

VCEFC Daily Devotional Aug 21 – Aug 27, 2006

Aug 21 Is He your King?

Psalm 99

*“The King is mighty, He loves justice- you have established equity; in Jacob you have done what is just and right. Exalt the Lord our God and worship at His footstool; He is holy.” 99:4-5*

The psalm continues the themes which mark the whole group of psalms dealing with the Lord's Kingship. But more than others it stresses the holiness of the divine King (vv.3, 5,9). He delights to use His royal power in doing right. He establishes His people as a society based on equity, and enforces rules of justice and standards of righteousness by acts of wrath and punishment against their rebellions and by the prophet's denunciations. He provides a way for His people to worship in His very presence, made welcome before His holiness. Those who acknowledge His Kingship will have the privilege of answered prayer, but also the obligation of obedience to revelation, and submissiveness to the merciful discipline of God.

Aug 22 God is God and God is good

Psalm 100

*“For the Lord is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations.” 100:5.*

The theme of the Lord's Kingship reaches its climax in this invitation to all the world to enter into the blessedness which Israel already possesses of owning and being owned by such a God. The Lord possesses us because of creation (He made us), election (we are His people) and providence (as Shepherd He presides over and guides us). The summons to worshipful thanksgiving arises from contemplation of the character of the Lord as good, and especially in that His steadfast love for us, and His reliable faithfulness towards us, are not dependent on anything in us, nor are they divine whims for a moment, but they are the abiding attitudes and activities of this good God at all times and to all succeeding generations.

Aug 23 Commitment to holiness

Psalm 101

*“I will sing of your love and justice, to you, O Lord, I will sing praise. I will be careful to lead a blameless life-when will you come to me? I will walk in my house with blameless heart. I will set before my eyes no vile thing. The deeds of faithless men I hate; they will not cling to me. Men of perverse heart shall be far from me; I will have nothing to do with evil.” 101:1-4*

This psalm is probably the coronation oath of the Davidic king. Vowing to reproduce in his own reign the characteristics of the Kingship of the Lord, the king commits himself to that blameless holiness “without which no one will see the Lord” (Hebrew 12:14). This comprehensive blamelessness concerns his private life at home, his desires, both of the eyes and also in making moral judgments, his determined separation from any sin, and the inmost thoughts which might knowingly dwell on evil. The verbal phrase “I will be careful to lead” derives from the wisdom tradition. It expresses the concern for wise living and acting and attentiveness to the lessons of wisdom, by observation or education.

With diligence, having observed the ways of the Lord, the godly leader gives himself to a life of integrity in the presence of God as well as in his personal affairs. The motivation for his loyalty comes from the Lord's acts of "love and justice". God is constant in His love and full of justice in His administration. The Lord's covenantal acts on behalf of His covenant people bring the psalmist to thanksgiving. These qualities are the motivating factors for his commitment to lead a blameless life. Are you also motivated to lead a blameless life?

Aug 24 Comfort for a grieving sufferer.

Psalm 102

*"In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. But you remain the same, and your years will never end."* 102: 25-27.

An anonymous sufferer brings his grief to God; but the comfort he receives is not that of direct relief, but it comes as he contemplates the changelessness of God in His dealings with His people as a whole, and the eternal purpose of God which includes in it such grief as he now endures but which will never let His people go. Man's changing fortunes, like the wear and tear of the natural world, are due to the active will of the changeless God. However, because our changeful lot is embraced by changeless and sovereign mercy, the psalmist can end on the note of confidence. God will not forget his servants, and their descendants, of whom the psalmist is himself one, will be established and secure.

Aug 25 Salvation

Psalm 103

*"As high as heaven is over the earth, so strong is His love to those who fear Him. And as far as sunrise is from sunset, He has separated us from our sins."* 103: 11-12

What God has done for us far exceeds anything we have done for or against Him. The summary word for this excessive, undeserved, unexpected act of God is salvation. Prayer explores the country of salvation, tramping the contours, smelling the flowers, touching the outcroppings. There is more to do than recognize the sheer fact of salvation and witness to it; there are unnumbered details of grace, of mercy, of blessing to be appreciated and savored. Prayer is the means by which we do this.

Eugene Peterson, *Living the message*, p. 44.

Aug 26 Nothing merely happened along.

Psalm 104

*"What a wildly wonderful world, God! You make it all, with Wisdom at your side, made earth overflow with your wonderful creations."* 104: 24

Everything is created. Everything carries within its form and texture the signature of its Creator. No part of this material world is unconnected with God: every cell is in the organism of salvation. Biblical religion cannot be lived apart from matter-the seen, felt, tasted, smelled, and listened to creation.

It is all, precisely, creation. Nothing merely happened along. Chokecherries and tundra and weasels are not random accidents. Since everything is by design, no part of creation can be bypassed if we intend to live in the fullest possible relation to our Creator in his

creation. None of it is an inconvenience that we are forced to put up with. Nothing is a stumbling block introduced by the devil to trip the feet of those whose eyes are piously lifted in praise to God. Creation is our place for meeting God and conversing with Him. The voice that spoke Behemoth and Leviathan into being is the same voice that says, "your sins are forgiven you," and invites us to call upon Him in the day of trouble. External and internal are the same reality. Heaven and earth are formed by a single will of God.

We take box seats in this creation theater when we pray. We look around. The mountains are huge, heaving their bulk upwards. The creeks spill across the rocks, giving extravagant light shows under the hemlocks. The lakes fill up with sky, on earth as it is in heaven. A lion rips its prey. A sparrow builds its nest. Solomon and the Shulamite embrace. An eagle plummets from a cloud to a meadow and takes a rabbit in its talons; for a few moments the two genesis creatures are in a terrible and tangled harmony. An infant drinks her fill of breakfast from her mother's breast. Matter is real. Flesh is good.

Eugene Peterson, *Living the Message*, p. 80

Aug 27 Great is thy faithfulness

Psalm 105

*"He gave them the lands of the nations, and they fell heir to what others had toiled for—that they might keep His precepts and observe His laws." 105:44-45.*

This is the second of four great songs of Israel's history (cf. also Pss. 78, 106, 136). It deals with Yahweh's covenant with Abraham concerning the land of Canaan and rehearses the events which led to its occupation by the children of Jacob. The emphasis throughout his survey is upon the mercy and faithfulness of the Lord as declared in all His wonderful works. Note the constant repetition of "He". The pronouns "He" and "His" referring to the Lord occur more than 40 times in vv. 5-45. The purpose of this historical survey is primarily to demonstrate the Lord's faithfulness to His covenant, concluded with Abraham, reaffirmed in the Exodus, and brought to an interim climax in the gift of the land, the prize reserved for his chosen ones. This great covenant, as the psalm shows, is all of God and all of grace. No word is spoken about man, either of his sin or his response to God. It is in this setting that we come to the final verse and the requirement of obedience. Here is the true basis of biblical ethics- to keep His statutes...not because of fear of punishment, but out of gratitude for God's great goodness. "We love, because He first loved us." (1 John 4:19)