

## Cultivate - PSALMS

### PSALM 76:

You may have heard or read the phrase "*The Spirit of 76*" used to refer to a "*patriotic sentiment typified by the zeitgeist surrounding the American Revolution. It refers to the attitude of self-determination and individual liberty made manifest in the Declaration of Independence*" (definition provided by Wikipedia). But the Christian finds a far more meaningful and eternal "*Spirit of 76*" right here, in the 76th Psalm.

Psalm 76 is a "Song of Zion" Psalm, reminding us of where our true loyalty and most profound identity lie. Verses 1-6 speak of a great deliverance. Verses 7-12 speak of a great judgment.

In these great themes, deliverance and judgment, we find something of a picture of the story told in the Scriptures. Jesus was sent to deliver his people from all of their enemies. And one day all the world will stand before him, on the day of judgment. Let these themes cultivate more of "*The Spirit of 76*" in your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. Remember, we are citizens of Zion before we are citizens of America.

### PSALM 77:

This Psalm begins in a time of suffering and tears and trouble and prayer-less, sleepless exhaustion (v.4). The Psalmist finds himself assailed by some very specific doubts (vs.7-9). But then there's verse 10. Followed by memories of God's holiness (vs.11-13), God's might (v.14), and God's love for his people (v.15), as seen in the story of the Exodus (vs.16-20). And then the prayer ends, very abruptly. The true God has been remembered, even in the midst of trouble.

Psalm 77 is a "Psalm for a People in Decline." And the next time you are attacked by dark moods and stinging doubts and tormenting despair, perhaps you will find comfort in this fellow-sufferer's honesty, courage, and faith.

Look for the turning point in the Psalm when the "I" (which seems to be everywhere at first) turns into the "You." Let that turning point find your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. Give thanks to God that in the Psalms, he gives us a language for suffering and for asking God hard questions. In fact, there are more Psalms of Lament than any other kind. And this is what we should expect, if life is full of trouble and sorrow at times, and if God loves us. It is. And he does.

### PSALM 78:

This Psalm is a bit lengthy. And it is entirely wonderful. The first eight verses set the agenda: each generation has a holy calling to pass on the faith to "*the coming generation*" (v.4) / "*the next generation*" (v.6), so that they might then do the same, and on and on, from one generation to the next. *This is how God intends that our children and their children "should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments" (v.7).*

Psalm 78, like last week's Psalm, is a "Psalm for a People in Decline." It is a searching, honest

review of the history of God's people, from the days of their slavery in Egypt, until the reign of King David. And the stories of this history—*children love hearing stories well told!*—are explored so truthfully so that the next generation might learn from those stories, avoiding the foolish errors of the past.

But the stories here told don't merely search the heart. They also encourage, instruct, and warm the heart. It's not just man's sin on display; it's also God's glorious grace. May both themes be found in your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. If we would be trained by them, the Psalms will teach us both how to adore our God and how to call out to him for deliverance.

### **PSALM 79:**

We have said many times that the Psalter offers you a way to pray through every conceivable circumstance in life. Well... what if the world turned against the church and tried to completely wipe it out? Would we have help praying in that kind of situation as well? Welcome to Psalm 79.

Psalm 79 is an "Imprecatory Psalm." Notice the strong "they" sections of the Psalm (vs.1-3, 5-7, 10-12), alternating with the "we" sections of the Psalm (vs.4, 8-9, 13).

Take note, as you pray this Psalm, that this is a cry of faith, in the midst of great distress. It is not a cry of doubt. Let that faith fill your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. Imprecatory Psalms are prayers for God's judgment to fall upon the enemies who are destroying God's people. Remember, there is a godly anger—known by both God and his people—that can be directed toward anything that is belligerently hateful toward the Kingdom of God. But we don't pour out this anger towards other people. We turn it into godly prayer to the Lord, waiting for the Great Day he has promised, when absolutely everything in the world will be set to rights.

### **PSALM 80:**

If God shines his face upon us, we shall be saved (v.3). Conversely, the full rebuke of his face means that we will perish (v.16). Therefore, you have the petitions that fill this Psalm: *"give ear... stir up your might and come to save us... Restore us, O God: let your face shine, that we may be saved (a refrain found 3 times)... Turn again, O God of hosts! Look down from heaven, and see; have regard for this vine."*

Psalm 80 is a "Psalm of Revival." And the vine metaphor of vs.8-18 makes it especially rich and memorable and striking. Reflect on what all that extended metaphor is teaching; consider each phrase carefully. And then meditate on what it means when Jesus says that he is *"the true vine"* (John 15.1ff).

Also take note of the title and attributes of God revealed here. Let those aspects of God's character and work enrich your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. Praying a Psalm like this trains us to cry out to God for strong help, and doing that builds confidence and hope and trust in the very midst of weakness.

### **PSALM 81:**

Redemption and Response. Those are the great themes of this great Psalm. In vs.1-5, God is calling his people to a great feast day, according to his law. In vs.6 & 7, God is recalling how he delivered his people from Egypt. Next (in vs.8-10) God recalls how he revealed himself to his people by his Word. In response, the free people of God are called to faithful lives of love and obedience. There are terrible consequences attached to disobedience (vs.11-13), and there are beautiful blessings attached to obedience (vs.14-16). Welcome to the covenant.

Psalm 81 is a "Psalm of God's Faithfulness." The "*feast day*" (v.3) in view here is most likely the Feast of Booths (also sometimes called the Feast of Tabernacles). See Deuteronomy 31.10-13 for a quick introduction. This feast commemorated the wilderness journey of God's people (after the Exodus) and included a public reading of God's law, every seventh year.

In spirit this Psalm is very similar to Psalm 95. Both begin with festive joy; both go on to remind us that God is looking for true listeners... not just happy feasters. May the lessons of the wilderness journey not be lost on God's people. Take those lessons with you as you pray this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. Let us faithfully believe and confess and teach the next generation the meaning of the history between God and his people, while we praise the Lord for his mighty works of salvation.

### **PSALM 82:**

In John 10.35 the Lord Jesus refers to earthly, human rulers who hold offices of great dignity and judgement and power—with corresponding responsibility and accountability before the Lord—as "gods." The Bible does that occasionally. It does so here. You see the duties of these "gods" specified in vs.2-4. These are Israel's judges (see those same duties spelled out in such passages as Exodus 22.22-4; 23.6-7; Deuteronomy 1.16-17; 10.17-18; 16.18-20). Their calling is to reflect the judgment of God (Deuteronomy 1.17). But what happens when these "gods" fail us? What happens when "*they have neither knowledge nor understanding, they walk about in darkness; [and] all the foundations of the earth are shaken*" (v.5)? Is there still a True God, to whom they are answerable? Yes. See vs.1,6-7. Therefore, we must pray to Him (v.8).

Psalm 82 is an "Imprecatory Psalm." The "gods" of earth have been brought to trial before the True God.

This is a bold Psalm, and it is a dramatic Psalm. And it brings great and terrible clarity to what is often a very confusing, chaotic human situation. Let that clarity encourage your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. Once you starting living faithfully in the fierce beauty of the Psalms, are these not some of the most rich and powerful encounters of your entire Christian life?

### **PSALM 83:**

Want to read an illustration of Psalm 83? Take in 2 Chronicles 20. But keep in mind that the evil coalition described in Psalm 83.5-8 by far exceeds any coalition against Israel of which we have any historical record. But even if all the world does turn "*with one accord*" (v.5) against the

people of God, what we have here is this: the people of God coming to him in prayer (v.1), in the very face of the world's roaring hostility (vs.2-8), forming their prayer in light of God's revealed Word (vs.9-15), and longing for the day when the "*Most High over all the earth*" is acknowledged by all nations (vs.16-18).

Psalm 83 is another "Imprecatory Psalm." And it helps us have a clear-eyed view of where the church truly stands, even if all the world hates us because we do not belong to it (see John 15.18-25). So... just pray. God has actually already overcome the world (see Psalm 83.9-12; John 16.33).

But make sure you note what the final desire of this Psalm is. It's not just our comfort or our victory; it is the true conversion of those who stand opposed to God (see v.16,18). We want to see them convinced of God, seeking God, and humbly bowing before him. Let that vision fill your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. May our prayers be a means of God bringing his blessing to the world.

#### **PSALM 84:**

Does your faith need to be strengthened and fortified this week? Then reflect deeply on the longing and hunger for God found in v.2. Contemplate how *all* creation can rest in the sacrifice ("*altar*," pointing to the work of Christ on the cross) that God has provided, pictured for us in v.3. Ponder the earnestness of faith celebrated in vs.5-7. Chew on that sweet contentment with God that is expressed in vs.10&11. Meditate and pray on these things until they begin to swell up in your heart, more and more.

Psalm 84 is a "Song of Zion," and a deep yearning for the presence of the Lord is written all over it. It's a rebuke to a puny, skimpy appetite for God, and it's an encouragement to those who desire to come and feast on the Lord.

Consider the three times the word "*blessed*" is used in this Psalm (see vs.4,5,12), as you seek to "enter into" this Psalm this week. Let that blessedness stir up a greater craving for the glory of God in your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. Remember the wisdom of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, question #1: your chief purpose in all of life is to glorify this God. And to enjoy him. Forever.

#### **PSALM 85:**

When we are in the midst of some painful affliction of life, that does not always and necessarily mean that we are in great sin and that God is displaying his disapproval. Remember Job, the one who suffered righteously. However, the wise *will* always receive the painful afflictions of life as invitations for self-examination. Perhaps there is some sin to be confessed. Perhaps there is some wrong to be righted. Such is Psalm 85.

Psalm 85 is a "Psalm of Revival." Out of the bleakness of a time when God's favor is only a memory (vs.1-3) and a sense of his anger fills the present (vs.4-7), this Psalm teaches us to pray, "*Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?*" (v.6).

And yet, look upon the land of God's goodness that comes into view at the conclusion (vs.10-13). This is the result of resolving to truly, sincerely listen to God (vs.8,9). May the joy of that promised country fill your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. Remember: the Psalter is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3.16).

### **PSALM 86:**

Are your prayers more occupied with telling God about you? Or telling God about himself? There's certainly nothing wrong with telling God about yourself; it happens everywhere, even here in 86. But notice the emphasis. We don't even fully get to David's specific need until v.14. First David spends time in communion with God and renewing his commitment to God (see vs.11,12). Count how many times the phrase "O Lord" is used, and what it is teaching us about the Lord at each instance.

Psalms 86 is a "Psalm of Petition," but it's striking how differently it is framed than the Psalms/Prayers of Petition that you and I usually pray. To see more examples of how people pray this way in the Bible, visit Nehemiah 9.5-31, 32-37; Acts 4.24-28, 29-30.

This is the only prayer of David (see the title) in Book III of the Psalter. It's a "lonely" prayer in that way. It's a lonely prayer in other ways as well. And yet, it's filled with praise. May praise, even in lonely moment, gladden your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. The Psalms remind us, in a thousand ways, that *all* of life is oriented around God. All of it. Every single moment.

### **PSALM 87:**

The City. The Birth. The Book. Three important themes of the Bible, all woven together here in Psalm 87. The City of Man (see Genesis 11.1-9) is an attempt to live in this world without reference to God, but the consummation of God's redeeming work will be a world-wide Garden City (Revelation 21.1-2, 15-27)! For other important "city" passages, see Isaiah 2, 26, 60, and Hebrews 12. But there's also the theme of Birth. Are we citizens of the City of God? That is, have we indeed been "born" there (see John 1.12-13; 3.3-8)? And finally, the theme of Book. Will our name be found in God's Book? See Exodus 32.32; Psalm 56.8; 69.28; Ezekiel 13.9; Daniel 12.1; Luke 10.20; Philippians 4.3; Hebrews 12.23; Revelation 3.5. And right here, Psalm 87.6 (see Isaiah 4.3).

Psalms 87 is a "Song of Zion." For a fuller commentary on it, see and sing and study John Newton's wonderful hymn, "*Glorious Things Of Thee Are Spoken*" (which title it taken from v.3).

As Paul says of the City of God in Galatians 4.26, "*the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.*" Let that remarkable origin and destiny saturate your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. Consider well this week all the delights of being a child of God, a citizen of that better city.

### **PSALM 88:**

Have you ever felt like you were stumbling through a darkened path, with no sunshine in sight,

where even the good news of gospel and the assurance of God's love and the promise of heaven all seem like it must be referring to someone else? That's the experience of this Psalm, over and over and over again. Even though the Lord is confessed as *"the God of my salvation"* (v.1) and even though the Psalmist is still praying, still trusting, still leaning... the feeling of darkness only deepens. Welcome to Psalm 88.

Psalm 88 is a "Psalm for a People in Decline." It is the incarnated prayer of Isaiah 50.10: *"Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God."*

This is the saddest, most depressed, most outcast-feeling Psalm in the Psalter. And when you need to pray honestly to God from that point of view, here it is for you. Take it in hand, get down on your knees, and pray. *"Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of the Lord and rely on his God."* May this kind of freedom and honesty in prayer be yours this week, regardless of what kind of prayer you need to express. We'll pray it together on Sunday. Remember, God will never abandon his children, even in the most confusing and absurd-feeling moments of life. He teaches us how to pray honestly in those moments as well.

#### **PSALM 89:**

This one is a bit lengthy, so some outlining helps. There are three sections to this Psalm: 1-14, 15-37, and 38-51. (Verse 52 is an editorial conclusion to Book III of the Psalter.) The first section is centered on the idea that God's promises are guaranteed by God's nature. The second section is the core and heart of the Psalm, focusing in on significant points of God's promises to his Old Testament people: the favored people, the favored king, the favored dynasty. The third section is seeking God's face in the midst of what seems like broken promises. To get a quick taste of this section, just look at the verbs attributed to God's actions in vs.38-45.

Psalm 89 is one of the great *"How long?"* Psalms of the Bible (see that question twice in v.46). *"Remember how short my time is!"* (v.47).

There is pain and tension in this Psalm, but the heart of it is humility, not bitterness. It doesn't rant and scold. And it doesn't explain away. It looks to God to explain and fulfill. And, in doing so, it points us on to the New Testament, where all of God's promises of an eternal king from the line of David are fulfilled well beyond all of our wildest imaginations. Let those Christ-centered promises occupy your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. Remember, Book III of the Psalter (which just ended with Psalm 89) was darker than the first two books. Book IV will turn to the praise and reign of God on earth, with new hope.

#### **PSALM 90:**

The top of this Psalm offers us my favorite title found in the whole of the Psalter: *"A Prayer of Moses, the man of God."* Can any setting possibly better suit the subject matter of this Psalm than the devastating news Moses heard from God in Numbers 14.34: *"According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, a year for each day, you shall bear your iniquity forty years, and you shall know my displeasure"*? What was Moses doing for those wearying 40 years? What was he thinking? What was he praying? Psalm 90. It's beautiful, it's

moving, it's utterly realistic... and it's pointing us to our only hope.

Psalm 90 is a "Wisdom Psalm." You and I do not live in a culture that welcomes reflection on judgment, reflection on mortality, reflection on death. But the Bible again and again teaches that we must reflect on these things deeply, if we would be wise.

Isaac Watts once wrote a hymn, based upon this Psalm. It's called, "*O God, Our Help In Ages Past,*" and I heartily recommend the knowledge of it and the singing of it. Let this Psalm's presentation of God's eternity over against our frailty give wisdom to your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. The Wisdom Psalms are very practical. What practical guidance do you find here, for your own life and for your own growth in the fear of the Lord?

### **PSALM 91:**

Earlier this morning I woke up from one of those threatening nightmares that make you immediately turn to God and mutter something like, "Thank you, Lord, that that was just a dream. It wasn't real." However, as Psalm 91 quite vividly reminds us, threats can be very real in this world. But that's not the only thing in this world that is real. Our Father's pledge of strong love, defending love, personal, warm and caring love is also very real. Even a host of unseen heavenly guardians is real (v.11).

Psalm 91 is a "Psalm of Trust." And the next time you feel that you are being encircled by danger or exposed to threat... come and dwell in the shelter of the Most High.

Notice the "I" who prays in vs.1 & 2—this is you. Notice the "you" who is being addressed in vs.3-13—this is also you. And finally, notice the "I" who confirms his promises in vs.14-16—this is the Lord. May each of those changes of voice, in its own way, bring confidence to your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. Give God thanks and praise for his delivering love.

### **PSALM 92:**

Just as all of human history pivots on Christmas Day—the *birth of this world's Redeemer*—so this Psalm pivots on v.8, a simple but commanding statement of the exaltation of the Lord. The title tells us that this is "*A Song for the Sabbath.*" Read through this Psalm with that in mind! What does this Psalm / Song teach us about the Sabbath? Note that it's obviously a day for praise; a day to recognize God's holiness; a day to be reaffirmed in the eternal distinction between what is stupid/foolish/wicked/evil and what is exalted; a day to recall what God has done for his people.

Psalm 92 is a "Psalm for Times of Trouble." And indeed, once a week in the midst of this troubled world, God is calling *you* to Sabbath. To a day "*of solemn rest, a holy convocation*" (Leviticus 23.3), for corporate worship.

Notice the big contrast in this Psalm between the transience of the wicked (vs.7,9,11) and the ever-renewed strength of the righteous (vs.10, 12-15). Let that contrast move you to deeper

prayer this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. Give thanks to the Lord, for his steadfast love endures forever.

### **PSALM 93:**

Psalms 93-100 have a consistent theme of the Lord's kingship, his sovereignty, his rule, his reign, his strength, his role as the mighty judge of the universe. God is the Great King over all the earth and all that is in it! See here, in 93.4&5, the image of his effortless sovereignty over the thunderous pounding of the mighty waves of the sea. Prepare to be encouraged in the royal calm of how God exercises his kingly majesty, and with Psalm 93, let us faithfully acclaim his kingship to this world.

Psalm 93 is an "Enthronement Psalm," and it begins this series of Psalms described above with an announcement that declares truth over and above all the tumult of this life: "*The Lord reigns!*"

In the midst of your tumult this week, simply pick up this Psalm and announce that declared truth with the Psalmist. Announce verse 1. Then announce verse 2. Then announce verse 3. Then announce verse 4. And finally, announce verse 5. Declare it calmly, but declare it loudly. The Lord is speaking to you yourself very directly in this Psalm. Let that calm directness be celebrated in your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. Remember, one role of the Psalms in your life is to help you rightly express your faith, even in the midst of suffering.

### **PSALM 94:**

We said in last week's intro that Psalms 93-100 have a consistent theme of the Lord's kingship. In Psalm 94 this developing picture of the king begins to also acquire the related picture of the "*judge of the earth*" (v.2). Last week we celebrated God's sovereignty over the pounding waves (93.3,4); this week we trust in his sovereignty over the pounding that "*evildoers*" would like to inflict upon his people.

Psalm 94 is a "Psalm of Petition," urgently calling out to the Lord, begging him to "*rise up*" (v.2) and avenge the innocent blood of his people, as he has promised (see Deuteronomy 32.35; Romans 12.19-20). If vs.1 and 2 strike us as controversial, spend some time reflecting on vs.3-7. The God of the Bible is never uncaring, inactive, non-interventionist nor irrelevant when his beloved people are being crushed. And we rightly praise him for this.

But 94 is not merely a cry for vengeance. It is also a very reflective Psalm—almost like the Proverbs, at times—full of the confident spirit and passionate faith of one who has known and experienced God's faithfulness very personally. Let that spirit and faith forge bold prayers in your life this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. Learning to love the Psalms rightly may take some effort. But it's one of the wisest efforts you could make for your Christian maturity.

### **PSALM 95:**

In this Psalm the people of God are singing and worshipping the one who is in their very midst as the Lord, the Rock of their salvation, the great God, the great King, the Creator, the Maker, the Shepherd, the One to whom—*when you hear his voice*—full faith and full trust and full



obedience is owed. No wonder this Psalm is frequently encountered as a call and guide to worship. In fact, the ancient church use to call 95 "*the Venite*"—which is Latin for "*Oh, Come*"—the first two words of the Psalm.

Psalm 95 is an "Enthronement Psalm." And, with that in mind, take note of how the conclusion of the Psalm has a very different feel than the opening. This is a real and true King whose enthronement we are here celebrating. "*Safe? Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you.*"—Mr. Beaver, *The Chronicles of Narnia*

The message of this Psalm is expanded upon in Hebrews 3.7-4.13. The "*today*" is actually today. The "*you*" is actually you. And the "*rest*" is salvation in Jesus Christ. Let this call to worship give shape to your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. Note the great variety of directions in which the Psalter seeks to take your praise. Let's indwell all of those directions faithfully.

### **PSALM 96:**

Last week's Psalm (95) seemed to be centered within the fellowship of the covenant people, where the Lord is known by all the wonderful titles used to describe him in that song. This week (Psalm 96) we seem to be moving outward, in mission, bearing the testimony of who God is to "*all the earth*" (v.1). His glory and his marvelous works are worthy of all praise out among the nations, among all the peoples (v.3). All the earth is called to tremble before him (v.9) and rejoice before him (v.11), for he is indeed the righteous judge of all the earth (vs.10,13).

Psalm 96 is the second in a series of five "Enthronement Psalms." This Psalm has a lot in common with the song of David in 1 Chronicles 16, when the ark of God triumphantly enters into Jerusalem. Stand in awe at that moment when the *True King Of This World* planted his throne right there, in the enemy's former citadel. He's still doing that today.

Romans 8.19 says, "*the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.*" Do you get that same sense of eager longing here? "*Oh sing... ascribe... worship... for he comes!*" Let that vigor of that "*eager longing*" fill your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. May the Psalter fill your heart with the life and power of salvation this week, alongside a holy love for the Lord.

### **PSALM 97:**

In these Psalms that so strongly and so beautifully celebrate the Lord's kingship (Psalms 93-100), a strong link has been established between his kingship and his holiness or righteousness (see, for example, 93.5; 94.15, 21, 23; 96.9,13). Now that link is heightened and magnified when we catch a glimpse of a throne which has as its very foundation righteousness and justice (v.2), and the heavens that are always proclaiming his righteousness (v.6). And finally this Psalm's climax comes to us as a resolute call to righteousness (vs.10-12).

Psalm 97 is the third in a series of five "Enthronement Psalms." These Psalms make very clear that God is coming, as the universal king.

But his coming as the King of the Universe will meet with different reactions. In Psalms 96 & 98 we see the sheer delight of his people. Here, in 97, we see the doom of the rebels, as they behold the coming Conqueror. Let the awe of that approaching moment move you to vigorous prayer this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. Let us join with the whole of the church—throughout all time and in every place—in praising the Lord, with united heart and voice.

### **PSALM 98:**

We saw in last week's Psalm (97) that the king's *"righteousness"* continued to be developed as a big theme in this series of "The Psalms of the King" (93-100). In this week's Psalm we consider the king's righteousness again, both in the past (v.2) and in the future (v.9). Very important! Does God's kingly righteousness make you glad and joyful of heart? It should! For assistance (from God!), see verses 1 and 4 and 7.

Psalm 98 is another "Enthronement Psalm." The ancient church knew this Psalm as the *"Cantate Domino,"* meaning *"Oh Sing To The Lord"* (the first words of v.1). And the Book of Common Prayer would often use it as the bridge between Old Testament promise and New Testament fulfillment.

Note that this Psalm is a lot like 96, but here we find no didactic instructions and comparisons, as we find there. Rather, 98 is wholly and completely given over to the joyful exhilaration of praise! Let that praise infuse your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. Remember there are 4 "uses" of the Psalms to keep in mind, that you might explore and enjoy it fully: the prayer of the original human author, the corporate prayer of Israel in worship, the prayer of Jesus, and finally OUR prayer—both individually and corporately.

### **PSALM 99:**

*"Holy is he!"* (v.3) *"Holy is he!"* (again, v.5) *"The Lord our God is holy!"* (v.9). Psalm 99 is a strong call to praise and worship the Lord! And these three refrains of his holiness divide the Psalm up into three parts. Verses 1-3 emphasize the grace of the Holy One; though peoples tremble and the earth quakes before him, he sits enthroned, dwelling among his people in Zion. Verses 4-5 stress the law of the Holy One; he loves justice and equity and righteousness with all of his might. And verses 6-9 assert the fellowship of the Holy One; hearing and answering the prayers of his people, forgiving them, and disciplining them.

Psalm 99 is the last of this series of "Enthronement Psalms" (93, 95-99). As we've been praying through them, how have they affected you? At times, perhaps these Enthronement Psalms have stirred you deeply, calling you into the feast of worship! At other times, perhaps they have humbled you, revealing again the depravity of sin, before the face of his profound holiness. As a wise believer once wrote, "God is all that stirs us and all that shames us." Let both moods carry you to a self-forgetful joy and delight in Christ, through whom the exalted Holy One is *"a forgiving God"* (v.8). Pray Psalm 99 to your Holy Lord of Grace! We'll pray it together on Sunday. Believer, you have a particular circumstance in life right now, to which Psalm 99 speaks powerfully. Believe it and live it, thoughtfully.

**PSALM 100:**

Just take a moment, first of all, to reflect on all the commands here: *"Make a joyful noise, serve, come, know, enter, give thanks, bless."* And then take a moment to reflect on all the affirmations: *"He is God, he made us, we are his, we are his people, the Lord is good, his steadfast love endures forever, his faithfulness to all generations."* Obviously, we can learn a lot about God and about what it means to be his people, right here, in Psalm 100.

This Psalm richly and vigorously and beautifully celebrates the Lord God! And if you want to more fully enter into this celebration, look up the hymn *"All People That On Earth Do Dwell."* Notice that the name of the tune to which it is sung is "Old Hundredth." Why? Because it's based off of... Psalm 100.

Another wonderful hymn that is based upon this Psalm is *"Before Jehovah's Awesome Throne."* Reflection upon that hymn would also be very worthwhile for any Christian. Let this Psalm illuminate your prayers this week. We'll pray it together on Sunday. Consider how the nation of Israel had her understanding of the Lord God formed by this Psalm. And then consider how the Christian church today has our understanding of the Lord God formed by this Psalm. *"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever"* (Hebrews 13.8).