

Deliver Me - Psalm 120 **Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading**

Notes from the Sermon

This morning we begin a new series on a group of Scriptural songs called the Psalms of Ascent. If you open your Bible to Psalm 120-134 you should notice that in the heading of each of these songs it designates them as a "Psalm of Ascent." It is generally believed that this "Psalter within the Psalter" were designated this way because they were a series of songs sung by Hebrew pilgrims on their journey to Jerusalem during their travels for the festivals. Jews were required by the Law of God to visit Jerusalem three times a year for these celebrations which included the Passover, the Feast of Weeks (A.K.A. Pentecost, which is today), and the Feast of Booths. Each festival begins with a day of remembrance and is followed by a week long party. They were the celebrations, and the Hebrews were to understand that they were parties thrown by God for them, and His invitation to a table prepared by Him and to which He would attend. In other words, they were coming to meet their God and gather with His people. Each celebration retold a portion of their redemption story as a people, the story of the rescue from slavery in Egypt, His covenant with them, and their wandering in the wilderness en route to the Promised Land. Furthermore, these celebrations book-ended the Spring and Fall harvest seasons, and functioned as a sort of Thanksgiving for God's provision for their needs.

Therefore, families, extended families, and even entire villages would travel, often a multiple day trip to Jerusalem. And on the way, as they anticipated fellowship with God and the joy of His people they would sing these songs together. They were songs for the journey, songs for pilgrims on the way to Jerusalem. So let's start first by emphasizing the importance of song in the life of the Hebrew people. The Songs of Ascent are part of a larger collection of 150 songs, poems, and prayers used by the Hebrews in their worship. But most of them are set to music, to be sung together. They were the way to collectively express their emotions, doubts, joys, and fears together while also singing their faith. In song, they taught Israel (and us) how to worship and pray. For the most part, the Psalms are a vertical conversation, a lifting of our voices to God's throne, or they are an invitation to praise and pursue God together. In other words, the Psalms are direct prayers ("God, deliver me") or calls to worship ("Let us worship the LORD together"). What is so amazing about the Psalms is that they express pretty much every possible human emotion, but rather than allowing emotions to turn inward in despair or outward in rage, they teach us to pray our emotions. The Psalms come with an authentic invitation to God to lift our emotions to Him in prayer, and then trust Him with them. And when the Psalms are sung in community it validates the life struggles and joys for all of the people. What a wonderful book! We should visit it often.

Our first Psalm of Ascent is the perfect first song, because it is a prayer of desperation from someone who is far from home. Verse 5 says, "Woe to me, that I sojourn in Meshech, that I dwell in Kedar." It's really not possible to be in these cities at the same time, as one is miles north of Israel and the other miles south. But they represent the idea of living as exiles and refugees. The Psalm was probably written after the Babylonian Exile, the period of Hebrew history where they were conquered by the Babylonian Empire and all Jews were deported to Babylon to again live as indentured servants. Seventy years later the Persian Empire set them free and allowed Jews to return home, but the majority never did. Most Jews became part of the Diaspora, the Jews scattered around the world. So these cities in the Psalm represents Jews who are far from home, they are being slandered and persecuted for their faith in the True and Living God, and they are longing for home. They desire peace, but live among the violent. But their hope is to turn to Jerusalem, to journey to

the Temple, to renew their vows and have their sins atoned by sacrifice. As a prayer, this song is a simple song of deliverance. But as a Song of Ascent, it is the perfect starting place. Whether they lived in Kedar or Bethlehem (a mere seven miles away), they really were still far from home and needed to come as pilgrims to the Holy City where they would meet their God and gather with His people.

So one last point then, as with all the Psalms of Ascent, Jesus sang these songs on the way to Jerusalem for these festivals as well. He sang them as a child with his family, as an adolescent when he traveled with his family and actually got left behind in Jerusalem, and as an adult with His disciples during his journey for Passover where He would be crucified. For us as followers of Jesus, these are our songs too, but they center on the person and work of Jesus. The longings in the Psalm are real, but they meet their hope and fulfillment in Jesus who both embodies the pain of the Psalms and yet offers the true redemption longed for in the Psalm. So may we sing them with hope, trust, and joy.

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Job 15	Job 16	Job 17	Job 18	Job 19	Job 20	Job 21

Reading from this past week: Psalm 120

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Psalm 121

Family Worship

Song - *The Lion and the Lamb*

<https://youtu.be/5iuUF4LOOE?si=jsOjb9fT5SgMUB1Q>

Gospel Project

Unit: Paul became a Missionary

Story: We are part of one church

Big Picture Question: Who can be saved?

Answer: Anyone who trusts in Jesus can be forgiven of their sins and be right with God.

Scripture: Acts 13-14

New City Catechism

Question 21: What sort of Redeemer is needed to bring us back to God?

Answer: One who is truly human and also truly God.

Verse: Isaiah 9:6

Scripture

Psalm 120

- What worship song right now connects deeply with you because it connects your longings to Jesus.
- What are some ways we as believers can express the issues in Psalm 120. When might this be a good Psalm for us to pray and remember?
- Imagine Jesus singing this Psalm on the way to Jerusalem in the days before He was crucified. How is Jesus both the point of this Psalm and the hope found in the Psalm?

Prayer

*Pray for our graduates and for their next stage of life.

*Pray that our journey through these Psalms would help us live lives of pilgrims in our world.