

Say it with...

Psalms

Overview

- **The aim of this sermon series is to help us engage effectively with the Psalms.** To learn to use them as a part of their prayers, and to use the full range of types of Psalm. In church services we tend to use only a small subset of the Psalms, these tend to be psalm of praise and thanks giving, but there are more examples of lament, struggle and challenge. We need to learn to make use of all of the different examples that God has given us to speak with Him!
- **The Psalms were Jesus' prayer book and Hymn Book** – they should be the same for us too. Jesus quoted the psalms more than any other Old Testament Scriptures, even in the agony of his death on the cross, he found a Psalm with words to articulate his experience (Ps22).
- The Psalms are 150 authorised ways to speak to and hear from God (135 us to him, 15 Him to us). Psalms are conversational.
- **The Psalms all start with the foundational understanding that God is sovereign, and He is faithful to His promises/Covenant, and is working out his purposes – for good.** Hence they can praise & Thank, but also ask questions of God saying “this is how things are”, “but God’s nature is like ‘That’”, and we don’t understand and are struggling to find God’s purposes in it, and we will still trust. But God, what are you going to do?
- We are OK to come to God as we are, with our Joy, hurt, anger, confusion, thankfulness – sometimes we will find an answer, sometimes we’ll just know that God is with us in whatever is going on, even as we don’t understand.
- Many of the psalms don’t ‘hold back’ and are raw, vulnerable and at times demanding of God, you certainly wouldn’t speak to the Queen like that, **so why does God say is it OK to do so with Him?**
- **I would like us to encourage people to read through the Psalms until they find their voice/heart”**
- General information on the Psalms can be found in a number of Study Bible and commentaries

On the origin of the Psalms

- Psalms was a song book, commissioned possibly by King David. It has 5 different subsections, some for temple worship/liturgy at festivals, and some for everyday use.
- We don’t know who or when many of the psalms were written, some by David, many attributed probably to David, but not knowing can be an advantage as they stand on their own value, not interpreted through the perceptions and circumstances of the author. (Our worship songs stand on their own merits, we don’t worry that “Be Bold, Be strong” was written as a slow song, for a man on death row, for 10 years it became an upbeat song of confident courage for the church). We can appreciate the Psalms innate value.

Outline different sorts of Psalms - There are 5 main different types

- **Psalms of Praise (Ps 95,100)** – worshiping God for who He is (You are great)
- **Psalms of Thanksgiving (Ps 30, 105)** – worshiping God in light of what He’s done (our response to His faithful actions)
- **Psalms calling for Help (Ps3,140)** – calling in on the sovereign and just God to get involved in situations, knowing his inclination to do so, and His power to act (Prayers for self and for the wider world)
- **Psalms of (choosing to) Trust (23,121)**– These are declarations of Trust in God that persists despite pressures; they expect that everything may not be wonderful in a person’s life all the time.
- **Psalms of Lament (13,35)** – Psalms are not all positive and uplifting, they are not all about celebration & success. But include frustration, sorrow, anger, confusion, despair too. We thought things were like “this”, but “that” has happened, and we don’t understand and are struggling to find God & his purposes in it

Resources for the Psalms

- John Goldingay’s “Psalms for everyone” Parts I & II, are easy to read, they are written as a daily devotional – Highly recommended
- Bruggeman’s “the Message of the Psalms’ is more complex, but very helpful too.