

Booklet~ Summer of Psalms Psalm 40

Soul Food Day 1

Scripture Psalm 40:1-3

¹ I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry. ² He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. ³ He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear the LORD and put their trust in him.

Waiting Patiently (in the pit)

In today's world we have high speed internet, microwaves, fast food and Amazon prime 2 day delivery... we are not accustomed to waiting. In Psalm 40 David was forced to wait. Not only wait, but wait with anticipation. It is one thing to read about waiting patiently, but actually living in wait is something else. Waiting is hard work and full of many unknowns, especially for us who are not used to waiting. Yet the Lord still calls us to wait. After all, good things come to those who wait. Romans 8:28 reminds us that "... in all things [even waiting] God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." Our waiting is not in vain, we grow in patience and we learn the art of slowing down. Our society of instant gratification does not do us any favours. The natural rhythm of life takes time. Vegetables need a season to develop, trees need time to grow tall and strong. Even our bodies take time to adjust, heal, and mature (our brains are not fully matured until around 19 years old).

Hymn writer Phillips Brooks admitted, "The hardest task in my life is to sit down and wait for God to catch up with me." Yet patience is part of God's strategy for maturing us as Christians. It's a lost skill we all need to cultivate. If we have no joy because we are always in a rush, slow down. God will give you a new song—but first we must wait patiently for Him (vv.1-3).

Patience is a virtue that carries a lot of wait!

Application

-What are you waiting for?

-How would you rate your patience level?

-Stop now and listen to where God is for you right now in this moment

Prayer: Lord help me to be patient. I ask today that you would slow my life down enough to see where you are working in my life. Help me to experience you at your pace and not mine. Amen.

Soul Food Day 2

(Excerpts from <https://www.raystedman.org/daily-devotions/psalms/a-song-of-resurrection>)

Psalm 40:2-3

He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. ³He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear the LORD and put their trust in him.

A Song of Resurrection

This is a description of resurrection. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire or, as the Hebrew has it, out of the pit of tumult, out of a terrible experience, out of a place of desolation and despair and death.

Life is often filled with death. Every experience that is opposite to what God has designed for us is an experience of death. Bitterness and shame and sorrow, hate and greed and loneliness, are all forms of death that come into our lives right now. That is what our Lord was experiencing. He understands these things because He has been through them Himself. Ultimately they led Him, as they will lead us, to that final moment when life ends and death is before us--the deep, dark desolation of death. But, He says, the Lord drew me out of that. He lifted me up from a slimy pit, out of the mud and mire, and set my feet upon a rock and made my steps secure.

That is a beautiful description of the experience of resurrection. None of us has ever been resurrected. There is a great difference between what happened to Lazarus and what happened to Jesus. Lazarus was really resuscitated; he was restored to this life almost as though he had been given mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. But Jesus was resurrected. He was the firstborn from the dead. He stepped into a whole new experience of life that God had designed from the beginning for humanity. That is what the Messiah is describing here. The result is, He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God.

A new song describes a new experience. When God does something great for you, you do not sit down and recite a proverb or compose a paragraph or devise a recipe. You write a song, because singing is one of the best ways we have of expressing what is happening to us. And so He has a new song to celebrate a new kind of living, resurrected life. The effect of that resurrection life, He tells us, is going to be widespread. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the LORD (Psalm 40:3). The effect of the resurrection of Jesus was that the story of Christianity, the message of the Christian gospel, exploded in the Roman world as the church literally thrust out in every direction and shook the world of that day.

Jesus is inviting you out of the pit and into a new song

Application

Bitterness, shame, hate, sorrow, and loneliness are all forms of death. Do we believe and act on His indwelling Presence to dispel every form of death we experience?

Prayer

Lord, you have the power to bring life from death. Thank you that through the resurrection of Jesus You have given me new life.

Soul Food Day 3

Psalm 40:9-10

⁹ I proclaim your saving acts in the great assembly; I do not seal my lips, LORD, as you know. I do not hide your righteousness in my heart; I speak of your faithfulness and your saving help. I do not conceal your love and your faithfulness from the great assembly.

Testifying to what God has already done

One time I was cutting down a big tree that was burning on the inside and it fell in the wrong direction and almost killed me. I realized that evening that I could have died if I was standing for one second longer where I had been. I remembered that God was not finished with me. This story is to illustrate the power of story.

Jesus encountered me and my life was never the same. I thought about it that even if I stopped living as a Christian, that would not negate the reality that there was a God in Heaven who loved me so therefore I may as well continue on living as Jesus has asked me to, in love and reverence for him and my neighbor.

Everyone loves a story. They stick with us. They make us laugh or cry or move us to action. I could preach spot on theology in a sermon and half the congregation would be nodding off, but as soon as I begin to tell a story, every eye and ear tunes in to listen. Stories teach us, entertain us, challenge us and frighten us. The writers and audience of the ancient near east loved stories as well. They are documented in the bible in every genre from action adventure (The exodus) to love (Song of Songs) to wisdom literature (Ecclesiastes). Each of us has stories of our own lived experiences. David finds himself in a pit like situation and he shares how God had saved him before and he wants everyone to know who God is to him and what God means to him. David's story is not unlike our stories of what God has done in our lives. Those are stories that God is calling us to share. Your story could be death defying or a testimony as simple as St. Augustine's.

In a moment of intense emotional crisis, Augustine hears a child's voice chanting, "Take and read, take and read." When he does so, he encounters Romans 13:13-14.

"Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. ¹⁴ Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh."

One of the most prolific authors in all of Christendom was reborn by hearing a child's voice

Before Jesus ascends in Acts 1:8 he encourages his disciples with these words: Here they now addressed to you – "...You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my **witnesses** in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Jesus calls us to be witnesses so share your story with those around you

Applications

-One of our duties as believers is to be witnesses to God's transformative power in our lives. Have you experienced His Holy Spirit's power in your life? Share your story with those around you.

-What is your story? Where has God transformed you in your life?

-Who will you talk to today? How can you share your story of God's good news to them today?

Prayer

Lord, help me to see you in my story. Help me to articulate your transforming grace in my life to those around me. Give me the courage to be a witness for you today. Amen

Soul Food Day 4

(Excerpts from <http://asanefaith.com/devotions-on-psalm-401-10/>)

Psalm 40:4

“Happy are those who make the Lord their trust” (Psalm 40:4).

The peculiar happiness of those in the LORD

Daniel traveled to Tanzania with several members of his congregation. The trip was part of an exchange program that allowed Christians from both Tanzania and the United States to see different parts of the church and experience different cultures. When Daniel arrived, he was struck by the lush beauty of the land, by the poverty of the people and by the people’s joy. The Christians that Daniel met had very little, but they were happy and they celebrated life.

Daniel ruminated on what he thought were two opposing facts—the poverty of the Tanzanians and their joy. The more he thought about it, the more he realized that the Tanzanians had very little in which they could place their trust. IRA’s and 403b’s were virtually unheard of. Few people own cars. Their homes were the simplest of structures and, for most of the people, their clothes were second-hand from people in other countries. The only place to put their trust was in the Lord—in the Lord’s presence, protection and provision. Placing their trust in God enabled them to experience a happiness and joy that was rare even in the abundance of the United States. It is true—those who place their trust in the Lord are happy, and it is a happiness that cannot be taken away from them.

Place your trust in the Lord and you will find a lasting happiness beyond current circumstance

Application

-Where is your happiness coming from today? Is it your surroundings? Or your connection to the Lord?

Prayer

Faithful Lord, help us to see you more clearly, love you more dearly and follow you more nearly day by day. Amen.

Soul Food Day 5

Psalm 40:6-8

⁶ Sacrifice and offering you did not desire—but my ears you have opened—burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require.⁷ Then I said, “Here I am, I have come—it is written about me in the scroll.⁸ I desire to do your will, my God; your law is within my heart.”

Sacrifice and the new covenant

As the old adage goes “rules were made to be broken.” Then why do we have laws? Why is it against the law to steal? Or kill? Or treat another as less than human. People need laws to remind them that they are more than animals. God understood this better than humanity. There are 613 laws in the Torah (first 5 books of the Old Testament). 613 rules given to the priests by God to pass onto the chosen people of God so they could live holy and righteous lives as an example of who God was. How many laws do you think the Israelites broke? That’s right, 613. God also understood something deeper about the human condition. That “the human heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure” (Jer. 17:9). That is why God’s plan was bigger than mere laws. He instructs the Israelites to have the law written on their hearts (Deut.6:6). David’s words in Psalm 40:6-8 echo this fact and also foreshadow what is to come. David summarizes the heart of the law “...to do [God’s] will.” David proclaimed and desired to do this in his heart but still he was not able. It’s not that humans were set up to fail; it’s that God knew us better than we knew ourselves and we were unable to do it ourselves. In God’s perfect timing, God came to us to bring a new covenant in Jesus Christ. The writer of Hebrews takes liberties to attribute David’s words in psalm 40 to Jesus (Jesus was David’s descendant after all) “...by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” (Heb 10:10). The Writer then uses words from Jeremiah’s prophesy (31:31-34) and attributes them to the Holy Spirit that Jesus is the new covenant and it is only through his sacrifice that the law is written on people’s hearts and that their “sin and lawless acts [God] will remember no more” (Heb 10:17 ref. Jer:31:34)

“And where these have been forgiven, sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary” (Heb 10:18)

Application

-Do you feel like David, always striving to follow God but never succeeding? Or like the writer of Hebrews who says that we are already forgiven in Jesus?

-what does it mean for you today to have the law written on your heart?

Prayer

Dear Lord, help me to remember that it is only by your sacrifice that I am forgiven. Help me to experience your law written on my heart. I desire to do your will in Jesus. Amen.

houseChurch material

1. Have different readers share the psalm in at least 2 or more translations (suggestions: NRSV, MSG, AMP, etc.)

2. Reflect between each reading: what words stand out to you between translations?

Psalm 40 (NIV)

For the director of music. Of David. A psalm.

*¹ I waited patiently for the LORD;
he turned to me and heard my cry.*

*² He lifted me out of the slimy pit,
out of the mud and mire;
he set my feet on a rock
and gave me a firm place to stand.*

*³ He put a new song in my mouth,
a hymn of praise to our God.*

*Many will see and fear the LORD
and put their trust in him.*

*⁴ Blessed is the one
who trusts in the LORD,
who does not look to the proud,
to those who turn aside to false gods.^[b]*

*⁵ Many, LORD my God,
are the wonders you have done,
the things you planned for us.*

*None can compare with you;
were I to speak and tell of your deeds,
they would be too many to declare.*

*⁶ Sacrifice and offering you did not desire—
but my ears you have opened^[c]—
burnt offerings and sin offerings^[c] you did not require.*

*⁷ Then I said, "Here I am, I have come—
it is written about me in the scroll."^[e]*

*⁸ I desire to do your will, my God;
your law is within my heart."*

*⁹ I proclaim your saving acts in the great assembly;
I do not seal my lips, LORD,
as you know.*

*¹⁰ I do not hide your righteousness in my heart;
I speak of your faithfulness and your saving help.
I do not conceal your love and your faithfulness
from the great assembly.*

*¹¹ Do not withhold your mercy from me, LORD;
may your love and faithfulness always protect me.*

¹² For troubles without number surround me;

*my sins have overtaken me, and I cannot see.
They are more than the hairs of my head,
and my heart fails within me.
13 Be pleased to save me, LORD;
come quickly, LORD, to help me.*

*14 May all who want to take my life
be put to shame and confusion;
may all who desire my ruin
be turned back in disgrace.*

*15 May those who say to me, "Aha! Aha!"
be appalled at their own shame.*

*16 But may all who seek you
rejoice and be glad in you;
may those who long for your saving help always say,
"The LORD is great!"*

*17 But as for me, I am poor and needy;
may the Lord think of me.
You are my help and my deliverer;
you are my God, do not delay.*

Application

1. What did you hear during the reading? What did the Holy Spirit say to you?

2. What do you think and how do you feel about what the Holy Spirit said?

How do you feel comforted, convicted & challenged from the reading?

3. What does the Holy Spirit want you to do now?

4. Share any of the above discoveries with your houseChurch. Ask each other, "What is your nugget?"

Discussion Questions

1. What are the major themes of this psalm?
2. Do you feel like you are currently in a “pit.” What would it look like for God to pull you from it? Or what would a new song sound like to you?
3. Has God has pulled you from your pit. Share your story with those around you.
4. What does it mean when David says “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire—but my ears you have opened—burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require” (vs. 6)
5. Share how this psalm motivates you in your relationship with the Lord

Optional: search U2’s song “40” on youtube and spend some time meditating on it.