

praying AT HOME & TOGETHER

santa barbara community church



WEEK OF MAY 10, 2020

I WILL PRAISE YOU, GOD, WITH ALL OF MY HEART

Psalm 138 (NIV)

¹ I will praise you, O LORD, with all my heart; before the “gods” I will sing your praise. ² I will bow down toward your holy temple and will praise your name for your love and your faithfulness, for you have exalted above all things your name and your word. ³ When I called, you answered me; you made me bold and stouthearted.

⁴ May all the kings of the earth praise you, O LORD, when they hear the words of your mouth. ⁵ May they

sing of the ways of the LORD, for the glory of the LORD is great.

⁶ Though the LORD is on high, he looks upon the lowly, but the proud he knows from afar. ⁷ Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life; you stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes, with your right hand you save me. ⁸ The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me; your love, O LORD, endures forever- do not abandon the works of your hands.

Prayer

- Our goal is always to pray Scripture back to God. Because at its best, prayer puts listening before speaking. Picture it this way: all Scripture is “God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16,17). In prayer we therefore breathe out what God’s Spirit breathes into us in reflection, praise, thanks, confession and request. Poet George Herbert aptly describes prayer as “God’s breath in man returning to his birth.”
- We start by breathing in, by listening to God’s Word. Read through the psalm once, slowly, asking the Holy Spirit to “underline” a phrase or word that you need to pay attention to. Repeat it silently to yourself, asking the Lord to tell you why you need to pay attention to it. When invited, say it aloud to those you are praying with.
- After listening to the Word, pray each of the sections of the psalm, using the 4 R’s.
 - Refect: What does it mean?
 - Rejoice: What gives me reason to thank and praise God? A good way to think about thanks is being grateful for what God does. To praise him is to say “Wow” for who God is, his holy character and goodness.
 - Repent: What in this text shed light on sin in my life? Confess your sin.
 - Request: Based on what I see here, what may I ask God to give and do? Then ask!
- Throughout, quotes and comments are added to embellish the psalm and help you pray it.

I WILL PRAISE YOU, GOD, WITH ALL OF MY HEART...

1. "I WILL PRAISE YOU...." VERSES 1-2A:

¹I will praise you, O LORD, with all my heart; before the "gods" I will sing your praise. ² I will bow down toward your holy temple and will praise your name for your love and your faithfulness,

- Praise is a decision, not a mood. We may think that to do something with all our heart is to do it with emotion. In the Bible, the heart can include emotion, but goes much deeper: it is the center of our being, the core of our resolve and commitments. Pray that you will worship this way, that we will.
- No one who has ever thoughtfully considered God's love and faithfulness needs to "be in the mood" to praise God. It is a sober necessity. Recount all the ways you know God to be faithful and loving and praise him for these things.

2. "FOR YOU HAVE".... VERSES 2B-3:

^{2b}for you have exalted above all things your name and your word. ³When I called, you answered me; you made me bold and stouthearted.

- Praise God for his faithful Word in Christ and in the Bible.
- Pray not for God to take you out of trouble, but for Him to make you bold and stouthearted in trouble. Pray as Phillips Brooks urged his congregation to pray: "Do not pray for easy lives. Pray to be stronger people. Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers. Pray for powers equal to your tasks."

3. "MAY ALL THE KINGS OF THE EARTH PRAISE YOU, O LORD".... VERSES 4,5:

⁴May all the kings of the earth praise you, O LORD, when they hear the words of your mouth. ⁵ May they sing of the ways of the LORD, for the glory of the LORD is great.

- Seen through the lens of the New Testament, this is truly an evangelistic prayer, that all peoples will be baptized into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and be disciples of Christ. Pray for this to be so. Pray for the kings and peoples of the earth to bring their riches into the Heavenly City (cf. Revelation 21:22-26)

4. "YOU WILL".... VERSES 6-8:

⁶Though the LORD is on high, he looks upon the lowly, but the proud he knows from afar.

⁷Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life; you stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes, with your right hand you save me. ⁸The LORD will fulfill his purpose for me; your love, O LORD, endures forever- do not abandon the works of your hands.

- The Scriptures teach that to live is to fight in a cosmic conflict, to "walk in the midst of trouble" (7). Do you believe that? Pray that you will be more conscious of the larger spiritual realities and conflicts that, though unseen, are real. Pray as Jesus taught, the God will deliver us "from the evil one."
- Read and reflect on the Apostle Paul's words below, and ask yourself, what have I entrusted to God for 'that day'? -- at end of my life? On the day when Jesus will return to "judge the living and the dead." Pray for the wisdom and courage to live life from its end, its purpose. "Teach us to number our days rightly, that we may gain a heart of wisdom" (Psalm 90:12). What is your purpose?
 - "being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. Philippians 1:6
 - I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day. 2 Timothy 1:12
 - I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me

the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only to me, but to all who have longed for his appearing. 2 Timothy 4:7,8

- We live in a culture that worships youth and lives only in the present. But the real question is not where are we now, but where will we be in the end. What is the trajectory of your life? John Wesley was asked what he thought of the movement he founded, the early Methodists. His boast was, “They die well.” Will you? Pray that you will die well, by the grace of God.