

Friday, December 7, 2018

Too heavy

Psalms 49-50

Sacrifice thank offerings to God, fulfill your vows to the Most High, and call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me.
Psalm 50:14-15

This is the first psalm of Asaph. Asaph is the chief of the Levitical singers mentioned in 1 Chronicles 6:39. He was also appointed to minister before the ark of the LORD, to give thanks and to praise (1 Chronicles 16:1-4). He would have a very good idea of sacrifice and offerings that came to the LORD. This psalm recognizes the majesty of God and calls the reader to worship rightly. God does not need the sacrifices of men (50:9-13). The sacrifices and burnt offerings are not to satisfy His need. Sacrifices offered by heathens to false gods were believed to be offered to meet that god's needs. Not so the God who is the one true God. The sacrifices represent the absolute need we have of God. Twice in this psalm God calls for thank offerings. A thank offering is an offering of fellowship and peace. It is a voluntary offering given by one who has fulfilled all other offerings with a pure heart and then sacrifices an offering of thanks for the pure heart that comes by the grace and forgiveness of God. See Leviticus 7:11-21. These are the sacrifices of God. My heart given over freely to Him—in sacrifices that are voluntary and represent my love for Him.

LORD, please help me to bring an offering of thanks to You. See my heart, Lord. Know that it is truly Yours and that the offerings I bring are not brought because You have a need. They are brought because I have a great need for You to know how much I have given myself to You. Take my life. I offer it as a living sacrifice of thanks to You, my God and my Redeemer. Amen.

Saturday, December 8, 2018

Sacrifices

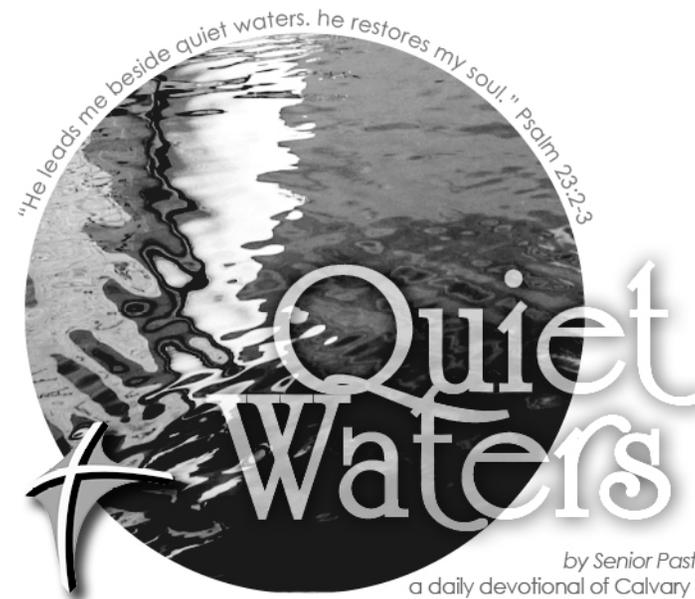
Psalms 51-52

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken spirit and a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.
Psalm 51:17

Sacrifices are not easy for me. It is so hard to put aside my self. I look so often to my interests and my needs and how others can sacrifice to meet my needs. I do the same with God. I appreciate His sacrifice, but it does not always lead me to respond with the sacrifice that will bring me into His presence. This powerful psalm is written by David after Nathan confronts him about his sin with Bathsheba. David sees the depth of his sin. He had been blinded to the depths of it prior to the confrontation, but after, his heart was broken because of his sin. This is godly sorrow that leads to repentance (2 Corinthians 7:8-12). This is not sorrow that he got caught, or even sorrow about the hurt that it caused in this world. This is a sorrow that it was a sin against almighty, holy God. Each of my sins are committed against the lover of my soul. I must come to a place where I grieve over the impact my sin has on my relationship with God. Then I can truly repent and find the freely given forgiveness and restoration He longs for us to have. Psalm 32 :5 reveals what David felt like prior to repentance. The sacrifices God requires are a crushed heart, a heart that is contrite and broken before Him, without pride. God is the One who then comes and heals that broken heart, turning it from a heart of stone to a heart of flesh.

Father, please help me see my sin in all its vileness. Help me be repulsed by it and its impact in my life. Help me bring You the sacrifice of a broken spirit and a contrite heart that is soft toward You. Place that heart within me please. Amen.

December 3 - 8, 2018



by Senior Pastor Chuck Cervenka
a daily devotional of Calvary Community Church

Monday, December 3, 2018

Downcast

Psalms 41-42

Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God. My soul is downcast within me; therefore I will remember you from the land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon—from Mount Mizar. Psalm 42:5-6

Self-talk. All day, every day, it seems I am caught in a conversation. Many times it is self-talk. The psalmist illustrates the art of self-talk here and I love that it comes in the midst of his prayers. The more I read the Psalms and the more I consider them to be prayers, the more I see that, in some ways, the psalmists were distracted persons in their prayers. Many times they seem to meander and, as in this psalm, move into questioning themselves and their souls. Why do I feel this way? Why am I responding like this? Snap out of it! Put your trust in God. I see this in my self-talk. It is easy for me to step into damaging self-talk if I neglect to remind myself often that I can listen to the truth of God in all the ways that He has revealed Himself. This may mean rehearsing the mighty acts of Scripture or it may be reading old journals to remind myself of His faithfulness in my life. When God allows me to remember that I thirst after Him and His presence, just like the deer panting for the water, my self-talk takes a whole different course and rather than speaking the language of despair, I speak the language of the certain hope I have in the presence and promise of God.

O LORD, please step in often to those conversations I have with myself. I need Your truth to stay constantly in front of me so that I do not listen to the lies that cause me to drift from You. Draw me close. I thirst for Your love and presence in my life. Amen.

Tuesday, December 4, 2018

Guide

Psalms 43-44

Send forth your light and your truth, let them guide me; let them bring me to your holy mountain, to the place where you dwell. Then will I go to the altar of God, to God, my joy and my delight. I will praise you with the harp, O God, my God. Psalm 43:3-4

Many believe that the 42nd and 43rd psalms were originally one psalm. The psalmist continues to seek the truth and presence of the LORD. God's light and truth are what the psalmist seeks. I can relate to his search. This world is filled with darkness and deceit. Ever since the deceiver of old approached Eve and spoke his native tongue, lies have filled the earth and distorted the truth of the Master. This distorted truth brings with it a darkness that is filled with misunderstanding, disillusionment, and despair. It is the cause of broken and strained relationships. The serpent still speaks lies in an attempt to fill me with sadness and despair. Like the psalmist, I long to live in the joy and delight for which I have been created. God is that joy. God is that delight. His truth pierces the darkness of deceit and allows me to sing the songs of joy from His holy mountain. It is the light and the truth of God that lead me and guide me to His presence. It is in His presence that I find true delight. It is His truth that allows me to expose the lies.

O LORD, lead me and guide me as only You can. Lead me by Your truth and light. Please help me discern the lies of the evil one. I don't want to give them a foothold in my life. They keep me from You and I find solace nowhere but in Your presence. Amen.

Wednesday, December 5, 2018

Fear

Psalms 45-46

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. Psalm 46:1-3

I have found in my life that declaring something is true does not necessarily mean that I will act as though it is true. It does help me to declare it as true, but it takes a different resolve to have it become truth in my response. This psalm quickly takes my mind to the account of Peter getting out of the boat to walk on the stormy sea (Matthew 14:28-31). He saw Jesus and knew that he could trust the Rabbi. He knew that Jesus would be able to keep him safe. So, he jumped out of the boat. I am not sure I would have had that courage! Peter took the first step and then started to glance around. That is when the storm looked bigger than the refuge. He lost hold of his faith. I must remind myself that the One who is the Creator is not bound by the created. I can have great courage in whatever situation I walk through because God is ever present and is more than capable to reign over that which He has made. Sometimes the things in my life seem like such great storms! The waves are high and the earth is quaking. Yet God stands firm. It is not just a set of words I need to say; it is truth that beats through my very being and I rest in the strength and the refuge of the Mighty Fortress.

A mighty fortress is our God! I believe this with all my heart dear Father. You are my refuge. So many times You have shown Yourself to be my defender. May I walk in great faith, not wavering from the truth I believe, so that others may see that you are sovereign over every storm. Amen.

Thursday, December 6, 2018

Forever and ever

Psalms 47-48

For this God is our God forever and ever; he will be our guide even to the end. Psalm 48:14

This declaration follows a psalm that celebrates the truth that God brings strength to the city of Jerusalem. It is the city of Zion, which He chose and desired as His dwelling place on earth (Psalm 132:13). It is not the city that is great—it is God. It is He who gives the city its strength, according to His will and His choosing. For the chosen people of God who lived in this city or who made journeys to worship in the temple, the city represented the presence of God among them. God is in her citadels; he has shown himself to be her fortress (48:3). As the psalmist encourages a walk around the city, it is to observe the places that the LORD reinforces. The city itself did not bring terror to the kings who came against it. It was not the people that they feared. It was the King of the city. That King is God. It is the city of the LORD Almighty and it looks toward and forward to the Holy City in which God dwells. His reign is forever. He is God forever. He will guide forever. For the Jewish people, the city of Jerusalem represents God's dwelling presence, even as the world today tries to deny this truth. God loves Jerusalem and, one day, Jesus will come back to the city for which He mourned (Matthew 23:37-39) and will establish His millennial throne. God is God forever and ever. He reigns over everything forever and ever. Though it may not always be apparent to my eyes, I know that God is working His plan for His purpose and His good.

Lord, thank You for the reminder that You are God forever and that You are not subject to our thoughts about You. It is You who brings strength to Your promises. Amen.