

Our Eyes Look to the Lord our God - Psalm 123 **Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading**

Notes from the Sermon

A few years back our church used Don Whitney's book *Praying the Bible* during our May prayer emphasis. If you don't have this book, pick it up. For me, this book was a game changer for my prayer life. The core idea in this short work was not really that earth shattering. Dr. Whitney just encouraged people to shape their prayers around the Bible, and specifically the Psalms. It was a good reminder that most of these poems are actually framed as prayers, direct conversations with the Creator and Redeemer, and therefore the best way to pray is actually to recite these prayers line by line and then pause to fill in gaps with anything that came to mind.

Our Psalm this week is a perfect example. Although short, it is a faith-filled corporate prayer of lament. There are myriads of Psalms that reflect the cry of God's people from pain filled situations when life is hard, people are cruel, and circumstances are overwhelming. And this corporate lament was one sung by the people as they journeyed together to Jerusalem to encounter God's presence and seek the One who was their hope when life is hard.

The beauty of the Psalms and its prayers is found in the reality that they live in the world that really exists, the fallen broken world where life is hard, pain is real, sin is massive, and people misuse and commit injustice against others. The Bible does not try to create a utopia. Yes, there are prayers asking God to change circumstances as God's people desire a better reality. Yet, there are generations of Old Testament people who live in horrible conditions. They lift up the praises and prayers of worship and glory, yet the help in this life they so long to see never arrives. Psalms gives these and others like them in history prayers for the journey, prayers of lament to be lifted out of pain as an expression of faith in the God who rules and loves.

Psalm 123 is a real life Psalm, although it flips the script on the normal rhythm of a lament Psalm. Usually these prayer poems begin with a cry of hopelessness and pain coming from a brutal situation that has left them helpless. So they vent, they wonder where God is and why He is silent. They express their doubt, disappointment, pain, anger, frustration... Yet, the Psalm is a prayer, so they are already expressing faith in the God who is able, and who loves them. It is normally after their cries of helplessness that they then turn to God and declare their trust. Psalm 123 on the other hand begins with a cry of trust and hope. "To you I lift up my eyes, O you who are enthroned in the heavens!" In the previous song the pilgrims declared, "I lift my eyes to the mountains, where does my help come from?" This Psalm lets us see that when we see the mountains in our lives, the next thing we should do is lift our eyes higher, above the mountains and to the heavens so we can fix our gaze on the True and Living God who rules. So the Psalm begins with a strong declaration of faith. Yet, their faith has not solved all their problems, in fact, in some ways their problems are worse.

This situation for this Psalms is the shame God's people are experiencing because of the slander, derision and contempt of people. The people in the Bible live in an honor/shame culture where their identity is defined by the community. To be shamed and held in contempt is equal to having the sense of self destroyed. We say, "Sticks and stones break our bones, but words can never hurt us." Lets be honest, this is nonsense, words hurt. But in a shame culture, to be scorned in words can be equal from being cut off from one's people. So the hurt feelings spiral in to the lose of a place and the destruction of identity. This is why people who come to Jesus in Eastern and Mid-Eastern culture are in danger. Harsh words from family and community often lead to being completely cut off. So this prayer is from the person whose belief in God has led to contempt and shame. So why isn't God defending his name, sending fire from heaven, speaking out loud to shut the mouth's of the proud? This

prayer begins with trust, but ends with the situation unchanged and a people who are literally up to their neck with contempt. So they cry out to God for mercy. Mercy to endure, mercy to change their situation, mercy to keep trusting and praying.

This short prayer is a good one, and one we need to pray together. Because even if this does not reflect my emotions and need in the current moment, it does express the longings and desires of someone around us. So we sing these types of songs and pray these prayers together to offer hope when people are suffering and feel helpless. It reminds all of us that we need to lift our eyes above the mountains in life to see the God who is still King, who still rules, who is still purposeful with every detail of our lives. If He acts it will demonstrate His glory, but if He doesn't resolve the situation the way we want we can be sure that the God who rules is working for our good. So we pray the Psalms together.

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Job 36	Job 37	Job 38	Job 39	Job 40	Job 41	Job 42

Reading from this past week: Psalm 123

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Psalm 124

Family Worship

Song - *His Mercy is More*

<https://youtu.be/G-JGcVRNPRo?si=-FMc0Y-0S6TotHoP>

Gospel Project

Unit: The Church on Mission

Story: Paul and Silas started churches

Big Picture Question: What is our mission as Christians?

Answer: Our mission is to make disciples of all nations by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Scripture: Acts 15-18

New City Catechism

Question 24: Why was it necessary for Christ, the Redeemer, to die?

Answer: Christ died willingly in our place to deliver us from the power and penalty of sin and bring us back to God.

Verse: Colossians 1:21-22

Scripture

Psalm 123

- What is the Psalmist expressing when he or she speaks of God as the one “enthroned in the heavens?” Why is this important to remember when life is confusing and hard?
- What emotions do you see in the Psalm? Do you resonate with what the Psalmist is feeling? Why are Psalms like this important for us to know before we enter hard times in life?
- Is the problem resolved in this prayer? Why is it good to have a songs that trust in the Lord even if He does not immediately act as we hope He would?

Prayer

*Pray for our Women’s Ministry.

*Pray that we would lift our eyes to the One enthroned in heaven when our lives are full of pain and doubt.