

# The Devotional Use of the Psalms

Continuing Education, Concordia Theological Seminary

St Mathew's Lutheran Church, Almena, Wisconsin

August 28 - 30, 2018

Dr. John W. Kleinig

1. Meditation on God's word with the psalms in the Early Church and in daily devotions
  - a. Meditation as deliberate recitation or chanting rather than mental reflection in the Early Church: physical, imaginative and emotional engagement
  - b. Speaking the psalm to oneself → chewing at it to digest it → memorizing it → seeking help from it
  - c. Concentration and engagement at point of personal impact
  - d. Wide range of meditation as self-instruction and lament, confession of sin and faith, prayer and thanksgiving, praise and adoration
  - e. Driving the demons away with God's word as in Ps 6:8: ***Depart from me you workers of evil.***
  - f. Praying the psalms with Jesus like the Lord's Prayer
  - g. Traditional use of a psalm for the week or for the day in devotional handbooks

## 2. The Foundation for the Psalms: God's Self-Proclamation with His Name

See Ex 34:5-7: ***The Lord descended in a cloud and stood with him (Moses) there (on Mt. Sinai, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord, a God compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy and faithfulness, keeping mercy for thousands (of generations), forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the father's on the children and the children's children, to the third and fourth generation."***

- a. Response to the request of Moses for God to show him his glory (Ex 33:17-23)
- b. Only occasion where the Lord "calls on" His own name by preaching Himself to Moses: institution of the Psalter
- c. He authorizes the use of His holy name to gain access and give access to Him by calling on Him by name and proclaiming His name
- d. The use of the psalms to gain God's compassion and grace, His patience, mercy and faithfulness, His forgiveness and justice
- e. Repeated allusions to this unique proclamation in the psalms

## 3. The Nature of the Psalms

- a. Songs of David

- David is the “father” of sacred song, just as Moses is the “father” of the law and Solomon is the “father” of wisdom (2 Sam 23:1).
  - God sent the prophets Nathan and Gad to tell David to establish the Levitical choir to sing the Lord’s song in the temple that Solomon built after David had died during the presentation of the daily burnt offering each morning and evening (2 Chr 29:25).
  - He appointed the singers on his behalf and in his place as the head of the congregation (1 Chr 6:31-39; 16:1-6; 23:30; 25; 2 Chr 8:14).
  - David gave them their instruments (2 Chr 29:26, 27; Neh 12:36) and composed some of the psalms for them to sing (1 Chr 16:7-36).
  - The psalms belonged to David and his successors: see Davidic ascription
  - Through the choir he continued to sing the Lord’s song even after his death (2 Chr 7:6): ***the Levites also (stood at their posts) with the instruments of music for the Lord that King David had made for giving thanks to the Lord...whenever David offered praises through them.***
- b. Songs of the Spirit which were inspired by the Holy Spirit.
- Last word of David in 2 Sam 23:2: **The Spirit of the Lord speaks by me; his word is on my tongue.**
  - Voice of the prophetic Spirit: see also 1 Chr 25:2, 4
  - God’s inspired, powerful word: from God to us and from us to God
  - Inspiration by the Spirit by singing the psalms.
  - Paul in Eph 5:18-19: ***Be filled with the Spirit as you speak to one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs and as you make music in your hearts to the Lord.***
- c. The songs of Jesus, the Messiah
- He is identified as their speaker in Rom 15:9, 11; Heb 2:11; 10:5-7
  - He uses them to teach his disciples about himself and God (Luke 24:44)
  - He uses them to pray for us and with us (Matt 27:46).
  - See Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Psalms: the Prayer Book of the Bible*, 20-21: ***How is it possible for man and Jesus Christ to pray the Psalter together? It is the incarnate Son of God, who has borne every human weakness in his own flesh, who here pours out the heart of all humanity before God and who stands in our place and prays for us. He has known torment and pain, guilt and death more deeply than we. Therefore it is the prayer of the human nature assumed by him which comes before God. It is really our prayer, but since he knows us better than we know ourselves and since he himself was true man for our sakes, it is also really his prayer, and it can become our prayer only because it is his prayer. Who prays the Psalms? David prays... Christ prays, we pray.***

- He identifies himself with us and us with himself as he prays them for us.
  - We pray them together with him as we do in the Lord's Prayer.
- d. The songs of the church as the city of God
- Songs of Zion sung at the temple by the choir on behalf of all God's people and all the earth
  - Proclamation of the Lord's goodness to Israel and the nations
  - Call for the nations to join God's people in praising Him together with the angels and all creation
  - Songs of the church as the new earthly choir in heavenly Zion
  - Psalter as the songbook of the church
- e. The songs of each faithful soul
- Songs of lament and petition for help
  - Songs of confession of sins and confession of faith
  - Songs of thanksgiving and praise
  - Songs for self-instruction and self-encouragement
  - Psalter as personal prayer book
- f. The journey in the Psalter
- From lamenting at our human condition to thanksgiving and confession of faith in God
  - From complaining to God to blessing him
  - From guilt and shame to praise of God: see the recurrent pleas for deliverance from shame in Ps 25:2-3, 7, 20; 31:1, 17; 69:6-7; 71:1; 119:31, 80, 116, the declarations in 6:10; 22:5; 37:19; 44: 7, 15-16; 53:5; 69:19; 71:24; 97:7; 119:6, 46; 127:5, and prayers for the shaming of the enemies in 31:17; 35:4, 26; 40:14; 70:2; 71:13; 83:16-17; 86:17; 109:29; 129:5.

#### 4. Psalm 1: the psalter as a handbook on meditation

a. Text

*<sup>1</sup>Happy is the man, who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,  
nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers,  
<sup>2</sup>but his delight is in the law of the Lord,  
and on his law he meditates day and night,  
<sup>3</sup>and he is like a tree planted by streams of water,  
that yields its fruit in its season,  
and its leaf does not wither,  
and in all that he does he prospers.*

***<sup>4</sup>The wicked are not so,  
but are like chaff that the wind drives away.***

***<sup>5</sup>Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,  
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;  
<sup>6</sup>for the Lord knows the way of the righteous,  
but the way of the wicked will perish.***

b. Explanation of terms

- Happy: congratulation with Hebrew *ashre*
- Wicked = guilty in God's court
- Righteous = innocent in God's court
- Law as practical instruction by God (Hb. *Torah*)
- Meditation as muttering, speaking to oneself
- Double sense
  - Day and night = "morning and evening" or "all day and all night"
  - 'Its fruit' or 'His fruit'
  - 'Its season' or 'His season'
  - 'In all that he does he prospers' or 'all that he does prospers.'
  - 'wind' or 'breath/spirit'
- Congregation: assembly of people who meet with God at the temple
- Standing: stand acquitted

c. Imagery

- Main image: life as a journey
  - Two ways: way of wicked v way of righteous
  - Journey of a wicked person: walking, standing, sitting on a road that perishes
  - Guidance on the wicked way by counsel, example and mockery
  - Travel by the righteous person on an unseen way that is known only to the Lord
  - Guidance on the righteous way by the Lord through daily meditation on his word
- Tree
  - God as the orchardist who plants and waters a fruit tree
  - Location - desert or temple: see righteous person as an olive tree in Ps 52:8 and a date palm tree Ps 91:12-15
  - Watering – spring or irrigation canal: see Ps 46:4 streams of water from God's presence in Zion
  - Nature - evergreen fruit tree
  - Seasonal fruit
- Chaff

- Separation from grain by threshing
  - Removal from grain by winnowing
  - Windblown and useless
  - Court of law
    - God as Judge in the divine service
    - Congregational assembly as place for judgment
    - Person on trial: sinner
    - Verdict: guilty
    - Sentence: exclusion from the congregation with no way to go
- d. Surprises: reversal of expectations
- Contrast between walking on the wrong way and meditating on God's teaching rather than walking on the right way in 1-2
  - The Lord knowing the way of the righteous rather than the reverse
  - The way that perishes rather than the wicked who perish
- e. Reflection and application
- Two kinds of meditation: the advice of wicked or Lord's teaching
  - Delight as the reason for meditation on God's word
  - Meditation on God's word as the mark of a righteous person
  - Meditation as a verbal activity
    - Speaking to oneself
    - Assimilating God's word: mouth ► ears ► heart
    - Daily reception of God's Spirit like water through the his word
  - Times for meditation: morning and evening
  - Result of meditation
    - Picture of irrigated fruit tree
    - Watering with God's Spirit: see Is 44:3; Jn 7:37-39; 1 Cor 12:13
    - Fruitfulness in season: see Gal 5:22-23 for the fruit of the Spirit
    - Evergreen foliage rather than temporary growth
    - Prosperity of person and work
  - Goal of meditation
    - Reversal of cliché: the righteous know the way of the Lord
    - Picture: secret way of the righteous in their journey through life
    - God as hidden companion and guide
    - Receiving direction from God by listening to him
    - God's intimacy with us: known by Him
- f. Psalm 1 as the introduction to the Book of Psalms
- Origin from meditation on God's word in the light of our experience
  - Aids for meditation on God's word as it interprets our experience

## 5. Psalm 2: the Psalter as a handbook on for taking refuge in the Messiah

a. Text

<sup>1</sup>*Why do the nations rage  
and the peoples meditate on emptiness/deception/delusion?*

<sup>2</sup>*The kings of the earth take their stand,  
and the rulers conspire together  
against the Lord and his Anointed One, saying:*

<sup>3</sup>*“Let us break their chains  
and throw off their fetters.”*

<sup>4</sup>*The One enthroned in heaven laughs;  
my Master makes fun of them.*

<sup>5</sup>*This what he says to them in his wrath,  
so that he frightens them in his anger:*

<sup>6</sup>*“As for me I have installed my King on Zion,  
the mountain of my holiness/sanctuary.”*

<sup>7</sup>*Let me tell of the decree (commission) of the Lord:  
He said to me, “You are my Son;  
Today I have become you Father.*

<sup>8</sup>*Ask of me, so that I may give the nations as your heritage,  
and the ends of the earth as your possession.*

<sup>9</sup>*You will crush them with an iron scepter  
and smash them like a piece of pottery.”*

<sup>10</sup>*Now therefore, you kings, be sensible;  
take advice, you judges of the earth.*

<sup>11</sup>*Serve the Lord with reverence  
and rejoice with trembling.*

<sup>12</sup>*Kiss the Son, lest he be angry  
and you perish in the way,  
for his wrath is quickly kindled.  
Happy are those who take refuge in him.”*

b. Verbal links with Psalm 1

- Meditate in 1:2 and 2:1
- Way in 1:6 and 2:12
- Perish in 1:6 and 2:12
- Happy in 1:1 and 2:12

c. Genre

- Royal psalm (see also 18; 21; 22; 45; 61; 72; 89; 101; 110; 132; 144)
- Setting: the king's coronation or enthronement
- Forms of speech
  - Riddle: the rebellion of the nations against God (1)
  - Divine oracle about his counter measure (4-6)
  - King's presentation of his divine commission to the nations (7-9)
    - Adoption formula (7<sup>b</sup>)
    - Offer of the world to the king (8)
    - Promise of victory and supremacy (9)
  - Ultimatum to the nations (10-12<sup>b</sup>)
  - Congratulation to every refugee (12<sup>c</sup>)

d. Literary Features

- Reports of direct speech
  - From the kings about God and his Messiah (3)
  - From God about his king (6)
  - From God to the king (7<sup>b</sup>-9)
- Change of speakers
  - Royal prophet (1-6)
  - King (7-9)
  - Royal prophet (10-12)

e. Examination

- Report by a prophet: Lord's reaction to rebellion of nations: 1-6
  - Riddle: why do the nations and their rulers rebel against God and His Messiah (1)
    - Their meditation on a futile delusion: victory (1)
    - Their conspiracy against the Lord and His Messiah (2)
    - Their decision to reject their rule (3)
    - Desire for autonomy
  - God's response to their conspiracy (4-6)
    - Unexpected reaction: no counter attack but mockery of their stupidity and warning against incurring his wrath
    - Reason for mockery: installation of the Messiah on His holy mountain with protection by His holiness
    - Wrath at the desecration of His holiness: self-destruction
- King's report of his mandate from God: 7-9
  - King's announcement of the God's decree at his coronation
  - God's adoption of him as his son and heir with the right of inheritance
  - God's offer of a world empire at his request
    - Nations in addition to Israel as hereditary subjects

- Whole world as God's royal estate
    - Promise of dominion and victory (9)
      - Shepherding with iron sceptre: divine power to rule by defending people from the powers of chaos
      - Ritual smashing pots by Pharaoh as sign of victory over his enemies
  - The prophet's ultimatum to the nations: 10-12
    - Call for prudent attention to God's word
    - Summons with three commands
      - Serve the Lord by participation in the divine service
      - Rejoice with trembling: astonishment privilege
      - Kiss the royal son as member of God's royal family
    - Warning: avoidance of the Messiah's wrath and destruction
      - The Messiah as the agent of God's grace and wrath
      - Destiny of nations: acceptance or rejection of the Messiah
      - Self-destruction from rejection: contrast with Ps 1:6
    - Puzzling congratulation
      - Who are the refugees? Israelites, or kings
      - In whom do they take refuge? God, Messiah, God through Messiah
      - How do they take refuge? Tribute and petitions to the Messiah or God
      - Where are they to take refuge? King's palace or temple
      - Answer: taking refuge with the Messiah in heavenly Zion
- f. Use in the New Testament
- Use by Peter in Acts 4:24-30 in prayer for the church after the trial of him and John by the Jewish Sanhedrin
  - Use by Paul in Acts 13:32-33 and the author of Hebrews in 1:5 to proclaim Jesus as God's Son
  - Use in Rev 19:15 to proclaim Christ's rule over the nations with his word as well as by Jesus in Rev 2:26-27 to include the church in his rule over the nations

## 6. Psalm 13: meditative complaint to God

- a. When do we complain, and why?
- b. How do we feel when we have been wronged?
  - Hurt and anger

- Hatred for the 'enemy'
- Desire for justice and revenge
- Shaking of faith in God: failure in duty of care

c. Laments as most common psalms

- Use of same Hebrew term for meditating (Ps 77:3, 6, 12; 104:34; 119:15, 23, 27, 48, 78; 145:5) and complaining (Ps 55:2, 17; 64:1; 102:1; 142:2)
- Two types: individual and national laments
- Three kinds of individual laments
  - Complaint to God with appeal for help by a victim of abuse or injustice: use of protesting questions 'why?' or 'how long?'
  - Description of trouble with appeal to God's generosity by needy person: sickness
  - Confession of sin with appeal to God's mercy by sinners

d. Psalm 13 as a typical complaint

***For the choirmaster. A psalm of David***

***<sup>1</sup>How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?***

***How long will you hide your face from me?***

***<sup>2</sup>How long will I have pain in my soul,  
and sorrow in my heart all the day?***

***How long shall my enemy be high over me?***

***<sup>3</sup>Look (at me); answer me, O Lord my God!***

***Light up to my eyes,***

***so that I do not sleep the sleep of death,***

***<sup>4</sup>and my enemy will say, "I have defeated him,"  
and my foes rejoice because I am shaken,***

***<sup>5</sup>even though I trusted in your steadfast love.***

***My heart will rejoice in your deliverance;***

***<sup>6</sup>I will sing to/of the Lord,***

***because he has dealt bountifully with me.***

e. The process of complaining to God

- Speaker: King David and every troubled person
- Act of faith
  - Address of God as Lord and my God
  - Trust in His steadfast love
- Complaint about God's failure to help as he had promised

- Four reasons for the complaint to God
  - For forgetting the speaker: indifference
  - For hiding his face from him: rejection
  - For unbearable pain and sorrow
  - For the triumph of his enemy over him
- Identity of the unnamed enemy
  - Personal
  - Social
  - Political
  - Religious
  - Demonic: enemy as the term for Satan in the NT (Matt 13:39; Lk 10:19)
- Three pleas to God for help
  - For attention: eyes
  - For favorable response: ears
  - For light to eyes: vision of God's goodness and revitalization and rather than darkness and death
- Three reasons for answering petitions
  - Prevention of premature death
  - Prevention of the triumph by the enemy: identity of 'him'?
  - Prevention of rejoicing by enemies at his shaken trust in God
- Promise of praise
  - Vow of a song of thanksgiving for salvation/deliverance/victory
  - God's bountiful help as the reason and content of this song
  - Fulfilment with song of thanksgiving such as Psalm 30

f. What is the devotional use of these laments?

- Who is your enemy?
- How can these laments help us with our anger? See Eph 4:25-27, 31
- Why does God welcome our complaints?
- How do these psalms 'praise' God?

## 7. Psalm 57: theophanic meditation

a. Text

***For the choirmaster. Do Not Destroy.  
A Miktam of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave***

***<sup>1</sup>Be gracious to me, O God, be gracious to me,  
for in you my soul takes refuge;  
in the shadow of your wings I take refuge  
until the disaster passes by.***

**<sup>2</sup>I call to God Most High,  
to God who fulfills his purpose me.  
<sup>3</sup>He will send from heaven to save me,  
He will rebuke the one who hounds me. Selah  
God will send out his steadfast love and faithfulness/truth.**

**<sup>4</sup>My soul is in the midst of lions;  
I lie down among fiery beasts, the children of Adam,  
whose teeth are spears and arrows,  
and whose tongue is a sharp sword.**

**<sup>5</sup>Be exalted, O God, above the heavens!  
Let your glory be over all the earth.**

**<sup>6</sup>They set a net for my steps-  
my soul was bowed low.  
They dug a pit before me;  
they have fallen into it themselves. Selah**

**<sup>7</sup>My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready!  
Let me sing and let me make music.**

**<sup>8</sup>Awake, my glory, awake!  
With harp and lyre let me awake the dawn!**

**<sup>9</sup>I will give thanks for/about you among the nations, my Master;  
I will make music for/about you among the peoples.**

**<sup>10</sup>For your steadfast love is great to the heavens,  
your faithfulness to the skies.**

**<sup>11</sup>Be exalted, O God, above the heavens!  
Let your glory be over all the earth.**

b. Superscription

- Temple choirmaster as the King's mouthpiece
- *Miktām*: written psalm placed before God by David or another king as a memorial
- *Do not destroy*: instruction for retention
- Mention of cave in title from 1 Sam 24:1-22: life-threatening situation
- Use by choir director as a morning song at the temple

- c. Influence of Exodus 34:
  - Plea for grace to the Lord who is gracious (1)
  - Appeal to God's steadfast love and faithfulness (3, 10)
  
- d. Structure and content
  - Plea for theophany on earth: 57:1-6
    - Petition for grace (2)
    - Wish for divine intervention (3-4)
    - Report on threat from 'man eaters' (5)
    - Petition for cosmic theophany (6)
  - Promise of thanksgiving: 57:7-12
    - Report of the fate of the 'man eaters' (7)
    - Decision to awaken dawn with song (8-9)
    - Vow to thank God internationally (10-11)
    - Petition for cosmic theophany (12)
  
- e. Reflection and application
  - Plea to God for his gracious protection: 1
    - Threat of 'destruction' by those who 'hound' him
    - Appeal to God's grace, like a needy subject with a king
    - Petition for protection from destruction
    - Taking refuge under God's wings (see also Ps 17:8; 36:7; 61:9; 63:7; 91:4)
      - Chickens under the wings of a mother hen: safe place
      - Wings of cherubim over the mercy seat at the temple: sanctuary
      - Common image for the high god: sun with wings
  - Confession of faith in God's intervention: spoken to a human audience: 2-3
    - Address of God with the title Most High: used for El, the supreme head of the Canaanite pantheon
    - God: the 'avenger' of those who seek justice from him
    - Faith in God's intervention to save him from the one who hounds him
    - God's steadfast love and faithfulness as his body guards (Ps 40:11; 61:7; 89:14, 24)
  - Evaluation of threat: to himself: 4
    - Psalmist as a person lying down to sleep among man-eating lions
    - Enemies as lions: devouring predators
    - Use of their teeth and tongues as weapons against him: spears, arrows, sword

- Symbols of demons in ancient world
- Surprise petition to God for his theophany in glory:5
  - Appeal world-wide intervention
  - Appeal for God's theophany in loving kindness and faithfulness
  - Theophany as judgment of the wicked and vindication of the righteous
  - God's glory that covers the earth with its light like the sun
  - Glory in heaven ► temple ► world
- Reflection on downfall of his enemies: to a human audience
  - Proclamation of their demise
  - God's entrapment of them with their own evil-doing, like hunters of birds and animals with nets and pits
  - Prelude to God's universal judgment
- Performance of song: to himself in 8-9
  - Reversal: singer wakens the dawn rather than vice versa
  - Song of praise before dawn of God's deliverance
  - Use of *'ūrāh* as a battle cry for God in Judg 5:12: see also call for intervention as Judge in 7:6; 44:23; 59:5; Is 51:9
  - Waking up of three things with the song
    - Heart: reflects God's glory as it glorifies God
    - Harp and lyre to glorify the Lord
    - Dawn of God's glory for all nations
  - Picture of dawn
    - Liturgical: beginning of a new day for praise singer
    - Musical: song for a new day played on the harp and lyre
    - Devotional: reflection of God's glory in the heart of the singer
    - Eschatological: anticipation of God's theophany and his final victory over darkness
  - Singer's call on his 'glory' to 'wake up' with God's glory and announce the new day
    - Manifestation of God's glory in him by singing this song: see 2 Pet 1:19
    - Experience of theophany in his awakened heart
- Vow of thanksgiving: to God in 10-12
  - Vow of international thanksgiving with its beginning now as in Ps 18:49 and 117:1
  - Proclamation of God's steadfast love and faithfulness to all people

- Promise of international thanksgiving in anticipation of his world-wide theophany in steadfast love and faithfulness to all nations
- Repetition of the same petition in 12 as in 6
- Defeat of enemies by petition and praise
- Note the use of 57:8-12 in 108:1-5.

f. Devotional use

- Morning prayer
- Prayer from protection from the devil as a roaring lion (1 Pet 5:8)
- Meditation on the dawn of day with Christ in our hearts as his temple
- See hymn 873 LSB as a meditation on this psalm

## 8. Psalm 30: meditative thanksgiving

a. Text

*A Psalm. A Song for the Dedication of the Temple. For David*

<sup>1</sup>*I will extol you, O Lord, for you have drawn me up,  
and have not let my foes rejoice over me.*

<sup>2</sup>*O Lord my God, I cried to you for help,  
and you have healed me.*

<sup>3</sup>*O Lord, you brought up my soul from Sheol/the Underworld,  
restored me to life from among those who go down to the Pit.*

<sup>4</sup>*Make music for/to the Lord, O you his devoted people,  
and give thanks for his holy name.*

<sup>5</sup>*For his anger is but for a moment;  
his favor is for a lifetime.  
Weeping may tarry for the night,  
but joy comes with the morning.*

<sup>6</sup>*As for me, I said in my prosperity/security,  
"I shall never be moved/shaken."*

<sup>7</sup>*By your favor, O Lord,  
you had established me like a strong mountain.  
But when you hid your face,  
I was dismayed.*

<sup>8</sup>*To you, O Lord, I called,  
and to the Lord I cried for grace:*

**<sup>9</sup>“What profit is there in my death (blood),  
if I go down to the Pit?**

**Will the dust thank you?**

**Will it tell of your faithfulness/truth?**

**<sup>10</sup>Hear, O Lord, and be gracious to me!**

**O Lord, be my helper!”**

**<sup>11</sup>You have turned for me my mourning into dancing;**

**you have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness,**

**<sup>12</sup>so that my soul (glory) may make music for you and not be silent.**

**O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever.**

b. Explanation

- Extol: acknowledge God’s importance by saying: “The Lord is high/exalted”
- Sheol: the Underworld, the place of the dead
- The pit: the grave
- Give thanks: praise, confess, acknowledge, thank
- Holy name = the remembrance of his holiness in Hebrew: holy remembrance ie. give thanks to the Lord for remembering his holiness or give thanks by remembering to use his holy name
- Note the appeal to God’s grace in 8, 10 and the mention of his faithfulness in 9
- As in 57:8 ‘my glory’ refers to the soul that reflects God’s glory

c. The setting and use of this individual thanksgiving

- Like 13 and 57 many laments with a vow of thanksgiving that would be offered after God had delivered them from sickness, death and any other troubles
- Fulfillment by the presentation of an animal as a thank offering as in Lev 7:12-15 with a song of thanksgiving for God’s deliverance
- That song reported how God had delivered them to the family members and friends who were invited to the temple as guests for the occasion.
- Celebration of a holy meal with the meat and bread from the offering

d. Reflection and application

- David’s report of his deliverance: 1-3
  - Summary: praise for rescue from death and his enemies
  - Cry for help → revival and healing
- David’s invitation to his guests and all God’s faithful people to join him in his musical thanksgiving: 4-5

- Similar beneficiaries of God's steadfast love
- Reason: God's lifelong favor in contrast with his temporary anger
- Proverb about joy in the morning after a night of weeping
- The day of life that does not end with weeping and the darkness of night but with joy at the light of a new day
- David's report of his former state: 6-7
  - God's gift of stability and strength, prosperity and health to him: comparison to a mountain
  - His presumption that he was unshakable: turning away from God
  - His dismay at God's disapproval of his complacency
  - Dependence on God for life and protection, good health and strength
- David's prayer for deliverance: 8-10
  - Appeal to God's grace rather than his right to life in a prayer for deliverance from sickness and death
  - Reason for the appeal: God's loss of him a thanks-giver and praise-singer by his death
  - Purpose of life: thanksgiving and praise that acknowledges God's good gifts and faithfulness and proclaims it to the world
- David's report of his changed state: 11-12
  - Sorrow to joy
  - God's transformation of him from ungrateful, sick and dying person into a lifelong praise singer.
- Picture: two kinds of clothing
  - Black sackcloth
    - Made from hessian and covered with dirt and ashes
    - Worn by professional mourners or when someone the family had died
    - Worn by all Israelites once a year on the Day of Atonement to show that they were doomed to die by their sins.
  - White robe worn by priests and people for happy occasions
- Change of status from a sad mourner into a joyful musician and dancer: end of silence
- Reflection of God's glory in music and song: proclamation of God's gracious presence
- Vow of eternal praise
  - Perpetual thanksgiving and praise by David with his choir and the psalms in the temple (30: 61:8)
  - Eternal song of praise by the Messiah (cf. 61:8; 145:1-2)

## 9. Psalm 100: meditative praise

### a. The nature of praise

- When do we praise someone, and why?
- Why do we praise God?
  - Recognizing God's goodness: hidden and unobtrusive
  - Remembering and enjoying God's goodness
  - Telling others about God and his goodness
  - Inviting others to receive God's gifts and to enjoy them
  - Sharing enjoyment by praising someone or something good
- The Psalter as a handbook for praise
  - Hebrew name: The Praises
  - Increasing occurrence of psalms of praise
  - Movement from lament to praise
  - Clusters of Hallelujah psalms in 104-106, 112 – 118, and 136 that culminate in 146 -150

### b. The liturgical use of the psalms of praise

- Performance by the choir as the Lord's song during the enactment of the daily burnt offering at the temple each morning and evening
- Performance by the singers on behalf of the king, the people and the nations
- Accompaniment with lyres, harps and cymbals
- Connection with the sounding of silver trumpets by the priests to announce the presence of the heavenly King to meet with His people: audience
- Prostration of the congregation at the end of each stanza in homage to the heavenly King
- Call for the congregation, Israel, and the nations to join the choir and the king in praising God with set responses such as Amen and Hallelujah
- Only four addressed to God (8, 65, 84, 104) and the rest to the congregation and the world as proclamation of the Lord's name and presence, His nature and His deeds, His goodness and His mercy

### c. Text of Psalm 100

#### ***A Psalm for Thanksgiving/Thank Offering***

***<sup>1</sup>Acclaim the Lord, all the earth!***

***<sup>2</sup>Serve the Lord with gladness!***

***Enter into his presence with singing.***

***<sup>3</sup>Know that he the Lord is God!***

***It is he who made us, and not we ourselves/we are his;  
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.***

***<sup>4</sup>Enter his gates with thanksgiving,  
and his courts with praise.***

***Give thanks to him, bless his name!***

***<sup>5</sup>For/Surely the Lord is good; his steadfast love is forever,  
and his faithfulness is for all generations.***

d. Reflection

- Call for the whole earth with all its inhabitants to join the congregation in thanking and praising the Lord
  - Similar calls to the earth in 66:1; 96:1
  - The use of the inclusive “we” in 3
  - Its use of a confession of faith based on the covenant formula: “I will be your God, and you will be my people”
- Seven words of invitation
  - Acclamation of the Lord in his presence at the temple
  - Joyful participation in the divine service
  - Entry into the Lord’s presence with singing and shouting
  - Acknowledging the Lord as the only God, their Creator and Shepherd
  - Entry through the gates and courts of the temple with thanksgiving and praise
  - Performance of thanksgiving for his creation and providence
  - Blessing the name of the Lord by using his name to acknowledge him as the giver of blessing by saying: “Blessed be the Lord...” (eg. Ps 28:6; 31:21)
- Three reasons for thanksgiving: content of thanksgiving
  - The Lord’s goodness: see Ex 33:19
  - The Lord’s eternal steadfast love: see Ex 34:6
  - The Lord’s intergenerational faithfulness: see Ex 34:6
- The use of the thanksgiving refrain
  - At the temple: 1 Chr 16:34, 41; 2 Chr 5:13; 7:36; 20:21; Jer 31:11; 33:11; Ezr 3:11
  - In the psalms: Ps 106:1; 117; 118:1, 29 as well as 107 and 136
  - As a grace and in family devotions
- Why do we begin our devotions and prayers with thanksgiving?

10. Psalm 95: liturgical meditation

a. Text

***<sup>1</sup>Walk along (in procession), let us shout with joy to the Lord;  
let us acclaim the rock of our salvation!***

***<sup>2</sup>Let us approach his presence with thanksgiving;***

***let us acclaim him with musical song!***

***<sup>3</sup>For the Lord is a great God,  
and a great King above all gods.***

***<sup>4</sup>In his hand are the depths of the earth;  
the heights of the mountains are his also.***

***<sup>5</sup>The sea is his, for he made it,  
and the dry land, which his hands have formed.***

***<sup>6</sup>Walk along (in procession), let us make prostration and bow down,  
let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!***

***<sup>7</sup>For he is our God,  
and we are the people of his pasture,  
and the sheep of his hand.***

***O that today you would listen to his voice:***

***<sup>8</sup>Do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah,  
as on the day of Massah in the desert,***

***<sup>9</sup>when your ancestors tested and tried me out,  
though they had seen my work.***

***<sup>10</sup>For forty years I was disgusted with that generation  
and said, "They are a people  
whose hearts have gone astray,***

***<sup>11</sup>so that they do not know my ways."***

***Therefore in my anger I swore,***

***"They shall not enter my rest."***

b. Setting

- Hymn of praise sung by the choir at the temple
- Processional psalm for pilgrim festival: Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles
  - Walking and entering the temple
  - Call for congregational jubilation and acclamation
  - Prostration before in the Lord's presence

c. Reflection and application

- Call: choir to congregation for procession: 1-2
  - Walk as technical term for procession
  - Approach Lord's face: altar rather than idol
  - Choir: song of thanksgiving with music
  - Congregation: shouts of acclamation
  - Acclamation: YHWH, the Rock of salvation

- Image of cosmic rock: stability and security in chaos
  - Rock at the temple: site of altar
  - Mount Zion as the rock of Israel (Isa 30:29)
  - Lord as Israel's rock: safety and security
- Reason for acclamation: 3-5
  - Lord as Creator
  - Great God: supreme God, head of pantheon
  - Great King: supreme Emperor rather than Assyrian King
  - Lord's domain
    - Underworld: ghosts and demons ► mountains: high gods
    - Sea with chaotic powers ► dry land with people
- Call: choir to congregation for to perform prostration: 6
  - Entry into sanctuary for prostration
  - Prostration: homage to King and Creator at the altar for burnt offering
- Reason for prostration: 7<sup>a</sup>
  - Allusion to covenant formula: God's commitment
    - Lord's commitment to them
    - Their dependence and allegiance to him
  - Pastoral imagery
    - Lord as shepherd
    - Land as grazing land
    - People as hand-fed, hand-led flock
  - Prostration as placement in the Lord's hand
    - Hand that controls the underworld (4)
    - Hands that shapes the land (5)
- Attention to God: audience at the temple: 7<sup>b</sup>
  - Admonition of choir to congregation
  - Word of prophecy as centre of the service
  - Announcement: personal briefing by King
  - Call to listen to his voice in the divine service
  - Today: day of the festival
- God's warning: refusal to listen to his voice: 8-11
  - Address of congregation by God
  - Hardening of hearts
    - Experience of salvation: seeing his work
    - Obstinate refusal to listen and learn
  - Incident at Meribah: Exodus 17:1-7
    - Meribah: Place of Strife/Challenge
    - Massah: Place of Testing
    - Challenge to Moses: lack of water
    - Testing: proof of God's presence
    - Reversal: test of God rather than his test of them
    - Gift of water from the rock

- Example of hardened hearts
- Result of hardness
  - God's disgust at them for 40 years: generation
  - Reason: straying hearts and unacknowledged ways
  - Response in oath: exclusion from land as place of rest (Num 14:20-23, 28-35)
- Warning about entry into the temple
  - Land as place of rest ► temple as place of rest
  - Danger of refusing to listen to God's voice
  - Entry into God's rest by listening to his voice
  - Goal of service: hearing God's voice

c. Devotional Use

- Use for beginning of Jewish Sabbath service and our service of Matins
- Use as sermon text for Heb 3:7-4:13
  - God's provision of access to his rest to the congregation
  - Entry into God's rest with faith by listening to the gospel
  - Resting to let the word of God work on us
  - End of our work of self-justification
  - Danger of missing out on eternal rest by disobedience
- Theology of worship and personal devotions
  - Entry into God's presence with thanksgiving
  - Confession of faith in God as our Creator and Shepherd
  - Listening to the voice of God
  - Entry into the eternal Sabbath of God by faith: place and time
  - Devotions: resting with God by listening to him
  - Earthly rest as foretaste of heavenly rest (Rev 14:13)

**11. Psalm 23: meditative personal confession of faith**

a. Visual meditation

- Focus on imagery: pictures
- Use of imagination to see what is said
- Working out the story from the sequence of pictures
- Eye for the unexpected
- Seeing what is otherwise unseen: mystery
- Vision of God and his dealings with us

b. Text

***A Psalm of David***

<sup>1</sup>***The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.***

<sup>2</sup>***He makes me lie/crouch down in green pastures.***

*He leads me beside still/restful waters.*

<sup>3</sup>*He restores my soul.*

*He leads me in paths of righteousness*

*For his name's sake.*

<sup>4</sup>*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,*

*I will fear no evil,*

*For you are with me;*

*Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.*

<sup>5</sup>*You prepare a table before me*

*in the presence of my enemies;*

*you anoint my head with oil;*

*my cup overflows.*

<sup>6</sup>*Surely/only goodness and steadfast love shall follow/pursue me*

*all the days of my life,*

*and I shall dwell the house of the Lord forever*

c. Type of Psalm

- Individual psalm of trust: 4; 11; 16; 27; 62; 63; 73; 91; 123
- Focus on lifelong experience rather than particular experience

c. Structure

- The Lord as shepherd: 1-4
  - His ample provision (1b-2a)
  - His guidance in the right way (2b-3)
  - His presence and protection in danger and death (4)
- The Lord as host: 5-6
  - His protective hospitality (5a)
  - His generosity as a host (5b)
  - The constant enjoyment of the Lord's goodness in his house (6)

d. Reflection and application

- The Lord as the shepherd:1-4
  - Provision by the Lord
    - Kings as shepherds with people as flock in the ancient world
    - Lord as Israel's shepherd
    - Two surprises: God as the personal shepherd of David and David as a sheep
  - Provision with all necessities for life
    - Green pastures

- Israel in the promised land
  - Guidance by the Lord to place of rest
    - Guidance to restful waters
    - Restoration of soul: satisfaction
    - Direction on right paths that go the right way to the right place
    - God's name as the reason for his guidance
  - Protection by the Lord as bodyguard
    - Valley: ravine that leads into the underworld, the place of darkness, chaos, and death
    - Presence of Lord as guardian and guide
    - Comfort with protective club and helpful staff
    - No fear of evil/disaster with the threat of death
    - Surprise: journey with the Lord through death valley
- The Lord as a generous host: 5
  - Elaboration of images of food and drink from verse 2
  - Use of tables only for kings and important guests
    - Altar at the temple: Lord's table (Ezek 44:16; Mal 1:7,12)
    - Provision of holy food for God's guests rather than God
  - Surprise: God as host who waits on his guest and prepares a royal banquet for his guest
  - Sanctity of guests in antiquity
    - Honorary member of the family
    - Protection by it and its gods
    - Attack on guest as sacrilege
  - God's protection of his guest by provision of hospitality
    - Challenge to enemies
    - Human and spiritual enemies: devil and evil spirits
  - Honor as guest: royal treatment
    - Anointing of head with perfume: guest, king, priest
    - Filling of personal bowl: overflowing wine
  - Enjoyment of God's hospitality: permanent resident in God's house (cf. the king's plea in Ps 61:4)
- Interpretation of imagery: shepherd and host in 6
  - Goal of journey: green pastures ► tranquil waters ► death valley ► Lord's house
  - The house of the Lord = temple
  - Surprise: pursuit by enemies or evil ► lifelong pursuit by the Lord's goodness and kindness
  - Occasional visitor ► permanent resident of the Lord's household
    - Privilege of access and fellowship
    - Provision of food and other needs
    - Privilege of table fellowship: royal family
    - Protection by holiness

12. Psalm 46: meditative corporate confession of faith

a. Text

*To the choirmaster of the Sons of Korah. According to Alamo. A Song.*

*God is our refuge and stronghold,  
a very present help in trouble.  
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change,  
though the mountains totter in the heart of the sea,  
though its waters rage and foam,  
though the mountains tremble at its upsurge.*

*Selah*

*There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,  
the holy place which is the habitation/residence of the Most High.  
God is in the midst of her; she shall not totter;  
God will help her when morning dawns.  
The nations rage, the kingdoms totter;  
He utters his voice, the earth melts.  
The Lord of hosts/armies is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our fortress.*

*Selah*

*Come, behold the works of the Lord,  
how he has brought desolations on the earth.  
He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;  
he breaks the bow and shatters the spear;  
he burns the chariots with fire:  
"Be still, and know that I am God.  
I will be exalted among the nations,  
I will be exalted in the earth!"  
The Lord of hosts/armies is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our fortress.*

*Selah*

b. The threat of chaos

- Our fear of chaos
  - Natural chaos: earthquakes, tidal waves ► global warming
  - Political chaos: revolution and war
  - Social chaos: breakdown of social order, families, and marriage
  - Mental chaos: confusion, mental sickness and insanity
  - Spiritual chaos: no safe place of refuge
- Symbols of stability and chaos in the ancient world
  - Stability in natural world

- The earth
  - The mountains as the pillars of the earth and the sky
- Stability in society
  - Strongholds, fortresses, and fortified cities as places of refuge
  - Armies with weapons
  - Kingdoms with kings and standing armies
- Chaos
  - The sea with its water: tsunamis
  - Earthquakes that make the earth quake and mountains fall.
  - Volcanoes that make the earth melt
  - Defeat in war by other nations and kingdoms
- Canaanite mythology
  - Mountain home of *El*, the supreme god, the Most High, the head of the pantheon
  - Attack on life by the gods *Yam*: Sea and *Mot*: Death on the Earth and the Mountain home of *El*, the supreme god
  - Their defeat by *Baal* with his thunderbolt voice to protect the land and life on it.
- The vision of stability in Psalm 46
  - Speakers: the people of God
  - Focus: the city of God = Jerusalem
  - Key words and contrasts
    - Mountains and kingdoms that totter in 2 and 5 v city of God that does not totter in 5
    - Raging waters in 3 ► raging nations in 6
    - Earth: gives way in 2 ► melts in 6 ► desolations in it in 8 ► cessation of war to its ends in 8 ► Lord's exaltation over it in 10

c. Reflection and application

- Ps 46:1-3: God as the only safe place in disaster
  - God's presence, protection and help as reason for fearlessness
  - Ever present = always able to be found, most available, readily accessible
  - Threat from three kinds of natural chaos: earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and tsunamis
- Ps 46:4-8: God's home in his holy city as a place of refuge
  - The river in the city
    - The tunnel that brought the Kidron spring into the city (2 Chr 33:30)
    - Symbol of the spring that watered the Garden of Eden in Gen 2:10-11 (Ps 36:8-9)

- Symbol of the future spring from a new heavenly temple in Joel 3:18; Ezek 47:1-12; Zech 14:8
- The holy place = the temple on the acropolis of Jerusalem
- Attack on God's city by the pagan nations = attack on God who dwells in its midst
- God's defense of his holy city with his voice rather than his hand at the dawn of a new day: defeat of forces of darkness
- Confession of faith in God's presence in Zion = church (Matt 5:14; Gal 4:25-27; Heb 12:22; Rev 21:1-4, 9-27)
- **The Lord of hosts** = Lord of armies
  - The twelve tribes of Israel
  - The heavenly bodies
  - The angels
- Ps 46:9-11: God's surprising intervention
  - Call on nations to **behold the works of the Lord**
  - **Desolations** = ruins left after defeat in war
  - God's **desolations** = disarmament of the earth: bows, spears and chariots in the city of God; cf. Is 2:4; Zech 9:10
  - The word that God's **voice** utters = 46:10
  - **Be still** = let go, relax hands, drop weapons, stop fighting, give up, surrender
  - Disarmament as the result of hearing God's voice and acknowledging him as exalted King of the all the nations and the earth: see the lifting up of Jesus on the cross and Luther's confession: ***One little word can fell him.***
  - Note the difference between God's exaltation among the nations in 10 and God's exaltation over the nations in Ps 99:2
  - Because of the Lord's works the confession of Israel in 46:7 becomes the confession of the nations and our confession
  - Together with 48, 76, 84, 87, 122, 125 this one of the songs of Zion, the church in the Old Testament

d. Confession of faith in the one holy church as our heavenly sanctuary on earth against Satan and all the powers of chaos

- See Christ's disarming of demonic rulers and authorities in Col 2:15
- See Christ's promise in Matt 16:18 that the gates of hell will not prevail against it
- See AC 7: ***It is also taught among us that the one holy church will be and remain forever.***
- See Luther's meditation on this psalm in LSB 656; see also 648

13. Conclusion on affective instruction from Luther (LW 35:256): ***The Psalter holds you to the communion of saints and away from the sects. For it teaches you in joy, fear, hope, and sorrow to think and speak as all the saints have thought and spoken.***

