**A Psalm a day**



***Daily Reflections***

 ***for Lent 2021***

***from the Benefice of***

***Malpas, Threapwood and Bickerton***

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***BOOK 3***

***from Monday 8th March to Saturday 13th March***

***DAYS 17 to 22***

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*Dear Friends,*

*We invite you to continue to journey with us through Lent by finding a quiet moment each Monday to Saturday to share with us in reflecting on the Psalms. We will provide a verse or short extract from a Psalm, a ‘ponder point’ and a prayer for each day. Our reflections will encourage you to read the whole Psalm from your Bible if you have time. We hope you will pause to think about what you have read. This Book 3 comes from Revd Helen who continues with the last five Psalms from the section of the Book of Psalms known as the Songs of Ascents.*

*May you know His presence and His peace as you journey on.*

*With every blessing,*

*The Rector and Revd Helen*



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***DAY#17 MONDAY 8th March 2021***

***For reading & reflection: PSALM 130: 1-8***

v.6: ‘**my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning.’**
***Ponder point:*** I love this verse. We expect the sun to rise every new morning. In the same way we can be as sure of God as we are of the dawn. God is at work in the world and will bring about His purposes, however dark things may seem. So as we wait for His purposes to come to pass we do so with the same confident hope and certainty as a watchman waits for the dawn. R.S. Thomas’ poem “Kneeling” which describes waiting on God in prayer ends with the words, “The meaning is in the waiting”. Waiting and hoping show a willingness to let God have His way rather than making plans and telling God to put them into effect. Is there a situation you need to surrender to God? Be confident that His will is always our highest good and reflect on what you are learning and discovering as you wait on Him.

***Prayer:*** *Father, we commend to your faithful love those who are crying from the depths; help them to watch and pray through their time of darkness, in sure hope of the dawn of your forgiveness and redemption; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen*



***DAY#18 TUESDAY 9th MARCH 2021***

***For reading & reflection: PSALM 131:1-3***

v. 2: ‘But I have calmed and quieted my soul,
   like a weaned child with its mother’

***Ponder point:*** This verse, in painting a beautiful picture of a child’s contented dependence on its mother, portrays the child-like humility and trust which God depends of us. The Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892) is reported to have said of this Psalm that “This is one of the shortest Psalms to read, but one of the longest to learn’. It can take time to grow a steadfast trust in God and to stop trying to control everything and everyone. We were told at theological college that, “There are only 3 persons in the Trinity, and there are no vacancies!” We come to a place of secure trust like the Psalmist when we cling to God not out of insecurity or fear but with calm and firm confidence in Him. Are you perplexed by too many concerns today? Then ask God to help you to focus on what He wants you to be concerned about and leave the rest of the universe to him.

***Prayer:***

*Eternal God, calm and quieten our souls; keep us humble and full of wonder*

*and trusting as we live in your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen*



***DAY#19 WEDNESDAY 10th MARCH 2021***

***For reading & reflection: PSALM 132:1-18***

v.11: ‘**The Lord swore to David a sure oath from which he will not turn back’.**

***Ponder point:*** This is the longest of the Songs of Ascents and said to be the oldest. It has been called “The Psalm of David’s Obedience”. The first half takes an incident from Israel’s past to show the importance of obedience. It was John Calvin who said that “the true knowledge of God is born out of obedience”. Just as in the Old Testament we see how many of Israel's difficulties stemmed from their lack of obedience, so in our own Christian discipleship can our problems and setbacks arise when we fail to follow God’s commands. The second part of this Psalm – from verse 11 - moves from past history to future hope. God keeps his promises and Scripture reminds us of this repeatedly. This psalm ends with the promise that the blessings that lie ahead will be greater than the blessings of the past. But in all of this, may we remember that the key to God’s blessing is obedience. How do you see obedience to God’s commands? As restrictive or restraining? Or as the key to freedom and blessing?

***Prayer:*** *Jesus, Son of David, make us a priestly people; clothe us in righteousness,*

*make us fruitful, and give us hearts to shout for joy in your salvation;*

*we pray in the power of the Spirit. Amen*

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***DAY#20 THURSDAY 11th MARCH 2021***

***For reading & reflection: PSALM 133:1-3***

vv.1&2: ‘**How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity! It is like the precious oil on the head, running down upon the beard, on the beard of Aaron’**

***Ponder point:*** I love this vivid image that the psalmist uses to describe the blessings that flow from unity. God blesses unity in families, communities, marriage, teams, nations and the Church. Unity has always been both God’s will and his desire. The image of oil flowing from Aaron’s head on which it has been poured, down his beard and onto the collar of his robes is taken from the ordination of Aaron and his sons as priests. This picture shows the far-reaching, all-embracing influence of true unity. The people of God are already a family with a shared fatherhood in God, but sadly that doesn’t necessarily mean happy families. What might we do as the family of God in our own churches to strengthen our unity?

***Prayer:*** *Grant to your people, good Lord, the spirit of unity, that they may dwell together in your love, and so bear to the world the ointment of your healing and the dew of your blessing; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen*



***DAY#21 FRIDAY 12th MARCH 2021***

***For reading & reflection: PSALM 134:1-3***

vv.1-2: ‘**Come, bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord, who stand by night in the house of the Lord!
Lift up your hands to the holy place, and bless the Lord.’**

***Ponder point:*** This is the last ‘Song of Ascents’. The keyword here is ‘praise’. V.1 addresses those who minister by night. The priests and Levites in the Temple in Jerusalem often worked in shifts, especially during festivals, and it was not unusual for services to go on through the night. I was reading recently of an Anglican Church in London that has a 24/7 prayer room. Worshippers sign up for a slot of at least an hour and there is guaranteed to be someone praying and worshipping in that room at any given time, 24 hours a day 7 days a week. That’s quite something! The lifting up of hands in v.2 was and remains today not only a very natural gesture of praise, but also a posture of prayer which expresses openness and expectation of receiving blessings from the Lord. This Psalm is sometimes referred to as *Circle of blessing* because that’s what it is - it begins by inviting people to bless God and ends with God’s promise of blessing on them. Do you find praise contagious? Have you ever found that if you put yourself among people who are worshipping and praising it’s difficult not to get drawn in to praising ourselves, whether we feel like it or not?

***Prayer:*** *Guard all your household, Lord, through the dark night of faith,*

*and purify the hearts of those who wait on you, until your kingdom dawns with the rising of your Son, Christ, the morning star. Amen*

***DAY#22 SATURDAY 13th MARCH 2021***

***For reading & reflection: PSALM 13:1-6***

v.1: ‘**How long, O Lord?**

***Ponder point:*** Psalm 13 is one of thesixty ‘Psalms of Lament’- psalms that cry out in complaint to God and demand his help in trouble. In them we hear of the real life experiences of Israel - songs of personal sorrow, loneliness, distress, sickness and death; and complaint in the face of trouble, disaster, enemy attack, oppression and injustice. Urgent questions are addressed directly to God. They express a whole range of human emotions– some of which as Christians we perhaps hope we might never feel and may not wish to pollute our prayer life with them. But I believe that the earthy languageof the Psalms can provide for us today a means of expressing feelings that we might otherwise find difficult to articulate. This raw and sometimes disconcerting language of the Psalms depicts the reality of the human condition and puts it right where it belongs – in conversation with our sovereign, faithful, all-powerful God. Is there something you need to get off to your chest today? Maybe the Psalms will help you find the right words in which to take it to God.

***Prayer:*** *Jesus Christ, Son of God, who passed through the dark sleep of death, remember those who cry to you in shame and silence and defeat and raise them to your risen life, for you are alive and reign for ever. Amen*

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