

VCEFC Daily Devotional July 17 – July 23, 2006

July 17 A Mature Faith

Psalm 71

“Though you have made me see troubles, many and bitter, you will restore my life again; from the depths of the earth you will again bring me up. You will increase my honor and comfort me once again.” 71:20-21

This psalm is the prayer of an old man who has spent a long life in reliance upon God. He speaks of God with faith and gratitude. The Lord has been his hope, confidence, praise, strong refuge, and splendor from birth. Though his troubles have been overwhelming, the power of the Lord is so great that He can extend His love into the deepest depths. He alone has the power over life and death. In confidence and trust the psalmist looks forward to receiving all that God has to give him: revival and new personal advances in his experience of God.

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?...For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8: 35, 38-39.

July 18 Kingdom of Righteousness

Psalm 72

“For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help. He will take pity on the weak and the needy and save the needy from death. He will rescue them from oppression and violence, for precious is their blood in his sight.”

The kingly rule which is the theme of the psalm is certainly described idealistically, a common feature of the royal psalms, and the basis of their Messianic interpretation. The heart of this psalm’s delineation of ideal kingship is that in the role of the King was focused the fundamental requirement: a justice which brings new life to the unfortunate and destroys oppression. Prophetically the psalm looks through and beyond the individual Davidic king for whom it was first sung, reminding him of his high calling, and attains a vision of Christ, seeing that in Him the helpless find the powerful redeemer, and by his fulfillment of royal righteousness He will bring healing to all Creation, till non shall hurt or destroy in all God’s holy kingdom (Isa. 11:1-9). This hope comes to expression in the familiar hymn “Jesus Shall Reign” by Isaac Watts:

Jesus shall reign wheree’er the sun
Does his successive journey run’
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.

July 19 Better Vision

Psalm 73

“No doubt about it! God is good- good to good people, good to the good-hearted. But I nearly missed it, missed seeing His goodness. I was looking the other way...” 73:1-3.

When we find ourselves deficient in wisdom, it is not because the Word of God has pages missing, but because we have not seen all there is on the pages we already have. It is not

another book we need, but better attention to the book we have; it is not more knowledge we require, but better vision to see what has already been revealed in Jesus Christ.
Eugene Peterson, *Living the Message*, p. 159.

July 20 Why have you rejected us forever, O God?

Psalm 74

“Remember how the enemy has mocked you, O Lord, how foolish people have reviled your name. Do not hand over the life of your dove to wild breasts; do not forget the lives of your afflicted people forever. Have regard for your covenant, because haunts of violence fill the dark places of the land. Do not let the oppressed retreat in disgrace; may the poor and needy praise your name.” 74:18-21

This is one of the several poignant lamentations which found utterance at the destruction of Jerusalem and the beginning of exile in Babylon. The tragedy was not merely that the centre of religious life, the Temple, had been destroyed: that which cut the cord of hope and overwhelmed the nation with moral dismay was the inference that God had forsaken them. Where was God’s faithfulness to the covenant? As one year followed another, the long duration of the captivity lent credence to the thought of divine rejection and urgency to prayer. Regardless of their miserable conditions, the godly affirm the creative and redemptive powers of their covenant God, and their appeal and hope is based, not on the grounds of earthly circumstance, but on divine faithfulness.

July 21 Who is in control?

Psalm 75

“ We give thanks to you, O God, we give thanks, for your name is near; men tell of your wonderful deeds. You say, “I choose the appointed time; it is I who judge uprightly. When the earth and all its people quake, it is I who hold its pillars firm.” 75:1-3

Unlike the preceding psalm, this psalm does not question the goodness of God but rather exults in His sovereignty and righteousness. There is a background of calamity and a sense of recent relief from serious danger. Thematically the psalm shows several similarities with Hannah’s song (1 Samuel 2:1-10) and Mary’s Magnificat (Luke 1:46-53). The expression of thanks, doubled by intensity, is occasioned by an experience of the Name of God coming near, i.e. God Himself acting in the fullness of His revealed character, and doing wondrous deeds such as He alone could do. God does not act because things have come to a desperate pass, but because the time appointed for action has come. To the human view the earth is tottering to its doom, but its stability is neither secured by men, nor upset by them. The world and its inhabitants are kept in place by God.

July 22 The self-revealed God.

Psalm 76

“Surely the wrath of men brings you praise, and with the remainder of wrath you arm yourself. Make vows to the Lord your God and fulfill them; let all the neighboring lands bring gifts to the One to be feared. He breaks the spirit of rulers; he is feared by the kings of the earth.” 76:10-12.

This psalm celebrates a victory in which the Lord has signally revealed Himself. “Self-revealed” is the first Hebrew word in this psalm and it announces its subject-matter. God

has made Himself known to His people, who testify with new enthusiasm that His name is great: they see the greatness of His revealed nature. The occasion of the self-revelation was a great victory. The victory has revealed the almightiness of divine providence by which even man's anger is turned to serve God's purposes. The only proper response to such a God is integrity, devotion and reverence. The past victory is seen as the pledge and foretaste of His ultimate world-wide conquest.

July 23 Quarreling with God

Psalm 77

"Has God forgotten his manners? Has he angrily stalked off and left us? "Just my luck," I said. "The High God goes out of business just the moment I need him." 77:9-10

Quarreling with God is a time-honored biblical practice: Moses, Job, David, and St. Peter were all masters at it. It is a practice in which men and women in ministry have much practice. We get a lot of practice in this because we are dealing with God in some way or other most of the time, and God doesn't behave the way we expect.

Jonah is quarreling because he has been surprised by grace. He is so taken aback that he is disagreeable about it. His idea of what God is supposed to do and what God in fact does differs radically. Jonah sulks. Jonah is angry. The word anger occurs six times in this final chapter.

Eugene Peterson, *Living the Message*, p. 153.