

“First Sunday in WvM, our new home.”

Psalm 105:v1-6 and v37 to the end.

Shall we pray?

Father, thank you for this opportunity to be here. Thank you for the privilege of being able to preach, uh, the first message here at WvM, for All Saints. Thank you Lord for your word, which is living. And we pray that your word now would speak to each of us and teach us about prayer through this psalm. In Jesus name. Amen.

So, through Lent, we're thinking about words from the psalms, particularly this morning's Psalm 105. It's a very long psalm, so there's a big section cut out from the reading we heard.

At times it can be hard to locate a psalm to a time and a place. Sometimes it is easier, sometimes it is harder. Sometimes there's a heading with your psalm that'll say, from this event in David's life.

Other times, there's no title. This one, it seems, can be connected to the time of King David and to the entry of the Ark into Jerusalem.

The Ark had been taken from the home of Obed Edom and now is brought with great praise and delight. And in 1 Chronicles chapter 16, we read the opening 5 / 6 verses of Psalm 105.

It says that David first committed to Asaph and his associates his psalm of praise. of thanks to the Lord.

So this Psalm first appears in those times with David. 1 Chronicles 16, what David teaches is a combination of Psalm 105, 96 and 106. If you go to 1 Chronicles 16, you'll see the footnotes, which will show which parts are from which psalm.

So Psalm 105 is in, this is like the overview before we zoom in on the, on the particular verses.

The Psalm is in the following parts.

Verses 1 to 7. It is about joyful praise in the psalm. The people are encouraged to exalt the Lord God, lift him high.

Verses 8 to 15, the earliest days of the nation are described.

Verses 16 to 23, the going into Egypt is described.

Verses 24 to 38, the coming out of Egypt, the great deliverance, the exodus event is described and told again.

And in verse 39 at the end. The journey through the wilderness into the promised land.

So that's a lot of ground being covered in the psalm.

Someone commented that Psalm 104 talks about the early chapters of Genesis. And then Psalm 105 remembers the last chapters of the same book, Genesis, and takes us into Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers.

So, the first six verses are probably are dynamic verses and maybe they make you feel tired after a long week here this morning.

There's none of the gentle, "the Lord is my shepherd", I shall not be in want.

Instead, you see this type of like, shotgun approach of phrases,

give thanks, make known,

sing, tell everyone, give glory, rejoice,

sing to the Lord in his strength, remember all he's done.

It's a lot of activity in five or six verses.

You know, so we're going to walk through it briefly. Not like we did last week, but we are going to walk through it briefly.

One of the first questions it asks us of the psalmist, what is prayer about for us? What is prayer about for us? And I think these verses remind us of the breadth of prayer. The breadth of what prayer is.

Because often I think what can happen with prayer is that we see prayer is sometimes mainly about asking for ourselves or for others. And that's an important part of prayer. But I think this, this psalm expands us or wants us to look further. Expand your horizon.

You know? Reminds me of how one of the things I love about the Netherlands of when I'm driving up, particularly up to Friesland, there's these huge skies. You just see all this stuff in front of you. And I remember how amazing that was when I was back in England, where you only see a tiny bit of ground. Of course there's hills, but you only see a small amount of area in front.

And for that, for some of us, that's very beautiful as well. But you almost expand this horizon when you're going north, or of course most parts of Netherlands, but it particularly strikes me going north into Friesland.

So, expanding our breadth of prayer, give thanks is how David begins. Thanksgiving for what God has done as part of our prayer life.

Thanksgiving. And Thanksgiving is not just a theme in the Psalms, it's also a theme with the New Testament. So Paul's famous Philippians 4, "do not be anxious about anything, but in everything with prayer and thanksgiving, present your requests to God." Paul regularly in his letters shares not only what he's praying for the church community, but how he's thanking God for them.

Giving thanks to God is how David says prayer about. Give thanks. Giving thanks to God recalls what he has done. And as we give thanks to God, it reminds us that we've *that he's not against us*, but that he's for us and that he's good and loving. As we think about the things to be thankful for.

Giving thanks also can mean is *about standing on a promise* that God has given. Faith is expanded as we thank God for the promise he has made. But thanksgiving also *is about giving thanks to God for individuals* as Paul does. And as we give thanks to God for individuals, it expands our hearts for them.

We may be in conflict with people, or we may find ourselves thinking only negatively about people. Give thanks to them in your prayer. Give thanks for them in your prayers. You may say, well, what can I give thanks for? There's nothing comes to mind. But perhaps your starting point in that situation may be to thank God for **what he has done for them**, rather than what they have done for you.

And that may simply begin with what we did this morning, where we brought the cross and to remember and to give thanks to God that he died for them as well, that he sacrificed himself for them, that he loves them. That may be enough thanksgiving for that day.

So, the first question David asks is, you could almost say, *where is thanksgiving in my prayer?* And like Paul, is there something that we can do which means I pray, I ask, I give thanks?

Adoration

Sing is what he says, reminds me of the Pixar, um, film Sing. Augustine said, "whoever sings, prays twice". Whoever sings, prays twice. People at times think of, have different acronyms to describe prayer and one of them, the 24 7 prayer movement uses the word PRAY.

P for pause, the need to be still as you come into prayer to help you to focus.

R, rejoice.

A, ask.

Y, yield or say yes to God's will come what may.

Another common one I know is called ACTS.

ACTS standing for

Adoration,

Confession,

Thanksgiving

Supplication.

Pete Gregg in his book *How to Pray*, which is one of my favourite books on prayer, he talks about the Lord's Prayer and how he gives us a shape for our personal prayers.

And the prayer like Jesus said means there's multiple aspects to prayer and he draws out a number of themes: adoration, petition, intercession, perseverance, contemplation, listening, confession, and spiritual warfare.

So where's *adoration*? Our Father in heaven hallowed be your name, your name be exalted, your name be glorified.

I share these because they reflect what Psalm 105 is pointing to, 'praise him, worship him, focus on all he has done, tell of his wondrous acts'. Let us sing, or let us, as a couple of verses says, "let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice, (v3)."

So the question would come in for us as we think about prayer is, where is adoration and worship in my prayer?

We mentioned last week, Compline and also how Lectio 365 seeks to end the day by giving you time to reflect. Now in both Compline and Lectio 365. There is a time to repent after you've reviewed your day or your week, but both of them also have a time to review and then to rejoice. So you could flip that verse that we've been looking at and say, look at his wondrous deeds and sing.

So if looking back on the day can feel a bit like rummaging around in a drawer, not knowing what you're going to find. There may be things that aren't so good in your day for which we need to repent, but there are things that have been in our day that can inspire us to sing, to worship our Lord God.

So we need a balance in our, in our reflection of as we look back, what prompts us to praise as well as to repent.

Seeking is a third theme that comes across in those opening verses. The NIV puts up, look to the Lord and his strength. Seek His fear always. New Living Translation says, search for the Lord and his strength continually seek him. I love what somebody wrote on this, which was just so eye-opening.

He said, this person said, this call to seek is not based on a false hope. It's based on the confidence that God continually shows his face.

And this view is confirmed by the psalm. The future, “seek the Lord continually (v4)”, from day to day, is followed in the psalm, as you can see, by remember the works, wonders he has done.

So we're motivated to seek the Lord because we remember well. We're *encouraged*, we're moved to seek the Lord because, partly, we remember well. Well,

As we said in the psalm, the psalm is like a five minute YouTube video of Israel's history from like Abraham, the promised land, the psalm says seek because remembering shows who God is and he wants to be found. The reason when you get to the psalms end, the reason why we seek God is not because we'll never get to our goal but because we do get there, the people began there and ended in the promised land.

The call to seek, but seek is not about seeking guidance. This is about seeking presence. Presence, not present, in case my Northern Irish accent, you get lost there.

Psalm 27, one of my favourite psalms, says, My heart says of you, seek his face, your Lord, your face, Lord I will seek.

What does it mean to seek the presence? There's two stories I want to share just to illustrate why this can look like. But for me, seeking presence is, can be simply being, I want to be where God is.

The first story, this one comes from a friend of Pete Gregg, and I came across it, several months ago.

Pete Gregg and his friend, who's a minister, were going to go out on a retreat. His friend saw what Greg was going to bring. Greg had about five or six books that he was going to try and read in about four days of retreat. And his friend looked at him and shook his head and said, you know, this is not about reading, this is about **being**.

And he went out and told a story about his son. He's a vicar, like me, in England. And he said, there was a stage in his son's life, his son was a teenager in high school, and what his son would do, was his son would come in from his high school, sit on the sofa in the study, get out his phone, flick through his phone for about 15 or 20 minutes, not say anything to his dad, and then leave the room again.

He did this continually. And they were talking about this, and the vicar said, looking back, he would never, ever trade those hours for anything. Because his son was comfortable. to be in his presence. He just wanted to be there in his Dad's study.

It's his way of unwinding. It was a safe space. It was a good place. He just wanted to be near his father.

And they would talk later in the day at the family meal.

Presence. He wanted just to be there, not to do.

The second story, which moved me very deeply. It's about an Orthodox priest in the States. And he told this story of how he got to the point of where as a priest he was in, he was in burnout.

And he said his prayer life, all his prayer life had become, and I've told some of you this story over the months, was that all he could do with prayer was imagine in his mind when he came to prayer that he would go into a cave, and in the cave there was a fire, and by the fire was Jesus. And in his mind he would just go into that cave, sit by the fire, sit beside Jesus, and he would say nothing.

And he said for months, that's all he did in prayer.

And he (the priest) said, he began to really doubt, is this actually prayer, what I'm doing? He also noticed, after a few months, that in his mind, which he never created, but he noticed how the Ark of the Covenant had appeared beside the fire.

So in this cave, he would come in, sit beside Jesus, a dark cave, with a fire, with Jesus and the Ark of the Covenant. And he had all these doubts. He was later at a pastor's conference, and he had a guy stand up, he talked about all the successes, all the amazing things of ministry, and how things were great, and how things were growing, and how things were happening, and he said, honestly, as a priest, he felt really tired, because he was just worn out, and he was just being worn out by listening to this person talk.

But this pastor then offered to pray for the fellow pastors and priests who were there.

And this, this, this pastor prayed for this priest. Now, they'd never met each other, but this pastor prayed over him and he prayed over him and said, you know, "thanking God that this man desires to be in your presence. Just like Samuel wanted to be by the ark." That's from 1 Samuel 3.

That really struck him – the priest - that actually this was okay, by being with God for that time.

And that's something about just wanting those two stories to illustrate a little bit. Prayer can be also about being, wanting to be there with God, rather than come in and come out.

Remember is the next phrase we draw on it. We've brought this out before from last week, so I won't say much more on it, but remembering we've already mentioned the space to review in your prayer. And it can be important to think about what regular pattern you have for that.

Is it something you do weekly? Is it something you do this once a year in a retreat? Or something like that. Do you take a retreat, either as a couple or individually? And this is where remembrance really is important to think about for a place like this, because Psalm 105 talks about the journey God did to bring the people to a place.

And I think on a day like this, and over this week, it's helpful to reflect, and for those of you who are very involved in this building project, and the move, *remember* where it began, what happened *during*, and *what happened. to get you here.*

Remember the journey to bring us here. God's provision, the way the timing seems to be exactly right. You'll all have your different experiences of this, but think then about how does that **remembrance** inspire your prayer and your faith for the future.

One example I'll give you which is deeply inspiring for me is how we regularly brought the plans and the vision for this building to the council, by the renovation team. And there were a number of times coming up to our council meeting. We had a number of interesting decisions to make and I was thinking there's no way we're going to find common ground on this. But there were so many times by the end of that meeting, there was such a deep unity on a decision.

It was beyond an intellectual unity, as if somehow God had brought us to a place of this is the right thing to have or to do with this building.

And that inspires me, because it makes me think any other big decisions our council comes to, I'll look back on those days and say, "Lord, you did it then. You can do it again. You can bring us into a deep unity on something we may be on two different places on."

So remembering can encourage us to seek the Lord's presence and to seek his strength.

Now, there's a lot more I'd love to say. I'm going to have to jump, I'll cut out one thing, but I'm just going to, I want to make, uh, make you aware of this word, **make known**.

Make known.

The word make known on verse 1b seems to stand out because you're talking about thanks, singing, seek, remembering, and then it talks about *make known* to the nations what he has done.

Now in one way it made me think this can be the natural overflow of prayer. The overflow of prayer, as prayer moves within you, you're, you're excited.

It's, it's, you want others to know.

So it could be saying, as you give thanks to the Lord, you realize how much the world needs to know him.

It's a bit like grandparents, once they get their first or many grandchildren, everyone needs to know all the pictures come out. And if you don't want to know it, can I show you my new grandchild!

So that's something can happen, but also perhaps there's something else about how you can be the answer to your prayer. So it can be the emotional people need to know, but sometimes what can be happening here maybe is actually as we pray, we give thanks, and our prayer mobilizes us into action. Like God puts a heart in us for people or for things. So somehow we're praying for things and somehow we find that God is inviting us to be an answer to the prayer.

We're praying for this local community of Willem van Mechelenstraat. Perhaps God has put it in your heart, a cry to say, get involved in helping bless the community. If that's what you're praying for, God's inviting you to be an answer to the prayer.

And that's what some of us here can testify to. We've been praying for things, and somehow we've become part of the answer. But we didn't plan it.

So it could be either. It could be the heart, the emotions people need to know, or it could be actually that this sense of how you become the answer to the prayer.

Conclusion.

So David's words bring a review of our own prayers.

Thanksgiving.

It's a place in our prayers,

the place of **adoration**, worship song. Rejoice in our prayers.

It's a place to **seek** Him. To be with Him in the room.

Like the kid with the mobile phone. Just enjoy being there.

The place of **remembrance**. To look back with the Lord.

And **making known**. To be conscious of what's happening in the prayer for you. How is that prayer inviting you to move on? How is God asking you to be an answer to your prayer? Or what is God doing within you, within that prayer, that he wants to drive you out?

So we're going to finish in prayer, and I'm going to give a few moments of stillness. There may be an area that you particularly might struggle with, and to ask the Lord to help you in that.

Prayer.

Lord, we ask you, to teach us to have as wide a horizon of prayer as we can.

So, thinking biblically, Lord, we ask that you will help us to have time, time of thanksgiving, of adoration, of remembrance, but also, Lord, let us seek you to be comfortable to be in your presence, to desire to be in your presence, and Lord, Help us be sensitive to what you're doing in the prayer time in us and how you're inviting us sometimes to be the answer to our praying.

Thank you Lord. Thank you that we can pray for this in this house of prayer that's been prayed for down through many generations. We ask that you continue to teach us to pray and help us to continue to walk in that legacy of prayer that this building holds.

In Jesus name, Amen.