

AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS

TREASURES FROM THE PSALMS

(Part 1)

Diocese of West Malaysia

Archdeacon Eddie Ong
(Editor)

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Foreword



*Archbishop Datuk Ng Moon Hing
Province of South-East Asia
Diocese of West Malaysia*

Each one of us is built with a spiritual sensory mechanism. It can understand and discern the things of the spirit realm. The Bible tells us that we have a spirit which can relate and communicate with God directly. Of course, many people will find it very difficult because we have not been trained to do so. For example, in the case of deep sea diving, unless we have been trained and have experience doing it, we may not be able to dive satisfactorily. We can be clogged with fear and phobias of the deep or unknown.

This Lenten meditation, “At the Foot of the Cross” is the most basic tool that anyone of us can begin to enter into the spiritual realm by reading, meditating and reflecting from the Scriptures the message of God.

In “Treasures from the Psalms” you will read and relate with real people facing real situations and how they recorded their real feelings, fears, pain as well as hopes. Despite all the struggles and anxieties of the unknown future, the writers of the psalms responded to the living and sovereign God with worship, songs, faith, trust, courage and godly wisdom. It is through reading of the psalms that we want to follow their examples of faith, trust and confidence in the sovereign goodness and power of God.

I welcome you to discern and hear from God through this daily exercise of reading, meditating and reflecting on the Word of the Lord.

Shalom!

+ ngmoonhing

DIOCESE OF WEST MALAYSIA
(DIOCESAN STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION COMMISSION)

Diocesan Theme 2011-2020
Decade of Mission and Networking

Mission Challenge
One In Christ

Our Mission & Themes

In response to the Gospel and the Mission Mandate of our Lord Jesus Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we seek to make disciples, to bring wholeness in the midst of our changing society and to grow our dioceses to the glory of God.

2011 Sowing the Seeds
2012 Nurturing the Shoots
2013 Optimising God's Vineyard
2014 Guarding the Yield
2015 Fostering Ventures

Enriching Partnership 2016
Enhancing Ownership 2017
Releasing Talents 2018
Bringing in the Sheaves 2019
Blowing the Trumpet 2020

ENHANCING OWNERSHIP

The ten year theme brings us to “Enhancing Ownership” for 2017. It is the continuation of Sowing the Seeds, Nurturing the Shoots, Optimizing God's Vineyard, Guarding the Yield, Fostering Ventures and Enriching Partnership. There are three crucial areas in “Enhancing Ownership.” First, *enhancing ownership in Faith*. Our faith needs to be strong and anchored firmly in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Our faith in Christ must be able to withstand temptations as well as trials of life. Secondly, *enhancing ownership in Identity*. We need to live out our identity as children of God and all the blessings and responsibilities that follow. As children of God, we are to learn how to let our light shine brightly in the midst of darkness and disbelief. Finally, *enhancing ownership in Discipleship*. We need to deepen our spirituality and our understanding to be disciples of Jesus Christ. The *Sarang* (“Called to Awaken the Laity”) discipleship training courses have been a blessing to an increasing number of our parishioners. This year, the Diocese has added another two discipleship courses – Anglican Institute of Ministry and Diocesan Spiritual Formation. May the Lord bless all our endeavours for him and his kingdom!

LENT 2017

What is Lent?

The word 'Lent' originates from the Latin word *quadragesima* or Greek *tessarakoste*, which is the 'fortieth' day before Easter. In old English, Lent simply is springtime (or *lenz* in German and *lente* in Dutch). In the early years of the Church it was confined to a few days before Easter. But by the Fourth Century it was extended to forty days before Easter, a period associated with the forty days and nights that Jesus spent fasting in the desert just after his baptism. Lent is still observed for this duration today.

When is Lent?

Ash Wednesday heralds the start of the season of Lent. There are six Sundays in Lent, all of which are distinguished as celebrations of the Resurrection on which Christians feast. Six days are added to complete the original forty days of the season.

Why Lent?

The main purpose of Lent is to enrich our awareness of the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps the individual four letters, L, E, N, T, will assist us in appreciating the significance of his mission.

Listening & Learning

Lent is primarily about our walk with the Lord – to listen, to learn and to obey the words of the Lord. For 2017, we will read 47 psalms and see how the psalmists responded to uncertainties, anxieties, fears, frustrations and poor health. Despite all their stresses and uncertainty of the unknown future, the psalmists responded to God with faith, hope and love. Charles Spurgeon called it, "The Treasury of David." Psalms 119:162 expresses, "I rejoice in your word like one who discovers a great treasure. (New Living Translation). Jesus himself read and understood the Psalms and he quoted its words on numerous occasions. They were an inspiration to him, and likewise, the psalms will also be a great inspiration and learning experience to us as well.

Examination

Lent is a contemplative preparation for seeking spiritual renewal. "I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting and self-denial." (*Liturgy of Ash Wednesday - Book of Common Prayer*)

Needs

Lent exalts compassion-in-action in response to Divine love. Jesus said, "When you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honoured by others." Instead, we are to take care not to practice righteousness in front of others.

Thanksgiving

Lent is a time of Thanksgiving to the Lord for the blessings of life. If not for his grace, there will be no conversion, no abundant life, no forgiveness of sins, and no eternal life. Thanks be to God for his great love and mercy.

Collect for Ash Wednesday

Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing you have made
and forgive the sins of all who are penitent:
create and make in us new and contrite hearts,
that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness,
may obtain of you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness;
through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you
and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Archdeacon Eddie Ong

Note: There are 47 psalms in this book. However, the psalms are not in sequence as Psalm 2 is read on Easter Day, Psalm 16 is moved to Holy Saturday, Psalm 22 to Good Friday and Psalm 42 for Maundy Thursday. Psalms 10 and 45 are not in the book as the contributors did not submit.

COPING IN A WORLD OF RAPID CHANGES

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, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night (Psalm 1:1).

Where do you go for counsel in a world of rapid changes?

When I was growing up in the 1960s, it was simple. My counsel on how to be successful came primarily from my parents, school counsellors, friends and documentaries from a one-channel black and white television network. They stressed core values like the importance of education, hard work, honesty, kindness and respect for culture, customs and the deities. Fifty years have since gone by. With the ever accelerating advancement of technology including iPods, Wi-Fi, Internet, YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, Smartphones and Tablets, we are flooded with massive amounts of knowledge which leads to subsequent changes in lifestyles and values. The need to constantly adapt to changing scenes of life may lead to burn-out and feelings of anxiety, despair, pain and tragedy. Traditional and morals and values are now replaced by an ever-increasing secular worldview where everything is relative, nothing is certain and just about anything goes.

Jesus had forewarned that wickedness will increase and the love of many for God will grow cold (Matthew 24:12). With such a despairing scenario, the psalmist exhorts men and women to return to God and his Word, the 'law of the Lord' (v.1). All who choose to live by God's Word will be blessed and whatever they do will prosper (v.3) for the living Lord will watch over them (v.6). The more we focus on God's Word, the deeper our roots will go down into him; and the more we will know his answers to the many questions and problems we face each day. By contrast, those who reject God's laws and pursue the gratification and values of the world with its never-ever-satisfied desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes and pride of life (1 John 2:16) will end up disappointed and ultimately worth nothing in eternity. In the words of Ecclesiastes, "Vanity of vanities! All is vanity." Jesus used the story of the two house builders to make the same point (Matthew 7:24-27). At the Judgment, the wicked will not be able to stand comfortably in the presence of

God, his Maker (v.5). In Isaiah 40:8 God says, “The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures forever.” The Word of God has withstood the test of time. It had never been disproved and never goes out of date. God's Word is as relevant to our modern situation as was to people living hundreds or thousands of years ago. No matter how tumultuous or volatile our world gets, we can count on the Lord Jesus Christ who promises us, “Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). God’s Word is our anchor and refuge yesterday, today and into the future.

On this Ash Wednesday and throughout the season of Lent, let us take delight in the Word of the Lord, meditate on his Word ‘day and night’ (v.1) and take no pleasure in the values of the wicked.

Ponder

The Psalmist declares that the man or woman of blessedness and spiritual stability is one whose life is built on and bathed in the Scripture. Think about what practical steps you need to take to build your faith and values on the Word of God.

Promise

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 (Psalm 1:3).

Prayer

Lord, change my attitude from burden to delight when I read, reflect and respond to your Word. Amen.



Article by the Venerable Eddie Ong, Vicar of St Gabriel’s Church, Kuala Lumpur and Archdeacon of the Upper Central Archdeaconry.

Day 2 – Psalm 3

GOD IS OUR STRENGTH

But you, O Lord, are my Shield; my Glory, you lift up my head!
(Psalm 3:4)

It was David's most stressful and humiliating experience in his entire life. Everything that he had spent his life working for had suddenly unravelled. Many whom he had thought were associates and friends had abandoned him and sided with his rebellious and deceitful son, Absalom. It brought home to David his own failure as a father. One son was murdered, a daughter was raped, and the murderer was now after his own father's life in addition to his kingdom. Life was falling apart for David! What do you do when life falls apart? How many of us have gone through anything close to the trauma that David was experiencing?

I thought that things were fine with my health but suddenly I had to see a doctor for some nagging pain in my abdomen and constant weight loss. After examining me, the doctor referred me for an Ultrasound. When he saw the results, he told me that I needed to see a surgeon to remove the growth. My world fell apart. Not knowing how I would be able to provide for my family if my problem was a very serious one meant that life fell apart!

What do you do when life falls apart? David wrote Psalm 3. He begins by crying out to God. My doctor immediately cried to God for me. Then he suggested that I should see a renowned government surgeon for a second opinion. The surgeon was a friend of mine, who made arrangements for all the necessary tests. Eventually he told me that there was a growth in an unusual place, told my wife that he was going to keep me in the hospital for some time. Two other specialists were also enlisted to study my case. Further, ultrasound, X-ray and CT scan were done but the endoscope was unsuccessful because of the excruciating pain. On the tenth day, I was sent home but told to return in a month's time for another endoscope. A month later another endoscope done, after the biopsy, the result astonished the specialists. The two Hindu and one Muslim doctors told us that they were worried about the growth which was increasing in size. But they were amazed and said "Your God is more powerful and merciful to answer all your cries, the growth has disappeared." Prayers with trust and faith had resulted in a miracle! Although I have never gone through anything close to what David experienced, these excruciatingly painful moments made me to cry out to God.

When life falls apart, you must know who God is and how to lay hold of him in prayer (3:3-4). This shows that our Lord is our shield, our glory, the restorer of our joy, and our prayer-answering God. It means that God is our protector and defender. David personalises it, that the Lord is a shield 'about me.' Our faith in the Lord must be personal. We need not fear problems while we rejoice in a prayer-hearing God.

David's heart was humbled before God. If the Lord restored him, David would worship him. If the Lord did not restore him, David still would bow before his just and holy ways. But even though now David was separated geographically from the symbol of God's dwelling place, the separation was no hindrance to his prayers. We should learn to humble ourselves before God, realising that our only plea is his grace. No matter where we are or in what kind of difficult circumstances we find ourselves in, even if our difficulties are the result of our own sin or failure, we can cry out to the Lord for grace and know that he will hear and answer according to his purpose. David's final exclamation, 'Salvation belongs to the Lord,' shows that David was depending on God for everything. When we cast ourselves on God alone for deliverance, he gets all the praise!

Ponder

Is your trust and faith ("Forsaking **All**, I Trust **Him!**") in the Lord daily expressed in action?

Promise

"When I call out to the Lord, he answers me from his holy mountain." (Psalm 3:5)

Prayer

O Lord, though many be against me and would attack my name, I'll glory in my Saviour and trust in you, my shield and my God.



Article by the Reverend Robin Arumugam, retired priest assisting at St John's Church, Ipoh.

Day 3 – Psalm 4

PEACE IN THE MIDST OF PANDEMONIUM, SLEEP IN THE MIDST OF STRIFE

In peace I will lie down and sleep for you alone, Lord make me dwell in safety.
(Psalm 4:8)

Peace and sleep are things every human being will strive to have for the wellbeing of the whole person. However, these two essentials elude many of us in this modern world. It has been estimated that 10% - 30% of adults have insomnia at any point in time. Sales of tranquillizers, sedatives and hypnotics have skyrocketed making pharmaceutical companies which market these drugs very profitable. Are drugs the solution to attain enduring peace and sound sleep? King David who wrote this Psalm showed us a different way to achieve peace and sleep even in the midst of very trying situations. He composed this poetic prayer when he had to flee from his wicked and deceptive son, Absalom, who had led an internal uprising to usurp his throne.

There are three broad things we see in David's prayer; firstly he called on God with confidence, secondly he controlled his emotions with calmness and thirdly, he sought God's countenance (face) to dispel his calamities.

David's response to difficult and dangerous situations in his life was firstly by calling on God with confidence. His past experience of how this righteous and merciful God brought him relief in his distress shored up his confidence (v.1). He was confident that the length of the days of his enemies would not be great for he believed that it was God who had set him apart for the throne and that the Lord would hear his prayers (vs.2,3).

Secondly, David controlled his emotions with calmness when facing the loss of his throne and the serious threats to his life. Rather than reacting impulsively, his response was not to sin while he was angry. Rather, he would choose to be reflective, searching first his own heart and remained silent (v.4). This would not be easy and it would require him to put to death (right sacrifice) all his innate desires to be sinfully angry and turn all his anguish to God and trust him fully (v.5).

Thirdly, David sought the countenance of the Lord to dispel his calamities. His reflections led him to remember the protection and peace in Aaron's benediction (Numbers 6:25-26). He asked for the light of God's face to shine upon him and his situation; to dispel the works of darkness and accordingly grant him protection and peace (v.6). Such an action of God would result in such a joy which would be more than a successful harvest of grain and wine would bring (v.7). David ended his prayer with a deep assurance that he can lie down and sleep with perfect peace (v.8).

"Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord and our hearts are restless, until they find rest in thee" (St. Augustine of Hippo)

Ponder

What is your first response or reaction when someone brings about troubles and calamities to your life? Are you able to control your anger and sleep with deep peace in such trying situations? Follow the steps David took in his prayer and trust God fully to hear your prayers.

Promise

I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety. (Psalm 4:8 NKJV)

Prayer

Lord, in my distress hear my cry and call for help. You are merciful and you have set your children apart to dwell in your safety. Help me to trust you fully. Protect me and relieve me of all my tensions and anxieties and grant to me peaceful sleep. In Jesus' name. Amen.



Article by the Reverend Dato' Dr Yeoh Beng San, Pastor of Cornerstone Sanctuary, Ipoh. Rev Yeoh is also a medical doctor.

Day 4 – Psalm 5

WAKING & WAITING

In the morning, Lord, you hear my voice;
in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly.
(Psalm 5:3)

Good morning! This is a very common greeting. With the advance of social media like WhatsApp, we are showered with such greetings on a daily basis. This is one of the ways people who are connected via networking greet one another. But the giving or receiving of the greetings by itself does not ensure that we will have a 'good' morning or even 'good' day. How do we have a 'good' day?

In Psalm 5, we find the Psalmist begins by praying and seeking God earnestly. The Psalmist finds a very special time of the day to seek God – in the morning. As we grew up it may have been our routine to wake up, make our bed, brush our teeth, take our bath and then breakfast before we actually start the journey of our day. But where does God fit into our daily morning schedule?

The Psalmist teaches us that, 'in the morning, Lord, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly' (v.3). We hear not only the words of a prayerful man but also the timing of his prayer. Waking and seeking God early in the morning is a spiritual discipline that needs to be rediscovered and inculcated into our Christian community. Why morning and not any other time of the day?

Mornings are not only the quietest time of the day and the best time to pray but, morning is also the beginning of each new day with God. In the words of John Bunyan, he says, "he who runs from God in the morning will scarcely find him the rest of the day." But that is the reality of life because we tend to rush through our prayers and then rush through the day without sensitivity to God's presence and plans for our daily lives. When we end the day we are either self-centred in our achievements or frustrated in our failures. God is once again missing except probably for a short moment of prayer before we fall asleep. But beyond just praying in the morning the Psalmist teaches us to learn the spiritual discipline of

waiting upon God with expectation. The Psalmist says 'in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly' (v.3). This is truly a challenge for some Christians as we may be comfortable to probably pray in many words but then we are not at ease to be seated in silence and waiting for the Lord's response. But remember the promise in Isaiah 40:31 that 'those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength. They will rise up with wings like eagles.' We need to learn to wait upon God as much we are to learn to speak to God early in the morning.

We observe this practice in the life of Jesus when he frequently rose early in the morning to seek God the Father in diligent prayer, waiting for his directions. In Mark 1:35 we read, 'in the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there.' His disciples knew exactly where he would be in the morning as that was his daily lifestyle – seeking God in the morning. As we follow Christ we need to learn from his prayer life of seeking God early in the morning and waiting upon him for each day our "daily bread". May we rediscover the joy of his presence every morning!

Ponder

How do you start your day? How is God central to your daily life?

Promise

For you, O Lord, will bless the righteous; with favour you will surround him as with a shield. (Psalm 5:12)

Prayer

Dear Lord, forgive me for rushing through my morning day by day. Help me to sit quietly at your holy feet and know what a pleasure and joy it is to just be in your presence every single morning. Amen.



*Article by the Reverend Jesvinder Singh, Vicar of St. James' Church, Sentul
and Priest-in-Charge of St. Matthew's Church, Selayang.*

Day 5 – Psalm 6

PRAYING OUR TEARS

I am wearied with sighing; every night I flood my bed with weeping;
I drench my couch with my tears. My eyes are dimmed with sorrow.
(Psalm 6:6-7)

Someone rightly said that tears are a biological gift of God. They are a physical means for expressing emotional and spiritual experience. Indulging in tears can cultivate self-pity but then if we suppress tears, we lose touch with our feelings. But if we pray our tears, we enter into sadness that integrates our sorrows with our Lord's sorrows and discover both the source of and the relief from our sadness. How true indeed!

For me personally this past year has been very difficult as I dealt with marginalised girls at a vocational training opportunity centre for them. How do you help some of them, when they come from such traumatised background? At such times, I have experienced to some degree what the psalmist experienced when he cries out "How long, O Lord, how long?" (v.3)

Tears are often considered a sign that something is wrong with us. It could be that we are experiencing depression or unhappiness or even frustration in a given situation. And yet at those times, isn't it expected of us by others to either avoid it or to get over with it? Why? I believe that the reason being that in today's busy world, one can hardly find a person, besides the professionals, who will give you a listening ear. But not with God as I have found out over the years of being a Christian. Last Easter was my jubilee year in my relationship with Jesus, my heavenly Bridegroom. For me personally, I can warm up to God and feel no embarrassment about crying in his presence because I know that he welcomes it, because he longs for us to snuggle up to him when we are sad and crying like an earthly child will do with his parent.

Barnes' Commentary Notes on verse 6 has this to say, "This verse discloses the true source of the trials referred to in the psalm. It was some deep mental anguish – some source of grief that exhausted David's strength, and that laid him on a bed

of languishing. No circumstances in the life of David better accord with this than the troubles which existed on account of the ungrateful and rebellious conduct of Absalom, and it is most natural to refer it to this. Many a parent since the time of David has experienced 'all', both mental and bodily, which is here described as a consequence of the ingratitude and evil conduct of his children."

Are you going through a time of difficulty now? It may be a work situation or a family problem or even a broken relationship. Is our relationship with God enjoying intimacy that we can encourage ourselves to wait upon him and to trust him in our greatest times of difficulties? Can we believe that our tears have a voice, a loud voice, in the ears of the God of mercy? Remember that silent tears are not speechless ones. Our prayers are cries to God.

Ponder

I am wearied with sighing; every night I flood my bed with weeping; I drench my couch with my tears (Psalm 6:6).

Promise

Three times in Psalms 6: 8-9 we read "For the Lord has heard my weeping. The Lord has heard my cry for mercy; the Lord accepts my prayer."

Prayer

Thank you my Father that you always hear and see my tears. And I am assured that you will always do it and so I have nothing to fear. Amen.



Article by Miss Elisabeth Alfred, a Lay Reader at St Paul's Church, Petaling Jaya.

Day 6 – Psalm 7

THE LORD – MY DEFENDER

O Lord my God, I take refuge in you;
save and deliver me from all who pursue me.
(Psalm 7:1)

Psalm 7 is a meditation of David which he sang to the Lord concerning the words of Cush, a Benjamite. We do not know who this Cush is except that he is someone from the same tribe of King Saul, David's father-in-law and his, David's, sworn enemy. Cush has made false accusations against David and David is burdened with these false accusations. He calls on God to be his advocate and defender and commits his innocence to God's protection (v.1).

Being falsely accused is an all too familiar occurrence and each of us can identify with that in some measure. People have said things that were completely untrue or they may have twisted the truth leaving us feeling vulnerable, oppressed and persecuted. How have you responded in these situations? I know what the natural man would do, and certainly, within me, if someone slanders me, a sense of rage would rise up at the injustice of it and a raw anger directed at the slanderer.

But what should we do in such times? What did David the palmist do? The very first thing he did was to come to the Lord. Here in this psalm is a pattern for the child of God to follow. No matter what our circumstance, no matter how difficult, no matter how much we feel we are being persecuted, we need to come before the Lord and present our case.

The first thing we do is to make our plea to God for refuge. In verse 1 David says "O Lord my God, I take refuge in you..." So when slandered it is not in man that we take refuge, it is not in justice we take refuge, it is not in getting things straightened in life that we take refuge. We take refuge in God and we cling to him. But what was the basis of David going to the Lord? David knew he was innocent and he was confident of his innocence. He knew that the accusations Cush made against him had no basis. Like David we too must be confident in our own innocence when we come to God for redress. We must be confident in our own integrity then only can

we call on the highest authority to be our judge. David in this psalm is saying, “I am innocent of the charges that Cush is laying against me.” Because David knows he will be vindicated, he trusts in the future just judgement of God. He knows who his God is. His God is the righteous God who looks deep within the hearts of men and examines all their motives and their thoughts (v.8). He will save those whose hearts and lives are true and just (v.10).

Therefore knowing who his God is David ends the psalm by praising the Lord. There is no problem so big in our life that the Lord will not give us the grace to praise him. As we put God first, everything will fall into place. David’s plea starts with “O Lord my God” – this is a personal relationship he has with God, “and in you do I put my trust. I am resting in you, I am secure in you. I know my standing in this life. I know that you are the unchanging God.” David’s circumstances had changed, but praise the Lord, his God had not. Our circumstance will change, but we thank God; we know God will be the same.

Ponder

If you are going through something like this right now how are you going to deal with it in a way that pleases and glorifies God?

Promise

I will give thanks to the Lord because of his righteousness; I will sing the praises of the name of the Lord Most High. – Psalm 7:17

Prayer

Father, when false accusations are made against me, impress on me to seek you first for solace and strength, and to rest in your unfailing love to make all things new again. Amen.



Article by Ms Esther Richards, a member of St Paul’s Church, Petaling Jaya. She is also the Editor of the Diocesan Anglican Messenger.

Day 7 – Psalm 8

WHY MAN?

What is man that you should be mindful of him,
or the son of man that You should care for him?
(Psalm 8:4)

Have you ever felt alone and uncared for in our busy, overpopulated world? Or alternatively have you read about the enormous vastness of the universe, which God created, and the tiny earth upon which even tinier people walk, and wondered how God could ever have time or attention to consider us?

That's exactly what David writes about in Psalm 8:3, "When I consider the heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you should be mindful of him?" But God *is* mindful – he knows each one of us, and not only that, but God has given us the task of ruling the earth and the creatures in it, as we read later in the psalm, and for this, David praises God, ending the psalm with 'how majestic is your name in all the earth!' (v.9)

Today we have a much bigger understanding of the moon and stars than David did – we have visited the moon, and we are discovering, every day, planets orbiting around other stars. Our depth of understanding of the size of the universe is exploding and it can be tempting to think that God really has too much to do to worry about mere humans. But we also have an interesting model in the internet. These days we search the internet and find information about ourselves, and others, within an instant. Suddenly we are able to find, amongst the seven billion people on earth, friends who we lost touch with years ago, and even information about our deceased ancestors in order to build up a family tree stretching back centuries.

And remember that the internet in its current form has only been with us for a couple of decades – the World Wide Web was invented in 1990, and the first graphical browser in 1994 – less than 25 years ago. The instant availability of information which we now take for granted was a dream when I was growing up – information was found in books in libraries, and much information simply wasn't available at all. The internet shows that we can enjoy instant worldwide

communication allowing us to know and care for people in many parts of the world. Now we know that this level of communication is possible. It is perhaps a little easier to believe that God has the capability to do a lot more than a 25-year-old man-made computer network. And that he really can be aware of every single one of us, caring for us and looking after our needs!

As we bear this in mind, we can be assured that the ancient Latin words – omnipotent (all powerful), omniscient (all knowing), omnipresent (present everywhere) – are not beyond the capabilities of the God who created and brought into being the stars, the moon, the earth and the sun. And we, as mere humans, are able to address God directly through our prayers and supplications – we can be truly thankful to God for this.

Ponder

The name and person of God are so glorious. Why would he create human beings or care about us? Why would he become one of us and die on the cross? The answer is: "God is love" (1 John 4:16).

Promise

Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, you have fashioned praise because of your foes, to silence the hostile and the vengeful. (Psalm 8:2)

Prayer

Father, you gave me the freedom to reject you so I would also have the freedom to love you. I love you with all my heart and all my life. Amen.



Article by Mr Edward Clayton, Lay Reader in All Soul's International Community Church, Desa Sri Hartamas, Kuala Lumpur. He is a Partner of Strategy&, the PricewaterhouseCoopers strategy consulting business.

Day 8 – Psalm 9

ON THE RISE

Rise, O Lord, let not man prevail; let the nations be judged in your presence.
(Psalm 9:20)

To say that we live in troubled times is perhaps an understatement. On the international scene, there is evidence of increased natural disasters, regional conflicts, wars and scandals of all shapes and sizes.

At home, all is not well too with our economic, social and political situation. It has been reported that more than 300,000 people have chosen to give up their Malaysian citizenship. They have migrated to countries that they perceived to be better for them and their children.

The Christian community is also confronted with verbal attacks and increased acts of discrimination on the account of our faith. Thus, many Christians are driven to despair and a sense of hopelessness.

It is in such painful situations that we ought to be driven to read and reflect on God's Word. The Psalmist here begins with confident praise to the Lord for the deeds God is about to perform (1-2). God is not silent to the cries of his people. In the words of the late Francis Schaeffer, referring to the God of the Bible, "He is there and he is not silent."

He is God who acts in exercising judgment (vs.3-6) simply because of who he is (vs.7-10). In these few verses, the Psalmist describes God as eternal, righteous, strong and trustworthy. It will do us much good to pause and meditate on these biblical truths. It will speak both to our minds and our souls, especially when we feel that many things are out of control.

As the Psalmist understands who God is, it enables him to sing praises to God and also to pray (vs.11-14). Praise and prayer comes not in a vacuum but has to be soundly rooted in our theology of the God that we worship. Otherwise, our praises and prayers are mere words, a lot of noise but little substance. Perhaps that is why we are scarce and poor in our praise and prayer. We have not come to the

point where we see the Lord in the same way as the Psalmist – that the Lord is eternal, righteous, strong and trustworthy.

Thus the Psalmist has hope as he sees the redemption of the Lord. The wicked will ultimately be vanquished (vs.16-17). On this truth he finds his rest. “But God will never forget the needy; the hope of the afflicted will never perish” (v.18).

We who are believers in Christ share this same hope in our Redeemer who died on the Cross as the final act of salvation. He will come again to be the ultimate Judge, triumphant over evil and wickedness. This is the God on the rise, worthy to be worshipped and serve.

Ponder

What is the extent of our praise and prayers – merely for our own needs or steeped in the truth of who he is?

Promise

The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. Those who know your name trust in you, for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you (Psalm 9:9-10).

Prayer

Jesus, our Redeemer, we praise you for your ultimate and final victory. Amen!



Article by the Reverend Tan Meng Poo, Pastor of Hosanna Anglican Church, Johor Bahru. A lawyer by training, he is also the Vice President of our Daily Bread Ministries of Asia Pacific.

Day 9 – Psalm 11

STAND OR FLEE?

In the Lord I take refuge.
How then can you say to me: Flee like a bird to your mountain?
(Psalm 11:1)

Psalm 11 is a radical call to be faithful. Three personalities are in view here, the Lord, the Speaker and ‘the Advisers’.

Verse 1 makes clear that the one who counts is the Lord. The subsequent verses are the Speaker’s own reflection upon the place the Lord has in his life. Whether the Advisers are well-meaning friends or political advisers to the Speaker, their statement raises the question of trust and the need for a safe place. Should one flee to the safety of the mountains like a bird or should one rely on the Lord or literally ‘find shelter in the Lord’? (v.1)

Why the necessity to flee? The bird imagery continues: the ‘faithless’ are on the hunt preparing to shoot their arrows at the birds, bending their bow. Why are they able to do it? They are operating in the dark, operating deceptively like other attackers the psalms mention (e.g. Psalm 5). The contrast here is deliberate; attackers operating in the dark versus people of integrity whose inner and outer life match. It is a perilous situation indeed, wicked forces operating within the darkness are attempting to overwhelm the rule of law and righteousness. Their method is violence and destruction – even as far as the very destruction of the foundation of decent society. The faithful seem powerless to stop the collapse; hence the Advisers’ words for the reason to flee.

Then we are reminded that the Lord is on his throne in his holy palace. For the Psalmist, the visible temple in Jerusalem is not merely a building on earth, but it is within creation, not in some far-off ‘never-never-land’. Moreover, the Lord is not a sleeping God, he is not an absent God. He knows what is happening in his creation. He ‘sees’ behind people’s words to know the real truth about them and so

distinguish between the faithful and the faithless. His examining divides faithless from faithful. After the examination, the Lord takes action and how terrible that 'violence' will be upon the lawless and the faithless. But for the upright and faithful one, the Lord's act of deliverance is evidence of dedication to the faithful.

The Lord's acts of faithfulness and deliverance are always available to those who trust him. The faithful ones know this because the Lord is involved in life *now* and they often testify to that involvement. If the Lord's activity only refers to the future, the Speaker's scornful response to the Advisers would make no sense. No, God's involvement does not belong to either a community in the distant past nor to a day at the end of time. It belongs to ordinary believers like you and I living in the present. The Speaker in Psalm 11 testifies to this.

Ponder

Are we tempted to lose heart when 'the darkness' closes in? Are we tempted to flee rather than stand as 'children of the light'?

Promise

Therefore, put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand (Ephesians 6:13).

Prayer

Heavenly Father, help me to be mindful of your ever-ready resources to stand firm in the face of every form of darkness and so testify to your faithfulness and deliverance.



Article by the Reverend Lee Kon Yim, a Chartered Quantity Surveyor by training and an Assistant Priest at St Barnabas' Church, Klang.

Day 10 – Psalm 12

HELP, LORD!

Help, Lord, for no one is faithful anymore.
(Psalm 12:1)

Psalm 12 commences with David's cry for help, 'Help, Lord.' David saw godlessness around him. All the faithful people had vanished (v.1). People were uttering lies. There were flattering lips. People were double hearted (v.2). The poor were plundered. The needy were groaning. Everywhere the wicked prowled. Vileness was exalted (v.12). David was in a state of despair. Really bad times. What did David do? He cried to the Lord, 'Help, Lord.' He pleaded that flattering lips and boastful tongues be cut off (vs. 3-4).

What was the Lord's response? "Because the poor are plundered, because the needy groan, I will now arise," says the Lord; "I will place him in the safety for which he longs." (v.5). Can we rely upon God's word? The words of our Lord are pure and refined like silver (v.6). God will keep his word and will guard us from this generation forever (v.7). Is our situation today any different from David's time? Are we in a state of despair today?

Are we inspired by the Word of God? Are our thoughts, conversations and actions governed by the Word of God? Do we think about whatever is true, noble, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent and praiseworthy? (Philippians 4:8). How do we manage our tongue? Do we talk about the salvation story? Do we point others to the Saviour? Do we do our part to uplift the oppressed and the marginalised in our society? Are we the "voice" of the voiceless and the helpless? Do we add value and bring joy into the lives of the needy? Do we provide a sense of fair play and justice to the man on the street? Or are we contributing towards godlessness, wickedness, unrighteousness, evil, injustice, corruption, idle talk, juicy gossip, blatant lies, flattery, breakdown in family relationships, dissensions amongst church members, manipulations and the like? A quick personal reflection may uncover a thousand sad tales. Times are bad around us. What should we do? Do we have any hope? Psalm 12 teaches us to cry to our Lord for help and to rely on God's Word. Our first and immediate response should be, 'Help, Lord.' We must

plead for God's intervention, control and direction in all our situations and he will deliver us from our miseries. God answers our prayers in accordance to his will. "Whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith." (Matthew 21:22).

Secondly, we must rely on God's Word and his promises in the Bible. The words of our Lord are pure, refined and reliable. According to 2 Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness."

How can we reach out to others who have not met Jesus Christ so that they too can cry out to him for deliverance from their anguish? We can continue to establish properly constituted, viable and sustainable mission outreach points, cell groups and connect groups in the midst of our suffering communities which will facilitate and offer mission footprints to the people in need to enable them to experience the love, grace, peace and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. These mission footprints would provide them with the space and opportunity to cry out to God for help, "Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance" (Psalm 28:9 KJV). Let them hear the salvation story from the Word of God and be blessed. This is the way forward for lasting solution to our earthly woes and miseries. Lead them to the Saviour!

Ponder

How can we reach out to others who have not met Jesus Christ?

Promise

The words of the Lord are flawless, like silver purified in a crucible, like gold refined seven times. (Psalm 12:6)

Prayer

You, Lord, will keep the needy safe and will protect us forever from the wicked (Psalm 12:7)



Article by Mr D Raja Singam, a Lay Reader at the Church of the Holy Spirit, Ipoh. He is also the Diocesan Registrar.

Day 11 – Psalm 13:1-6

EVEN IN OUR TROUBLES, GOD'S LOVE CAN BE TRUSTED

But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation.
(Psalm 13:5)

For nine excruciatingly long and stressful years, Saul had relentlessly hounded David as 'one hunts a partridge in the mountains' (1 Samuel 26:20). This apparently unending struggle for life had driven David to desperation and prompted him to pour out his woes to God in language that is bitter and yet honest, "How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and everyday have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me?" (vs.1-2). David was deeply troubled that Satan was winning the battle (v.4).

David's questions reflected his fears of abandonment by, and estrangement from, God. Like David, we all go through dark nights of the soul when we wonder if God has abandoned us. Of course, God hadn't really left David and he doesn't leave any of us because he has repeatedly promised in his word, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5).

However, sometimes in the emotion of the moment, our minds play tricks on us. We mistakenly think that our losses and our hardships are worse than they really are and we may feel like David who, in the confusion of the moment, thought God had forgotten him. When David later recalled what he knew rather than what he feared, his sense of hardship and trouble turned into a song of praise. "But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, for he has been good to me" (vs. 5-6).

Another person in the scriptures whose faith was tested is Job. God did not explain to Job what he was doing but said he could be trusted to do what is right. On a single day, Job lost everything – his family, his business, his health and everything he owned (Job 1:13-20) and yet in the course of his long ordeal Job was able to say, "Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him" (Job 13:15).

Under God's wise control, everything that happens to us, whether enjoyable or painful, is designed to develop our character. The moral fibre of our character can grow only when nourished by stress, trials, tribulations and afflictions. That's why suffering saints can glory in tribulation. God allows us to go through the test or the trial so that we may be fashioned into instruments of strength for him.

Ponder

V Raymond Edman said, "Never doubt in the dark what God told you in the light."

According to Rick Warren, the test of real faith is: "Will we continue to love, trust, obey and worship God even when we have no sense of his presence in our life?"

Promise

As with David and Job, our aching can give way to joy when we approach God honestly, plead for help and reaffirm our trust in God whose love for us will never waver or change because regardless of our feelings to the contrary, God is real!

Prayer

Dear Lord, help us to believe that you are with us, even when we can't see you working in our lives. We surrender ourselves to your purpose for any suffering we may endure. Amen.



Article by Mr Philip Nainan, a Lay Reader at St. Christopher's Church, Johor Bahru. Philip is also a lawyer.

Day 12 – Psalm 14

I BELIEVE IN GOD

The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.'
(Psalm 14:1)

In my past 28 years in full time ministry, I have come across all sorts of people, but three groups of people outshone all.

The first group of people are the ones who believe in God, love God, fear God, obey God and serve God. This group of people have been truly blessed by God. They live a truly blessed life.

The second group of people are the ones who also believe in the existence of God. They come to Church regularly, read the Bible, pray – long prayers and pay their tithes without fail. However, they are nowhere around the Church when the need arises to serve!

The third group of people are the ones who always question the existence of God. The word 'fool' in Psalm 14:1 refers to practical atheists in Israel, people who had turned their backs on the covenant that the Lord had made with his people. Here were men who refused to go to the Temple, who disdained the Scriptures, who had no regard for the Sabbath or the moral law, who lived as though God did not exist. They asked questions like "why," "when," "how," and etc. There was a time I used to sit with them and argue to prove the existence of God. As time went on, as like the proverb says, 'a fool is always right' (Proverbs 12:15) and I realized that it was truly a waste of time arguing with them. The longer you argue with them the more they think they are wiser than you.

Throughout my years in the ministry, I have seen these three groups of people. What had been written in the Word of God about these people is actually taking place. Those who have acknowledged the existence of God and have been truly fulfilling his will in their lives are truly blessed and are rewarded by the Lord. Parents who instilled love, reverence, obedience to the Lord and the willingness to serve him in their children's lives are reaping their harvest through seeing their children growing up in a godly character.

Those who have acknowledged God but have a “Touch & Go” relationship with God are also experiencing what they have shown. They have a religion but it lacks intimate relationship with the Lord.

Those who questioned the existence of God are also reaping their harvest. A friend of mine who spent much of his time trying to question the existence of God, was laying ill. He was so afraid that he called for me. “Father, I am very sorry. I always questioned the God you believed. Now I realized that he truly is alive and I will have to face him soon, please forgive me and pray that Jesus will show his mercy upon me when I face him.” Two days later, he died but a special peace of mind came to me. The Lord had forgiven him and had shown him mercy.

With today’s political, economic and social climate, it is wiser to say that “God is alive” than to question his existence. As we walk through this Lent season, let us ponder God’s Word and let his words minister to us daily. Let us experience his love and power in our lives daily. We have nothing to lose but all to gain!

Ponder

The atheist’s biggest problem with believing in God is not evidence, but rather the threat God poses to their lifestyle. (Ed Rea)

Promise

The Lord looks down from heaven on all mankind to see if there are any who are wise, who want to please God (Psalm 14:2, TLB).

Prayer

Lord, we agree and worship you, the God who is God. Amen!



Article by the Reverend Canon Jacob George John, Vicar of Holy Cross Church, Bandar Sri Manjung, Perak. Jacob is also the Chairman of the Diocesan Board of Bahasa Malaysia and Indigenous Work.

Day 13 – Psalm 15

WHO IS WORTHY?

O Lord, who shall sojourn in your tent?
Who shall dwell on your holy hill?
(Psalm 15:1)

The Psalm opens with two questions in verse one, “O Lord, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill?” The rest of the Psalm is the answer to those questions.

The “tent” there refers to the tabernacle. In David’s time, God dwelt among his people in the tabernacle that Moses had made in the wilderness and David had brought to Mount Zion in Jerusalem, the ‘holy hill’ that verse 11 refers to. And so the question that the Psalm is answering is this: ‘Who is it that can come and live in God’s presence?’

The Psalm continues, not by describing ceremonial requirements, but by describing the character of the one who can live with God. He walks blamelessly, with integrity before God and man, and always does what is right (v.2a). His speech is truthful (v.2b), reflecting the good in his heart. He does no wrong to others, in speech or in actions (v.3). He is a good judge of character: honouring the one who fears the Lord rather than the evil person (v.4a). He fulfils his promises even when it is costly to him (v.4b). He does not oppress others or treat them unjustly for his advantage (v.5). Having described this ideally good person, the Psalm concludes with the emphatic promise in v.5b: “He who does these things shall never be moved.” But not even David, the man after God’s own heart, who wrote this Psalm, lived up to this. And if we are honest, neither do any of us. The Bible’s verdict on humankind is that we have all gone astray (Romans 3:10-12). There is only One Person who has fulfilled this Psalm perfectly – Jesus Christ. He alone is without sin and is uniquely qualified to dwell in God’s presence.

So how can we dwell with God? The only way is through Jesus. When we trust in Jesus, we are spiritually united with him by faith. Our sin is shared with him (and he has paid for it completely on the cross), and his righteousness is shared with

us. We are considered righteous in him (2 Corinthians 5:21), and therefore qualified to live with God.

As God's righteous people, there is a sense in which we live in God's presence every day. But we look forward to enjoying God's presence in all its fullness at the end of the age when Jesus ushers in the new creation, and we dwell with him forever. In the meantime, as God's people, we are to imitate the character of our Saviour and King which is described for us in this Psalm. We are to work hard at this, knowing that the Spirit is also at work within to change us to reflect his image.

Ponder

As we meditate on this Psalm, let us reflect firstly on how beautifully it describes Jesus. Then let us consider what changes we need to make in our own lives, so that it more accurately describes us as well.

Promise

He who does these things shall never be moved (v.5b).

Prayer

Thank you Father that Jesus is worthy to dwell in your presence and that you accept me in him. Continue to change me to be more like him in my character.



Article by the Very Reverend Dr Andrew Cheah, Dean of St Mary's Cathedral, Kuala Lumpur. Andrew, a medical doctor by training, is also a member of the Diocesan Standing Committee.

Day 14 – Psalm 17

PLEAD MY CASE, O LORD!

Let my vindication come from you; may your eyes see what is right.
(Psalm 17: 2)

David, a fugitive, is on the run from men who have become his enemies and who are pursuing him in order to kill him. David is cornered, feeling isolated, betrayed and unjustly treated, despite doing no wrong or harm to his pursuers. In his dire predicament, David turns to God in prayer.

David's confidence in prayer (vs.1-5) – David expresses his confidence in his prayer to God due to his personal relationship with God, and due to his innocence and righteousness in the predicament he is in.

David's reason for his prayer (vs.6-9) – David's understanding of, and trust in, God's great power, faithfulness and love compels him to call on God for his current predicament of being pursued and surrounded by his enemies.

David's complaint about his enemies (vs.10-12) – David complains that his enemies and pursuers are hard-hearted, arrogant and deceitful. They are unjustly and relentlessly hunting him down in order to kill him.

David makes his request to God (vs.13-14a) – David now requests God to intervene in his predicament, and to deal with his enemies and rescue him from them.

David's confidence in God's work (vs.14b–15) – Despite being in a seemingly helpless situation, David expresses his confidence in God's graciousness and faithfulness. David expresses his confidence in God's protection and deliverance upon him in his predicament.

We know that God answered David's prayer, intervened in his dire predicament, delivered him from his enemies, and vindicated his faith and trust in God. David was proven right to turn to God in earnest prayer and not to retaliate by human means.

We can also see parallel developments and experiences in Jesus' life on earth and in his journey to the Cross. Jesus was maliciously spoken of. He was betrayed by his own people. He was falsely accused and finally, he was unjustly punished. Yet Jesus did not retaliate to prove himself but trusted in God and remained faithful to God's plan and purpose for his life and mission. Ultimately, God vindicated Jesus to the greatest triumph in human history – his resurrection from the dead and the hope of salvation for all mankind!

In our Christian lives, we will sometimes face unfair and unexpected criticism, antagonism and even attrition. When faced with such challenges, do we react impulsively and contemplate retaliation, or do we, like David in Psalm 17 and Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, take our cause to God in prayer and seek vindication from our God who is the Lord of truth and justice?

For our prayer to be answered and our cause to be vindicated, we must ensure that we are righteous before God and living according to his will, for his glory and honor, like David in Psalm 17 and Jesus in his life and mission on earth. Then, we can live with the peace and assurance that God will vindicate us.

Ponder

As for me, I will be vindicated and will see your face; when I awake, I will be satisfied with seeing your likeness (Psalm 17: 15).

Promise

Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings (Psalm 17:8).

Prayer

I call on you, my God, for you will answer me; turn your ear to me and hear my prayer. Show me the wonders of your great love (Psalm 17:6-7a).



Article by the Reverend Tom Cherian, Vicar of St John's Church, Ipoh.

Day 15 – Psalm 18

WITH GOD FOR ME, WHO CAN BE AGAINST ME?

With your help I can advance against a troop, with my God I can scale a wall.
(Psalm 18:29)

The context for Psalm 18 comes from 1 and 2 Samuel where David, as a young man, is relentlessly pursued by King Saul and his 3,000 strong army. David flees for his life hiding in foreign enemy territory, hot unforgiving desert wilderness and in dark, wet stony-cold caves. Later, as King, he would face his own battles against the Philistines, Moabites, Arameans and Edomites. Then, of course, there was the deeply agonising clash with his own son, Absalom. David's life was characterized by much pain, frustration, and despondence:

"The cords of death entangled me; the torrents of destruction over whelmed me. The cords of the grave coiled around me; the snares of death confronted me" (vs.4-5).

Maybe you are at a place of desperation like David was? There appears to be no solutions to your problems. The enemy seems to be looming in nearer and nearer. There are conflicts with close, family members. What will you do? To whom will you turn to?

David turned to God. He relied totally on his relationship with God to get him through this adversity:

"In my distress I called to the Lord; I cried to my God for help" (v.6a).

Psalm 18 is indeed a Psalm of thanksgiving. In fact, it is duplicated almost exactly in 2 Samuel 22 as probably one of the last words of this great King. It is his declaration that despite the difficult circumstances of his life, God protected, vindicated and delivered him during many dangerous years.

Two observations stand out.

First, David's own assurances and experience of God: "I love you, Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock,

in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold” (v.2).

Secondly, as a general principle, when we live for God and try to go his way, he cares for us and blesses us. When we insist on our own way, we bring misery and destruction on ourselves.

Ponder

“What a blessing it would be if we could turn even the most disastrous event into a theme for song, and so turn the tables upon our great enemy.” (Charles Spurgeon)

Promise

“What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?” (Romans 8:31-32)

Prayer

Father, help me to realize that there is nothing you and I will not be able to handle together today. There is no rock like our Rock. Praise be to the Rock of our Salvation! Amen.



Article by the Reverend Dr Vijendra Daniel, Vicar of St Barnabas' Church, Klang.

Day 16 – Psalm 19

NATURE AND SCRIPTURE REVEAL GOD'S GLORY

The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
(Psalm 19:1)

When I was small, I used to look up to the sky and be mesmerized by the beauty of the sun, moon and stars. I couldn't help but to think how wonderful God has made everything. Today as I learn more about the universe from science, I feel so awestruck at the vastness of God's wisdom and at the same time feel humbled by it.

The first six verses of Psalm 19 capture this truth - all of creation points us towards God. They declare God's glory and their "voice" goes out through all the earth. When we see in nature, the handiwork of God, we are left reflecting on the precision and the marvelous designs, and the Designer himself. It is an invitation to come and know God every time we marvel at the beauty of the earth. However nature itself cannot fully reveal God to us.

Therefore the Psalm moves from verse 7 onwards to God's special revelation to his people. God reveals himself through his word and his prophets. People are now able to know God and have a relationship with him through this Covenant. Unfortunately as Paul says in Romans 7:1-12, while the Law is good, we are not capable of following it because of our sins. Studying the Law only brings us to realize our own faults and trespasses. It is no wonder then, the Psalmist goes on to reflect on his own transgressions in verses 12-13 of the Psalm:

"But who can discern their own errors?
Forgive my hidden faults.
Keep your servant also from willful sins;
may they not rule over me.
Then I will be blameless, innocent of great transgression."

Thankfully God finally revealed himself through his Son (Hebrews 1:1) through whom the Covenant is renewed. Today through Jesus who died and rose again

our sins are forgiven and our relationship with this Creator God is restored. As we ponder God's beautiful revelation through the nature, the prophets and finally through Jesus, we too share with Psalmist in submitting our thought and words to God and his truth (v.14).

Ponder

Through all the earth their voice resounds, and to the ends of the world, their message (Psalm 19:5).

Promise

The Lord's teaching is perfect, resorting of life.
The Lord's pact is steadfast, it makes the fools wise.
The Lord's precepts are upright, delighting the heart.
The Lord's command unblemished, giving light to the eyes.
The Lord's fear is pure, outlasting all time.
The Lord's judgments are truth, all of them just.
(Psalm 19:7-9)

Prayer

Heavenly Father, through the creation and your word, you have revealed who you are to us. Grant us grace to know you more and more through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. In him we offer ourselves to you in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



Article by the Reverend Gerrad Emmanuel, Vicar of Holy Spirit Church, Ipoh.

Day 17 – Psalm 20

BATTLEGROUND JOHOR BAHRU !

May we shout for joy over your victory and lift up our banners in the name of our God. May the Lord grant all your requests. Now this I know: The Lord gives victory to his anointed. He answers him from his heavenly sanctuary with the victorious power of his right hand. Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. (Psalms 20: 5-7)

It finally came. After months of praying and hard work, my husband and I were pleased to see his name on the promotion list. Big changes were about to come our way. We were about to relocate.

Seriously, what has all this got to do with the reading of today? David was the subject and author of this psalm. During his reign as king, Israel was at war frequently. According to C.H. Spurgeon, this psalm was a National Anthem that was to be sung at the outbreak of war, when the King was girding on his sword for a fight. It was dedicated to the Chief Musician who would then rally the people to pray earnestly to God on behalf of their beloved King. This relationship can also be seen prophetically to represent the cry of the ancient church on behalf of their Lord, Jesus Christ, at his impending crucifixion.

The first four verses of this psalm are a prayer for the success of the king. Verses 5, 6, and 7 express steadfast confidence in God and his Son Jesus Christ; verse 8 declares the defeat of the enemy, and verse 9 is a concluding appeal to God. My focus will be on verses 5, 6 and 7. Where there is steadfast confidence in God every need, be it big or small can be met through prayer. Jesus and David both had exceptional prayer lives. They always looked up to God regardless of their physical, emotional and mental state. Jesus for example demonstrated that perfectly on the Cross at Calvary. He was betrayed by a trusted friend, exhausted and thirsty from hours of interrogation and torture and yet in his weakest hour he prayed. His confidence was in God the Father.

It is an undisputed fact that modern day living brings about change and for us as a family change was coming at a rapid speed. Our prayer needs as a family were to get a reliable live in maid, to buy a house that was spacious and comfortable that we could call home and to place our kids in the best schools Johor Bahru could offer. We prayed as a family for each need to be met as often as we could. We had confidence that God would fulfil those needs according to his will and time. All we had to do in the meantime was to be patient and have absolute confidence in him. I must admit waiting patiently for God to act was extremely hard especially with time running out and looming deadlines.

Ponder

How often have you lacked confidence that God will meet your needs?

Promise

I would like to conclude with 1 John 5: 14-15 "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us and if we know that he hears us whatever we ask we know that we have what we asked of him." Friends, during this time of Lent let us renew our confidence in our great and mighty God. Be strong and have courage and hope in Him. For the God we believe in never fails and do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine.

Prayer

Almighty God, you know my every need before I even come before you. Please give me victory in my hour of trouble. I place my trust in your powerful name.



Article by Mrs Winniffer Manohar, wife of Mano Johnson, a member of the Diocesan Standing Committee. Both Winniffer and Mano were members of St Katherine's Church, Kajang and recently they moved to Johor Bahru, Johore.

Day 18 – Psalm 21

THE HEART'S DESIRE

You have granted him his heart's desire
and have not withheld the request of his lips.
(Psalm 21:2)

What is your greatest wish? What do you most want in life? It may be the wish for success, health, wealth, peace, and long life. However, we may not really be sure what is our deepest longing, or able to describe it. Though we may be aware that something is missing in our life; something that other people or things cannot not satisfy. The great Augustine of Hippo refers to the heart that is “restless until it finds its rest in you.” Today's psalm describes the response of the king who has everything, even to have what he most wants, his heart's desire.

The king in this psalm of David, surely refers to the Kingship that was set up under the prophet Samuel, first with Saul, and then David himself. The king rejoices in ‘the strength of the Lord’, which also concludes the psalm (vs.1,13), with the Lord's strength being exalted or praised.

David extends praise to God for both preserving his life during the years he fled from Saul, and for establishing the twelve tribes of Israel into a single kingdom centred on Jerusalem. God has blessed the king through his strength (vs.1– 6) with joy, life, victories, wealth and even granting him his heart's desire. And it is the strength of the Lord that has brought the king victory over his enemies (vs.7–12) who were seized, consumed and destroyed. Enjoying his successes, the psalmist attributes his blessings and triumphs to God and declares his trust in the Lord (v.7), whose love is unfailing and unshakeable.

This psalm must also serve as a reminder to the descendants of David who later ascended the throne, to remember to place their faith and confidence in God, and not in themselves and their own achievements. For it is God ‘who brings down the mighty from their thrones and exalts the humble and meek.’ Those in high places are only there by the sovereign will and goodness of God.

But what was the desire of David's heart? It is not the sinful desire that led him into immorality, deceit and murder with 'the Bathsheba affair.' It is the honest desire of his heart that is exposed to God's gaze and scrutiny and longs for righteousness, truth and relationship with God. It is the heart of the worshipper, and the longing of the heart for God himself – whom to know is eternal life.

It is through the line of David that God promises to establish an everlasting king and kingdom. This is the prospect of the coming of Jesus, the King of all kings and Lord of all lords. Jesus comes to cleanse and purify our sinful hearts and make us fit for eternal life. Jesus comes to make possible a relationship with the living God, and to satisfy the God-given desires of the heart, to know him and to be known by him.

As we understand the longings of our hearts, we will also discover more of what God wants for us – life with him forever.

Ponder

How do you feel that all the desires of your heart are seen and known to God?

Promise

You gave life to him, length of days for ever and ever (Psalm 21:4).

Prayer

Lord, draw me closer to you until my heart and will become one with yours. Amen.



Article by the Rev David Cox, head of the Diocesan Spiritual Formation Platform. David was Vicar of All Saints' Church, Taiping (1982-1985 and 2013-2015).

Day 19 – Psalm 23

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
(Psalm 23:1)

A shepherd is one who takes care of his sheep. He leads them to safe and fertile ground to graze and protects them from harm. When he hears the bleating of a sheep he runs to its rescue. He is there to fight any foe that comes their way. He is present and willing to defend, encourage and discipline his sheep in order to keep them safe.

David's early experience as a shepherd is used to illustrate the Good Shepherd in Psalm 23 where we find a representation of the Shepherd's authority, guidance, infinite love and powerful provision. This psalm assures us of the rich nourishment, wise guidance, strong defence, and ultimate blessing that each desperate child of God who turns to him will receive.

As mentioned in the parable of the lost sheep, we are the sheep (Matthew 18:12–14, Luke 15:2-7), the people of God. It is those who recognized the “Good Shepherd” as “Lord” and obey him and call on him who can claim the blessings assured to them in this psalm, ‘I shall not want’ (v.1), he ‘refreshes my soul’ (v.4), and God’s ‘goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life’ (v.6).

We are constantly challenged and we face crises and demands. When troubles come and the enemy assaults us, it is so easy to get our eyes off God and be obsessed over our problems and often we feel so far away from him but this psalm provides an antidote. The focus is on the Lord, the one who cares for us. As the Shepherd, he faithfully guards and guides his sheep, and provides wholesome nourishment. Even the ominous danger of the valley of the shadow of death is quickly dismissed in the confidence that he will go through it with us. The psalm begins with “the Lord,” and ends with “the Lord forever.” Let us keep our eyes on him, our Good Shepherd.

As lost sheep restored by the Good Shepherd, let us tread the journey of faith with thankfulness. May we stay close to the Good Shepherd, hear him daily through his

written Word, speak to him fervently and frequently in prayer and ever be thankful for his blessings.

Ponder

The Good Shepherd is with us not to make life easy but to surround us with his love, encouragement and strength for the next step forward.

Promise

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. (Psalm 23:4 KJV)

Prayer

Dear Lord God, you are the Good Shepherd who always lead us. Whenever we walk through times of wilderness, bring us to the green pastures and lay us besides still waters that we may come to feast on your abundant provision and be refreshed. Watch over us and lead us through the barren places and dark valleys, to the place of your safety that we might lie down in peace and serenity in your presence. Amen.



Article by Deaconess Ruth Ong, Pastor of All Souls' International Community Church, Desa Sri Hartamas, Kuala Lumpur.

Day 20 – Psalm 24

THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S

The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it.
(Psalm 24:1)

I still remember the days when my children would look at their brother or sister and cry out, "Mine!" Whenever I heard this cry, I would try to calm the situation, but it wasn't always easy. One would cry out "mine!" and the other one would just cry. I'm glad those days are over now.

Psalm 24 reminds me that nothing is really "mine" - nothing is really "ours." It is all God's. It always has been and it always will be. I wonder how different my life would look like if I remembered that what I have is not mine. I wonder how different raising my children would have been if we could have lived out the reality that it actually is all God's. Yes, I might have it right now, but it isn't really mine, to do with it as I wish.

God entrusts people with all of God's creation. This hymn draws our attention away from ourselves to the One who owns it all. Fallen humans very often look at the earth as if it belongs to them. But "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). The earth belongs to God and to no one else. God is the rightful owner.

Not only does the earth belong to the Lord, but everything it contains. More specifically, every single human being belongs to the Lord. "Know that the Lord is God. It is he that made us, and we are his" (Psalm 100:3). That fact should serve as the foundation to everything else in our lives. We are but stewards, good or bad, of what God has entrusted to us.

God calls us to be stewards within the context of our individual lives, our family households, our church households, and the global household. As stewards of this creation-encompassing household (*oikoumene*), we are responsible for the ways in which we use and abuse it. Christians are called to fulfil our stewardship duties through acts of loving care and respect.

Ponder

Since everything in the world belongs to God, why then do we spend so much time and energy accumulating and clinging on to the things of this world? Perhaps it is because in the back of our minds we still think they belong to us. We have not yielded in submission to the universal ownership of God.

Promise

The world around us seems to be soaking in sin, destruction and disobedience. However, the promise is that we can transcend it because the 'King of glory' in his Resurrection has won the victory in which we share. "Those who have clean hands and pure hearts ... will receive blessing from the Lord and vindication from the God of their salvation" (Psalm 24:4-5).

Prayer

Lord, as stewards may we be awakened to your abundant, freely given grace permeating all of your creation. And as expressions of our awareness, may we choose to enter into active partnership with you and others to lovingly care for and heal every gift of grace that you have entrusted to us. As stewards, we pray that we grow in this partnership with you and that every dimension of our lives becomes a witness of the living Christ and a channel for your grace poured out to all. Amen.



Article by the Reverend Dr Albert Sundararaj Walters, a Priest in the Diocese of West Malaysia. Albert holds a PhD in Islamic Studies from the University of Birmingham.

Day 21 – Psalm 25

IN GOD I TRUST

In you, Lord my God, I put my trust.
(Psalm 25:1)

During my seminary days, I was travelling by bus for my weekend practical. There were two gentlemen seated opposite. They were talking about their spiritual journey. One of them said, he loves the book of Psalms because they are very practical and speak to him. I myself, even though I have struggled with Psalm 91 after the return of my darling daughter Rebecca to our God (am still struggling), have always enjoyed reading the Book of Psalms and have found great comfort, encouragement and strength. In Psalm 25, the writer begins by saying, “To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul; in you I trust, O my God” (vs.1-2).

As we journey through the period of Lent, it is not all about giving up food or something we desire. Giving up food without reading the Bible and praying is not called fasting; it is called dieting. Our primary goal of fasting should be to know the will of God and to submit our will to his. During this period, we should spend extra time reading the Word of God, meditating on it, and submitting ourselves and allowing God the Holy Spirit to take full control of our lives (vs. 4,5). One of the areas we need to really search ourselves is, do we really trust in Jesus to meet all our spiritual and physical needs and to equip us with wisdom and strength to face and to overcome all the challenges we face in life? It is easy to say “God is Good” and sing, “A mighty fortress is our God” within the four walls of the church. The minute we leave the church and hear, and see the political and moral chaos around us, our hearts sink and we are tempted to look to other sources for help. This is because we don’t really go on our knees to seek the face of God to help us fight the powers of darkness that are capitalizing on the weaknesses of man to cause chaos to God’s creation. In all circumstances we should say, “To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul; in you I trust, O my God” (vs.1-2).

During this period of Lent, we should learn to go beyond all that we see and hear. If we are not sensitive to the voice of God the Holy Spirit, we can easily become disillusioned or become like the Church of Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-22), placing

our trust in buildings, bank accounts and numbers. We should in all circumstances lift up our souls to our God; and put our trust in him. We must seek the face of God. We should seek the guidance of God the Holy Spirit to show his ways and to guide us in his truth, to enable us to have a deeper understanding of spiritual matters. Because, whether we like it or not, we are engaged in a spiritual warfare. St. Paul saw and advised the Ephesians that our battle is not against flesh and blood, but 'against the rulers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil' (Ephesians 6:12). We cannot overcome our problems by placing our trust in political and spiritual leaders or in our own strength and knowledge (Psalm 20:7).

We must learn to lift our soul to God and put our total trust in him in order to live a victorious life and be his witnesses in our nation. The promise is this - no one whose hope is in God will ever be put to shame (v.3).

Ponder

Do you really believe and trust that Jesus will carry you through all your trials?

Promise

All the ways of the Lord are loving and faithful toward those who keep the demands of his covenant. (Psalm 25:10)

Prayer

Heavenly Father, I believe and trust that you will carry me through all my trials in life. Today, I lift up my soul to you and place my complete trust in you. I place all my worries and burdens at your feet. Enable me through God the Holy Spirit to enjoy the resurrected and fullness of life that Jesus came to give me. Through Jesus Christ my Lord and Redeemer. Amen.



Article by the Venerable Edward M John, Archdeacon of the Southern Archdeaconry and Vicar of St Christopher's Church, Johor Bahru.

Day 22 – Psalm 26

A PLEA FOR VINDICATION

Vindicate me, Lord, for I have led a blameless life;
I have trusted in the Lord and have not faltered.
(Psalm 26:1)

What do you pray and plead to God for?

Psalm 26 is David's plea for vindication because of his faithfulness to God. At the start David asks God to vindicate him, to judge him innocent, as he is blameless (v.1a) and goes on to explain why. He has remained faithful and committed to God, trusting in his faithfulness at all times (vs.1-3). He did this by staying away from those who reject God's ways, are wicked and hypocrites (vs.4-7). Because of this he pleads with God to recognise his faithfulness, to deliver and have mercy upon him when he comes to judge (vs.8-11). In the final verse (v.12) David reminds us that as a faithful servant his feet stand on solid ground and he can praise God not only privately but also with the gathering of God's people.

How might this Psalm shape our own prayers? How can David's example help us during this Lenten period? As we reflect on his words we can take comfort in knowing that they point us to the One who fulfilled David's plea in the greatest way; Jesus Christ. In Christ we see one who was truly vindicated because he was truly blameless. He was judged innocent as God's true King who alone was faithful to his father and lived a perfect, blameless life. Christ abhorred the hypocrites, like the Pharisees and Scribes. He was tried and tested on the cross and through it all remained faithful. Ultimately God delivered his king in Jesus, from death and vindicated him by raising him to life.

As we consider our lives we can be both encouraged and challenged through this Psalm. As sinful people we know that we will never be judged innocent by our own merits. And yet we can rejoice that Christ took the penalty for our sin once and for all so that on the final day of judgement we, who believe and trust in Christ alone, can be vindicated through the merits of Jesus. Knowing that in Christ we have been judged innocent before God we now seek to respond by living lives that are faithful and obedient to God as we wait for his return and we can stand in the

eternal assembly of God's people. Our prayer and plea for vindication can be full of assurance because of what Jesus has done for us and we can respond to this by living lives that trust in the Lord who never falters.

Ponder

Without Christ's work on the cross we can never be judged innocent before God. What response has Christ's death and resurrection stirred in you? How can you be living a life that trusts in the Lord and does not falter?

Promise

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1).

Prayer

Gracious God, thank you for sending your only Son into the world to die for sinners like me. Thank you that because of Jesus I can be judged innocent before you. Please help me, especially when it is difficult to be obedient to your word, to be faithful and honour you at all times giving you praise. Amen.



Article by Mrs Shanti Duraisingh who serves in various ministries at St Mary's Cathedral, Kuala Lumpur. She is also a member of the Diocesan Synod and is on the Board of Equip Gospel Ministries.

THE FAITH THAT OVERCOMES FEAR

The Lord is my Light and my Salvation; whom should I fear?

The Lord is my life's Refuge; of whom should I be afraid?

(Psalm 27:1)

Fear is a current problem for many of us. We fear many things. A study of the bible reveals that fear has been a companion of man since the beginning of time. The bible also exhorts us in many parts to “fear not.” We have multiple fears – rejection, failures, inadequacies, inabilities, dreaded diseases, sudden deaths, natural disasters and catastrophes, financial insecurities, and the after-death judgement. Fear is a thief of our joy and happiness. It robs us of the possibilities of worthy achievements and leave us sick and depress. But God wants to deliver us from all the bondage and agony of fear.

The words of our text from Psalms 27:1 provides us with an explanation of the conquering faith of David. He had experienced many fearful situations in his life. He had been tried and tempered by prevailing fears. Here we can also learn how to overcome our own numerous inward and outward fears.

Firstly, the Psalmist overcame his fears by *Trusting* the Lord (vs.1-3). His faith kept him from despair. Irrespective of the raging fears that stormed his life, the psalmist trusted the Lord. *He trusted the Lord in the present* (v.1). The Psalmist used the present tense to show that in times of trouble he considered God as his Light, his Salvation and his Strength. In all his bitter experiences, he discovered that trust in God kept him from being afraid. With God as the resource of his life he had nothing to be afraid off. *He had trusted God in the past* (v.2). Looking back over his life, the Psalmist pondered how God had helped him overcome all the enemies and the foes of his life in the past. God was greater than any of his enemies and had granted him victory and success. This further strengthen his faith to trust God to save him. *He will trust in God in the future* (v.3). The Psalmist knew that his enemies, political oppressors or horrors of war always surrounded him and were inevitable and that only trust in God would see him through all this frightening situations. He believed that God cared for him and that God would see him through

all the future situations as he had experienced God in the past and present situations.

Secondly, the Psalmist overcame his fears by *Meditating* on God (vs.4-6) The Psalmist overcame his fear by pondering and reflecting on God. The more he meditated and learned of God, the less he feared. He wanted to, 'behold the beauty of the Lord' (v.4), 'to enquire in God's temple' (v.4), and 'to sing praises to the Lord' (v.6). His reflections of God helped him to rise above his fears and lead him to serenity. God was greater than his fears.

Thirdly, the Psalmist overcame his fears by *Praying* to God (vs.7-14). The Psalmist mastered his fears by honest prayer to God and made specific petitions. He asked God to "hear" his voice (v.7), to "teach" him (v.11), and to make him "strong" and "courageous" (v.14).

Trust in the Lord, meditate on him, and pray to him and he will also deliver you from your all fears and anxieties today.

Ponder

Is your "Faith" bigger than your "Fears"?

Promise

Though my father and mother forsake me, yet will the Lord receive me (Psalm 27:10).

Prayer

Show me, O Lord, your way, and lead me on a level path (Psalm 27:11).



Article by the Venerable John Kennady Samuel, Vicar of Holy Trinity Church, Batu Gajah and Archdeacon of the Lower North Archdeaconry.

Day 24 – Psalm 28

AWESOME PRAYER ANSWERING GOD

Blessed be the Lord for he has heard the sound of my pleading.

Psalm 28:6

Our human mind cannot accept unanswered prayers. We want the reply to come immediately after the petition is brought forth. But God loves to hear us pray and he answers us according to his will at his appointed time.

During World War 2, in a remote town in Malaysia, a group of Christians wanted the war to end. They had lost their loved ones, their jobs and their possessions. There was no freedom of worship under the Japanese regime. Their church had been taken away and their priest was imprisoned. They cried out to the Lord day and night. All they wanted was freedom so that they could live normal lives again but it looked as if their prayers were unheard. Months turned to years and there was no reply from above. Then one day the news came that the War had ended and they were free people again. What joy they experienced as they welcomed the wonderful news of freedom. They also realised that God had answered their prayers.

Similarly in Psalm 28, David faces danger for himself and the whole country. He calls to the Lord, his rock for help. And he utters 'do not turn a deaf ear to me' (v.1b). David feels that God is looking away from him. Desperately he pleads for help, asking God not to drag him away with the wicked who put a show of friendship in order to gain their own ends. He knows that eventually God would punish them. He wants to be genuine before God.

Amazingly in verse 6, the Psalmist changes from petition to thanksgiving. His prayer has been answered! God has heard him! He exclaims, "Praise be to the Lord for he has heard my cry." No more asking because God has given him and his people victory.

In all situations we rejoice when the answer is according to what we expect. But we forget God does not always answers our prayers according to what we want. He answers prayers in three ways i.e. yes, no or wait. We rejoice when the answer

is 'yes' but we cannot accept 'no' or 'wait' for an answer. In order to understand God's answer to our prayers we need to study God's word and understand how the Lord has given us the Holy Spirit to intercede for us. Romans 8: 26 says, "the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groaning too deep for words." Jesus knows we will be at a loss if we did not have the Holy Spirit to intercede on our behalf and strengthen us to accept God's answer to our prayers.

During this Lent, let us remind ourselves that when we walk with Jesus he will live with us and empower us through the Holy Spirit to live a prayerful life for him.

Ponder

Prayer changes things! When you pray, believe in the risen Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Promise

Save your people and bless your inheritance; be their Shepherd, and carry them forever (Psalm 28:9).

Prayer

Heavenly Father, give me supernatural gifts of knowledge, faith and deepen my prayer life. In Jesus' name. Amen.



Article by Pastor Nesam Ebenezer of St. Paul's Church, Petaling Jaya. Nesam is also the Chairperson of St. Paul's Day Training Centre (DTC), a ministry to people with learning difficulties.

Day 25 – Psalm 29

THE VOICE OF GOD IN A GREAT STORM

The voice of the Lord is over the waters, the God of glory thunders.
(Psalm 29:3)

Psalm 29 is noted as a hymn of David. Much of David's life was spent outdoors in the midst of creation. As a shepherd boy watching the sheep, as a young soldier fleeing from King Saul, in battles against the Philistines, and later on in life, fleeing from his own son Absalom following a coup, it is not surprising that many of David's psalms including Psalm 29 seems to have been inspired by his first-hand witnessing of God's work through his creation.

In verses 3-9, 'the voice of the Lord' is mentioned seven times. That voice of the God of glory and power is manifested in acts of strength. 'The voice of the Lord' is upon the waters (v.3), powerful and majestic (v.4), breaks the cedars (v.5), leap like a calf (v.6), strikes with flashes of lightning (v.7), shakes the desert (v.8), twists the oaks and strips the forests bare (v.9). The voice of the Lord is heard and seen in all creation. Watch and Listen to the voice of the Lord. The people of God do not need to fear the powerful voice of the Lord. On the contrary, they see his power and take comfort that he is their God. The power of God is behind his people, not against them.

The same powerful voice of the Lord broke the silence of the first Christmas nights with a multitude of angelic hosts praising, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth, goodwill toward men!" (Luke 2:14). What a glorious, holy and powerful night!

In the Gospel of Mark, the voice of the Lord spoke, "Peace, be still" and the raging storm and thunderous storm subsided immediately. The disciples said to one another, "What sort of man is this (Jesus)? Even the wind and the sea obey him" (Mark 4:37-41). We are invigorated when we sing this familiar chorus, "Are you discouraged and are you blue? Are clouds obscuring the sun from view? Keep trusting Jesus though storms assail. You have his promise, he will not fail! It's always darkest before the dawn. Don't be discouraged but carry on. He'll not forsake you, the sun will break through. It's always darkest before the dawn."

We worship a God who is Lord of the storms, and, therefore, Lord of life. This God exercises power over life's turbulent aspects. This strong and blessed God offers the attributes of strength and blessing to the people. Our response naturally is, "Glory to God" and we worship him!

Ponder

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder, consider all the worlds thy hands have made. I see the stars. I hear the mighty thunder thy power throughout the universe displayed. Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to thee - how great thou art! How great thou art!" (*Hymn: "How Great Thou Art," a Swedish traditional melody and a poem written by Carl Gustav Boberg. 1859–1940.*)

Promise

The Lord gives strength to his people; the Lord blesses his people with peace (Psalm 29:11).

Prayer

May this eternal truth be always in our hearts that the God who breathed this world into being, placed stars into the heavens and designed a butterfly's wing, is the God who entrusted his Son to the care of ordinary people, became vulnerable that we might know how strong is the wonder of Love. A mystery so deep it is impossible to grasp. A mystery so beautiful it is impossible to ignore. Amen. (*Source: John Birch, 2016. Faith and Worship*)



Article by Mr Tan Joon Chee is a Lay Reader and People's Warden at St Paul's Church, Petaling Jaya.

Day 26 – Psalm 30:1-12

A NEW HEART – FROM PRIDE TO HUMILITY

When I felt secure, I said ‘I shall never be shaken.’
(Psalm 30:6)

Psalm 30 opens and closes on a note of thanksgiving. The emphasis is on praise to the Lord for rescuing David from a dangerous and difficult situation that included sickness (v.2), near death (vs.3,9), God’s anger (v.5), weeping (vs.5,11) and emotional turmoil (v.7).

David experienced three problems: (a) the sinking mire beneath him; (b) the enemies around him who wanted him dead; and (c) the distress within him. And God delivered him from all three! Because of his disobedience, David was in this adverse situation but the Lord lifted him up. David’s foes would have been glad to see him dead. It was David’s pride that brought the plague to the land (2 Samuel 24:10,14). And he felt the pain deeply – his convicted conscience and broken heart could have killed him. But God heard his pleas and brought him from death to life. For David, this was the dawning of a new day after a painful time of suffering in darkness. Each morning God’s mercies are new (Lamentations 3:22-23) and his help often arrives in the morning.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ brought the dawning of a new day for all who trust in him (Matthew 28:1). Weeping comes as a guest, but God’s gracious favour is with us for a lifetime (2 Corinthians 4). As Jesus explained to his disciples, God doesn’t replace sorrow with joy, he transforms sorrow into joy (John 16:20-22).

It was David’s pride that made the Lord chastened him (vs.6-10). Pride is an attitude that all people face constantly (Deuteronomy 8). Prosperity without humility can lead to adversity. David’s mountain (kingdom) seemed strong, but the Lord showed David how weak he was. Knowing he had sinned, David cried out to the Lord for mercy and even debated with him.

David was a great king with a strong kingdom but he was only one breath away from the grave. When he humbled himself and confessed his sin, the Lord mercifully forgave him and restored him. Once David knew he was forgiven and accepted, he moved from funeral to feast. He took off the sackcloth of sadness and put on the garment of gladness. In Scripture, a dramatic alteration of one's life was often marked by a change in clothing (Luke 15:22). David was singing to the Lord from the depths of his heart. What a difference! We too have a lifetime of grace to prepare us for an eternity in glory.

And so we preach the good news of God's mercy while honouring the reality of spiritual bleakness. We acclaim God both in times of joy and sadness; for we testify to an incarnate Lord who struggled with temptation in the desert and cried out in despair on the Cross.

(Reference: The Wiersbe Bible Commentary, Old Testament, Warren W. Wiersbe, David C. Cook publishers, 2007)

Ponder

How are we tempted with pride? When we feel we are secure in our position, prosperity or health think of how we are to reflect Jesus' words, "for even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mk. 10:45).

Promise

O Lord my God, I called to you for help and you healed me (Psalm 30:2)

Prayer

Father God, may I always remember that all blessings come from you and I am here to serve you and others for the extension of your Kingdom here on earth.



Article by Mr Jaccob Thomas, a Lay Reader of Peace Community Centre, Bukit Jalil, Kuala Lumpur.

Day 27 – Psalm 31:1-24

COPING IN A WORLD OF RAPID CHANGE

Into your hands I commit my spirit; deliver me, Lord, my faithful God.
(Psalm 31:6)

In times of trouble, who do you seek for help? In time of difficulties who do you turn to?

Most people will first try to solve their problems themselves. Some would seek help from friends or relatives. But sometimes there is no one we can turn to. And perhaps the most painful experience would be to turn to a wrong person who later on betrays you. Also, when we are in trouble, we are tempted to use human ways to solve our problems and tend to turn away from God's truth.

Psalm 31 is believed to be written by David when King Saul sought to kill him. He was facing physical illness and even betrayed by close friends. In times of trouble David prayed that God will set him free from his enemy's trap and able to walk on 'spacious space' (v.8).

In those years of escaping attacks from his enemies, David could have developed physical illness and became weak. He was in distress. His eyes grew weak with sorrow. His body and soul were with grief. Due to the afflictions, his life was consumed by anguish and his strength failed and became weak (vs.9-10).

Most vulnerably, instead of stretching their helping hands many of David's friends deserted him (v.11). He was forgotten by his peers as though he was dead, like a broken pottery (v.12). Some even plotted to betray and kill him (v.13).

Even though David was in trouble, he had full confidence in God. Besides praying to God for protection, David praised and professed his confidence in the Lord. He took refuge in God (v.1). As a sign of trust, he committed his spirit unto him (vs.5,14). He believed that the Lord will truly hear his prayers and come to his rescue (v.2). In contrast, some people trust in their worthless idols (v.6).

Finally, David challenges the faithful to love the Lord and be strong (vs.23,24). This is like a conclusion for this psalm: “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9).

Like Psalm 22, this psalm was prayed by Jesus. While he was hung on the cross shortly before his death, Jesus prayed, “Into your hands I commit my spirit” (v.5a, cf. Luke 23:46). Stephen the first Christian martyr said a similar prayer at his last breath, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” (Acts 7:59).

From Psalm 31, we learned to surrender ourselves totally unto God’s guidance and protection in whatever circumstances.

Ponder

What would you do when facing with difficult time such as anguish and groaning? Why not refocus on God’s protection instead of the difficulties you face?

Promise

God’s goodness is stored up for those who fear him (Psalm 31:19)

Prayer

Father, thank you for preserving me from harm. Help me to refocus on your promises instead of the difficulties I am facing. Amen.



Article by the Reverend David W. W. Wong, pastor of a Chinese Anglican Church in Granville, New South Wales, Australia.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF FORGIVENESS

Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.
(Psalm 32:1)

In this psalm of David, his great anguish caused by guilt over grievous sin is palpable. We see the physical and psychological effects of unconfessed sin (vs.3-4). All believers would have or ought to have experienced this feeling of guilt and condemnation regarding sin. We need to feel the burden and heaviness of sin to fully appreciate the gift of God's forgiveness.

The blessings of divine forgiveness are immeasurable to a repentant sinner who has borne the guilt of sin (vs.1-2). His sins are covered by the blood of the Lamb. There is no greater blessing for a Christian than to be forgiven and to not have his sins counted against him. God, in his mercy, credits righteousness to those who believe and trust in his saving grace. In Psalm 103:12, the psalmist describes the greatness of God's removal of our sins – "...as far as the east is from the west,...". To receive the great blessings of forgiveness we must first acknowledge and confess our sins (vs.5-6). So often, we tend to ignore sins that we consider as just a part of human nature or human weaknesses. We make excuses for our sins and shortcomings and even expect God to overlook them too. We ought to view sin as God sees it – any thought, word or deed that falls short of his absolute standards. The closer our walk with God, the more sensitized we are to sin and we are able to see sin from his perspective. God loves his children and wants to forgive and reconcile us to himself. He does not write us off, no matter how 'bad' we have been, just like the father in the parable of the Prodigal Son. But like the prodigal son, we must take the first step – confess, accept responsibility and forsake the sin. Then we can rest in the promise that 'he is faithful and just to forgive all our sins.....' (1 John 1:9). In Isaiah 1:18 God says "Come now, let us settle the matter. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow;...". The Lord is close unto them that are of a broken heart (Psalm 34:18). When our conscience accuses us and when our peace is disturbed, turn to God without delay. Instead of running

away, we can turn to him as our refuge. He will lead us through trials and temptations and grant us his protection (vs.6-7). What a blessing to have God as our deliverer and refuge.

God has also promised to be our teacher and counsellor and to keep watch over his children (vs.8-9). He teaches us through his word, i.e., the scriptures. Thus, studying and meditating on the word of God is what we ought to do diligently if we desire the blessing of having God as our refuge. Let us be wise and equip ourselves with spiritual knowledge.

Having experienced great sorrows and then forgiveness, the psalmist is able to attest to God's unfailing love which encompasses the person who trusts in him (v. 10). He has found joy in God's grace and mercy. We who have been forgiven and declared righteous are called to rejoice in the Lord (v.11). This is our personal testimony of the blessedness of forgiveness. May we be able to tell what we have received so that others will, by the grace of God experience his mercy and forgiveness too.

Ref: (i) Bible.org, Stephen J. Cole and (ii) Annotated Study Bible, KJV

Ponder

Do we come to God in confession daily? Do we forgive others? How do we encourage one another to walk in obedience so that we can enjoy God's favour?

Promise

So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed (John 8:36 NIV).

Prayer

Lord, give us a repentant heart and forgive us our sins as we forgive others. Thank you for your promise to cleanse us and grant us the joy of your salvation. Amen.



Article by Rachael Edmonds-Joseph, wife of David Joseph, Diocesan Secretary.

Day 29 – Psalm 33

REJOICE IN THE LORD WHO LOOKS ON US

Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord,
the people he chose for his inheritance.
From heaven the Lord looks down and sees all mankind.
(Psalm 33:12-13)

The psalmist begins by telling us to praise God with joyful, loud and yet, skilful singing accompanied by instruments and with new songs (vs.1-3). For young people, hymns and choruses are new songs for them!

Why do we praise the Lord?

Firstly, the Lord is faithful and true. He is full of love for the world especially if there is justice and righteousness (vs.4-5). Matthew Henry comments on verse 5, “What a pity it is that this earth, which is so full of God’s goodness, should be so empty of his praises, and that of the multitudes that live upon his bounty there are so few that live to his glory!” I hope that cannot be said of us.”

We praise him for his greatness. By his word, he created the heavens and the stars, the oceans and all the earth. All our lives depend on him (vs.6-9).

Throughout history, the Lord’s purposes remained firm in spite of the actions made by many nations which were contrary to the plans of God (vs.10-11).

However, the nation who is faithful to the Lord will be chosen as his people. He continues to look down upon all mankind and considers all their actions and attitudes (vs.12-15).

Some world leaders are proud of their own military strength, economic wealth and political power but all these will not save them if they go against the purposes of the Lord (vs.16-17). God does not work through man’s strength or schemes.

Many of God's people have been persecuted by such wicked leaders and made to suffer till the point of starvation and death. Even in our country, Christians are facing many threats to our faith and practices. As with other citizens, we are anxious about the challenges faced by our nation: the economic problems, social injustices rampant corruption, abuses of political power and religious tensions.

Yet, we can still put our faith in the Lord who continues to look upon us with the love that does not fail (vs.18-19). The Hebrew word “hesed” in verses 5, 18 and 22 means steadfast love.

That is why we can put all our hope and trust in the Lord and in spite of our difficulties, we can still rejoice for his steadfast love which never fails (vs.20-22).

Ponder

Think of the ways we can promote justice and righteousness among all the peoples, especially those who are marginalised.

Promise

But the plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations (Psalm 33:11).

Prayer

May your unfailing love be with us, Lord, even as we put our hope in you (Psalm 33:22).



Article by Lay Canon Emeritus Dr Teoh Soong Kee, a Consultant Obstetrician & Gynaecologist in Ipoh. Canon Teoh worships at St Peter's Church, Ipoh.

Day 30 – Psalm 34

DELIVERANCE FROM TROUBLE

I sought the Lord, and he answered me, and delivered me from all my fears.
(Psalm 34:4)

We live in a world of uncertainty and fear. In our own country, Malaysia, our ringgit has devalued so much that even our daily groceries needs are affected adversely. Events that are happening in our country like the recent yellow shirt and red shirt rallies, the *hudud* bill controversies (enhancing the *Shariah* courts' powers), the ongoing 1MDB scandal and many other issues bring about much tension and apprehension. Whether we like it or not, we are affected in one way or another. As believers, to whom do we go in times of uncertainty and uneasiness?

Psalm 34 shows us how to face difficult circumstances. In the passage, David openly recalled his own pain and sorrow and how he had to feign madness and being driven away by an enemy king (1 Samuel 21:10-15). Yet out of this brokenness, pain and fear, which he endured with the hostility from those who sought his life, David was able to declare, "I sought the Lord, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed" (v.4). What a heart-warming testimony! We too should be following the footsteps of David 'who sought the Lord' for deliverance in times of troubles.

David further testified that 'the angel of the Lord encamps' (v.7) around those who sought the Lord. He will deliver them from all fears and save them despite troubles. Furthermore, those who seek and take refuge in the Lord will lack nothing (v.9). They are called 'blessed' (v.8) and the Lord invites them to 'taste and see' his goodness (v.8). Believers will be happy. They will not go hungry and most important of all, they will not be condemned. The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing (v.10).

Like David, let us then 'fear the Lord' (v.9) and 'turn from evil and do good' (v.14). Seek peace and pursue it (v.14). Let us continue to bless the Lord. Let us magnify and exalt his holy name for as we continue to boast in the Lord, and as our mouth

continuously praise him, he will redeem us. He will keep our tongue away from evil and our lips from speaking deceit. Be assured of this one thing – in whatever circumstances you are in, ‘the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are attentive to their cry’ (v.15). God is good all the time; and all the time, God is good!

Ponder

As we ponder on our past, let us examine to see if we have been going to God’s creation for solutions during times of troubles and fear, or have we been going to our Creator God for comfort and relief?

Promise

The Lord redeems the life of his servants; none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned (Psalm 34:22).

Prayer

Gracious Father, we thank you for your words as a timely reminder to us to come to you in prayers in times of uncertainty, uneasiness and fear. Thank you for the promise that you will hear us when we seek you with a contrite heart. Amen.



Article by the Reverend David Low, Priest at St Mark’s Church, Seremban.

Day 31 – Psalm 35

PRAYING FOR ENEMIES

Then my soul will rejoice in the Lord and delight in his salvation.
(Psalm 35:9)

This is a difficult Psalm, but I am grateful to have been given the challenge to think about it with you under the title, “Praying for Enemies”. It relates closely to our present time. How do we pray for those we see as enemies to our nation, culture, values, faith, peace or even to our very lives? We may be taking a world view, but there are many times when our ‘enemies’ are close and personal; people who may have hurt us by word or deed. They may be work colleagues, relations or even amongst the church family. How does this psalm help us to pray for enemies?

There is a structure to this long psalm.

In verses 1 - 3 we find an initial appeal to God to contend against his enemies. The Psalmist, King David, is picturing God as a warrior king and is calling on him to take up arms to fight for him (v.1b).

This section ends with a creedal statement. God is saying to the psalmist, “I Am Your Salvation”. We have the beginning of a prayer. “God, whatever ill happens to me, I will trust in you, my Saviour.”

Three sections follow: verses 4 – 10, 11 – 18, 19 – 28, each with a description of the wrongs that David perceives to have been done to him. The Psalmist cries for help from God (seen now as divine judge). Each one ends with a vow of praise to God. It is these endings I want to concentrate on as sources for prayer.

Look first at verses 9 – 10. Think about the central exclamation, “Who is like you, O Lord?” (v.10) and about the words that lead up to them (v.9) ‘rejoice in the Lord and delight in his salvation’. Then look at the practical outcome he wants to see. The psalmist is not thinking only of himself but of the weak, the poor and needy (v.10). The prayer for enemies has to be inclusive of all who are suffering due to war or for other reasons.

The second section (vs.10–18) ends with a different form of praise. It is a promise to share his thanks and praise of God's goodness with others. Despite the length of his persecution as summed up in verse 17, he will maintain his faith, and witness to it even amongst crowds of people (v.18b).

The third section (vs.19–28) ends with a prayer of praise after victory. He is sharing his joy and gladness with others. He is witnessing to the very nature of God, 'who delights in the well-being of his people' (v.27b).

But I think there is something to add to a prayer for enemies, and that is the New Testament record of Jesus' prayers of forgiveness. It is central in the Lord's Prayer "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us" (Luke 11:4). It is one of the seven words of Jesus from the Cross, "Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

Ponder

What does it mean for us to, "love our enemies and do good to those who hate us"?

Promise

With God's help, try hard to get to know and to understand those we see as enemies.

Prayer

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us (Luke 11:4).



Article by the Reverend Ann Bucknall, one of the pioneer lecturers of Seminari Theoloji Malaysia. She now resides in Lichfield, England.

THE LOVE THAT IS LIGHT

In your light, we see light.
(Psalm 36:9)

Recently my wife and I retired and moved across the country and into a new condominium so that we could be close to our children and grandchildren. Among the improvements we made to our new home was to upgrade the electrical system and improve the lighting. We added fixtures in corridors and rooms that had been dark before. Two things happened. First, when light was splashed across a wall that had been in shadow, we could see the imperfections and cracks in the plaster and paint that had been hidden before. More work! But much to our delight, second, the added light also made the whole home come alive in a new way. We saw things we had not seen before. The new light invited us to put up pictures on the walls that remind us of many beautiful moments in our life. The lights helped us to see paintings made by friends with new clarity. The new lights in the dining room, living room and kitchen nurtured hospitality and will help build new friendships in our new community.

In Lent, as we stand at the foot of the cross, we see the one who is the Light of the world, being crucified against a darkening background. It is not only the sky that is dark, but the spiritual landscape is darkened by the crushing realities of betrayal, violence, injustice and all the sinful brokenness of the world. All seems lost and hopeless. Love and Light seem to have been defeated by wickedness and darkness. But as John proclaims, “the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it” (John 1:5).

In a profound little phrase in Psalm 36:9, we are invited to meditate on light and seeing. “In your light, we see light.” What might this mean? This phrase comes at the climax of the second section of the psalm (vs.5-9) that is a lovely, poetic exposition of God’s love. The first section of the psalm (vs.1-4) has dealt with the wicked. They don’t fear God, they have a capacity for deluding themselves (don’t we all), you can’t believe what they say, and they do bad things. A third section (vs.10-12) is a petition that those who know God might continue to experience his

love. The psalmist contrasts the ways of the wicked, not with the ways of the righteous as often happens in Israel's wisdom literature, but with the amazing love of God which he calls God's "steadfast love." The activity of the wicked pales in comparison to the overwhelmingly strong, wise, creative, light filled and life giving love of God. The steadfast love of God is an important concept in scripture. It is a love that will not be turned aside. It overcomes all obstacles. It endures. Even if we are unfaithful and run away (Jonah, Gomer, the prodigal son), God will go after us (Hosea) and joyfully welcome us home. In a series of lyrical phrases, the psalmist describes this steadfast love as being as strong as the mountains, as deep and unfathomable as the ocean and reaching up to the clouds of heaven. Animals and humans are gathered up into this love that is a refuge. Looking forward to all the meals in the Gospels and the abundant banquet of the Kingdom, God's steadfast love here spreads a feast for all people with rich food and drink from "the river of your delights." It is the fountain of life. All of this beauty, all of this power, all of this steadfast love...is Light. With the illumination of this Love that is Light, we "see", we gain insight, we are enlightened. The evil of the world is seen in the context of God's vast eternal love. The cross is seen in the light of the resurrection. The story of your life is seen in the light of God's great redemptive story. When we "see" what God is doing to bring justice, peace and forgiveness into the world, we "see" what light filled actions we must do to make it a reality.

Ponder

How can I let God's steadfast love be expressed in my actions?

Promise

You save humans and animals alike, O Lord (Psalm 36:6).

Prayer

O Lord, open my eyes that I may see your Light and walk in your paths.



Article by retired Archdeacon Gordon Finney, former lecturer at Seminari Theoloji Malaysia. With Adele, his wife, they reside in Canada.

Day 33 – Psalm 37

THE DESIRES OF YOUR HEART

Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.
(Psalm 37:4)

What are the desires of your heart? What do you long for? What are those long-term dreams or unanswered prayers that you would love to see fulfilled?

This psalm of David says that God will give us the desires of our heart. But there is a condition – we are to ‘delight’ ourselves in the Lord.

Do you enjoy God? Do you delight at spending time with him? This is a question that I don’t often ask myself. Do I fear God and am I in awe of him? Yes. Do I doubt his goodness, faithfulness or power? No. Do I believe that he saves, sets me free and has a purpose for my life? Yes. But do I delight in him?

The shorter Westminster Confession says that the chief purpose of humankind is to “worship God and *enjoy* him forever”. So how do we enjoy God and delight in him?

Firstly, spend time alone with Jesus this Lent. The more we get to know him the more we will delight in him. There is no substitution for spending time with Jesus in prayer and in reading the word every day. This devotion series is designed to help us do that.

Secondly, as we ponder the cross this Lent, let Jesus’ joy become our joy. In Hebrews 12:2 it says of Jesus, ‘for the joy set before him’ he ‘endured the cross’. The freedom and forgiveness that the cross brings you and me was a source of great joy for Jesus and should be a source of delight for us too.

Thirdly, ask the Holy Spirit to grow the fruit of joy in us. As Christians we can sometimes be a little too serious. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit, intensity is not. Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with joy today. Laugh more. Children laugh, on average, 150 times a day. Adults laugh, on average, 6 times a day. Jesus tells us to be more like children. Smile at strangers. A smile costs nothing but it is priceless.

As we spend more time with Jesus and as we begin to delight ourselves in him, we find something else happens. His desires increasingly become our desires. Our wills begin to align with his will. In the Lord's Prayer we pray, 'Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven'. As we delight ourselves in him he gives us the desires of our heart, not as the answer to self-centred prayers but as an echo of the Father's will now reflected in our own hearts. To delight ourselves in the Lord is to submit joyfully to God's plans and purposes for our lives.

God loves you. He has a plan for your life. You are not destined to a life half lived. Your life has significance within his salvation plan for the world. But it all begins by spending time with Jesus, delighting ourselves in him and letting our will begin to reflect his.

As we pray that ancient prayer of the church, "Come, Holy Spirit", we can expect to experience that which C.S. Lewis described as being "surprised by joy".

Ponder

What are the desires of your heart?

Promise

Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Prayer

Come Holy Spirit, please fill me with joy today!



Article by the Reverend Miles Toulmin, Pastor of Holy Trinity Bukit Bintang, Kuala Lumpur. Miles is also the Executive Director of Alpha Asia Pacific. With his wife Sarah, and three children. They came to Malaysia in August 2014.

Day 34 – Psalm 38

PRAYER IN TIME OF CHASTENING

O Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath.
(Psalm 38:1)

Some experiences in life bring about pain, be it physical, mental, emotional or spiritual pain. David in Psalm 38 was experiencing all of it. He was hurting physically (v.3), emotionally (v.4), mentally (v.6) and spiritually (v.15). What caused David's pain? According to David, it was himself and his sin.

David had an ongoing adulterous affair with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, a soldier away on duty in the defence of the King and his country. In order to keep secret from Uriah that his wife Bathsheba was pregnant (2 Samuel 11:5), David had to get rid of her husband permanently. Through David's manipulative and evil instruction, Uriah was - killed in battle (2 Samuel 11:14-17). The Lord confronted and rebuked David's shameful and cruel act. David had ordered a loyal soldier to be killed ('murdered') so that he could continue with his adulterous affair with Bathsheba, now a widow. His lust after a married woman and his manipulation could not be kept from the Lord. The Lord rebuked him. David faced the repercussion of his sin with great physical, mental, psychological and spiritual pain. In repentance, David admitted and humbly confessed his heinous act and beseeched the Lord to mercifully extend to him grace rather than continued wrath. He cried, "I have done bad things. My sin is always a trouble to me" (v.18). David took responsibility for his pain. As the King, David could have placed Prophet Nathan in prison for "false allegations," or put the blame of Uriah's death on his commanding General. No. David regretted, "I am bowed down and brought very low; all day long I go about mourning" (v.6) and confessed his sin (See Psalm 51). Psalm 38 ends on a hopeful note, "O Lord, do not forsake me; be not far from me, O my God. Come quickly to help me, O Lord my Saviour" (vs. 21-22). It began with pain but ended with hope because in the Lord, there is mercy and forgiveness.

Today, we know that God's mercy and love have a name and his name is Jesus. David admitted his sin, 'my iniquities,' and 'my wounds are foul and festering because of my foolishness' (vs.4-5). God promises us that he will

cover our sins through the blood of Jesus Christ. In fact, the Hebrew word for “cover” is the same word that describes what happened to the Egyptians who were pursuing the Israelites when the Red Sea came crashing down on them. It covered them. It destroyed them and that is what Jesus’ blood does to our sins - past, present and future. When we repent of our sins and turn to Christ, he washes away our sins. Without the cross we are trapped in our sins and there is no hope. But through the love of God demonstrated on the cross of Calvary, we are forgiven and our sins are wiped out completely! Hallelujah!

Ponder

Puritan Stephen Charnock puts it this way, “(our sins caused the death of Christ) and it was a death which the justice of God required, and at the sight of it that justice was so calmed, that sharp revenging sword drops out of its hand. God has smelled, in the death of Christ, so sweet a Saviour that has fully pleased him. He can now pardon the sins of believers with the glory of his righteousness, as well as of his grace. He can now legally justify a repenting sinner.” That is what he did for David and that is what he does for us. To God be the glory!

Promise

O Lord, my salvation, make haste to help me. (Psalm 38:22) O God, make speed to save us. (*Anglican, Matins / Evensong*)

Prayer

Lord, we turn to you and acknowledge our sins. Forgive us. We truly repent. Thank you that you give us grace. In Jesus’ name. Amen.



Article by the Venerable Eddie Ong, Vicar of St Gabriel's Church, Kuala Lumpur and Archdeacon of the Upper Central Archdeaconry. He is also a member of the Provincial Synod.

A CRY TO GOD FOR HELP TO KNOW LIFE'S TRUE MEANING

O Lord, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days;
let me know how fleeting I am! Surely for nothing they are in
turmoil; man heaps up wealth and does not know who will gather!
And now, O Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in you.

(Psalm 39:4,6b-7 ESV)

The psalmist, King David, lying in a bed of pain, and filled with a deep consciousness of sin and helplessness, cries out, 'I was mute and silent to no avail' (v.2). He is reluctant to speak (v.1); but a fire of anguish is burning inside him (v.3). Like Job (Job 7:11), he must speak out: "O Lord, make me to know my end and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting I am" (v.4). David realizes kingly power and wealth have not given him security and happiness. "Man heaps up wealth and does not know who will gather" (v.6). Love of wealth will never satisfy (Ecclesiastes 5:10). The psalmist asks God to show him the meaning of his life, 'you have made my days a few handbreadths: my lifetime is as nothing before you. (v.5). In the reality of eternity our lives are fleeting. Preoccupation with wealth and power separates us from what is lasting and eternal. The psalmist, in repentance, cries out for mercy and forgiveness: "And now Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in you. Deliver me from all my transgressions" (vs.7-8). He has sinned and experiences the pain of God's discipline (v.11).

Jesus saw our human preoccupation with earthly treasure as the source of our suffering and downfall. He warned, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy. Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven. For where your treasure is there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:19,21). Our hearts belong to God, 'for in him we live and move and have our being' (Acts 17:28). When our hearts are solely centered on the things of this world, be they earthly possessions or even the material welfare of self and family, we lose our true inheritance. Jesus reminds us that our true inheritance is the lasting peace and joy of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 25:34) and the treasures in heaven are

a life lived on earth in the footsteps of Jesus. For Jesus identified himself with the hungry the sick and the homeless. "I was hungry, you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty, you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you took me in" (Matthew 25:35).

Daily we see for ourselves the plight of the poor, the refugees and the homeless in our Malaysian towns and villages. As we open our hearts to God during this Lenten season, longing to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, the Holy Spirit will lead us into right action.

Ponder

What is Jesus saying to me during this time of Lent, as I seek to follow in his footsteps?

Promise

Our heavenly Father knows what we do sacrificially and lovingly in his name and our reward is the treasure of joy in heaven (Matthew 6:4).

Prayer

Jesus, I thank you for your invitation to follow in your footsteps of loving compassion. Help me to be humble and attentive to your word. Amen.



Article by Deaconess Datin Dulcie Abraham, a writer of several articles and books. Her passion is Christian Spirituality and the development of Asian Christian women's ministry. She attends St Mary's Cathedral, Kuala Lumpur.

Day 36 – Psalm 40

A REASON TO REJOICE

He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire;
He set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.
(Psalm 40:2)

Psalm 40 was written by King David while he was an outlaw, fleeing from King Saul. He speaks of how he was marvellously rescued from trouble.

David referred to the terrible trouble he was in as a “pit”. It clearly expresses how helpless he felt – down in a hole, hemmed in and around with no way of escape. He describes the pit as a “slimy pit” with “mud and mire” (v.2a). Those of us who have experienced walking on muddy pathways realize how slippery it is and how unstable we feel. We have no control over our feet. It slips, slides and goes where we do not want it to go! In a slimy pit, we would be where our feet keeps sinking and we have no firm ground to stand on. We are not just helpless, we become desperate!

But the second half of verse 2, David tells us how God lifted him out of the pit and set his feet on a rock and gave him a firm place to stand. What a wonderful relief, a firm solid rock, after that terrible feeling of sinking with no help.

And from that experience, David breaks into praise and declaration of God’s goodness (vs.3-6). The experience of being delivered from this trouble is so special that it needs a “new song” – a new expression!

He breaks into praise and declares the wonderful things that God has planned and done for him – none can compare with this God (v.5).

The psalm ends with a prayer that God will continue to deliver and protect David.

As we think of this psalm, many of us will understand how David felt. Perhaps right now, some of us are feeling that slimy pit in our lives and that there is no way of getting out. We feel we cannot rest our feet on solid ground. Everything seems to be sinking down and down.

Let us turn to God and wait patiently, like David did, and God will lift us up and set our feet on solid ground. Then, like David, we will have a “new song” to declare God’s goodness to us.

Ponder

Many, Lord my God, are the wonders you have done, the things you planned for us. None can compare with you; were I to speak and tell of your deeds, they would be too many to declare (Psalm 40:5).

Think back of the “wonders” in your life that God has done which has astounded and even confounded you. Think of how your life has taken an unexpected turn simply because of God’s grace. Ponder and praise God for it and share with others.

Promise

Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, who does not look to the proud, to those who turn aside to false gods (Psalm 40:4)

When we turn to God and trust him alone to help us – not the powerful (proud) or other gods – we are blessed.

Prayer

Father, like David, I am poor and needy. You are my help and my deliverer. You are my God, do not delay (v.17) Thank you for all you have done for me. Continue to be my God and Deliverer. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.



Article by Ms A Annamaney, a member of St Paul’s Church, Petaling Jaya, is the Chairperson of the Diocesan Anglican Care. Annam is also the Anglican Alliance Regional Facilitator for East and South-East Asia.

Day 37 – Psalm 41

GRACE OF GOD

Blessed is he who has regard for the weak.
(Psalm 41:1)

God in his mercy does not give us what we deserve but rather in his grace gives us what we do not deserve. Jesus who died for us on the cross has pardoned us. David who had sinned against the Lord pleaded, “Have mercy on me, Lord; heal me, for I have sinned against you” (v.4) and the Lord pardoned and delivered him (vs.10-13).

In this wretched world of ours, we battle the notion of being seen as an unforgiveable sinner, the moment we fall into sins. Regrets, remorse, being let down are feelings we struggle with when we are neglected and rejected by the very society and community we live in. But Psalm 41 reminds us to have ‘regard for the poor’ (NIV) or ‘helpless people’ (God’s Word Translation) and those who graciously assist them are considered ‘blessed’ (vs.1-2).

Grace can be seen in the light of the following.

1. Grace accepts our unworthiness. Unworthy as we are, we come before the throne of grace with the assurance that God only is worthy.
2. Grace is unmerited favour. It is not deeds that save. Guilt and regrets assail us and penance follows; undoing and doing as a means of homage. We ask if we can make the wrong right, but this does not give us merit before God.
3. Grace precedes Law. A set of ‘dos’ and ‘don’ts’ are before us. We are conditioned and grow ourselves into this framework thinking, in fulfilling the law we are set aright before God. Jesus fulfils the law.
4. Grace is inherently powerful. Accomplishments and achievements are what we strive for but God seeks not your success but your faithfulness. He does not seek your ability but your availability.

The psalmist upon receiving forgiveness, learns to live with integrity. He stays repented. An ongoing battle within himself.

Augustine of Hippo reiterates, “every saint has a past and every sinner a future.” Man is a fallen and forgiven creature daily in need of God's grace.

Ponder

How do we treat others whom we consider as fallen?

Promise

Because of my integrity you uphold me and set me in your presence forever (Psalm 41:12).

Prayer

Lord, help me not to rejoice in the ill fortune of those who have wronged me. Be merciful to me a sinner.



Article by the Venerable Charles Fraser, Vicar of St Aidan's Church, Bahau and Archdeacon of Lower Central Archdeaconry

Day 38 – Psalm 43

LIGHT AND TRUTH

Send out your light and truth; let them lead me!
(Psalm 43:3)

I remember very clearly when as a teenager I began to read the Psalms, I would think that 'the writer of this Psalm is going to be in real strife with God!' The language used by the Psalmist was so forthright and confronting. I had been raised to respect my elders, a good and worthy thing to do. However, it meant that I never really learnt how to express what I was truly feeling. Like most men, I kept my feelings to myself. Very unhealthy. I had to learn that the Psalmist was not being disrespectful or rude, but he had come to know his heavenly Father as the one who created him, loves him, cares for him more than he could understand. He also knew that verbally laying out before God what was on his heart led him to think through the problem before God and discern from God's word the way forward.

Verses 1 and 2 are a cry out to God - don't you see what's happening to me? Don't you care? My desire is to love the Lord and honouring him is all of my life. However all around there are many who accuse me wrongly. I am misunderstood and vilified. What is the use! I feel depressed and completely alone. My trust has been in the Lord, why does he now appear to reject me? Why do I feel so overwhelmed and downcast?

Having so openly opened his whole heart and mind before the Lord, the Psalmist finds that he is now able to look more clearly at his situation and think more clearly about it. He realizes that he has wandered away from God and that the only true way to understand what was happening to him was 'to be led by God's light and truth' (v.3). It is only God's light and truth that can lead him to right thinking and restore his relationship with God. Remembering God's love and goodness, the joy of worshipping the Lord in the fellowship of fellow believers, a God so consistent cannot have changed.

The Psalmist now as it were talks to himself. What has been going on in my head? Why have I allowed my feelings to dictate what is happening to me? We are never

helpless victims of our emotions! There can now only be one conclusion. 'Hope in God!' He alone can save me. He alone loves and cares for me not only through this life but also in the life to come. His light and truth alone will bring me through this oppression and gloom to where 'I shall again praise him'. It's not waiting 'on' God, but placing my hope 'in' God. Looking expectantly that God will work out his plans and purposes to his glory.

Let yourself go. Our Heavenly Father's ear is always open. He never slumbers or sleeps. When we feel rejected it is not God who has rejected us. We have allowed the Devil to distort our thinking and so our feelings.

Make yourself think - How did I get into this mess? I looked for meaning and purpose in myself and others. God alone is light and truth; let him lead me!

Pull yourself together - 'Why am I cast down? Why is there turmoil within me?' Meaning and purpose can only be found in God because he alone is the only sovereign Lord. My circumstances may not change but how I view them most certainly has! "I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God" (v.5).

Ponder

Why must I walk around mourning because my enemies oppress me? (Psalm 43:2c)

Promise

Reveal your light and your faithfulness! They will lead me, they will escort me back to your holy hill, and to the place where you live. (Psalm 43:3)

Prayer

Vindicate me, O God! Fight for me against an ungodly nation! Deliver me from deceitful and evil men! For you are the God who shelters me (Psalm 43:1,2a).



Article by the Right Reverend Peter Tasker, the Archbishop of Sydney's Bishop for International Relations. Bishop Tasker was once the Vicar of St George's Church, Penang.

Day 39 – Psalm 44

BECAUSE OF YOUR UNFAILING LOVE

Rise up and help us; rescue us because of your unfailing love.
(Psalm 44:26)

It is a story often told: hundreds of years ago, when the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, God rescued them by his mighty power and brought them to a land he promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, their forefathers. He planted them in the land not because they deserved it more than others but because of his love for them and the promise he made to their forefathers (Deuteronomy 7:6-10) It is this story that the psalmist now recounts because at present, the Israelites were not only defeated in battle, they were plundered, scattered, and sold as slaves. It was a stark contrast from the victory of their battles to occupy the Promised Land. They are utterly ashamed as they are derided among the nations.

The psalmist then takes a turn in his tone as he pleads the Israelites' innocence. Their calamity cannot be due to their unfaithfulness to God. They have not worshipped other gods nor broken his commandments. Still, they were 'regarded as sheep to be slaughtered' (v.22). Has God forgotten them?

In many ways, we too can identify with the psalmist's cry for help. Our lives as Christians have not been a walk in the park. Far from it. We know of others, or we ourselves, struggle with debilitating pain, disease, or mental health problems. We have lost our loved ones to cancer, illnesses and accidents. We face relentless workload and yet find it hard to make ends meet. We contend with the world's changing values as we define our own that must line up with the Bible's teachings. Is God asleep?

In Romans 8:36, Paul quotes verse 22 of this Psalm as he assures the Christians in Rome of their hope of future glory amidst present suffering on the basis of God's love for them in Jesus; that, in this love, Christians are more than conquerors against every suffering and condemnation.

Because, unlike the psalmist, we do not recount the story of the exodus from Egypt but of Christ and the cross. Jesus Christ himself suffered rejection and humiliation,

even unto death, not for any wrong that he has done but to take our sin upon himself. His resurrection is evidence of God's unfailing love as God raised him to life, lifted us from the curse of sin, and won for us a victory that lasts forever. Amidst our cries of apparent defeat in this world, a future will come where the devil will be banished and Christ reigns on his throne. On that day, creation will be made new, and there will be no more tears, suffering, pain nor death. Till then, like the psalmist, we can call on God, trusting in his unfailing love for us.

Ponder

Just as God has shown his unfailing love to the Israelites through his rescuing them from slavery in Egypt, he has shown us his unfailing love by sending his Son, Jesus to die for our sin and reconcile us to him forever. Amidst our struggles and suffering, we can rest assured in his love as we await Christ's return.

Promise

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 8:38-39).

Prayer

Thank God for his love for us in Jesus, that he has reconciled us to himself forever and nothing can separate us from him. Ask God to help us to always trust him and in his unfailing love.



*Article by Mrs Melissa Raj, the Chairperson of the Diocesan Youth Council.
Melissa worships at St Mary's Cathedral – SMACC, Kuala Lumpur.*

Day 40 – Psalm 46

STOP, LOOK, GO!

Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth.
(Psalm 46:10)

“Be Still” in ordinary English usage means “being quiet and in a stationary position.” In the Old Testament, these two words take on a deeper meaning. The Hebrew definition is “to surrender in order to know that God is in control.” It is to let go and to trust in his saving power in history and our lives. We learn to rest in the glory of God’s providence and sufficiency (Exodus 14:4). The chapter begins and ends in affirming God as our refuge and fortress.

When was the last time you stop to listen or to be still? A simple test – be still for a moment and try to hear your own heart beat? We live in a really hurried world where busyness cries from every corner. At all times, something must happen otherwise it is odd. No wonder some even talk and walk in their sleep! Our mind is seldom at rest. We have something like 50,000 thoughts a day or one thought every 1.7 second. That is a lot of thoughts! Many of this thought are not pleasant. Think of one at this moment. How about - “I’m too old, I’m too young, I am not good enough, I’m a failure, people don’t love me, the world is cruel, the church is full of”. How many of these are objectively true? It is just a thought arising from subjective negative feelings.

We need to hear an alternative voice. Jesus in calming the raging sea asked his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?” (Mark 4:40) When our thoughts are swamped by anxiety, we need to be intentionally still. I remembered a reality show “Fear Factor” where contestants are put through extreme situation. In one test, one contestant was thrashing desperately in the dark. The host managed to calm her by asking, “Is anything happening to you?” Of course not. It was her fear going wild. It is during those overwhelming moment that God want us to receive love and guidance by focusing on his objective truth. Paul

tells us to “set your minds on things above, not on earthly thing. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:2-3).

Whenever unhelpful thoughts inundate your perspective like a violent storm, let the words of Jesus be your anchor - “Peace, be still.” Silence those thoughts.

Ponder

Thoughts are our interpretation of reality, not reality itself. If we see something good, it is a reflection of our inner self. Are there any negative thoughts that you are addicted to?

Promise

My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will never be shaken (Psalm 62:1-2).

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
Your Light shines within us – let not my doubts and my darkness speak to me!
Lord Jesus Christ,
Your Light shines within us, let my heart always welcome your love!
(Taize tune: *Jesu le Christ*)



Article by the Reverend Joshua Ong, Vicar of St Paul’s Church, Petaling Jaya.

Day 41 – Psalm 47

OUR GOD REIGNS!

For the Lord Most High is awesome, the great King over all the earth.
(Psalm 47:2)

When do you doubt that God is really in charge?

As we reflect on the myriad problems both in our local society and the world at large it can be tempting to think that no one is really in control. When the daily grind is unusually heavy at work or in the home it can be tempting to wonder what's the point? What's the purpose for which we're tirelessly labouring?

Psalm 47 is a wonderful and crucial reminder for us that someone is in charge and nothing escapes his attention. The utter sovereignty of the Lord Most High was a key reason for Israel to praise him; to sing his praises (vs.1-2). They were to remember the ways in which he had delivered them from enemies far greater (v.3) and had chosen them in his grace to be his prize possession (v.4). They were to remember that he was not only their God but the God of all creation (vs.6-7). He reigns over the nations (v.8) and one day every ruler will recognise his majesty (v.10).

Today, we have even more reason to believe this than Israel did as we remember the deliverance God has granted us in his Son our Lord Jesus. To so many, the cruel cross looked like an out of control disaster; the Son of God crucified by those he came to save. And yet the bloody cross was at the heart of God's sovereign plan to exalt his Son and reconcile sinners like us to himself (Acts 2:22-24).

Through faith in Christ, who died, raised and is now exalted far above every authority, we can now be cleansed of our every wrongdoing before God and know life under his blessed reign both now and forevermore.

Jesus, having paid our penalty for sin and conquered death in his own body, declared to his disciples that “all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me, go therefore and make disciples of all nations...and behold I am with you always to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:18-20).

At times this world and our own lives may appear out of control as wickedness spreads and days grow darker. When you doubt that God is in charge and that Jesus his Son truly reigns over the nations, remember the cross where his sovereignty and majesty have been most clearly displayed.

Remember that Christ is risen so that one day all will bow and every tongue confess that he is Lord to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11) Let this truth encourage you to persevere in the service of his gospel today because brother and sisters: Our God Reigns!

Ponder

When are you most tempted to doubt that God is in control?

Promise

God reigns over the nations. God sits on his holy throne (Psalm 47:8).

Prayer

Lord, thank you that in Jesus you have become my true king in whom I am secure. Help me to look to the cross and not my circumstances so that I will trust and obey your reign both in the good times and the bad. Amen.



Article by the Reverend Tim Philips, SMACC 1 & Men's Ministry Pastor, St Mary's Cathedral, Kuala Lumpur.

Day 42 – Psalm 48

GREAT IS THE LORD AND MOST WORTHY OF PRAISE

Crime statistics are a regular topic of interest for Malaysians. The bulk of indexed crime in Malaysia is property theft; that is, having to do with property such as homes, offices, and vehicles. This has led many to install video surveillance and alarm systems, over and above their conventional grills and locks. Additionally, many opt for gated and guarded complexes with electronic access control systems. All these security measures are employed to deter property theft, and for protection from loss and harm. Yet, property theft and crime still happen. Burglars and thieves have ways to get around all our security measures. They are not afraid.

Not so the kings whom we read about in our Psalm for today. Despite joining forces and advancing together, they were terrified and trembled in fear as they approached God's city. On seeing the city of the Great King, the kings fled in terror and pain, and were utterly destroyed (vs.4-7).

So, unlike our properties, God's city, Mount Zion, is secure; and secure forever (v. 8). It is secure simply because God is in it (vs.3,8). He is the fortress, the towers, the ramparts, and the citadels. His people are assuredly safe. They dwell in his unfailing love and praise him (vs.9-10). Thus, although the Psalm portrays God's city, it is, truly, about God. The first and last verses of the Psalm leave us no doubt of that. God's people are safe and secure because of him.

Therefore, as God's people today, let us remember that we are safe and secure in him. There is no absolute assurance apart from him. God in himself is our absolute assurance. We can rest assured, God is our safety and security. This is our God, forever and ever.

Ponder

As readers of the Psalm are called to walk around the city, and consider her security (vs.12-13), this Lent, let us "walk" around the cross of Christ, and ponder the redemption and assurance God has graciously given to us. Let us meditate on his unfailing love for us shown through the sacrifice of his Son on the cross.

Promise

Because of what Christ has done on the cross, let us also look forward to Mount Zion – the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God (Hebrews 12:22), where God dwells among a great multitude of his people (Revelation 7:9, 21:3), rejoicing, worshiping and praising him.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank you that, through your Son, you have redeemed us from all sin and made us your people. We thank you also for the safety and security we have in you, and we look forward to being with you in your heavenly city. In the meantime, help us through your Spirit to dwell in your unfailing love and speak to others about you and your love for them in Christ.



Article by Mr Daniel Chai, a member of St Paul's Church, Petaling Jaya. He is also a member of the Diocesan Standing Committee.

Day 43 – Psalm 49

WE SHALL CARRY NOTHING AWAY

People who have wealth but lack understanding are like the beasts that perish.
(Psalm 49:20)

Psalm 49 is enriched with words of wisdom and instruction, having universal implications about man's final destiny based on his earthly life. Written probably during the times when society emphasized much on the power of wealth and riches, much like today. The psalmist warns of the folly and futility of wealth that is only transient in our earthly life, left behind to be enjoyed or destroyed by others upon our demise. Though it is viewed that wealth and success are signs of God's blessings for covenant obedience (Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 28), this has to be understood in the whole context of the Bible. Old Testament scriptures also reveal that prosperity was acquired by people who were powerful, greedy and even violent that ordinary people feared or envied them. The wealthy were constantly warned of its dire consequences by God through the prophets. In the New Testament, God established the new covenant in Jesus Christ focusing primarily on the spiritual 'prosperity' and not material 'prosperity.' This is very challenging to the modern man in a progressive and highly innovative era.

What man fails to understand is that earthly wealth cannot provide ultimate answers to his incessant questions for his after-life. Firstly, it cannot prolong our life on earth nor can it carry us through to eternity. A man cannot pay to God the price of his life. It is a false hope of assuming to gain God's favour with our wealth. Jesus illustrates of the rich man who filled his barn, hoping to satisfy himself for long, only to be rebuked as 'foolish' by God. Secondly, our wealth cannot follow us after life departs from this earth. Death strips us of everything except our soul. God gives us riches for the glory of his name to be shared and not for wealth to 'possess' us. Wealth as our 'master' distances God in our lives. Thirdly, wealth may create a perverted sense of godliness in us. Just like the rich young ruler whose wealth took precedence over the Cross of Christ, thereon losing the Kingdom of God. The Bible teaches that godliness with contentment is great gain (1 Timothy 6:6). Fourthly, focusing on wealth can be a devil's snare as he makes it attractive. It leads us into temptation filled with continuous dissatisfaction. Wealth gained through satanic

aspirations may defy us from doing good deeds or any good done may mislead us to self-righteousness. Many stray from the faith and struggle aimlessly through this deception, caught in the trickster's trap.

God is the Creator and Redeemer. We are called to aspire for heavenly treasures, which is to be upright in our Faith, to be rich in administering Grace, and be filled in the Spirit of truth. *Sheol*, the dark Pit, will have no power over the faithful as God has opened the gates of heaven through Christ. God has paid a ransom for us by offering Jesus, the Lamb of God as the substitutionary atonement (Mark 10:45). Christ, through his precious unblemished blood, death and resurrection has shattered the horror of *Sheol*. We are credited with the righteousness of Christ so that our sins are discharged and our souls redeemed. We pray that God will make us understand the sanctity of our God-given life, to flourish it with the knowledge and laws of God, to adorn our character with spiritual gifts and fruits, to treasure it from the perils of earthly greed, to daily enjoy the refreshing glory of the Lord, and to enrich it with the pleasing deeds for God that will all follow us into eternity.

Ponder

How much of 'heavenly treasures' am I accumulating here to be counted as worthy for redemption by the heavenly Father? (Matthew 6: 19-21)

Promise

But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, for he shall receive me (Psalm 46: 15).

Prayer

Help me and instruct me Lord to focus on the reality of eternal life and not to be indulged in the earthly treasures and pleasures of this temporal life. Amen.



Article by the Reverend Canon Emeritus David Devapitchai, Vicar, Parish of Emmanuel Church, Cheras, Kuala Lumpur.

MY SOUL THIRSTS FOR GOD

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When can I go and meet with God?

Augustine of Hippo said, “Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in thee.” People are created to glorify God, to worship him. There is a vacuum in the soul which only God can fill. This yearning to commune with God sometimes surfaces with great intensity during times of loss and grief, when God seems far, or hidden.

The Psalmist experienced a great loss, removed from the Jerusalem temple. In exile, the Psalmist expresses profound grief by crying out, “My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?” (v.2) His grief is further compounded by the taunts of his enemies; “Where is your God?” (v.3) This process reminds the Psalmist of previous times of worship and communing with God. Remembrance evoked the mind and heart of the Psalmist towards hopeful and joyful expectation in God;

Why, my soul, are you downcast?
Why so disturbed within me?

Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Saviour and my God. (v.5)

The cycle of lament is not ended but is repeated again; the Psalmist is once again broken by the very reminder of the worship and communion with God, and falls into another cycle. These cycles are made more graphic when we consider Psalm 42 and 43 as one psalm, as do many Hebrew manuscripts. We notice three cycles with the same identical words in 42:5,11 and 43:5. The recalling of our loss and expression of our grief in God’s presence - this dialogue of the soul with self and God - draws the psalmist and us, to an ever firmer grasping of our hope in God, in

On Maundy Thursday, we remember Jesus’ enacted parable and command with intent to the disciples, and us: the washing of the feet with intent to serve, and the institution of the Holy Eucharist with intent to remember, renewed and transformed,

until the Lord comes again. It is difficult to be a servant in a context of unfaithfulness, taunts and ungratefulness. But God promises his Spirit will minister to us and bring our intercession to him. Tears and laments are heaven's language of, faith, hope and love.

Ponder

What is our response to our cycles of lament triggered by personal and other forms of loss and grief?

Promise

Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Saviour and my God (v.11b).

Prayer

O Lord, help us to find you in the midst of our laments. May the light lit in our souls by our Saviour Jesus Christ strengthen us to love intentionally, abundantly and unconditionally. Amen.



Article by the Reverend Canon Dr D Steven Abbarow, Vice Principal of Seminari Theoloji Malaysia and Team Vicar of St Mark's Church, Seremban.

ABANDONED BUT NOT DEAD

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me,
far from my prayer, from the words of my cry?
(Psalm 22:2)

This Psalm begins abruptly with a disturbing scene: someone who knows and trusts God is forsaken; and he cries out to God in agony.

This is a very sad psalm until verse 21. Verses 1 and 2 tell us that David was in agony and in pain. He asked God for help. God did not answer. "You send me no peace" means, "I am still crying because you give me no help". David thinks that God has forgotten him! But David remembered that God always gave help (vs.3-5). He gave help to the fathers of Israel. This means all the Jews that lived before David. This made David sad. God always gave help to his people. Why did God not give help him? So the psalm begins, "Why have you left me by myself?"

Sitting in front of the stone where Jesus knelt at the Garden of Gethsemane was nothing short of coming in touch with the agony and pain that Jesus went through that most difficult part of his life. The words of King David were the words of the King of all nations. The agony and the pain of doing the will of God was too much to bear, with tears of blood as like a wine press crushing out the juice of the grape.

The feeling of being abandoned produced hopelessness. It was like going down to the bottomless pit. There is no way out and what was left was blinded by tears and frustration. The pain is so over-bearing that we sometimes focus on the pain rather than to see the bigger picture. Jesus pointed out that all of the events that were happening around him as he hung there on the cross were foretold in scriptures and we find it here in this Psalm. It was with the same feeling of hopelessness that David felt that Jesus spoke while on the cross, "My God, my God why have thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46) The Psalm then further goes on to accurately describe the crucifixion scene by saying: 'all those that see me mock me' (v.7)

If being forsaken means to be abandoned, rejected, despised, how could Jesus say, "Why have you forsaken me?" when he knew that he would be raised from

the dead, and therefore, not ultimately forsaken? The answer, I think, lies in understanding to some degree the eternal relationship that has existed between God the Father and God the Son. Understanding this relationship and the cry of Jesus from the cross leads to a shocking idea about the experience of Jesus on the cross.

Though we may feel forsaken, we are not forsaken any more than Jesus was forsaken. God did not forsake Jesus nor does God forsake us. The presence of sin in our lives makes us feel like we are forsaken, like God has abandoned us, forgotten us, or left us alone to suffer and die, when in fact God is right there all the time, holding us, loving us, and crying with us in our pain. It also helps us understand that on the cross, Jesus understood the feeling of being a sinful human being. It is for this reason that we can trust his promise that he will never forsake us (Hebrews 13:5).

Ponder

How deep is your relationship with Jesus? Has it matured and grown to weather the storms of life?

Promise

Let the coming generation be told of the Lord that they may proclaim to a people yet to be born the justice he has shown (Psalm 22:31-32).

Prayer

Lord, you didn't deserve what you experienced on the cross. You didn't, but I did. I deserve the cross. I earned the rejection you received. But in your unfathomable love, you took my place and gave me your place. With very grateful hearts! Amen.



Article by the Right Reverend Charles Samuel, Area Bishop of Northern Peninsula, Diocese of West Malaysia. Bishop Charles is also the Vicar of St George's Church, Penang.

I WANT TO LIVE FOREVER

You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence,
with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

Psalm 16:11 (NIV)

One of my all-time favourite rock bands was “Queen,” featuring the flamboyant lead singer, Freddie Mercury. He sang the theme song for the movie, “Highlander” entitled “I want to live forever.” Though Mercury himself died of complications with HIV/AIDS at the age of 45, he did share that if given the chance, he would like to live forever and entertain the world.

In some way, Psalm 16 is about living forever. Some OT scholars label Psalm 16 as the “golden psalm” because it tells of the secret of living forever. Charles Wesley utilized vs. 2, 8 and 11 as a part of his hymn, “Forth in Thy Name,” and captured the spirit of the psalm in its last line, “And closely walk with Thee to heaven.”

David presented three descriptions of the Lord and all of them may be applied to Jesus Christ today; the Lord of Life (vs.1-8), the Conqueror of Death (vs.9-10) and the Joy of Eternity (v.11.) Our focus will be on the last two as we celebrate Holy Saturday today.

When David wrote, ‘My body will rest secure,’ he was referring to the Messiah, and not to himself. Jesus is the only conqueror of death. Using Psalm 16:9-10, Peter proved that Jesus had been raised from the dead, for it is obvious that David was dead and his body had decayed in his tomb (Acts 2:22-31.) But Jesus’ body did not decay for when he rose on the third day, he had a real and substantial body. Paul too used Psalm 16:9-10 to prove the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (Acts 13:26-39.).

Doug Stanhope, an American stand-up comedian known for his cynical and controversial comedy style once asked, “If you really believe that death leads to eternal bliss, then why are you wearing a seat belt?” For many Christians, the focal point of heaven are gates of pearl, streets of gold, angels and glorified saints. We have also foolishly drawn caricatures showing white robed saints with halos and

harps, resting on little white clouds. The central glory and joy of heaven is Jesus Christ himself (Revelation 4-5.) In heaven, in our glorified bodies we will be like Jesus (Philippians 3:20-21; 1 John 3:1-3.) The joy of eternity will be far beyond any joy we have known on earth as we serve, worship and enjoy the Lord. The glories of heaven are so magnificent that John had to ransack human language to find words to describe it (Rev. 21-22.).

Ponder

What do the phrases “Conqueror of Death” and “Joy of Eternity” mean to me today in a culture that is obsessed with religious extremism, death, materialism and consumerism?

Promise

You will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay (Psalm 16:10).

Prayer

“Disturb us, O Lord when with the abundance of things we possess, we have lost our thirst for the water of life when, having fallen in love with time, we have ceased to dream of eternity and in our efforts to build a new earth, we have allowed our vision of Heaven to grow dim. Stir us, O Lord to dare more boldly, to venture into wider seas where storms show Thy mastery, where losing sight of land, we shall find the stars. In the name of Him who pushed back the horizons of our hopes and invited the brave to follow.” Amen. (*Desmond Tutu, late Archbishop Emeritus of Cape Town, South Africa.*)



Article by the Right Reverend Dr Jason Selvaraj, Area Bishop of Southern Peninsula, Diocese of West Malaysia. Bishop Jason is also the Vicar of Christ Church, Malacca.

THE LORD KNOWS THE WAY OF THE RIGHTEOUS

You are my Son; this day I have begotten you.
(Psalm 2:7)

The world is full of great human suffering mostly due to man's greediness, selfishness, power struggle, exploitation and corruption, sometimes even in the name of religion. Unfortunately, we have seen this over and over again through history. Human beings never seem to learn from such mistakes. The psalmist has repeatedly reminded us that the Sovereign God is laughing at the terrorists (v.4), rebuking the predators (v.5), reprimanding the intruders (v.9), and warning the aggressors (v.10) who are going against his Will and afflicting his creation. In fact, he has already ordained and anointed his Son to rule over the world as a Servant King. The rule of this King is firm and powerful however, it is not with coercing force rather with grace and service. The invitation to all is to draw near to him with love, trust, confidence and reverential fear (vs.11-12).

The lessons we can learn are:

- * Human beings will never ever be cleverer, wiser or stronger than the Sovereign God.
- * Without God, the ways of human beings are futile and fruitless.
- * Everything has its consequence: the aggressors will live in aggression, the terrorists will live in terror; however, the peace-makers will live in peace, the one who serves will live in joy.
- * God's way is always true and safe but narrow and challenging.
- * Seek God, serve him and yield to his way for prosperity and posterity.
- * The Lord always watches out for his children and leads those who walk in his way.
- * His Son is the King. The way to him is worship through faith, devotion and service.

Ponder

We need to ask ourselves, how much of God do we have in us. Have we been constantly seeking to adopt or implant this slogan by John the Baptist – “Christ must increase and I must decrease” in us? (John 3:30) Why not? Are we still pre-occupying ourselves with the futility of selfish and self-glorifying human’s plans and programmes? When will the Sovereign God be given a chance to lead our lives? Have we experienced the resurrection power of the Lord Jesus Christ in us? Christ is risen! Alleluia!!

Promise

Blessed are all those who put their trust in him (Psalm 2:12).

Prayer

Almighty God, we thank you for your love and grace upon us. Help us to constantly look at Jesus as the perfecter and pioneer of our faith. The whole world belongs to you, the universe too. Lead us away from the futile acts of human reasoning and planning into your presence with trust, hope and confidence. Prepare us to meet with God the Father daily in worship, God the Son Jesus Christ in service, and God the Holy Spirit in fellowship. Amen.

Collect for Easter Day

Lord of all life and power, who through the mighty resurrection of your Son overcame the old order of sin and death to make all things new in him: grant that we, being dead to sin and alive to you in Jesus Christ, may reign with him in glory; to whom with you and the Holy Spirit be praise and honour, glory and might, now and in all eternity.



Article by the Most Reverend Datuk Ng Moon Hing, Archbishop of the Province of South-east Asia and the Bishop of the Diocese of West Malaysia.