

11. Psalmistry (The Psalms)

Introduction

- Inspired words and hymns
- Used in worship (including Christian)
- Words spoken about/to God by his people

So, if they are our words *to God*, how can they be God's word *to us*?

1. Musical Poems

- Designed to be emotive – to evoke feelings
- They use something called parallelism

2. Grouped into 5 books

1. Psalms 1-41
2. Psalms 42-72
3. Psalms 73-89
4. Psalms 90-106
5. Psalms 107-150

3. The different types of Psalm

Lament: 60+ - express struggles, suffering, distress and disappointment

Activity: Read Psalm 88:1-7 (out loud)

Thanksgiving: express joy because something has gone well – God's faithfulness, protection, benefit

Activity: Read Psalm 66:1-7 (out loud)

Praise: express praise for who he is – his greatness to the earth and/or its people

Activity: Read Psalm 8 (all of it, out loud)

Salvation History: 5 – review Israel's history and God's saving works

Activity: Read Psalm 78:1-8 (out loud)

Civic Celebration: covenant renewal, kingship, enthronement, city of Jerusalem

Activity: Read Psalm 20 (whole thing, out loud)

Wisdom: 8 – express the merits of wisdom and the wise life.

Activity: Read Psalm 37:1-7 (out loud)

Trust: 10 – God can be trusted – even when things are going pear-shaped!

Activity: Read Psalm 23 (whole thing, out loud)

4. Why are Psalms useful?

The psalms help us express the full range of our extreme emotions to God – often using exaggerated language (hyperbole) - joy, anger.

i) A guide to worship...

To help us express thoughts or feelings we find difficult to put into words.

ii) A reminder to be honest...

The example of the psalms reminds us to hold nothing back – to express the full range of emotions before God.

iii) A prompting to reflect...

The psalms remind us to pray, reflect and meditate on the things that God has done for us.

5. So how should we read them?

Tip: It might be a good idea to read through the psalms and note which ones express a certain mood or feeling. That way, next time you feel that way, you can read the psalm that fits!

When you read a psalm:

1. What **kind** of psalm is it?
2. Read the psalm as **a whole**.
3. How does it make you **feel**?

Examples:

Lament: (individual) 3,22,31,39,42,57,71,88,120
(corporate) 12,44,80,94,137

Thanksgiving: (community) 65,67,75,107,124,136
(individual) 18,30,32,34,40,66,92,116,118,138

Praise: (creator) 8,19,104,148 (protector)
66,100,111,114,149 (Lord of history)
33,103,113,117,145,146,147

Salvation History: 78,105,106,135,136

Civic Celebration: (covenant renewal) 50,81
(Davidic covenant) 89,132 (kingship)
2,18,20,21,45,72,101,110,144 (enthronement)
24,29,47,93,95,96,97,98,99 (Jerusalem)
46,48,76,84,87,122

Wisdom: 36,37,49,73,112,127,128,133

Trust: 11,16,23,27,62,63,91,121,125,132