

PSALMS: A PLAYLIST FOR THE JOURNEY OF LIFE

Psalms

Speaker:
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Place:
Asian Christian Church

Introduction to the series:

- Psalms are the prayer book of the Bible
- Psalms were the prayer book of Jesus
- The “*zaburs*” (Psalms) have sustained the faith of the church in India & Pakistan. They are a big part of the rich heritage of our faith. We love singing the *zaburs*.

We want to deepen our understanding of the Psalms so that we can sing them more meaningfully; pray them more appropriately; draw strength & comfort; get guidance & instruction; deepen our confidence & faith and express our praise and thanks to God our King.

As we go through the journey of life, we can learn to live through each experience in conversation with God. The Psalms can teach us that each day and whatever highs or lows it brings is an opportunity to talk to God – to praise him, thank him, question him, confess pain or doubt or anxiety, confess sin, or express our joy or confidence. There are psalms for every sort of human experience and these psalms can deepen and enrich our walk through life.

The Psalms will teach us to live life in intimate connection and fellowship, in communion with God as we learn from using them in our worship, our prayer, our study, our work, in the midst of our daily routines... they are God’s playlist for the journey of our lives.

Through the month of January we are going to learn about the different kinds / categories of Psalms; how to read each kind and how to relate them to our life experiences. We will consider six kinds of Psalms over the course of this sermon series.

1. Psalms of Praise
2. Psalms of Lament
3. Psalms of Thanksgiving
4. Psalms of Confidence
5. Psalms of Kingship
6. Psalms of Wisdom

Today we will consider the Psalms of Praise. But before we do that we will take a look at an important feature of Hebrew poetry called Parallelism. Parallelism is a way of structuring the poem in such a way that the idea expressed in the first part is expanded upon in the second. This is usually done by simple repetition that adds an additional dimension or shade of meaning.

For example, in Psalm 103:1

Praise the Lord, O my soul
All my inmost being, praise the Lord.

Psalms of Praise are usually structured in three segments / sections / movements.

1. Call to worship (e.g. Psalm 103:1-2)
2. Reasons to worship: qualities / attributes of God especially as Creator / Redeemer (Psalm 103:3-19)
3. Affirmation of faith and/or Renewal of call to worship (Psalm 103:20-22)

Call to Worship

- We can learn from the psalmist's example to call ourselves to worship as we begin the day & remind ourselves through the day and even as we end the day to worship God. This way we invite God into every part, every moment, and every experience of our lives. We can thus begin to develop a constant consciousness of God's presence and begin to deepen and enjoy walking with him through our day.
- It also means that we should prepare ourselves properly for when we gather to worship with God's people. Come prepared, properly rested, come early, come eagerly anticipating, come seeking to participate wholeheartedly.

The Heart of Worship

What worship is not:

- Not just hearing the music I like
- Not just having an emotional experience – “Can I feel what I want to feel or come to feel?”
- Not performance
- Not about me or us, at all

Worship is about God

The heart of worship is to delight in the goodness, greatness and glory of God. It is to reflect deeply on his character & qualities and to respond in praise and adoration. Worship is to reflect on God with our mind, our heart, and our will in such a way that moves us to delight in Him (and this leads us to realize He delights in us too).

“To worship is...

...to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God,
...to feed the mind with the truth of God,
...to purge the imagination by the beauty of God,
...to open the heart to the love of God,
...to devote the will to the purpose of God.”

- William Temple

Application

1. *Read one Psalm a day.* (If you are ready for something more challenging & rewarding, you might even want to try reading through Psalms once a month by reading five Psalms each day. Pair your reading with a chapter a day from the book of Proverbs. Here is one way to do this: take today's date, say 5th, and begin by reading Psalm 5; then adding 30 to today's date, read Psalm 35 (5 + 30); adding another 30 to the previous Psalm's number, read Psalm 65 (35 + 30); and so on, adding 30 each time to the number of the previous Psalm you read until you have read five Psalms for the day.
2. *Pray through one Psalm each day.* Take time to meditate & pray through individual psalms. Learn to relate them to your life experience.
3. *Learn to study and appreciate the Psalms* – their poetry, their beauty, their truth, the way they acknowledge and invite God into every life situation & experience.
4. *Use them in personal and congregational worship* with enthusiasm and joy.