Keeping a “Cry of the Soul Journal”

As we explore these ten Psalms together as a church, (1) read through them over and over again, (2) ask three questions of each one:

- Adoration: What are you learning about God for which you could praise or thank him?
- Awareness: What are you learning about yourself as you work through your emotions?
- Aspiration: What are you learning about life you could aspire to, ask for, and act on?

And then, (3) use this journal to write your answers to then pray them back to God.

Further exploration on the following is provided at the end of this booklet:

- How should we address difficult emotions?
- How to understand relational movements with God.
- Why does WCPC observe Lent anyway?

A Withering or Flourishing Life

Psalm 1



- ¹ Blessed is the one
 who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
 or sit in the company of mockers,
² but whose delight is in the law of the Lord,
 and who meditates on his law day and night.
³ That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
 which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither—
 whatever they do prospers.
⁴ Not so the wicked!
 They are like chaff
 that the wind blows away.
⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
 nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.
⁶ For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous,
 but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.



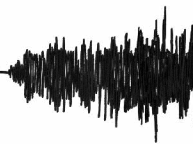
Adoration:

Awareness:

Aspiration:

Praying our Shame

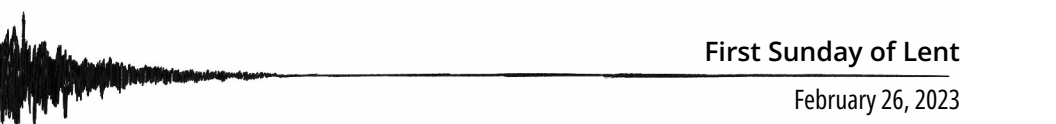
Psalm 25



Of David.

¹ In you, Lord my God,
I put my trust.
² I trust in you;
do not let me be put to shame,
nor let my enemies triumph over me.
³ No one who hopes in you
will ever be put to shame,
but shame will come on those
who are treacherous without cause.
⁴ Show me your ways, Lord,
teach me your paths.
⁵ Guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my Savior,
and my hope is in you all day long.
⁶ Remember, Lord, your great mercy and
love,
for they are from of old.
⁷ Do not remember the sins of my youth
and my rebellious ways;
according to your love remember me,
for you, Lord, are good.
⁸ Good and upright is the Lord;
therefore he instructs sinners in his ways.
⁹ He guides the humble in what is right
and teaches them his way.
¹⁰ All the ways of the Lord are loving and
faithful
toward those who keep the demands of
his covenant.

¹¹ For the sake of your name, Lord,
forgive my iniquity, though it is great.
¹² Who, then, are those who fear the Lord?
He will instruct them in the ways they
should choose.
¹³ They will spend their days in prosperity,
and their descendants will inherit the
land.
¹⁴ The Lord confides in those who fear him;
he makes his covenant known to them.
¹⁵ My eyes are ever on the Lord,
for only he will release my feet from the
snare.
¹⁶ Turn to me and be gracious to me,
for I am lonely and afflicted.
¹⁷ Relieve the troubles of my heart
and free me from my anguish.
¹⁸ Look on my affliction and my distress
and take away all my sins.
¹⁹ See how numerous are my enemies
and how fiercely they hate me!
²⁰ Guard my life and rescue me;
do not let me be put to shame,
for I take refuge in you.
²¹ May integrity and uprightness protect me,
because my hope, Lord, is in you.
²² Deliver Israel, O God,
from all their troubles!



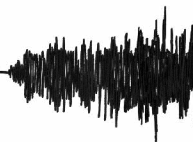
Adoration:

Awareness:

Aspiration:

Praying our Despair

Psalm 6



For the director of music. With stringed instruments.

According to sheminith. A psalm of David.

- ¹ Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger
or discipline me in your wrath.
- ² Have mercy on me, Lord, for I am faint;
heal me, Lord, for my bones are in agony.
- ³ My soul is in deep anguish.
How long, Lord, how long?
- ⁴ Turn, Lord, and deliver me;
save me because of your unfailing love.
- ⁵ Among the dead no one proclaims your name.
Who praises you from the grave?
- ⁶ I am worn out from my groaning.
All night long I flood my bed with weeping
and drench my couch with tears.
- ⁷ My eyes grow weak with sorrow;
they fail because of all my foes.
- ⁸ Away from me, all you who do evil,
for the Lord has heard my weeping.
- ⁹ The Lord has heard my cry for mercy;
the Lord accepts my prayer.
- ¹⁰ All my enemies will be overwhelmed with shame and anguish;
they will turn back and suddenly be put to shame.

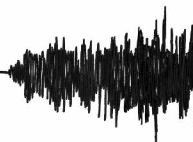
Adoration:

Awareness:

Aspiration:

Praying our Anger

Psalm 37



Of David.

¹ Do not fret because of those who are evil
or be envious of those who do wrong;
² for like the grass they will soon wither,
like green plants they will soon die away.
³ Trust in the Lord and do good;
dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.
⁴ Take delight in the Lord,
and he will give you the desires of your
heart.
⁵ Commit your way to the Lord;
trust in him and he will do this:
⁶ He will make your righteous reward shine
like the dawn,
your vindication like the noonday sun.
⁷ Be still before the Lord
and wait patiently for him;
do not fret when people succeed in their
ways,
when they carry out their wicked schemes.
⁸ Refrain from anger and turn from wrath;
do not fret—it leads only to evil.

⁹ For those who are evil will be destroyed,
but those who hope in the Lord will
inherit the land.
¹⁰ A little while, and the wicked will be no
more;
though you look for them, they will not be
found.
¹¹ But the meek will inherit the land
and enjoy peace and prosperity.
¹² The wicked plot against the righteous
and gnash their teeth at them;
¹³ but the Lord laughs at the wicked,
for he knows their day is coming.
...
³⁹ The salvation of the righteous comes from
the Lord;
he is their stronghold in time of trouble.
⁴⁰ The Lord helps them and delivers them;
he delivers them from the wicked and
saves them,
because they take refuge in him.

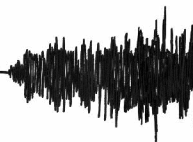
Adoration:

Awareness:

Aspiration:

Praying our Envy/Jealousy

Psalm 73



A psalm of Asaph.

¹ Surely God is good to Israel,
to those who are pure in heart.
² But as for me, my feet had almost slipped;
I had nearly lost my foothold.
³ For I envied the arrogant
when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
⁴ They have no struggles;
their bodies are healthy and strong.
⁵ They are free from common human
burdens;
they are not plagued by human ills.
⁶ Therefore pride is their necklace;
they clothe themselves with violence.
⁷ From their callous hearts comes iniquity;
their evil imaginations have no limits.
⁸ They scoff, and speak with malice;
with arrogance they threaten oppression.
⁹ Their mouths lay claim to heaven,
and their tongues take possession of the
earth.

¹⁰ Therefore their people turn to them
and drink up waters in abundance.
¹¹ They say, "How would God know?
Does the Most High know anything?"
¹² This is what the wicked are like—
always free of care, they go on amassing
wealth.
¹³ Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure
and have washed my hands in innocence.
¹⁴ All day long I have been afflicted,
and every morning brings new
punishments.
...
²⁷ Those who are far from you will perish;
you destroy all who are unfaithful to you.
²⁸ But as for me, it is good to be near God.
I have made the Sovereign Lord my
refuge;
I will tell of all your deeds.

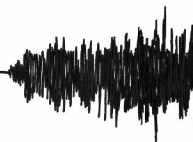
Adoration:

Awareness:

Aspiration:

Praying our Anxiety

Psalm 23



A psalm of David.

¹ The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,

³ he refreshes my soul.

He guides me along the right paths
for his name's sake.

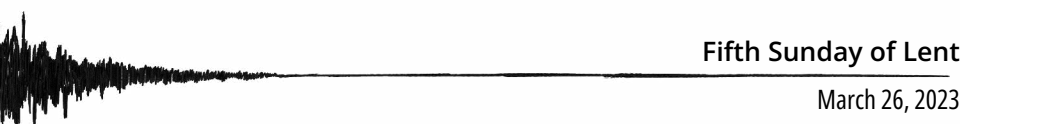
⁴ Even though I walk
through the darkest valley,

I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.

⁵ You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

⁶ Surely your goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord
forever.



Adoration:

Awareness:

Aspiration:

Praying our Contempt

Psalm 44

For the director of music.

Of the Sons of Korah. A maskil.

¹ We have heard it with our ears, O God;
our ancestors have told us
what you did in their days,
in days long ago.
² With your hand you drove out the nations
and planted our ancestors;
you crushed the peoples
and made our ancestors flourish.
³ It was not by their sword that they won the
land,
nor did their arm bring them victory;
it was your right hand, your arm,
and the light of your face, for you loved
them.
⁴ You are my King and my God,
who decrees victories for Jacob.
⁵ Through you we push back our enemies;
through your name we trample our foes.
⁶ I put no trust in my bow,
my sword does not bring me victory;
⁷ but you give us victory over our enemies,
you put our adversaries to shame.
⁸ In God we make our boast all day long,
and we will praise your name forever.
⁹ But now you have rejected and humbled us;
you no longer go out with our armies.
¹⁰ You made us retreat before the enemy,
and our adversaries have plundered us.

¹¹ You gave us up to be devoured like sheep
and have scattered us among the nations.
¹² You sold your people for a pittance,
gaining nothing from their sale.
¹³ You have made us a reproach to our
neighbors,
the scorn and derision of those around us.
¹⁴ You have made us a byword among the
nations;
the peoples shake their heads at us.
¹⁵ I live in disgrace all day long,
and my face is covered with shame
¹⁶ at the taunts of those who reproach and
revile me,
because of the enemy, who is bent on
revenge.
¹⁷ All this came upon us,
though we had not forgotten you;
we had not been false to your covenant.
¹⁸ Our hearts had not turned back;
our feet had not strayed from your path.
¹⁹ But you crushed us and made us a haunt
for jackals;
you covered us over with deep darkness.
²⁰ If we had forgotten the name of our God
or spread out our hands to a foreign god,
²¹ would not God have discovered it,
since he knows the secrets of the heart?
²² Yet for your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be
slaughtered.

²³ Awake, Lord! Why do you sleep?
Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever.

²⁴ Why do you hide your face
and forget our misery and oppression?

²⁵ We are brought down to the dust;
our bodies cling to the ground.

²⁶ Rise up and help us;
rescue us because of your unfailing love.

Adoration:

Awareness:

Aspiration:

Praying our Betrayal

Psalm 55

For the director of music.

With stringed instruments. A maskil of David.

¹ Listen to my prayer, O God,
do not ignore my plea;
² hear me and answer me.
My thoughts trouble me and I am distraught
³ because of what my enemy is saying,
because of the threats of the wicked;
for they bring down suffering on me
and assail me in their anger.
⁴ My heart is in anguish within me;
the terrors of death have fallen on me.
⁵ Fear and trembling have beset me;
horror has overwhelmed me.
⁶ I said, "Oh, that I had the wings of a dove!
I would fly away and be at rest.
⁷ I would flee far away
and stay in the desert;
⁸ I would hurry to my place of shelter,
far from the tempest and storm."
⁹ Lord, confuse the wicked, confound their
words,
for I see violence and strife in the city.
¹⁰ Day and night they prowl about on its walls;
malice and abuse are within it.
¹¹ Destructive forces are at work in the city;
threats and lies never leave its streets.
¹² If an enemy were insulting me,
I could endure it;
if a foe were rising against me,
I could hide.

¹³ But it is you, a man like myself,
my companion, my close friend,
¹⁴ with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship
at the house of God,
as we walked about
among the worshipers.
¹⁵ Let death take my enemies by surprise;
let them go down alive to the realm of the
dead,
for evil finds lodging among them.
¹⁶ As for me, I call to God,
and the Lord saves me.
¹⁷ Evening, morning and noon
I cry out in distress,
and he hears my voice.
¹⁸ He rescues me unharmed
from the battle waged against me,
even though many oppose me.
¹⁹ God, who is enthroned from of old,
who does not change—
he will hear them and humble them,
because they have no fear of God.
²⁰ My companion attacks his friends;
he violates his covenant.
²¹ His talk is smooth as butter,
yet war is in his heart;
his words are more soothing than oil,
yet they are drawn swords.
²² Cast your cares on the Lord
and he will sustain you;
he will never let
the righteous be shaken.

²³ But you, God, will bring down the wicked
into the pit of decay;
the bloodthirsty and deceitful
will not live out half their days.
But as for me, I trust in you.

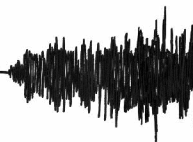
Adoration:

Awareness:

Aspiration:

Praying our Loneliness

Psalm 22



*For the director of music. To the tune of
"The Doe of the Morning." A psalm of David.*

¹ My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from saving me,
so far from my cries of anguish?

² My God, I cry out by day, but you do not
answer,
by night, but I find no rest.

³ Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One;
you are the one Israel praises.

⁴ In you our ancestors put their trust;
they trusted and you delivered them.

⁵ To you they cried out and were saved;
in you they trusted and were not put to
shame.

⁶ But I am a worm and not a man,
scorned by everyone, despised by the
people.

⁷ All who see me mock me;
they hurl insults, shaking their heads.

⁸ "He trusts in the Lord," they say,
"let the Lord rescue him."

Let him deliver him,
since he delights in him."

⁹ Yet you brought me out of the womb;
you made me trust in you, even at my
mother's breast.

¹⁰ From birth I was cast on you;
from my mother's womb you have been
my God.

¹¹ Do not be far from me,
for trouble is near
and there is no one to help.

¹² Many bulls surround me;
strong bulls of Bashan encircle me.

¹³ Roaring lions that tear their prey
open their mouths wide against me.

¹⁴ I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint.

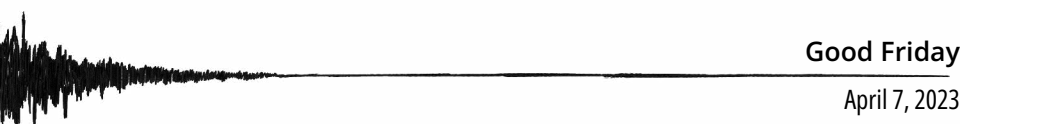
My heart has turned to wax;
it has melted within me.

¹⁵ My mouth is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue sticks to the roof of my
mouth;
you lay me in the dust of death.

¹⁶ Dogs surround me,
a pack of villains encircles me;
they pierce my hands and my feet.

¹⁷ All my bones are on display;
people stare and gloat over me.

¹⁸ They divide my clothes among them
and cast lots for my garment.



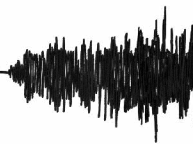
Adoration:

Awareness:

Aspiration:

The Breath of Life

Psalm 150



¹ Praise the Lord.

Praise God in his sanctuary;
praise him in his mighty heavens.

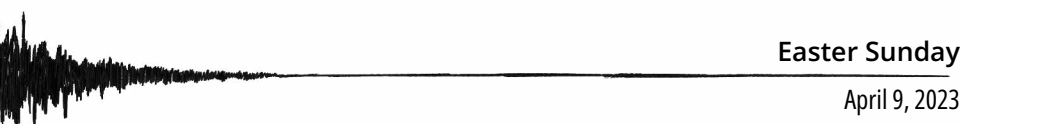
² Praise him for his acts of power;
praise him for his surpassing greatness.

³ Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet,
praise him with the harp and lyre,

⁴ praise him with timbrel and dancing,
praise him with the strings and pipe,

⁵ praise him with the clash of cymbals,
praise him with resounding cymbals.

⁶ Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.
Praise the Lord.



Adoration:

Awareness:

Aspiration:

For Further Exploration:

How should we address difficult emotions?

"Part of understanding difficult emotions...is comprehending why we avoid them. The reason we don't want to feel is that feeling exposes the tragedy of our world and the darkness of our hearts. No wonder we don't want to feel: feelings expose the illusion that life is safe, good, and predictable."

-The Cry of the Soul

Better understanding emotions:

- Emotions are not amoral; they are not neutral. (Some Therapists might suggest they are for fear that if we called them "good" or "bad" we might suppress them or work hard to avoid them.)
- Emotions are one way of knowing, not subjected under cognition or above it.
- To look inside is not to effect immediate change (turning negative emotions/feeling into positive emotions/feeling), but to explore what is underneath them—centrally, how we are relating to God and others.

"Struggling with emotions is not a matter of solving problems with a little more information and practical know-how. We are not machines that can be repaired through a series of steps—we are relational beings who are transformed by the mystery of relationship. We are radically disposed to idolatry, illusion-making, and attempts to secure our lives without bowing before God. Our core problem is not a lack of information—it is flight and rebellion."

-The Cry of the Soul

Emotions show us how to deal with a Fallen World, Hurtful People, and a Quizzical God. This endeavor involves the mind, body, and soul!

"Certain emotions, especially anxiety and depression, involve physiological components that can often be treated with medication and other biological intervention. Ignoring the importance of the body involves a tragic misunderstanding about what it means to pursue God. It is a terrible wrong to place extra burdens on those who suffer profound emotional battles by suggesting that all they need to do is to work out their issues with God to make their struggles go away. It is equally wrong to suggest that it is unspiritual or a second-best compromise to seek physiological help. This issues is not a black-and-white, either-or option."

-The Cry of the Soul

For Further Exploration:

How to understand relational movements with God

Relational movements with God and others could be summarized as: Movement against (attack), movement away (abandonment) and movement toward (love).

Relational Movement	Fight Response	Flight Response
Against (attack)	Anger	Fear
Away (abandonment)	Jealousy / Envy	Despair
Toward (love)	Contempt	Shame

- Attack- the violation of our dignity-
 - Anger- Is God just or will God let the wicked win?
 - Fear- Will God protect me?
- Abandonment- the withdrawal of intimacy-
 - Jealousy and Envy- Is God good? Will he leave me and bless others?
 - Jealousy- builds a possessive fence around what we have.
 - Envy- climbs another fence to steal what we do not have.
 - Despair- Will God leave me isolated and alone?
- Love- The Pursuit of our hearts-
 - Contempt- Does God love me? (the shield of mockery)
 - Shame- Will he hate me if he sees me as I really am?

For Further Exploration:

Why does WCPC observe Lent, anyway?

Throughout much of the church's history, Lent has been broadly observed as the season of forty weekdays and six Sundays leading up to Easter. In the Middle Ages, the English word, Lent (meaning "spring"), was adopted for this spring season, a period of preparation for Easter via self-examination and contrition, hopefully ushering in a season of spiritual renewal.

Protestants might have aversion to Lent for a couple of reasons. Some view Lent as commending a legalistic approach to life. Lenten practice is seen as an external, behavioral modification of the self through rigid discipline or denial: "Aren't Christians saved by grace after all?" Others are bothered by the rituals of Lent--things like ashes, candles, and darkened rooms, all of which create a mood of somber lament: "Aren't we past the sad, empty rituals of religion anyway?"

Yet, we should not see Lent as an endeavor to win God's favor. Rather, Lenten practice is a heightened response to God's rescue and our favor in God's eyes through Christ. The Scriptures are full of indicatives (God loves you. God saves you. God forgives you.) followed by imperatives (So obey him. So walk with him. So be grateful). Lent trains us to respond to grace (the indicative) via obedience (the imperative). Lent should not be avoided for fear that it is legalistic. Rather, Lent should be observed as a season of amplified awareness of God's work on our behalf and the cultivation of our obedient response to that work.

What about the other perception Lent is full of vacuous rituals and empty religious practices? What might be said to those who ask, "Aren't we past the smells and bells, whistles and thistles, incense and nonsense? Aren't candles and ashes the relics of a bygone era?" Answer: "Absolutely not!" For we are creatures of habit. We are people who fully embody deep patterns, behaviors, and rituals--practices that we might call liturgies for living. To be human is not to be a mere bundle of nerves, bag of hormones, or a brain on a

stick. Rather, it is to be a fully embodied self that thinks, feels, and does—and often not in that order! Think about the habits, patterns, and rhythms in your own life. What do you do first when you wake up in the morning? Or when you get to work? What do you feel on the commute home? What sort of smells do you love and what do they remind you of? Where do you go when you need to escape? What do you do when you need to feel released from anxiety or fear? What you think, feel, and do in these situations cultivates your liturgies for living: Practices become habits become patterns become rhythms become rituals become liturgies for living.

Good liturgies for living form and shape us in humanizing ways. Bad ones form and shape us in dehumanizing ways. Lent is a special season that trains our focus on the how's, what's, and why's of life. Lent grants us the opportunity to center ourselves as we practice taking off vices and putting on virtues. Lent helps us to become human again. Some questions to consider:

- What might I “give up” during Lent? As I give this up, what might I “take up”? (What will I feast upon as I fast?)
- Who might I share my fast with, and how will we hold one another accountable?
- Could some practices be taken up collectively as a community group? (At WCPC, we think of Christian Formation less as homework assignment and more as group project!)

Works Explored

The Cry of the Soul, Dan Allender and Tremper Longman.

The Psalms, Robert Alter.

The Psalms, Derek Kidner.

The Songs of Jesus, Tim and Kathy Keller.

Praying the Psalms in Christ, Laurence Kriegshauser.

How to Read the Psalms, Tremper Longman.

Psalms (in The Tyndale Series), Tremper Longman.

Psalms (in The New Bible Commentary), Alec Motyer.



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