

Week 9- Psalm 150: Praying our Praise

1: CONTEXT

A quick look back: This is our LAST week!! Spend a few minutes reflecting on the Psalms. How would you describe/define this book of Scripture if someone asked you to summarize it? What has stood out to you? What have you learned about a life of prayer?

Today's Passage: We fittingly end our study of Psalms with the very last psalm in the book, Psalm 150. This Psalm is part of 5 closing psalms, which all begin and end with the words, "Praise the Lord," or in Hebrew, "Hallelujah!" Amidst all the heartache of life- lament, sin, frustration, anger- and amidst all the realities of a life of faith- trust, journey, surrender- God is to be praised. He is worthy of our deepest Hallelujahs...

2: CONTENT

Read Psalm 150 out loud and then pick ONE of the following ways (Option A, B, C, or D) to help your group engage with this passage.

Option A. Notice/Wonder: Ask everyone to read the passage again quietly on their own. As they read, ask them to make a list like the one below. Remember that what people notice or wonder can just be small, simple things.

What do I NOTICE about this text?

What do I WONDER about?

Once everyone has had the chance to make their list, come together as a group and share your observations, writing them on a board or a place where everyone can see the list as it develops.

Option B. Creative Engagement: Give everyone paper and drawing supplies. Have everyone read the passage again on their own, then invite them to spend some time illustrating the passage (or a part of the passage) in whatever way they want- concrete, abstract, colors, images, words. When everyone has completed their art, come together and spend time sharing with each other what you drew and why.

Option C. Lectio Divina: Scripture is read four times, pausing after each reading:

1: HEAR the passage.

2: MEDITATE on the passage in the silence that follows.

3: IDENTIFY a word or phrase that stands out to you from the reading (leader may ask group to speak this out loud after the 3rd reading, or to share it as a group after the 4th reading)

4: REST in the presence of God.

Take time to share your reflections with each other as a group.

Option D. Guided Bible Study Questions:

1. Verse 1 tells us **where** God is to be praised. What do you think is meant/expressed by "sanctuary" and "in his mighty heavens"? Where is God's sanctuary? Are the heavens contained to a place?
2. Verse 2 tells us **why** God is to be praised. What reasons does the psalmist give? What is the difference between these two reasons, and why might they both be important?
3. Verses 3-5 tells us **how** to praise the Lord. As you read these verses, what kind of scene do you imagine?
4. Verse 6 tells us **who** should praise the Lord. Most translations read, "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord," but some Hebrew scholars say that a more exact translation would be,

“Let every breath praise the Lord.” How do these different translations bring out the potential meanings of this invitation?

3: APPLICATION

No matter what method you used for content, spend some time talking about what this passage might mean to us now. Here are some questions to help guide this discussion. Feel free to use several or to just focus on one or two.

- Does praise play a role in your prayer life? Do you think praise is different/the same as thanksgiving? In what ways? Why might both be important in the life of faith?
- The Psalms begin with “Blessed” and end with “Hallelujah.” How do these words work together? What is their relationship to all of the other true emotions and expressions of prayer that we have studied together?
- Most of us don’t worship regularly with all the instruments listed here: trumpets, harps, lyres, tambourines, strings, flutes, cymbals. But historical study tells us that each of these instruments would most likely have been played by different people from various classes, genders, and social roles. How does that explanation change what the psalmist might be trying to illustrate here?
- Have you ever had worship or prayer experiences that felt flooded with unencumbered joy and praise? Share what that was like.
- Share one or two ways that your study of Psalms has encouraged you, stretched you, or changed you over the course of the past few months. What have you learned about God? What have you learned about yourself?
- What is your “praise God” or “hallelujah” right now in your life?

4: PRAYER

Close your time together in prayer using one of the ideas below

- Use words/images/themes from the passage to guide your prayer.
- Raise up your “wonderings” from the notice/wonder section to God in prayer
- Take prayer requests and pray over each other as a group or in small groups
- Use this written prayer:

Lord, thank you for giving me life and breath and many reasons for praising you. I confess that my instrument of praise sometimes gets dusty when I don't regularly reflect on your acts of power and surpassing greatness. Forgive me for when I don't eagerly join the party, and help me to be aware of the worthiness of praise to you both today and all the days of my life. Hallelujah. Amen