

ST ARMANDS KEY LUTHERAN CHURCH
SARASOTA, FLORIDA

COME, JOIN THE CONVERSATION!
ON
THE BOOK OF PSALMS

Lesson Plan for Thursday – November 14, 2013

Conversation #8 – “Psalms of Individual Praise”

Our objectives for this session:

- to share personal ideas, attitudes, and experiences relating to The Psalms; and, in doing so, strengthen our SAKLC fellowship;
- to describe some key characteristics in psalms of individual praise;
- to easily identify the aspect of praise in several psalms;
- to experience the joy of praising God, guided by the psalms of individual praise.

A JOINT OPENING PRAYER – this time: it’s your responsibility!

{see instructions printed directly below:}

1. Open your Bible (*any translation is acceptable*) to the Book of Psalms – it matters not which psalm you initially select.
2. Skim/do not read ... go backward or go forward ... from where you opened;
3. Look for specific verses that in your mind express personal praise to God;
4. As result of your search, select and mark for your later use 1-3 contiguous verses found in any one psalm; these will serve as your contribution to **CONVERSATION**’s opening prayer of praise;
5. Skim through additional verses until “*time*” is called (*revise your selection if so moved!*)
6. When you are recognized, provide your name, and then from your Bible pray/read “*your*” verse(s) of individual praise [*no need to identify its source*].
7. After each person has read his/her verse, the whole group in unison is to respond with:
“PRAISE THE LORD!”

A) “PRAISE” is:

- at the heart of the people of God as individuals and as a worshipping community!
- central to corporate worship since biblical times
- a natural response of appreciation to God on the part of the believer
- a word that appears more often in Psalms than in any other biblical book
- **“Tehillim,”** the Hebrew title of Psalms, means “songs of praise.”
- number of psalms of praise is second only to number of psalms of lament

B) PRACTCUM on “PRAISE” as it is used elsewhere in Hebrew Scripture:

Instruction: Apply the following three questions to each of the passages of individual and corporate praise listed on the lower portion of this page; record your notes to the right of each scriptural reference.

1. What appears to be the reason for praising God? What is the setting
2. How is God addressed? What name, title, or image of God is used?
3. What is the form or means by which the praise is expressed?

Exodus 15:1-21

II Chronicles 5:1-14

Ezra 3:1-13

Isaiah 25:1-12

Isaiah 42:1-13

Daniel 6:1-16

C) PSALMS OF PRAISE – 5 CHARACTERISTICS

- 1) Address to God
- 2) A past distress
- 3) A plea to God
- 4) Recall of God's gracious deeds
- 5) Ascription of Praise

Example of a Psalm of Individual Praise, Psalm 30 –

**30 I praise you, LORD, because you have saved me *{address to God}*
and kept my enemies from gloating over me.**

**2 I cried to you for help, O LORD my God, *{note the past distress}*
and you healed me;**

**3 you kept me from the grave *{recall of God's gracious deed in delivering psalmist from distress}*
**I was on my way to the depths below,
but you restored my life.****

**4 Sing praise to the LORD,
all his faithful people!
**Remember what the Holy One has done,
and give him thanks!****

**5 His anger lasts only a moment,
his goodness for a lifetime.
**Tears may flow in the night,
but joy comes in the morning.****

**6 I felt secure and said to myself,
"I will never be defeated."**

**7 You were good to me, LORD;
**you protected me like a mountain fortress. *{further recall of God's past deeds}*
**But then you hid yourself from me,
and I was afraid.******

**8 I called to you, LORD; *{a passionate plea to God}*
I begged for your help:**

**9 "What will you gain from my death?
What profit from my going to the grave?
Are dead people able to praise you?
Can they proclaim your unfailing goodness?**

**10 Hear me, LORD, and be merciful!
Help me, LORD!”**

**11 You have changed my sadness into a joyful dance
you have taken away my sorrow
and surrounded me with joy.** { recall of deliverance }

**12 So I will not be silent;
I will sing praise to you.
LORD, you are my God;
I will give you thanks forever.** { ascription of praise }

Facilitator’s comments:

1. Some Psalms of Praise may not include all of the characteristics noted above.
2. Characteristics may not be in the same order as noted above.
3. Unlike a Psalm of Lament, the worshipper is offering praise out of already having experienced God’s love and grace.

D) A FURTHER ILLUSTRATION OF A PSALM OF PRAISE – using Jonah’s Psalm (see Jonah 2)

(Facilitator’s notes, both here and in interpreting verses that follow. This text obviously seems out of place where it is located In the belly of a “fish” a cry for help {a personal lament} would be appropriate, but not a Psalm of Praise for deliverance already experienced!)

(..... notice the remembrance of a time of past distress)

**“I called to the LORD out of my distress,
and he answered me;
out of the belly of Sheol I cried,
and you heard my voice.**

*(... Now, note how using mythical language Jonah describes the experience of dying as sinking down ... down into the subterranean waters of chaos
to the realm of death – and, remember the “cosmology” of those times!)*

**³ You cast me into the deep,
into the heart of the seas,
and the flood surrounded me;
all your waves and your billows
passed over me.**

*(... recall that death means separation from God,
whose presence is known in the Temple where people gather for worship)*

**⁴ Then I said, ‘I am driven away
from your sight;
how shall I look again**

upon your holy temple?’
⁵ The waters closed in over me;
the deep surrounded me;
weeds were wrapped around my head
⁶ at the roots of the mountains.
I went down to the land
whose bars closed upon me forever;

(now ... see how Jonah recalls God’s saving activity in response to his distress)

yet you brought up my life from the Pit,
O LORD my God.
⁷ As my life was ebbing away,
I remembered the LORD;
and my prayer came to you,
into your holy temple.

(... finally, Jonah celebrates God’s gracious action with an ascription of Praise)

⁸ Those who worship vain idols
forsake their true loyalty.
⁹ But I with the voice of thanksgiving
will sacrifice to you;
what I have vowed I will pay.
Deliverance belongs to the LORD!”

Facilitator’s Concluding Comment: This example from the Book of Jonah shows that a Psalm of Individual Praise typically looks back to a former time when a suppliant, in a situation of distress, cried to YHWH for help. That situation, however, no longer prevails. The interim of God’s absence, reflected in Psalms of Lament, has ended. In response to a cry out of the depths, YHWH has graciously acted! Once again, God has “shown his face” (HIS PRESENCE) and this new situation in life calls for the singing of “a new song!”

E) PRACTICUM - EXPLORING ADDITIONAL PSALMS OF INDIVIDUAL PRAISE:

Psalms 34, 40:1-11, 66:13-20, 92, 116, 118, 138

Instruction: Examine one or more of the above-listed psalms. Then, in the spaces below write the key words or phrases from the chosen psalm(s) that matches the different elements.

- 1) An invocation or address to God

2) The body of the psalm, which indicates one or more of the following:
a) A past distress -

b) A plea for help -

c) A recalling of God's gracious deeds –

3) An ascription of praise

F) SUGGESTION: BACK HOME, WRITE YOUR OWN PRAYER OF INDIVIDUAL PRAISE!

A CONCLUDING UNISON PRAYER OF PRAISE - Psalm 40:1-3

**I waited patiently for the LORD's help;
then he listened to me and heard my cry.
² He pulled me out of a dangerous pit,
out of the deadly quicksand.
He set me safely on a rock
and made me secure.
³ He taught me to sing a new song,
a song of praise to our God.
Many who see this will take warning
and will put their trust in the LORD.
Praise the Lord! Amen.**

(SAKLC_PSALMS_2013.11 per hjm)