

Praying With The Psalmists: A Study in the Psalms, Psalm 118,
Preached @ Harambee Church by Pastor Michael Gunn on January 4th, 2009

Intro:

As we enter into another New Year, it is helpful to reflect and be thankful to our God. For some of us, 2008 has been a very hard year, and yet, we are still summoned to be thankful. Our Psalm today is a psalm of thanksgiving and celebration, written for the movement of the believers into the temple to celebrate the Passover. They are celebrating God's deliverance from bondage, and death, and in our Psalm today we see that the author is thankful in spite of the circumstances he finds himself in.

I pray as we look into this Psalm, we meditate on the attributes of God that still give us reason to give thanks in spite of the circumstances many of us find ourselves in.

From the Head...

The Motivation For Thanksgiving (Psalm 117:1-118:4)

The motivation is simple; God's "Steadfast" enduring, faithful love he has for us (**John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:7-11**).

*"Let Israel say, □ "His steadfast love endures forever."
Let the house of Aaron say, □ "His steadfast love endures forever." □
Let those who fear the Lord say, □ "His steadfast love endures forever."*

Note that this call for praise is for "*All nations*" (**Psalm 117:1**). God is the god for everyone, and salvation is found in Him, and Him alone. There is no other God that has done what God has done for us because of His love for us. When humanity sinned against God it was enough for God to condemn us, but he hasn't. He has shown forth His holiness through the law, and then gave us His Son since it was evident that we couldn't match His holiness on our own, but are saved in the shadow of His wings.

Approaching the Temple (Psalm 118:5-18)

As we approach God, it is in our distress. We are in need of the Passover, of healing, of life in a world that brings nothing but bondage and empty promises. It shows itself great, but brings heartache in the end. After turning to human wisdom, and worldly power, we are forced by our lives circumstances to approach you with praise and thanksgiving, in spite of our distress. Many of us are shackled to being "People Pleasers" and fear what others think of us, instead of what God thinks of us. We desire to please man, rather than God, and subsequently do things that are often destructive to ourselves and those around us. Only God can set you free, and only God can truly assuage your fears and anxiety. **We approach the temple of God, placing our idols aside**, and turning to Him for salvation. **Romans 8:31** and **Hebrews 13:6** use **Psalm 118:6** to remind us that placing our trust in anything but God does not bring forth salvation from fear and death. It is for this reason that we are lovingly disciplined by the Lord, so that we can find our peace in Him (**Psalm 118:17-18**). It is in Christ that we find grace and forgiveness for our sin.

At the Temple Gates (Psalm 118:19-24)

We enter into His gates because of what he has done for us. We are made righteous by God, so that we could enjoy His presence (**Romans 5:19; 2 Corinthians 5:21**). Our joy comes from the knowledge that we have Christ as our prize, and that we are blessed with salvation. "*This is the Lord's doing!*" Verses 22-23 are quoted in the New Testament to show us that this savior is clearly the Messiah/God Jesus Christ (See **Matthew 21:42; Mark; 12:10-11; Luke 20:17; Ephesians 2:20-22; 1 Peter 2:4-8**). Christ is the fulfillment of the Passover. He is the reason for our thanksgiving! We boldly enter God's gates because of what He has done on our behalf (**Ephesians 3:11-12; Hebrews 10:19**). He is the final stone that is rejected and ultimately lifted up as the "Cornerstone," which is the stone that holds the other stones together.

Blessings From the Temple of God (Psalm 118:25-29)

In the temple of God we find final blessings and thanksgiving to Yahweh for salvation and His enduring love. Ultimately it was Christ who "*Came in the name of the Lord*" (**Matthew 21:9**). It was there that He offered Himself up as the sacrifice, and was ultimately rejected by many, even though they cried out "Hosanna" (Save us), but did not continue to look to Him for their salvation. Namely because they were looking to something other than Christ as their treasure.

...to the Heart

I pray that we see the greatness of our salvation in Christ, and do not look to other things to bring us joy. We can give God thanks no matter what our circumstances are, because he is our treasure. Jesus is our Passover, as He truly entered into Jerusalem to become a sacrifice for us, and through His death, burial, resurrection and ascension, we have victory over our sin and death. Let us rejoice and give Him thanks in 2009!!

Books for Further Study: Baker Commentary on the Old Testament, Wisdom and Psalms, Psalms Vol. 1-2, John Goldingay; Answering God: The Psalms As Tools For Prayer, Eugene Peterson; The Message of the Psalms: A theological Commentary, Walter Brueggemann, Psalms: The Prayer Book of the Bible, Dietrich Bonhoeffer; Praying the Psalms, Thomas Merton; Bread in the Wilderness, Thomas Merton, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1, Peter C. Craigie, New International Biblical Commentary, Psalms, Craig C. Broyles, The Book of Psalms, Robert Alter, Psalms Volume 1, James Montgomery Boice, A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23, Phillip Keller

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