

Friday, December 30, 2016

Quieted

Psalms 131-132

My heart is not proud, O LORD, my eyes are not haughty; I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me. But I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me. O Israel, put your hope in the LORD both now and forevermore.
Psalm 131

This is a rich psalm. The depth of the peace that is found in this psalm is what I long for in my life. David says his soul is quieted because he lets God be God. At first look, it would appear that one of the most prideful things a person can say is that they are not proud. Yet that is exactly how David starts this psalm. It is a declaration of his heart. He has learned the secret of quieting his soul. He quiets his soul by not concerning himself with the things that are too wonderful for him. This reminds me of Job's declaration of repentance, "Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know." (Job 42:3). I am learning this in my life. God holds me in His grip. To be quieted is to be content with Who holds me. Whatever the situation is in my life at any given point, I can quiet myself by remembering that God has this. He is looking at the big picture at the same time that He is involved in every aspect of my life. I do not need to worry and I certainly can understand that pride will not help me rest in His arms. He is holding the whole world.

Father, quiet my soul before You. O LORD, please take my pride and my haughtiness from me. Keep me from fixating on things that are just too wonderful for me to know. Thank You for protecting me from those things. Amen.

Saturday, December 31, 2016

Blessing

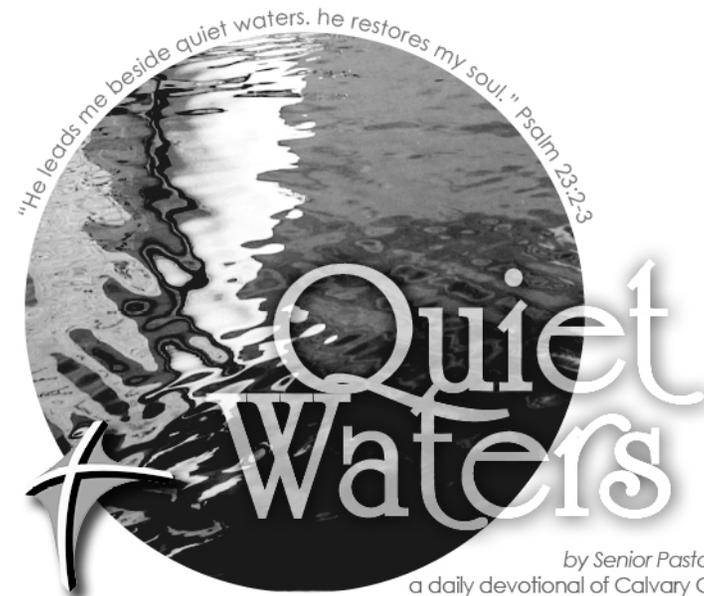
Psalms 133-134

How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down upon the collar of his robes. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.
Psalm 133

There was a unity that came to the people of Israel that eludes the western Church world. They came together and recited this Psalm of Ascent. In so doing, they would be declaring that the unity they have in the promises of God to them as a nation was something that was pleasant and good. It was the promises of God that allowed them to live together in unity. That unity brings the blessing of God. It is His design for His people. In Christ, it is possible for us to have the same Father. He is a loving Father and He is God. We can be united around that truth. The Father has promised eternity in unity for us. We will be with Him. It is so good and pleasant when that happens here and now. It happens as we come together in our unity in the Lord instead of our independence. The oil running down the beard of Aaron reminds us of the anointing of the Holy Spirit that makes this unity possible.

Dear Father, I long for this blessing for each of Your children. I can only imagine how You long to bestow this blessing. Please keep me from stirring up any sort of disunity among Your children. Thank You for the anointing. Amen.

December 26-31, 2016



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

Monday, December 26, 2016

Look

Psalms 123-124

I lift up my eyes to you, to you whose throne is in heaven. As the eyes of slaves look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maid look to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the LORD our God, till he shows us his mercy.
Psalm 123:1-2

The psalmist calls us to remember that God is sovereign. He is the One who is reigning over all there is and in Him alone is mercy found. The mercy of God is worth waiting for. God is not an evil tyrant withholding His mercy for maniacal purposes. God is a loving Ruler who knows what is best for those in His service. That is every person. Truthfully, most do not realize this. Those who do are not always the best at serving. Yet in this psalm a glimpse is given of how to wait for the mercy of God. Lift my eyes to the King on His throne. At the time of this writing, there would have been servants who waited for their master's command. It may come as just a movement of the hand. A faithful servant would watch the hand of the master and as soon as the hand moved, they would move to obey. This would require a constant gaze.

Is that how I lift my eyes to the Lord? Do I have a constant gaze upon Him, ready to move with Him as He leads? Am I waiting patiently, as His willing servant, for Him to reveal His mercy to me? I desperately need the mercy only He can give. If He were to give me what I deserve, I would be completely undone. I am grateful for my King. I look to His hand alone for mercy.

O LORD, keep my eyes fixed on You. You are the Author and Perfector of my faith. I watch for You in every moment of the day. Let me not get distracted and help me keep from looking away. Amen.

Tuesday, December 27, 2016

Exalted

Psalms 125-126

When the LORD brought back the captives to Zion, we were like men who dreamed. Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them." The LORD has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.
Psalm 126:1-3

I love the Psalms of Ascents because they are a reminder that God designed us for community. I get so tempted to wrap up my faith in individualistic ways, considering that God is for me and my good. This psalm in particular celebrates the amazing things that God has done for Israel as a people. This is not just one person talking about the fact that the return from exile benefitted him. He is celebrating that the return of the exiles to Jerusalem made God known. God doing things for the Israelites made God known among the nations. This came as the Israelites gathered together to sing songs of joy filled with laughter. They were swept away by God's work in their lives and it was a shout out to other nations. Those nations declared that God had done great things for them. This is why I love the worship services where the church comes together to declare the greatness of God. When we all cry out together how great God is and all that He has done for all of us, He gets all the praise and even those who look on who do not know Him can see that He has done great things for us.

Dear LORD, I am so selfish. How many times am I focused on what You can do for me? Instead, Lord, please help me learn how to praise You together with all who know You. Let me praise You for what You have done for us, even as I celebrate Your individual work in my life. Amen.

Wednesday, December 28, 2016

Unless

Psalms 127-128

Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain.
Psalm 127:1a

One small sentence in the middle of the Bible. As I ponder this verse, I can't help but wonder what life would be like if every person not only knew this verse, but lived as though it were true. Scripture reveals the difference in the lives of people. All throughout the Bible, the difference can be seen. There are those who seek to have the Lord build their house and others who labor in vain. David and Saul stand out as two examples. Saul had opportunity to allow God to build his house, but he chose to build it his own way. His house crumbled. David, on the other hand was amazed that the Lord would actually build a house for him (2 Samuel 7:11,18). The Lord built for David a house that would never end.

What is the house that I am building? How much of what I am trying to build is by my effort and my design? If I am honest, all too often, I am doing the planning. When this happens, I am building in vain. My house is built on the sand of my self-effort. It will not stand the test (1 Corinthians 3:10-15). I need to ask myself honestly whether I am allowing God to build my house. This means my relationships, my reputation, my testimony, my worth, my family, my job. Every aspect of my life is the house that will be built. Will it be in vain?

O LORD, teach me this truth in the depth of my heart. My self-effort keeps me from turning to You and trusting You to build the house. I look back and I can see the areas in my life where I allowed You to do the building—in me first. Those are the areas that bring the greatest joy and peace. Please Lord, let me help You build instead of building myself. Amen.

Thursday, December 29, 2016

Wait

Psalms 129-130

If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O LORD, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul waits; and in his word I put my hope.
Psalm 130:3-5

Hope implies waiting. In Romans 8:24, Paul asks the question, "Who hopes for what he already has?" Good question. Obviously, if I am hoping, it is because something has not yet happened. But what will I do while I am waiting? That is the real question, isn't it? Truthfully, I am not all that good at waiting. Usually the things I am waiting for are temporary and trivial things (in light of eternity).

This psalm awakens my heart to hope for the sure forgiveness found in the redemption that comes from the LORD. I fear the LORD because he forgives my sins! I long to be free from the sins that hold me in bondage. In God's strength, I gain victories here and that encourages me, but I hold out and watch for His return. I am absolutely sure He will come again. My hope is sure. So I wait. Even more than I am sure the morning follows the night, I am sure my LORD will come. So I wait in restful hope—even if I find myself in the depths of despair.

O LORD. My heart cries out to You from the depths of my longing. You have placed such a longing in my heart to be with You and yet You have asked me to wait. In the waiting, You have promised You will return—so I wait, with sure hope, confident that You will come again at just the right time to fulfill the redemption of all things. Help me proclaim this truth in all that I do and say so that all may know this hope that You alone provide. Amen.