

Israel as a Monarchy (1100 – 930 BCE)

Psalms of the Troubled Soul

Readings: *Psalm 61, 62, 64, 69*

Reflections:

- The themes of trust in God and care for the poor continue to be central to David's writing.
- Psalm 61: We see two references to meeting with God. One is on a mountain top experience like Moses on mount Horeb, “lead me to the rock that is higher than I.” The second is the image of the Tabernacle where God meets with you right where you are, “I long to dwell in your tent forever.” When we long for refuge with God we sometimes need to pull away to a mountain top retreat place to seek him. Sometimes we need to look right where we are to seek him in the day to day places where he comes to meet with us.
- Psalm 62: “Find rest, O my soul in God alone...Trust him at all times, O people, pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.” These types of very personal, intimate expressions really helped define what it means to have a personal relationship with God. Like Moses, David walks intimately with God but he takes it one step further. Through writing so many worship songs, he helps people enter into what it means to have a personal, intimate relationship with God. In a sense, Moses gave us the Law but in the period of the kings David gave us the Psalms. The Law revealed our hearts to ourselves so we could see that none of us could ever truly be without sin. The Psalms then help us express to God the need, brokenness and inner thoughts of our heart to God. All of this is wonderful preparation for the coming of Jesus when all of our sin will be dealt with, the veil between us and God is torn, and God's spirit enters into our lives to release to us true intimacy with God.
- “One thing have you spoke, two things have I heard: That you, O God are strong, and that you O Lord are loving. Surely you will reward each person according to what he has done.” This is a wonderful statement that reveals four things about God's character. First, that when God speaks, it is multi-layered. God says one thing but we find more than one thing is revealed. This will be shown to be true of prophecies which will have multiple layers of meaning. We should expect this from God in that he is infinite in all his

attributes. It makes sense that his communication to us contains such rich meaning that there is always a lot to unpack. Secondly, we discover that at his core, he is a combination of perfect love and perfect power combined. Ephesians 3:14-21 comes to mind as the New Testament expression of ultimate love and ultimate power. The key in the coming of Jesus is that this love and power is something we are to experience personally. His perfect love is to drive out our fear and make us completely secure. His perfect power is to give us confidence even in the places of our greatest weakness.

- Psalm 64: As David talks about how evil his enemies can get, we see again the emphasis on the heart. "Surely the mind and heart of a man are cunning." The righteous though are "upright in heart." So we see again that the greatest need of humanity is for an inside out heart transformation.
- Psalm 69: We see David's fear of the waters and drowning as he uses this as an image of being swept under his painful circumstances. This fear of the water was very real in their culture and helps us to understand the story of Jonah as well as the disciples out on the sea during the storm. In a way, Peter walking on the water would have had much symbolic meaning in contrast to David's psalms about being swept down to the deep, the place of death. God's concern for the poor is expressed again. "The poor will see and be glad...The Lord hears the needy and does not despise his captive people." God's heart is always to rescue, redeem and save those who are broken and desperate, poor and needy, who cry out to him. What a merciful God we serve through Jesus!