

# A Psalm for the Summer

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[ 0 : 00 ] I'm glad it was mentioned that Betty is under the weather. We're not glad about that, but at some point we'll say a brief prayer for Betty.

Bill's at home. If Bill was at home now, on other grounds, you would suspect that the World Cup was about to totally engross that.

Man, he loves that game. In his absence, I was requested to introduce myself at an impossible task, so I won't do it.

But I'll say this, though, by way of getting us into this. I did spend about 12 years of my long life with a British company, not British Petroleum, but I worked for a news agency called Reuters, and I had a boss, I've said this before here, I always remember he used to say to me, or he used to say to anybody who would listen, he was a Cambridge man, I think we have a Cambridge man here. Despite that, he was a wonderful fellow. But he used to say, always have a speech ready. So I always had a speech ready for Learner's Exchange.

[ 1 : 15 ] After I worked for that company, I went to Regent for a couple of years, but I didn't take any courses in the Psalms. I took a course in the Old Testament, which briefly covered the Psalms.

But what I know about the Psalter, I'm sure it's like most of us here, perhaps all of us, it's through reading them. Just paying attention to them, which is what the Church has been doing for 2,000 years.

So it's always good time spent, I'm sure you'll agree, just by looking at a psalm, today's talk called A Psalm for the Summer.

I'm afraid the psalm itself has nothing to do with the summer, but it's a psalm that I was going to suggest that we could memorize over the summer. It's hard to believe, isn't it, with the weather the way it has been, that the summer is almost upon us, it's at our door.

So there you go, an introduction. We always begin, usually, right at the beginning of any Learners Exchange talk, don't we, with a prayer. So I'm going to read this psalm, and this psalm is a prayer, so we read and we pray at the same time.

[ 2 : 23 ] So here we go. Out of the depths I cry to Thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice. Let Thy ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If Thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand?

But there is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared. I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in His word I hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than watchman for the morning, more than watchman for the morning.

O Israel, hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with Him is plenteous redemption, and He will redeem Israel from all His iniquities.

So we've read and we've prayed Psalm 130. Like anything in Scripture, you kind of want to pause and say, anything I say is inadequate.

Scriptures are better than anything we say about them. But we're invited, we're commanded to ponder them. In fact, in the Psalms, we're commanded to ponder the things.

[ 3 : 40 ] One Psalm in particular, I think, whosoever is wise, let him ponder these things. We're invited to think about them. So there it is, Psalm 130.

You might live and die with words like these words. I'm sure you'll agree. These are good words to make your own. Faith believes that you can, again, live and die with these words.

Our Lord died with words from the Psalter on His lips. So maybe, again, in the summer of 2010, we might just memorize these words, make them part of the furniture of your mind, if you will.

Just taking a step back from Psalm 130 to begin with, as you know, there are different kinds of, different types of Psalms, aren't there?

It's good to note the different kinds of Psalms there are. This is by no means exhausted. It gives you a feel for the overall picture of the Psalter.

[ 4 : 44 ] Some Psalms are praise Psalms. Right at the end of the Psalter, we end with a blast of praise Psalms. Don't we think of Psalm 150, all those? Praise the Lord.

Praise the Lord. Over and over again. Praise Psalms. Some are wisdom Psalms, definitely. As I mentioned earlier, Psalm 107 ends with the words, you'll recall them, Whosoever is wise, let him ponder these things.

Become wise by knowing a Psalm. So the Psalter says. There are Psalms of lament, of course. Psalm 88 is, I think, one of the more powerful.

They're all powerful. You recall Psalm 88 ends without any resolution for the psalmist. The psalmist is in pain and trouble and pours out his soul, her soul, to the Lord.

Psalms of lament. Some Psalms are for public occasions. There are Psalms apparently for weddings, perhaps for a coronation. Think of Psalm 45.

[ 5 : 54 ] My tongue is the scribe. The pen. How does it begin? My tongue is the scribe. My pen is the tongue of a scribe.

And he goes on to celebrate a great public occasion. Which may be just a passing thought. I've never really thought about this until this last couple of weeks.

Why are some of the Psalms for public occasions? I take it on the surface. I think we can conclude from that that heaven takes public occasions seriously.

I don't know how to think that through. But weddings, funerals, big public events are noted by heaven. Scripture has Psalms for those occasions.

Some Psalms, of course, are disturbing. Continuing our brief overview of the Psalter. And I take it these disturbing Psalms are meant to be disturbing. You know, the Psalms that have so much cursing in them.

[ 6 : 54 ] So much anger. So many cries for vengeance in some of the Psalms. There's much in the Psalter about enemies. For a long time, I couldn't really feel comfortable with the Psalms because they're always talking about enemies.

But I've learned to, if you get older, you accumulate more enemies. You can make more use of them. I hope that's not how I've really come to peace. Our Lord talks about enemies a lot.

Love your enemies. You have to know that you have enemies to love them. We have enemies.

There is full recognition in the Psalter, therefore, that God hates sin and will address it.

That's another aspect of that kind of thing in the Psalter that I think is theologically brought to our attention thereby. Of course, in the Psalter, there are repentant Psalms.

Famously, Psalm 51. Arena brought it to our attention last week. is about repentance. The Psalms, the Psalms, because they're about so much of life, they are for us.

[ 8 : 01 ] And we should remember that. They're a gift from the Spirit for us, finally. These categories, they're not just for scholarly work, but they remind us that the Psalter is about real life in the real world.

And we may use them. And I think we can be unashamed of the word use. Get to know the Psalter and use it. We may use these poems as acts of lament when we need to, acts of praise, acts of all of these different categories.

We can use the Psalter. What is Psalm 130? Coming right specifically to our, this particular Psalm. I would think that you can call it, nothing turns on this too much, but it's an interesting thing to think about. I think this poem would be called both a lament and a wisdom song.

It is an act of lament, but it teaches wisdom. It is lament, in a sense, as you act the words, as you enter into them and pray them, make them yours.

[ 9 : 13 ] And they're also an act of wisdom as you ponder it. People are strange and wondrous in this regard, aren't they? We may, we may both do things, if you will, and watch ourselves doing the thing.

It's a part of an aspect of our souls that's interesting. And the benefit here is very simple but profound. we may learn, as we both do the Psalms and ponder them, we may learn the discipline, I think I got this particular phrase from Oliver O'Donovan, the discipline of godly speech.

Is that a concern for us in our lives as Christians? as we perform a Psalm, if you will, and then we ponder the performance of the Psalm, again, if you will, we learn the discipline of godly speech.

The Psalms say, if you will, pray like this. Learn this speech and you will pray well or you will pray better or wouldn't it be wonderful to think that we learn the art of praying with wisdom. Much to be desired, obviously, these things which the Psalter offers us, to pray in wisdom, to pray for wisdom.

[10:47] all of this and more we can find in the Psalms, one would hope. So I want to just turn right now to Psalm 130.

Again, it's in front of us up there. I hope you can read it. And just look at it, if you will, so to speak, line by line and see what's here.

So the Psalm begins famously, out of the depths, I cry to thee, O Lord. Out of the depths, out of the depths, I cry to thee, O Lord.

As is frequent in the Psalms, you will have noticed this, the precise nature of the trouble is simply not specified. That's often a fact in the Psalms.

Later, we hear about sin and forgiveness, so we might think that the depths is a sense of alienation from God, obviously. Wisdom, it may be, to embrace any kind of depth as a reminder that we are in this dispensation, aren't we?

[11:55] We are always distant from heaven. There are rare souls, aren't there, who live with this sense of alienation, the sense of alienation from goodness, from a Christ-like life.

They live in this way in a pronounced manner. It is good. It is good. You find this sentiment in Psalm 119 and elsewhere, don't you? A psalmist will say, it is good that I have been afflicted.

Faith is tested, Peter says, as gold is tested. Out of the depths have I cried unto you, says this man, to you, O Lord, this man of faith.

Sometimes the testing reveals, the parable of Jesus uses another metaphor to get at this same truth.

You'll recall the metaphor of the sowings. Testing reveals that the soil of the heart is unfit for a harvest. The testing reveals that the faith isn't real.

[13:00] It hasn't taken root. So heaven, we see throughout Scripture, and we see in this psalm, heaven uses depths. Heaven uses them for our benefit.

A belief, of course, not to be held in any way lightly. The depths may be, don't we know it in people's lives, the depths may be fearsome.

Think about in Scripture, read with real sobriety of mind. I find it brings about sobriety of mind. A book like the book of Lamentations.

To think how desperately evil circumstances may become. Israel knew times of desperate depths, if you will. And people in their lives often come to see a fearsome depth.

And as Christians read the Psalms, of course, we remember the cross as God in Christ, if you will, assuming the depths on our behalf.

[14:07] So we can read this Psalm, of course, as Christians. Remember Pascal, I think rather daringly, but I think he gets away with it really. Pascal, in his famous book, *The Pensées*, has the Lord approaching the sinner.

Pascal puts words, that's why I call it daring, puts words into our Lord's mouth to make a theological point. He has, Pascal, the Lord approaching the sinner and saying, aren't these daring words?

He has the Lord saying to the sinner, I have been more foul than you. So do not draw back from approaching the holy God.

The Lord, Pascal is thinking of this, the Lord in becoming sin for us, he knew the final depth, didn't he? He knew the final alienation from God, his Father.

So the Psalms, I think we can safely say this, if we read them correctly, they will take us, or with more and more wisdom, they will take us deeper into the gospel itself, deeper than we will be without them.

[15:22] It isn't by accident that an apostle commands us, if you will, to sing psalms. We are to pay attention to the Psalter.

We have it on the word of an apostle. We don't have an option. We're supposed to sing the Psalms. Paul tells us to do that. So we go out of the depths, I cry to thee, O Lord, Psalm 130 begins.

this next part, Lord, this next part of the Psalter is, of this psalm, is fairly common language, but this has really stopped and thought about it in the last couple weeks.

What is that? This Lord, says the psalmist, he's in the depths, crying to the Lord. Lord, he expands on his words to the Lord.

Lord, he says, hear my voice. Let your ears, Lord, let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.

[16:33] Do you find that interesting? Perhaps a bit puzzling. It certainly is common in the Psalter. It's common in Scripture. You could find it a bit puzzling.

God is everywhere, we believe. God hears everything. He who planted the ear, says one of the Psalms. Do you know the psalm?

This is the verse in the psalm. He who planted the ear, is he not here? Says the psalmist. He who planted the ear, does he not hear?

Of course, the answer is yes. But, I take it there is in this language presented to us in this psalm, some wisdom to be gleaned.

The faith of Israel, you'll agree, you know, the faith of Israel is a hearing faith. Hear, O Israel, is in a very real sense the first commandment to Israel.

[17:38] Hear, O Israel. So, why ask God to hear, as this psalmist does? Well, I think the answer goes something like this.

Is it not a plea for, if you will, concentrated attention? The psalmist wants to zero in and have a conversation with God for a serious time of dealing with God.

Two parties here wanting intense meeting. I think something like that is going on in this psalm.

The psalmist wants, again, a serious time of dealing with God. He wants an intense meeting with God. So, the psalmist, again, as a wisdom teacher, I think we can safely call this psalmist, is saying that, am I over-reading it?

The depths equal God speaking to me. Out of the depths I cry to thee, O Lord. The depths equal God speaking. Reverence your circumstances.

[18:49] The psalmist here is revealing a circumstance. He's telling us that she is in a depth, is in a troubled place, a place of alienation, a place of difficulty, a place that you desperately want out of, the depths.

reverence your circumstances, says an old Puritan preacher. Reverence your circumstances. I've often thought this particular word from an old Puritan preacher could almost be called a definition of the Psalter.

Reverence your circumstances. They are God speaking to you. Reverence them. Don't just say, these are my circumstances.

Reverence them. That's the way God talks to you, says this old Puritan. I wonder if that's true. I think it is true. Reverence your circumstances.

If God is speaking, if you will, he wants my hearing. So I may respond, I'm trying to unfold again, these simple words from Psalm 130, I may respond, yes, God, I will listen to what you're saying to me in my circumstances.

[20:06] I in turn plead with you to hear my speaking. That's what this psalmist is saying. I'm going to gloss it a bit. I'm in the depths.

Okay, God, I'm here. I'm listening. Will you listen to me as I confess to you that I'm in the depths?

Hearing means, if you will, in the scriptures, hearing means serious moral concentration, I take it.

So we are taught in the scriptures. That's a mouthful, I know, but it's really very simple, isn't it? Do we believe that our creator wants to have serious dealings with us?

We have to decide that. Some people never really decide that. They keep God at a great distance. love. The psalmist says that God does want to have serious conversation with us, serious dealings with us.

In hearing God's address to us, says Oliver O'Donovan, a great Oxford ethicist, in hearing God's address to us, we learn personal existence.

[21:18] We are who we are by knowing God, having serious dealings with God. Nothing less than that. So the psalm opens at this point by saying that we are to listen to God and we ask God to listen to us.

Out of the depths, I cry to thee, O Lord, Lord, hear my voice, let thy ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. So, we move on to the next part of this psalm.

Psalmist now says, verse 3, you'll notice it, if thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared.

If you should mark iniquities, who could stand? Do you recall Psalm 1? Psalm 1 speaks of the ungodly, doesn't it?

They, says that psalmist, they will not stand in the judgment. The psalmist here assumes a profound doctrine of creation, I think.

[ 22 : 40 ] If thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? A profound doctrine of creation just lurks there waiting for us to acknowledge it.

Life's meaning our very identity is God dependent, thinks this psalmist. There is no alternative to knowing God on God's terms.

If thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? If there is an alternative to knowing God on God's terms, it is the alternative of not standing, apparently.

The psalm assumes, as this psalm assumes, as all the psalms assume, that God is really there and holds humanity responsible for its moral life, for its moral standing, name.

It's just the Bible, the psalter assumes this. Most, maybe all of the world's fury, and there's a lot of it around just at this time in our culture, isn't it?

[ 23 : 58 ] It's publicly obvious. All of the world's fury, much of it, this fury at biblical religion is a witness to this.

We simply know that this is true. There is a God. We're responsible to God. That's just the way it is. What if God should mark, says this psalmist, what if God should mark or take a full, unrelenting, forever serious view of my sin?

What would happen then? So asks this psalmist. That's all just presupposed in these simple words. If thou, O Lord, shouldst mark iniquities. He doesn't assume that there's a God who would be indifferent to his iniquities, who would be distant.

In formal terms, he's not a deist. God is present to the world. God is infinitely good and holy, holds humanity responsible for its sin.

This is what the psalmist deals with. It is a profound thing, says Soren Kierkegaard. I love to quote this. It is a profound thing to be a human being.

[ 25 : 09 ] The psalmist really assumes that to be true. It is a profound thing to be a human being.

There's no place you can hide. In a certain sense, God made us too great for that. We are in his image. We're responsible to our creator.

We should ask, if you will, for the strength to assume this, and you know where I get this language from, don't you? We should ask as we go along through life for the strength to assume this weight of glory.

It's our glory to be human and to be in the presence of a holy God to whom we are responsible. It is easy, it is so easy to be trivial about our lives, isn't it?

not to believe that we are creatures of God, but we are. We must believe this despite all the appearances that seem to contradict it.

[ 26 : 14 ] It is indeed, I'm sure you'll agree with Mr. Kierkegaard, it is a profound thing to be a human being. This psalm simply presupposes that, doesn't it?

if you, Lord, should mark my sin, could I stand? The answer, of course, is I couldn't. No.

This is the world in which this psalmist lives, and we're meant to live in it all the time, too. But the psalmist continues, doesn't he? But there is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared.

There, verse 4, I hope you've seen it, but there is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared.

A gloss, again, may go something like this, on verse 4, despite my perilous condition, there is a mystery in God which may allow me to stand, and to stand acceptably in God's holy, even, I think we can safely say from the rest of scripture, God's terrifying presence.

have I got that right? In the discussion time you can tell me why I've got that wrong or improve upon it. Despite my perilous condition, one who may not stand in the judgment, there is a mystery in God which may allow me to stand, to stand indeed acceptably in God's holy presence.

[ 27 : 50 ] presence. I'll quote him again, since I quoted him once, the aforementioned strange 19th century fellow, Soren Kierkegaard, he says very strangely that, and I think he got this right, that forgiveness he calls it is a great burden.

Forgiveness is a heavy burden that you must learn to bear in the gospel. It is the burden that we learn to bear, and when our submission to it is complete, we find out that the Lord's promise is true, that the burden is light.

But not to begin with. In a certain sense, forgiveness, Kierkegaard is saying forgiveness comes to you and crushes your pride, crushes all attempts at self-justification.

It removes all excuses. It simply says, if my God should mark iniquities, could I stand? No. But forgiveness, only God's free, unmerited forgiveness will cause me to stand.

Kierkegaard is right. Forgiveness is a heavy burden. Hence forgiveness, this psalmist knows this because he says, yes, there is forgiveness with thee that you may be feared.

[ 29 : 13 ] This is a profound psalm. There is forgiveness with you so that you may be feared. Fear means to know always, if I understand this psalm correctly, this psalmist correctly, this wisdom teacher in Israel correctly, fear means to honor always the mystery of God's forgiveness.

forgiveness. It's not an easy thing, forgiveness. We must honor it. If one is not puzzled, I'll say this to be a bit provocative and again in discussion time you can address it.

If you're not puzzled by forgiveness, you are either a most profound saint or you have not really thought about it. Which are you this morning? I know most of you are, I won't finish the sentence, that's not for me.

forgiveness is a great mystery. It causes our psalmist to say, oh I will fear you my God because in you there is forgiveness.

I will fear you. Does forgiveness mean that justice disappears? Some people think that Christianity is a religion of cheap grace.

[ 30 : 28 ] People in the faith sometimes say that, people outside the faith, thoughtful people. You Christians just got easy out clauses from your troubles. Does justice disappear?

Is there a kind of, is there space, a kind of, we could call it a moral space in God for indifference to evil that's been done? Does he just sort of look the other way in indifference?

This psalmist believes, this psalmist believes that forgiveness is a possibility and it is his great hope, but it teaches him again to fear. This sense of the depths of moral mystery in God that he's able to forgive.

And the Christian is, of course, privileged in the way that the psalmist was not. The psalmist, of course, scripture tells us, had great shadows of this truth to ponder.

The cross reveals the unfathomable possibility of atoning sacrifice in God, in God's own Trinitarian life, to bring about forgiveness, a forgiveness which is consistent with his holy character, with his character of justice and holiness.

[ 31 : 50 ] These issues, these concerns are known by this psalmist. He puts it in front of us just so succinctly and so brilliantly. And this, I think, is reinforced, it's indicated again and reinforced by what we read next in the psalm.

Verse 5, again, I hope you can see it there, the back. The psalmist, after having this little concentrated theological wisdom moment given to us about forgiveness and the fear of the Lord, he says now, I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope.

My soul, he continues, in repetition, he continues, my soul waits for the Lord, more than watchman for the morning, he says, more than watchman for the morning.

It's a long wait. My soul waits for the Lord, my soul waits. These, a bit of an aside here, always, these verses always remind me, forgive me for this, but always reminds me of Hamlet for some reason.

Always comes right to my mind. Remember that play opens with guards watching for the morning. Do you remember how Hamlet begins with those guards on the walls?

[ 33 : 13 ] Watching, that is to say, Shakespeare begins that play by telling us that watching and waiting frequently, if not always, implies profundity.

My soul waits. My soul waits. We watch and wait for important things, usually. When we're children, we often watch and wait for the most trivial things.

Of course, when you're a child, it doesn't seem trivial. We watch and wait for important things. The psalmist knows, this psalmist knows the experience of waiting for a living sense, doesn't he?

a living sense of God's holy and good and approving presence. Is that not what he waits for here? I wait for the Lord, my soul waits.

In his word, I hope. He's heard a word that God is a forgiving God. My soul waits more than watchman for the morning, more than watchman for the morning.

[ 34 : 19 ] Again, he waits for the mystery of God's forgiveness. He can cause you to stand in the judgment and he waits for this God's holy and good and approving presence.

He can cause you to stand on that great prayer at the end of the book of Jude. It talks like this.

Psalm, again, as Irena was talking about last week so wonderfully for, Psalm 51 is about this same

thing as a psalmist pleads for and waits for a sense of God's forgiveness.

We are not necessarily, when we think about waiting, we're not necessarily quiet in our waiting, are we? When I have no peace, a famous line from another Puritan, when I have no peace, I give God no peace.

A direct echo of a verse from the prophet Isaiah. Give God, come to me, give me no peace until I set you free. the God of Israel will say, when you have no peace, there's wisdom, isn't it?

If you have no peace today about something, well then don't let God ignore you, if you will. Give him no peace. Yell at him. Get his attention.

[ 35 : 35 ] Lord, I'm in the depths. Please, let's have serious dealings with one another. When I have no peace, I give God no peace. Ask for God's presence. this wisdom psalm reminds us to do that.

Not as, and this is the crucial thing, isn't it? This is why the psalmist waits. He knows the wisdom that is later articulated so wonderfully by that great bishop in North Africa, Augustine.

He wants to know God, not as I think you are, but as you know yourself to be. I don't want any foolish God that comes out of my imagination, some cheap God who's indifferent to my sin.

No, I need to know you as you really are in all of your holiness, in all of your goodness, and I need to know the mystery of this forgiveness that I've heard about, this mystery that is in you.

Oh, to have dealings with this God is the only thing that I live for. We do note that the psalmist trusts in God's word.

[ 36 : 37 ] Again, in this psalm, there's no expansion about what is this word, but Israel knows God as a speaking God. It's presupposed by our psalmists through prophets and priests and kings, Moses and Aaron, Samuel and David, all of them, all of the drama of all of these people and more, this drama is presupposed and rehearsed in this psalm.

God is a speaking God. He's revealed himself definitely mysteriously to Israel, to the mystery of Israel. Another reason, of course, for knowing the psalter daily is that it rehearses that whole drama. There is a, if you like to state these kind of things a bit formally, and I like this kind of thing, there is a central normative strand in history, therefore there is a central normative text, so Christians believe.

I'm rearranging a bit of Oliver O'Donovan's language there, but there is, again, and this psalmist believes it and teaches it here, but it's mostly presupposed, there's a central strand in history, and it has a central normative text.

The privileged book must be witnessed, must be a witness to privileged events. Faith, our faith believes this, and that's why we turn to the psalter over and over and over again.

[ 38 : 14 ] Faith believes this, and this faith founds the reason of our faith, if you will, the reason of the gospel. And the Psalms, just note this in passing, I had never seen this before until I was instructed about it to the good writings of Dr.

O'Donovan. Psalm 1 seems to be a great witness to the discovery of the discipline of reading, he believes, on his law, remember, on God's law, the psalmist meditates day and night.

Twice a day, he turns to God's word and attends to it. Reading, almost certainly by recitation, in the days of the Psalter's formation and its earliest use over quite a long time, these psalms were known in the heart.

They were carried around through the day and one could meditate upon them day and night. I hope we haven't fallen short of that as Christians in the early 21st century.

The psalmist concludes with a witness to his life in Israel, doesn't he? Oh, Israel. Isn't there a slight change in the register of the psalm here, but it doesn't really change anything, I'm convinced.

[ 39 : 40 ] You are. The psalm draws to its close with these words, O Israel, hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is steadfast love, with him plenteous redemption.

He will redeem Israel from all his iniquities. The psalmist concludes with a witness to his life again in Israel. He is aware, our psalmist, that he is not alone in faith.

No. This is always true, but not always appreciated, is it? It may be that in heaven's view, you cannot be finally just you.

Ever thought of that? Can't just be you. Men live together, says a poet, Robert Frost. Men live together, whether they live together or apart. A profound thing to say.

You are either in Adam, or you are in Christ. You're part of a strange mystery, one or the other.

There is a mystery here indicated by scripture, but I take it not explained.

[ 40 : 48 ] There may be a theologian in the room who can't explain it and we will listen to what he says later. Here is a reason, again, for loving the psalms. In these psalms we pray, by ourselves and yet with the people of God.

Isn't that wonderful? To have a sense of, in the formal way of putting it, would be small c, the catholicity of the church, which stretches back through the Old Testament saints as well.

So there is a brief look at Psalm 130. 30. The psalms, again, teach us prayer, obviously.

They teach wisdom. I hope we're agreed on that. They cause us again, as we said a moment ago, to pray with the saints of both testaments and across the Christian centuries for sure.

These are great goods offered to us in the psalms, faithful attention to them. But there's a bit more, isn't there? They teach us prayer, we recall, as Jesus prayed.

[ 42 : 01 ] Do you want to pray the way Jesus prayed? He prayed the Psalms. Jews did that. And they indicate the Psalter very strangely, don't they?

On many occasions, the mystery of our Lord. They somehow anticipate Jesus, the Psalms. They give us, if you will, the faith of Israel, which faith was brought to its fulfillment in Christ's life and death and resurrection.

We must always remember that's the setting of the mystery of our salvation, is Israel. He, as Psalm 130 says here, it is Jesus who has redeemed Israel.

It is Jesus who gives Israel full redemption. And so we are called, as Paul says, as Gentiles, to participate in the salvation given to Israel.

We get caught up in this story, how God is saving the world. There it is. We are to participate herein. We are to be grafted, again, in Paul's great language, into this vine, into what this fellow is saying, we're going to meet this chap in heaven someday.

[ 43 : 16 ] You should know his song for that reason. I read your song. We are to be grafted into the same salvation story that this psalmist is a part of.

And to know now, and to know now this salvation, and with this psalmist, if you will, to wait for the Lord's appearing. The psalm really does span both testaments.

We can completely pray this prayer. We are watchmen waiting for the morning, for the day, as Paul calls it, when the Lord returns, when all of his steadfast love will be on display.

His plenteous redemption will be overwhelmingly present, and we will know complete redemption and complete freedom from our sin, from our iniquities. Psalm 130 is surely just our faith in that nice little concentrated form.

So you would think it being that, and more I'm sure, I'm sure I've just scraped the surface, it's a great psalm to have in your mind. Psalm 1 to have this. Maybe if you don't have one Psalm 130 as part of your memory bank, somewhere in your synapses you can just call upon it, maybe this summer, it would be a great project, if summer arrives, you can memorize Psalm 130.

[ 44 : 37 ] Maybe during breaks, during the World Cup, that was a joke I had for Bill, but he's not here. Make this psalm your own, it's a great psalm to have.

There's some great saints in the history of the church who've made this psalm their own, and lived by it, even died by it, it's a great psalm. So I'm going to say a word of prayer, including prayer for Betty, and then you can tell me your ponderings about this wisdom psalm.

So let's pray. Lord, we thank you that you give us an opportunity to gather here week by week and to learn things in the gospel. We thank you, especially as we remember Bill and Betty today and the work they do to make this place happen.

We pray that you will give Betty a full recovery from what ails her just now. Bless both Bill and Betty right now, Lord. We know they're thinking of us and let them know we're thinking of them.

We thank you, Lord, for Psalm 130. May we make it our own and live by it. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Yes.

[ 46 : 10 ] I was just thinking in five of the my soul waits for the Lord and enemies for our life. Which is the reality of our life in the way waiting for things.

Last night I was speaking to a friend and she was thinking about her family who weren't Christians. Her children specifically. That she had hoped and long and waited for that her entire life.

And it's not happening and she was very distressed about that. And then she said to me, and I was trying to tell her, you know, we have to wait, we have to keep hoping that part of the Christian life for things that we may never see in our lifetime.

And then she said, if this is true, why would Jesus have said, ask anything you need or want in my name and in my will and it will be so.

She said, why would you have said that if that wasn't true? And your answer to her was? that the Christian life involves waiting and hoping and possibly waiting and hoping our whole life for even things that our God's will may not happen in our lifetime.

[ 47 : 32 ] I know it's not a very satisfactory answer, but that might be the answer. You'll agree? Yeah, I mean, that's a good question that she poses, isn't it? then I give my amateur answer.

The two things don't contradict one another. The Lord's great promise of certainty and a life, that part of faith which involves waiting.

Waiting, I take it, amongst other things, is the Lord's way of making us, it deepens us, it teaches us patience, it teaches us that he is wise in timing and we are not, it teaches us our creatureliness in deeper and deeper ways.

So as we wait, we enter more certainly, with more certainty, into the promises regarding prayer that we get from our Lord and other places in Scripture. Yes, so I would see the same, they feed one another.

The certainty of the promise and the reality of waiting are somehow symbiotic, they're not contradictory. But that would, I know, I would try to unfold that kind of answer with someone who's in that kind of predicament.

[ 48 : 52 ] That's why I like this out of the, your friend is in a depth there, that's why this psalm seems to be so endlessly instructive.

There's no indication here of timing, is there? How long did this, depth, last, no indication here, but he's certain that this hope in the Lord will issue in plenteous redemption.

He is certain. That's all. I know that's an inadequate answer, but please. I also think it took me a long time to get to this, but we pray to God and we want something, so in a way we're waiting, but we're not really.

We keep asking, we keep putting our fist in, and we won't let it go. We won't give it to God. We always hang on and take it back. So we're saying, you know, I want you to bring my son to you, so then you, why aren't you doing it?

So now you're hanging on again. Or how come you didn't do it already? So you've got your hand in a game. You just keep taking it back from God. I always feel he's unable to do what he wants because you keep sticking your oar in and trying to direct him in how it should be done.

[ 50 : 14 ] We have an idea of how it should be done. So when I now get into those things, I just keep saying over to you, Lord, in the hopes that I'll let go. We don't know the time.

I don't think we realize that we always take it back for a moment to fix something or to ask why we want to do it our way. No, I hear you.

I mean, with reference to the earlier question, the promises of Jesus about prayer are just unblushing, aren't they? They're just utterly without qualification.

Ask, you'll receive. Seat, you'll find. Knock, the door, will open. So, we wait, as I understand it, from the rest, from, to hear that in wisdom, is not, will not contradict the, this waiting for the Lord, waiting, hoping in his word.

Again, he says waiting, and then more than watchman, more than watchman, God asks us to, into the discipline of waiting. and about that, we learn the discipline of godly speech in the Psalter, hence, there's wisdom here.

[ 51 : 38 ] Phil, you're, I'm just thinking about this, isn't it true of the part of it, that, even to answer prayer, God will not overcome, will not destroy the freedom of others to respond or not respond to him.

God will be, he's granted a radical freedom to humanity and even how the depths of our desire for others do not destroy that part of their freedom.

God will be, yes, a classic moment in scripture is, don't be facile in reference to scripture, but Joseph being thrown into a pit by his brothers, he's, at this point, he assumes he's going to die, I take it, out of the depths of I call unto you.

But at the end of the whole drama, years of drama, I take, how's my chronology there, he finds out God's been doing everything for good.

How did this happen? Well, God was at work. There was a lot of waiting by the godly in the drama, but there it was, God was at work.

[ 53 : 06 ] Who quoted for us the other day, was it in a sermon? Yes, it was in a sermon, Sam in the Lord of the Rings, who says, is everything, a bad thing going to come untrue? Seems impossible, but full redemption, plenteous redemption is coming to Israel, and the psalm is certain.

But all of the questions that have been posed are real. How long, O Lord? Psalm 88 is good to juxtapose with 130. Remember, Psalm 88 is that psalm where I refer to it earlier, the psalmist has no resolution at the end of the psalm.

He's in some bad circumstance, and he just waits. That psalm's there for a reason. Sometimes that's your, if you will, existential reality, and there's no resolution just now.

What do you say to your friend? There's no resolution. You hold them in faith, you wait. So, David. Harvey, this is almost in the nature of trivia, but recently I've been very impressed.

I read through the prophets in the psalm in particular, that phrase steadfast love appears so often. I don't remember the number I counted exactly, but something like 120 times through the psalms alone.

[ 54 : 18 ] Wow. It's almost like a theme impressing upon us that very facet of God's character. Yes, yes, and believed in while you're in the depths.

And I just, I don't say that, I don't want to, I want to believe that, but not glibly. And I know you don't want to, are they, David? Our Lord believed in the Lord's, in his Father's steadfast love when he was dying on the cross, I take it.

He just somehow, God's goodness is at work here, and I cannot understand it. Harry?

Before I came this morning, I read about that Tiger Woods has just flunked out for the fourth time on a world championship that he's won four times previously.

And so, having thought about that this morning, what would it be like for Tiger Woods to say Psalm 130 at the end of his failure, of the terrible mess that he's got himself in, and what possibility there is of his ever getting out of it, of his ever returning to that championship that he's proven, that he's able to do it, but he no longer seems to be able to do it.

[ 56 : 03 ] It's a very, I just sort of thought it was an interesting illustration of our human situation to be caught in that particular circumstance where, you know, he, in verse 3, give up golf completely.

And, you know, what is the difference between the game he played this past week, in which he went over par, even.

You know, previously he's broken par by very many strokes. And, you know, how do people have hope when the desperate circumstances of our life seem to have overtaken us?

And, we need to find, we need to find a whole new dimension to our lives in, in God hearing us from the depths, from the depths of the personal circumstances of our lives.

He has to do it on the front page of the faith. We do it all in the privacy of our own law games. But, it makes that psalm seem to be very poignant.

[ 57 : 43 ] two things, yes, you're right, if we take, if we take, if we take, take him at his word, he's a Buddhist, he doesn't think, verse 3, is about reality, Buddhists don't believe that there's an iniquity to be dealt with, just illusions to be overcome, in a certain sophisticated metaphysical sense.

So, he might come to the realization there are iniquities to be dealt with, and that there's a God who can do that. His worldview is out of touch with reality.

I take it, Harry, this psalmist is in Israel, so he knows that Israel used to be in the depths of Egypt, and a God of grace gave them freedom. And this pattern he promises to repeat.

And so our psalmist is repeating the mystery of Israel. Israel in his own life. And that's why he doesn't arbitrarily turn to Israel as the psalm ends. As the Christian today at St.

John's, we'll come to the Lord's table and know a recapitulation in us of the mystery of Jesus and his depth for our sin and his resurrection.

[ 59 : 01 ] It's always the same, isn't it, the way salvation works. It's repetition. God says, do this with me, I'll save you in this. I know, I know, I know.

His golf game's a metaphor for his life, you're saying, right? Yeah. I hope my golf game's not a metaphor for my life. I'm giving it up. Sheila, you had your hand up earlier.

one. I think both you and Harry are kind of going around the same thing that is puzzling me. In the second paragraph, we have iniquities and forgiveness. In the last paragraph, we have iniquities and redemption.

Not a word about penitence. Not a word about repentance. Meaning, really, kind of at the core of the forgiveness and the redemption.

And I think this applies to Tiger Woods as well. I think verse 3 has, at its, just beneath its surface, but it's there, is repentance.

[ 60 : 05 ] He's aware of his iniquities. If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities. This psalmist is aware of sin and its need to be dealt with. Who could stand?

He's afraid, to put it bluntly, of being destroyed in a judgment. Some reformed theologians sometimes talk about being destroyed in a judgment.

Do you think that's not sufficiently there for the psalmist? Well, I guess the thought that came to my mind was love is never having to say you're sorry.

I don't hear sorry in this. The fact that God marks the iniquities and is going to deal with them doesn't exactly hit the nail on the head for me about what the sinner's part in this is.

I mean, I hear you. My answer would be, I think it's in verse three. I think the psalmist is here aware that his depths very much involved, if not exclusively, I would think even exclusively, this issue of his iniquity, and his inability to stand in the presence of his holy God, the God of Israel, but then he confesses, he knows there's a mystery of forgiveness.

[ 61 : 23 ] I think that is there in verse three. That may have to do with the form of the psalm. As a wisdom teacher in Israel, I think this was written short, to be memorized probably, and it's tightly reasoned, isn't it?

Very tightly reasoned stuff. I think it's therefore it's a fact, as it's, it's, there's some literary term for this, that you scarles or not, but the repetition captures the feeling of waiting, I believe, yes.

I think as other psalms will say, how long, the Lord, how long, and there's repetition to capture the feeling of waiting. Good sir. Verse four, sorry.

You put, I'm not trying to understand you correctly, Harvey said, I'm trying to think out loud here, but you put, when we're forgiven, there's this weight of glory that those who are forgiven begin to feel. Did you say something like that? Yes, yes. And I'm curious about the dynamic of other ways that forgiveness and fear work together, because it seems the scriptures as a whole testifies to the reality that it is the forgiven who are terrified of the Lord, and it is those who are not forgiven that do not fear Him.

[ 62 : 59 ] And just the dynamic of fear and forgiveness in the Christian ways. I'm not sure if you have any more to say about that, or if I'm off track, what is the role of stepping into forgiveness and you stand before the Holy God and you are afraid, but it's grace that taught you to feel that, right?

It's an amazing grace, or it's grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved, or I don't know, I'm just kind of thinking out loud. I hear you. Well, I intuit it here, but that it's, that in final theological terms, the psalmist knows that there's some great mystery in God that deals with us in forgiving love, that it's not casual, that some great transaction, he's got the, I did mention just in passing, I could have said more, he has the, I'm thinking of a letter to the Hebrews now, he's got the shadow of temple life probably in front of him, he knows that God does great things to bring about forgiveness, and that there's some mystery there that he can't penetrate as a wisdom writer, and it causes fear in him towards the mystery of God, that he's able to forgive with integrity, and again, I leap theologically to the Christian knows that

God did a transaction within his own life to bring about atoning, forgiving love for us, that it's a greater mystery than he, probably this psalmist ever could have imagined, that the Christian has a privileged further view of it, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, that I know I'm, can I come back?

Please, please. Just, maybe a more pointed question, is there a place that in the Christian life for a Christian to be afraid of God? Or, I mean, you can pick up another verse and kind of combat that, that perfect love casts out all fear, but is there a place that being a Christian, you are actually in a state that, I'll use the word maybe terror, because that more pointed to the question, that you are a bit of terror before the Holy God gets, or is that all washed away?

Well, I, I, I mean, a sense, to the extent that the word fear is correct here, a sense of God's, a sense of God's majesty, and then all that it creates in us is always appropriate in the Christian.

[ 65 : 37 ] Whether or not that is caught appropriately by a word like fear, I don't know. Depends on how we've all lived with a word like fear in all of our lives, maybe.

The, the, the, the, the seraphim who, who are pure and holy and have never known sin, scripture informs me that they veil their faces.

What, how would I be in the presence of God if they veil their faces? So that kind of meditation is always appropriate for a Christian, I would think.

But, also, freedom and liberty in God's presence is not inconsistent with that, right? So, good sir. I wonder if the fear isn't, in this sense, isn't more of a revered prayer.

Sure, sure. That's a pretty amazing verse, actually. It reminds me of the hymn Who is a pardoning God?

[ 66 : 47 ] Like, what in the world is this? Who can be a righteous God who has made me to serve Him? I reject that and He can be saying, well, I'll make this right.

I'm going to give my son and He'll pay the penalty for that. What in the world is that? You sound like Pascal. Could you say that in French for us?

Kierkegaard, his idea that it's profound to be human must be that we can experience that. I mean, God has done that. Yes, yes, yes.

And then there's a place in the Psalms where it says, what is man that you are mindful of? That's right. I mean, we are an elevated species not because of anything that we've done, but because of what God has done for us.

On that note, shouldn't we end? Thank you, thank you. I don't know, thank you. Thank you for being here. Would you like to tell us who's on next week?

[ 68 : 01 ] I don't know who's on next week. Does anybody know who's on next week? Oh, the good gentleman on my left. You're stealing my thunder with Tierkegaard, actually.

Oh, really? Could you tell us what you're talking about next week? I was scheduled to talk about the difference between genius Tierkegaard's distinction between genius and apostasy. Very good.

Wow, something light, eh? Thank you. Oh, no, no, no. We look forward to it. Thank you very much.

And do remember Betty with her, what is Betty's condition?

Bronchitis? And pray for Bill's. Who's Bill cheering for in the World Cup? The wrong team would be according to you. I think he's cheering for Scotland.

Scotland. Bill's cheering for Scotland. There's a bulletin. Thank you all. Thank you. Are you a World Cup person?