



Summer in the Psalms

Daily Prayer Guide

Summer in the Psalms 2016

God has given us a **tutor** and **toolbox** for prayer: the Psalms

These ancient poems speak and sing at the intersection of God's Word to man and man's words to God. Both prayer and Scripture, they are the fertile field of our communication with God. They are a guiding light for the life of faith. They are our words when we have none.

Over twelve weeks, we will entrust ourselves to the Psalms as our teacher and trainer, praying with them morning and evening. Let these prayers shape the rhythm of your day. Return to them in your mind. Memorize one line and repeat it throughout the day. While reading and praying, reflect on a few things:

What are the psalmists experiencing? How are they responding? How can you personally identify or sympathize? What does this psalm teach us about prayer, about God, about ourselves and the world?

The Psalms are the inherited songbook and prayerbook of Israel, the **people of God**. When we pray the psalms, we join together with the community of faith throughout history in one worshipping voice. We take the most deeply personal dimensions of our own life and connect them to the massive, mysterious story of God and his people.

The Psalms are not exactly "nice" and "pretty." They are **honest human prayer**, which is rough around the edges. Alongside songs of comfort, trust, and praise, we find other extremes: anger with God, violent wishes, enemies, crippling doubt, desperate requests, political outrage, anxiety and hopelessness. When we pray the psalms, we express these depths and learn that prayer is not about getting dressed up for God. It is about being honest with God in all seasons and experiences, even with the hidden and hideous in our life.

Too often our prayer is about getting our will done in heaven rather than God's will done on earth. Prayer is primarily **God's work in us** and our cooperation with his work everywhere. When we pray the psalms, we learn this by allowing God's own voice to pray in us and become our own. It is practice in humility, obedience, and listening.

Watch for Christ. The written Word reveals the Incarnate Word. Watch for how Jesus' life, death, and resurrection sheds light on these psalms, and imagine Jesus praying these psalms (as he often did). When we pray the psalms, **Christ prays with us and in us**.

—Nick Chambers

JUNE 2

Morning—Read Psalm 1

“LIKE A TREE”

The Psalms prepare us to pray with the image of a tree—rooted, nourished, and flourishing. The life of prayer is not something we can control or create; only when we surrender and learn patient *dependence* on the soil and stream of God’s Word do we become solid and fruitful.

Evening—Read Psalm 2

“I HAVE SET MY KING ON ZION”

Prayer gives us a God-sized perspective on the chaotic world around us. In the midst of political plots and power struggles, God actually *laughs*, directing our attention to his Son, who reigns over all. With Christ (“the anointed”) as our King, we don’t have to get caught up in confusion, anxiety, and despair over our life and our world.

JUNE 3

Morning—Read Psalm 3

“THE LORD SUSTAINS ME”

The psalms are often not pretty. But they are honest and vulnerable. The first words of actual prayer in the book erupt in desperation: “God, look at all my enemies!” David’s enemy here is Absalom, his own son (2 Samuel 15–19). The contrast is remarkable between David’s violent words here and his actual response in the story: he *forgives*. Everyone. We too can forgive, because we are not destroyed when enemies rise up against us. We rest and rise, secure in the promises of our Shield and Help.

Evening—Read Psalm 4

“I WILL BOTH LIE DOWN AND SLEEP”

In the evening, the dust of the day settles and we wind down to hear the ongoing hum of work, wishing, and worry still in our minds. With this psalm, we gather the fragments of the day. We quiet ourselves. We confess our mess-ups, the ways we chase after noise and nonsense, power and pleasure—all of which empty and fade, leaving us empty and faded. Trusting God, we offer up this sacrifice of our sinful life and receive from him true joy, true peace and rest.

JUNE 4

Morning—Read Psalm 5

“WATCH”

This psalm begins the day with clarity of vision about the two paths before us: that which leads to destruction and that which leads to the temple of God. In the morning, we prepare and present ourselves before God and *watch*—committed and carefully attentive to which path we choose at every moment—both what we are doing and what God is doing.

Evening—Read Psalm 6

“TURN O LORD, SAVE MY LIFE”

Death is part of life. We avoid looking straight at it most of the time by crafty constructions of safety, distraction, and power. As baptized followers of Christ, however, we are called to take up our cross daily and die to ourselves. It is only through such daily, face-to-face encounter with death that we can receive the sudden surprise of hope and assurance in this psalm (v. 8): crucifixion and resurrection.

JUNE 5

Morning—Read Psalm 7

“JUDGE ME, O LORD”

The Lord is Judge—one of his more unpopular titles in our day. What this means for the psalmist, though, is that God establishes truth, goodness, and peace on the earth. And so we pray *welcoming* God’s judgment in our world and in our own hearts.

Evening—Read Psalm 8

“WHAT ARE HUMAN BEINGS?”

The heavens and the earth are marvelous. Their Creator, infinitely more so. But who are these strange beings in between? What is humanity? The psalm asks and answers: we are the cared-for caretakers of all creation. This prayer fills us with wonder, humbles us, and hands us a responsibility.

JUNE 6

Morning— Read Psalm 9:1–10

“A STRONGHOLD IN TIMES OF TROUBLE”

God’s reign does not respect national borders; it spreads across all time and space. No matter what any civilization may claim and call itself, they all change, crumble, and even collapse. When we call Jesus our King, we mean that he is the sole stronghold and the one in control, no matter what the political landscape.

Evening— Read Psalm 9:11–20

“THEY ARE ONLY HUMAN”

Only one psalm after humans are called “a little lower than God...crowned with glory and honor” (8:5), we are reminded of our broken nature—so often fearful, fragile, and futile. We are both victim and villain, surrounded by our own mortal messes—shooting ourselves in the foot, abusing one another, forgetting God altogether because we think we can solve our own problems.

JUNE 7

Morning—Read Psalm 10

“DO NOT FORGET THE OPPRESSED”

Throughout the Psalms, the poor and needy consistently interrupt our safe prayers and confront our sleepy conscience. How can we pray for the oppressed if we ourselves have forgotten them? This prayer, in calling on God, also calls *us* to attention and action, to be a presence of justice for the helpless, the poor, the orphan. Our first step in remembering the poor is not being duped by the illusions of success, power, and prosperity.

Evening—Read Psalm 11

“IN THE LORD I TAKE REFUGE”

Sometimes we want to run and hide. In struggle and stress, the floor falls out from under us and we want to escape. Instead, this psalm teaches us to hold fast, praying this confounding but comforting paradox: the Lord is here with us; the Lord is enthroned in heaven. He is not just one or the other but *both*: cosmic providence and compassionate presence. There is no opposition between spiritual and solid, transcendent and tangible. This is the mystery of Jesus himself who is over all and in all, not surveying our troubles from afar but suffering with us and for us (Hebrews 6:14–16).

JUNE 8

Morning—Read Psalm 12

“THE FAITHFUL HAVE DISAPPEARED”

God doesn’t speak the way we do. We “utter lies” with “flattering lips,” (v. 2) while he speaks “promises that are pure” (v. 6). For this reason, Jesus teaches us to take no oaths, simply sticking to our yes and no (Matthew 5:33–37). To do so is to speak with the faithfulness of God. Even when it comes to issues of poverty and social justice (v. 5), we put our trust in the sure word of God’s protection and promise, not the shaky words of political power and programs.

Evening—Read Psalm 13

“HOW LONG?”

God is patient—sometimes too patient for us. His patience is intolerable because it seems more like he is asleep at the wheel (2 Peter 3:9). We can’t see through the forest, and we doubt that there is even a way out. God seems incapable of feeling the urgency of our troubles. Yet somehow hope springs abruptly. We pray once again through a sudden turn of assurance (vv. 5–6), moving from confusion to confidence—a new trust that God is present and provident even when his patience feels like absence.

JUNE 9

Morning—Read Psalm 14

“THE FOOL”

This psalm pictures “atheism” not as a set of ideas about the existence of God, but as an orientation of the heart—a *direction* that one faces and walks. It is a way living, characterized especially by mistreating others. Sometimes we play the fool, thinking God exists but acting as if he doesn’t. *Repentance* is the word we use to describe turning back from this heart-course to seek God.

Evening—Read Psalm 15

“WHO MAY ABIDE?”

Who will *dwell with God*? The person with integrity and strong and steadfast character, who is free from self-deception, who doesn’t gossip or change loyalties depending on the crowd. This person, instead of being envious of others’ success, is not only ethical and but even generous in their work, not comprising their values for attention and influence. We cannot be and do all this on our own. Jesus comes to *dwell with us* and transform us—by patient, watchful grace and discipline—into this kind of person, his own image.

JUNE 10

Morning—Read Psalm 16

“I HAVE NO GOOD APART FROM YOU”

God is ever *beside* us and *before* us, meaning that we are both *attached* to him and *attentive* to him. We belong to him wholly—heart, soul, and body. He is our chosen portion and cup; he is enough and more than enough. We enjoy his presence completely and enjoy nothing outside him. This is the path of life.

Evening—Read Psalm 17

“THE APPLE OF YOUR EYE”

In Hebrew, “apple of your eye” (v. 8) literally means “little man in your eye.” You know when you are so close to someone’s face that you can see your own reflection in their eye? That is what this is talking about—*intimacy* and *reflection*, being so near to God, so face-to-face, that we become like him: “I shall behold your face in righteousness; when I awake I shall be satisfied, beholding your likeness” (v. 15). For Paul, this is the ultimate Christian hope (1 Corinthians 13:12)

JUNE 11

Morning—Read Psalm 18:1–19

“HE REACHED DOWN FROM ON HIGH”

Sometimes God’s power and providence is pictured in the everyday order of nature. Other times, it looks like a catastrophic interruption of normality—earthquake and tempest, blinding light and darkness. Either way, God’s saving action comes to us as marvelous beyond our power, inspiring awe.

Evening—Read Psalm 18:20–50

“WITH THE MERCIFUL”

As with Psalm 3, despite the rhetoric of war, the actual backstory is one of *forgiveness*—of David passing up opportunities to kill Saul and finally end his life on the run. David shows mercy because he knows and prays that “with the merciful you show yourself merciful” (v. 25 ESV) just as we pray “forgive us as we forgive.” This is true deliverance and victory, the kind that comes from a merciful God.

JUNE 12

Morning—Read Psalm 19

“NOTHING IS HID FROM ITS HEAT”

With this psalm we meditate on the reality of God’s Word. From the majesty of the heavens to the mysteries of the heart, God’s Word speaks, shines, and searches. Many have referred to nature and Scripture as the “two books of revelation,” because God speaks all things into being and speaks to his people by one and the same Word. This Word is Christ himself, who creates, communicates, covenants, and comes to dwell with us (John 1:1–5).

Evening—Read Psalm 20

“MAY THE LORD”

This prayer of blessing—offered for the king—changes the way we treat our personal plans and desires, helping us to surrender them God, who is our power and provider, without whom we can do nothing. Not even the king in all his power can accomplish anything without God. There is no room for prideful self-reliance here. Praying this, we begin to view our victories and successes as gifts of grace, not as achievements of our own skill and effort—our chariots and horses.

JUNE 13

Morning—Read Psalm 21

“IN YOUR STRENGTH THE KING REJOICES”

The previous psalm prays for victory for the king; this one rejoices in that prayer being answered. The perspective of Psalm 20 bears fruit of *thanksgiving* in Psalm 21. We tend to forget God in the ecstasy of success, even if our endeavor started with prayer. We take credit when we should be giving thanks. This psalm helps us to remember what we learned. It releases us from the lonely pride of self-reliance into the vibrant, expansive world of gratitude and praise.

Evening—Read Psalm 22

“WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?”

Our Lord himself uses this psalm of lament to pray from the cross (Matthew 27:46). He gives this ancient song new voice, filling not only this psalm but the whole prayerbook with new meaning. We discover him everywhere praying with us and in us, even in the darkest regions of human life. When our heart erupts in despair, it is the voice of Jesus himself crying out within us—and also leading us into the hope of his resurrection and reign.

JUNE 14

Morning—Read Psalm 23

“THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD”

Christ is our Shepherd. He calls us by name and leads us (John 10:2–3), provides living water (John 4:13–14), restores our souls, (Matthew 11:28–30), cares for us and rejoices in us (Luke 15:4–5), and even lays down his life for us (John 10:11). Christ prepares us table even amidst enemies (Matthew 26:17–21, 31), fills our cup with forgiveness and salvation (Matthew 26:27–28), and anoints us with his Spirit (John 20:22; 1 John 2:27). Praying this psalm in Christ welcomes us into the whole world of the Gospel.

Evening—Read Psalm 24

“WHO IS THE KING OF GLORY?”

We do not *partially* enter into the presence of God. Nothing is left at the gate. God desires our whole life— hearts and hands, inside and out—to be washed and welcome in his presence. Jesus is both the Gate and the King of glory, by whom God welcomes us to become whole and healthy in him, the Creator of the whole earth.

JUNE 15

Morning—Read Psalm 25

“LEAD ME IN YOUR TRUTH”

God does not leave us to figure things out for ourselves. He instructs, leads, and teaches those who seek and wait for him, especially those who have humbly recognized their mistakes. He does not cling to a meticulous ledger of our past immaturity in order to shame us and beat us down with it. Like a good friend, he cares more about forgiving us and leading us into a life of truth and character. If we turn to him in repentance, we find him turned to us in grace.

Evening—Read Psalm 26

“IN THE GREAT CONGREGATION”

We pray about choosing our friends. Our cohorts and companions shape who we are, for better or worse—our habits and mannerisms, even our desires and values. Mindful of this, the psalmist turns away from friendships that would bring him down and looks toward being in the company of those who love to praise God and hear him praised. We should also be watchful of the kind of friend and influence we are to others.

JUNE 16

Morning—Read Psalm 27

“ONE THING”

This prayer voices the strength of *purity of heart*. The psalmist has confidence and freedom from fear because his only desire and request is God’s own beauty and presence. This purity is not easy; it requires vigilant care for the desires of our heart (Proverbs 4:23). The psalmist refuses all distractions and diversions; he does not look to the left or to the right, but seeks only the face of God (Proverbs 4:25–27), in a single-minded pursuit that is summed up in the command: “Wait for the Lord” (v. 14).

Evening—Read Psalm 28

“SO I AM HELPED”

There is simplicity to this psalm: a prayer for help and praise for being heard. Even when the messiness of our experience does not agree with this simplicity, we can take comfort knowing that the Lord hears and answers us.

JUNE 17

Morning—Read Psalm 29

“THE VOICE OF THE LORD”

The voice of God seems to mingle building and breaking, chaos and creation. It hovers “over the waters” (v. 3) as it did in the beginning (Genesis 1:2), and yet it “breaks the cedars of Lebanon” (v. 5) as he has promised to do in the end (Isaiah 2:12–17). God’s voice is so beyond us that we are not sure whether to be captivated or afraid. Regardless, we know that God speaks and accomplishes his purposes (Isaiah 55:11). Faith allows us to see and trust that no matter how God speaks—whether in whisper or storm—his Word is powerful and effective, shaking and shaping the very foundations of the earth.

Evening—Read Psalm 30

“I SAID IN MY PROSPERITY”

Prayer does not allow us to remain complacent captives to prosperity and its illusion of invincibility. We think we can be secure from all twists and turns, potholes and pitfalls, if only we arrange our work, finances, and family just so. But life isn’t a straight line. It involves seasons and contradictions: mourning nights and dancing mornings. Prayer (especially with the Psalms) is how we navigate this faithfully and honestly, allowing our struggles to open up new depths of joy and gratitude as we offer our experience—in all seasons—to God.

JUNE 18

Morning—Read Psalm 31

“BESET AS A CITY UNDER SIEGE”

The crowding voices of stress, doubt, insecurity, and fear can be suffocating. They put us under siege, helpless and isolated behind walls built of anger and defensiveness, while our worries simply wait for us to starve and surrender. The strongholds we build for ourselves become prisons in which we are incarcerated. The Lord alone is our true “fortress” (v. 2), the rescuer who breaks down our false walls and releases us into the open air of a “broad place” (v. 8), free from contracting stress and worry.

Evening—Read Psalm 32

“THEN I ACKNOWLEDGED MY SIN TO YOU”

Sin is an infection that spreads in secret, eating away at our depths with shame and stubbornness. It is a sickness that will never “take care of itself.” *Confession* brings us freedom and life by coming to the Great Physician who diagnoses and heals with the medicine of mercy. The only cure is forgiveness; the only way to receive it is confession.

JUNE 19

Morning—Read Psalm 33

“ALL HIS WORK”

The Word of the Lord is busy—creating (v. 6), commanding (v. 9), counseling (v. 11), contemplating humankind (v. 13), caring for his own (vv. 18–19), and crafting hearts (v. 15). In response to all this mysterious work of the Word, we lift our own words in worship.

Evening—Read Psalm 34

“LOOK TO HIM, AND BE RADIANT”

The Psalms have little tolerance for any *vague* God. The experience of God is concrete—hearing, gazing, even tasting. He is neither distant nor indifferent; he is *near* to us, safeguarding our very *bones*. This does not mean we will never suffer (quite the contrary), but it does mean we can come to know God even in the visceral experience of suffering. God reveals himself on our tangible terms so that we can actually become like him—children of light by gazing on his light, good by tasting his goodness.

JUNE 20

Morning—Read Psalm 35

“CONTEND, O LORD”

Sometimes the worst part about going through a difficult time is the way others treat you, adding insult to injury. Some actually delight in the troubles of others, loving to see someone else fall. Even though they may pretend to be caring and want to help, they relish the details of our situation and their consolations seem to be all about themselves. It is because of these kind of people that the psalmist prays in his pain, seeking comfort in God alone.

Evening—Read Psalm 36

“IN YOUR LIGHT WE SEE LIGHT”

For the wicked, their source of desire and delight is *within*, confined to the cramped and shadowy space of their own self-centered sphere. The world of God’s love, on the other hand, expands beyond measure, full of fresh air and warm light. For those whose hearts seek and serve something beyond themselves, God’s love is an infinite “fountain of life” (v. 9). God’s love enlightens our eyes to see a bigger picture, inviting us beyond the meager meal of self-centeredness to “feast on the abundance of your house” and “drink from the river of your delights” (v. 8).

JUNE 21

Morning—Read Psalm 37:1–15

“TAKE DELIGHT IN THE LORD”

It is backwards to think that we get what we want from God and *then* delight in him. When we start the other way around, as the psalmist suggests, we discover that delighting in the Lord actually *shapes* and *changes* the desires of our heart. When we love God, we naturally want the things he wants. In the same way, when we commit our way to the Lord and trust in him, we expect God to act, but not necessarily according to *our* plan. We are open to surprises.

Evening—Read Psalm 37:16–40

“THE RIGHTEOUS ARE GENEROUS”

There are two basic ways of handling what we have: grasping and giving. We can desperately gather and hoard or we can imitate the free and excessive generosity of God. The psalmist does not think generosity is an obligation; he thinks that it is obviously the best kind of life—what true prosperity looks like. It is also his explanation of how to “trust in the Lord and do good.”

JUNE 22

Morning—Read Psalm 38

“DO NOT BE FAR FROM ME”

There is little to no resolution to this prayer, no turn of hope as we have read in some other psalms. A cliffhanger does not make a bad prayer, just a real one. Answers to prayer are not always (or even often) immediate. Prayer does not make struggle magically disappear. But prayer does *surrender* our situation to God, allowing for us to build intimacy and get perspective through honest confession without blaming or making excuses.

Evening—Read Psalm 39

“I AM YOUR PASSING GUEST”

The psalmist silences the impulse to complain in his suffering and instead humbly reflects on the fleeting fragility of life. All time and breath is borrowed. His unnerving meditation sounds like that of Shakespeare:

“Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player
Who struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury
Signifying nothing” (Macbeth, V.v).

JUNE 23

Morning—Read Psalm 40

“I HAVE NOT RESTRAINED MY LIPS”

God does not desire an army of automatons who will blindly carry out his arbitrary will, but a participating people who are active and responsive, having an “open ear” to obey, an open mouth to share what God has done, and an open heart to hope in his help again. Because of this people, the story and Spirit of salvation will not stay secret, trapped in the past or a set of heartless practices.

Evening—Read Psalm 41

“THEY ARE CALLED HAPPY IN THE LAND”

In our land, the “pursuit of happiness” takes a legion of forms: financial security, self-sufficiency, social standing, success. They mostly revolve around looking out for oneself. Compared with these, the psalmist’s idea seems strange: “Happy are those who consider the poor” (v. 1). If we turn to Jesus, it gets even stranger: “Happy are the poor” themselves and “woe to the rich” (Luke 6:20, 24).

JUNE 24

Morning—Read Psalm 42

“WHY ARE YOU CAST DOWN?”

Every life of prayer will visit this question: “Where are you, God?” He seems absent when we need him most, leaving us confused, helpless, and lonely. God is not absent or indifferent; he is calling us deeper. Like a parent teaching a child to walk, God gradually lets go and sets himself at a distance as the *destination*, in order to teach us to trust, hope, and love on our own two feet. We are used to being led by the hand, but God is teaching us to *run*.

Evening—Read Psalm 43

“WHY ARE YOU (STILL) CAST DOWN?”

In a refrain of Psalm 42, we recall how often we fall into the same patterns of discouragement, doubt, even despair. In our life with God, we return again and again to similar valleys, never seeming to completely learn our lesson. We still falter and fall like children learning to walk. These two prayers console us on what sometimes seems like a journey without progress: “Hope in God. I will praise him again.”

JUNE 25

Morning—Read Psalm 44

“IN THE DAYS OF OLD”

The state of things around us—politically, economically, spiritually—can be bleak. As Christians, we find hope for the future in *memory* of the past. We refuse to despair, but we also shake off the tunnel vision of “Progress” to instead remember what “our ancestors have told us” (v. 1), seeing the present *through* the past. This is the *prophetic* mission of the Church: to speak with unflinching honesty and conviction about the past, present, and future in light of God’s faithfulness.

Evening—Read Psalm 45

“I ADDRESS MY VERSES TO THE KING”

Since an ode to the king’s wedding seems an odd prayer for us, this psalm invites us into an “allegorical” reading, meaning that we prayerfully search for spiritual symbolism, like secret seeds of inspiration the Spirit planted in preparation for Christ, to bloom and blossom with new meaning in his light. In this way, we pray this psalm over the wedding of Christ and his Church. Read Ephesians 5:21–33 and pray through this psalm again.

JUNE 26

Morning— Read Psalm 46

“BE STILL AND KNOW”

Nothing is constant; nothing is calm. Both nature and nations seem controlled by endless flux and fury. The only stable ground and source of peace is God’s presence in the midst of his City, the Church. Our stillness in him keeps us from reeling and being overcome by change and chaos.

Evening—Read Psalm 47

“KING OVER THE NATIONS”

No nation is outside the reign of God. When this one King arrives in the flesh, he takes this nationalistic attitude in the psalms and turns it upside down. This king washes feet, wears a crown of thorns, and associates with the lowest in society—foreigners and fishermen. As followers of Jesus, we are given authority that we do not “lord over” others but use to serve all (Luke 22:25–27).

JUNE 27

Morning— Read Psalm 48

“WALK ABOUT ZION”

Mount Zion is the place of God’s temple. To walk around and observe it is to be patient and attentive to the presence of God. This kind of walk is leisurely, quietly absorbing every detail until the terrain is familiar. Our time in prayer is not to get somewhere or get something done, because the goal and destination is God’s presence, which is always already with us and within us who are being built into his temple (Ephesians 2:19–22; 1 Peter 2:5). We shift from *doing* to *being*, simply strolling with God who is both our Guide and our Home.

Evening— Read Psalm 49

“LIKE THE ANIMALS THAT PERISH”

Seeing others enjoy wealth and security has a strange effect on us. We begin to compare and compete, anxiously measuring out the plot of our own prosperity. The psalmist reminds us of the foolish futility of this. Death is the great equalizer, the “shepherd” of us all. Wealth and prestige do not make it past this threshold; naked we arrive, and naked we depart. The grave accepts neither cash nor credit. The only riches that can ransom our resurrection are found in Christ.

JUNE 28

Morning—Read Psalm 50

“ONE JUST LIKE YOURSELF”

We idealize effectiveness, and we worry over appearance. Our shrunken imagination of God leads us to assume he does the same and forget that “mortals look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7). Sacrifices mean nothing in themselves; everything is always already his. The only thing resisting his reign is the rebellious heart. This is what God desires: people of gratitude, discipline, devotion, and obedience. Our religious practices have meaning only insofar as they express and exercise our hearts in this way.

Evening—Read Psalm 51

“HAVE MERCY ON ME, O GOD”

In Psalm 51, David offers up exactly what Psalm 50 demands: a contrite heart. From the beginning we see that forgiveness is only possible because of *who God is*: mercy and love. We are also given the *specific story* behind of David’s confession. This is not “sin in general.” It is *personal*. This is *my* sin against *God*. Confession looks inward and doesn’t compare with others. David sees that sin runs deeper than specific actions, meaning confession is more than a checklist. Sin is a *state of being*, and God desires “truth in the inward being” (v. 6). The prayer does not end in sorrow and guilt; confession is the threshold of worship. Broken bones rejoice (v. 8). The more we are forgiven, the more we love (Luke 7:47).

JUNE 29

Morning—Read Psalm 52

“GOD WILL BREAK YOU DOWN FOREVER”

Like a man bashing his own head against a brick wall, the one who constantly fights against God will sooner or later face a rude awakening: the wall is going to win. Because it’s a wall. While we throw our weight around and struggle to secure our petty autonomy, God is always already God and will never not be—perfect in peace and power. Only when we give up the fight can we tap into that peace and power, “like a green olive tree in the house of God” (v. 8).

Evening—Read Psalm 53

“NO, NOT ONE”

Psalm 53 is almost identical to Psalm 14, showing how essential it is for us to constantly watch whether we are uncaring, calloused, or cruel to others. If we are, the root problem is actually that deep down we are denying God.

JUNE 30

Morning—Read Psalm 54

“SAVE ME”

The story of Scripture is summed up in these two simple words: “Save me.” These are a form of *Yeshu-ah*, which invokes the name of Jesus himself, literally meaning “the Lord saves.” This is who God is to us, and the Psalms relentlessly usher us into a place where we remember our need for saving—in suffering, struggle, sickness, and sin.

Evening—Read Psalm 55

“MY FAMILIAR FRIEND”

Hear this prayer on the lips of Jesus, who was abandoned, betrayed, or denied by every last one of his closest companions. How much deeper this sorrow must have been than suffering hatred from strangers and powers-that-be! By forgiving everyone—friend and foe alike—Jesus makes categories familiar to the psalms like “enemies” difficult to pin down. Who is my friend? Who is my enemy? Both are my *neighbor*—my brother or sister—whom I am called to love.

JULY 1

Morning—Read Psalm 56

“WHAT CAN FLESH DO TO ME?”

This prayer takes on an ironic tone when considering Christ crucified—*this* and exactly this is what flesh can do. In rising, Jesus brings this prayer to its fullness by defeating even death—the ultimate enemy, the fell and final tool of man’s power. The shadow of death retreats in the light of life resurrected.

Evening—Read Psalm 57

“MY HEART IS STEADFAST”

David prays this as a fugitive, running and hiding for his life. To the heart steadfast in God, the darkness of the cave becomes the shadow of his wings; a long night in hiding from hunters becomes an occasion to make music. This is a sturdy, spirited joy that is prepared to praise in all seasons.

JULY 2

Morning—Read Psalm 58

“VIOLENCE ON THE EARTH”

“You gods” is a tongue-in-cheek address to earthly rulers, who set themselves up like powerful gods but are unjust and violent. We see such leaders all over the world: dictators, extremists, and even among those in power in our own country—even in the Church. Such people can seem like they were born to wield power wickedly, trained and tailor-made to oppress. We pray for justice, not only in our lives but everywhere, that those in power would be servants of God’s goodness.

Evening—Read Psalm 59

“ROUSE YOURSELF”

The evening is a time of rest and relaxation. It is also a time when we are vulnerable. Each and every evening as we unwind, enemies can return—self-pity, bitterness, worry—usually in the form of drumming up dramas, imaginary conversations or scenarios in which we are the victim, villain, or hero. Just as Saul sends his men to surveil David’s house every night, so these self-centered stories “run and make ready” (v. 4) to trap our mind in one destructive thought pattern or another. But “who will hear us?” We call on God to wake up and help, ourselves obeying Jesus telling us to be wakeful and watchful, vigilant with our hearts and heads (Mark 13:37).

JULY 3

Morning—Read Psalm 60

“YOU HAVE BEEN ANGRY”

We wince at the idea of an angry God, because we imagine his anger being like ours: destructive, defensive, selfish, erratic, and irrational. In God, anger is indignation against sin and the chaos and conflict it spreads, inside and out. Of the feelings we are familiar with, it is most like the grief and outrage we experience in the face of injustice—that twisted gut of moral offense that says things need to be set right.

Evening—Read Psalm 61

“TO THE ROCK THAT IS HIGHER THAN I”

Our “refuge”—a word that saturates the Psalms—is not just a vague feeling of safety. It is Christ himself, our Cornerstone and Solid Rock. Our refuge is a person—God himself as a human being. When enemies gather and our heart is faint, we do not retreat into some sentimental solace; we are led *up* and *forward* to take our stand on the actual flesh-and-blood life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.

JULY 4

Morning—Read Psalm 62

“MY SOUL WAITS IN SILENCE”

Silence is a soul-anchor. It grounds and secures us in the presence of God. It gathers the scattered fragments that ramble and rock on the waves of our minds. Silence sinks and cuts through the endless weather and churning water of head and heart to the solid bedrock where we are rooted in God. Silence is the power of God in the storm.

Evening—Read Psalm 63

“MY SOUL CLINGS TO YOU”

God is the satisfaction we seek. He is our rest and the object of our restlessness—our desire and our delight. Every desire we have, no matter how small or simple or strange, stems from the ultimate aim of our being—the first and final “trajectory” of our heart to *enjoy God*. All the pleasures of creation—beauty, “a rich feast” of food, friendship, work and rest—draw us into love of the Creator himself, the source and goal of every gift and grace.

JULY 5

Morning—Read Psalm 64

“THE HUMAN HEART AND MIND ARE DEEP”

We humans are masters of hiding. But that expertise has a dark backstory. Adam and Eve hid themselves and their nakedness after they sinned. Cain is “hidden from God’s face” after he murders and buries his brother. In reaction to sin we have gotten so adept at hiding, our motives are often mysterious even to ourselves: “The subterranean miner that works in us all, how can one tell whither leads his shaft by the ever shifting muffled sound of the pick?” (Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*). In self-deception, we deny our secret depths, the plots and purposes hidden in our hearts. But God sees even when we don’t and *wounds* us to reveal the truth: “From within, out of the heart of man” comes what “defiles” (Mark 7:20–21).

Evening—Read Psalm 65

“YOU VISIT THE EARTH AND WATER IT”

God’s act of creation is not a one-time kickstart; his hand is constantly working. In the fullness of time, the Creator visits and waters the earth in Christ—God’s full river of Living Water that pours himself out to yield a plentiful harvest of eternal life. Christ came for more than “saving souls.” He is restoring the whole created order. This is new creation; this is life abundantly.

JULY 6

Morning—Read Psalm 66

“COME AND SEE”

This is an invitation to witness the goodness of God, both in history and in our midst. As with any good news, sharing makes it more real. This kind of remembrance and storytelling opens up space for us to worship: to repent, praise, celebrate, and devote ourselves to the God who rescues whole nations and answers personal prayers.

Evening—Read Psalm 67

“MAY GOD CONTINUE TO BLESS US”

For an agricultural people, the seasons are a constant lesson in God’s providence. Working the land makes our utter *dependence* more urgent and concrete. Harvest gives an opportunity to give thanks and recognize our ongoing need for God’s grace.

JULY 7

Morning—Read Psalm 68:1–19

“FATHER OF ORPHANS”

When we call God “Father,” it expresses that he has a history of caring for the desperate and destitute. He is Father by creation, but also by adoption, reaching down and claiming the helpless and needy as his own. God welcomes home the powerless and the prisoners as family in the shadow of Sinai, the place of his presence and provision.

Evening—Read Psalm 68:20–36

“THE PROCESSIONS OF MY GOD”

Christ’s victory over death demands a celebration. In the face of war, danger, and every power of destruction, God has “summoned his might,” “sent out his voice” and declared, “It is finished.” Death has died. So together we throw a party out in the open, in a living mockery of death.

JULY 8

Morning—Read Psalm 69:1–15

“THE WATERS HAVE COME UP TO MY NECK”
“Zeal for [God’s] house” (v. 9) has made the psalmist a stranger in his own. Whenever someone wants to take their life with God more seriously with humility and discipline, there are always scoffers—often among their own friends and family—at the ready to bring them down with doubt and derision. Such an exhausting and discouraging environment can feel like treading water, slowly losing strength. No friend in sight, no foothold in the flood, the psalmist cries out to God until his throat is hoarse.

Evening—Read Psalm 69:16–36

“VINEGAR TO DRINK”
The suffering lament of the psalmist leads us to contemplate the Suffering Servant himself. It gives voice to the Crucified Christ—abandoned and afflicted. John’s gospel even says Jesus asked for vinegar to drink from the cross to fulfill this psalm (John 19:28). But he once again fulfills this psalm while confounding it—by offering forgiveness instead of vengeance. This story changes the way we read and pray especially verses 22–28. Read Isaiah 53—another prophecy of the Messiah—and notice the similarities.

JULY 9

Morning—Read Psalm 70

“O LORD, MAKE HASTE TO HELP ME”
Praying with the psalms helps us confront our illusions of self-sufficiency. We do not enjoy thinking of ourselves “poor and needy” (v. 5). It does not make for the best pep talk in the mirror. The psalms have no interest in self-help strategies that say, “You can do this in five easy steps if you put your mind to it.” The mirror of the psalms has but one simple message: “God I need you. Now.” Even in times of peace and prosperity, the psalmist attributes all strength and success to God.

Evening—Read Psalm 71

“O MY GOD, MAKE HASTE TO HELP ME”
This prayer is repeated not only here (v. 12) but elsewhere in the psalms (Psalm 38, 40). Morning to evening, our need for grace is not changed by life’s conditions and circumstances: it is always utter and urgent. For centuries, monks have used a form of this prayer—“O God, make speed of save me; O Lord, make haste to help me.”—to cultivate a constant awareness of God in every situation, because it contains everything essential to authentic prayer.

JULY 10

Morning—Read Psalm 72

“AMEN AND AMEN”
Another song for the king, which we again pray about Jesus, the Son of David enthroned at the right hand of the Father. Imagine this psalm as an extended footnote, an expressive commentary on the line of the Lord’s prayer: “Your kingdom come.”

Evening—Read Psalm 73

“SOUND AND SLEEK”
Our advertising-saturated world supplies a ceaseless stream of appearances—people seemingly free from struggle and want. Social media has spread this show by making us all marketers of one product: *me*. Everyone has a stage to selectively present themselves looking happy, adventurous, content, and carefree. We measure ourselves against these fabricated lives. The antidote to this game of envy is simple: “I went to the sanctuary of God” (v. 17). When our imaginations and desires are shaped more by God’s presence than by what other people’s lives look like, these appearances of prosperity are shown for what they are: despicable specters, “like a dream when one awakes” (v. 20), petty and paltry in comparison with the waking world of honest, authentic life with God.

JULY 11

Morning—Read Psalm 74

“THE PERPETUAL RUINS”
As the Church, the new temple of God’s presence, we witness to life even though “we are being killed all day long” (Romans 8:36; Psalm 44:22). Daily we shoulder death in faith that God is “working salvation in the earth” (v. 12), that all the seasons and extremities of life and death are held together by him who “fixed the boundaries of the earth” (vv. 15–17).

Evening—Read Psalm 75

“AT THE SET TIME THAT I APPOINT”
In “the fullness of time,” (Galatians 4:4; Ephesians 1:10), the cup of wrath prepared for the wicked was drained to the dregs by Jesus. This is the revealed mystery of God’s righteousness: the Judge himself has taken the judgment, in order to gather all into his kingdom.

JULY 12

Morning—Read Psalm 76

“BOTH RIDER AND HORSE LAY STUNNED”

Everything in this psalm is fulfilled in the resurrection of Christ. “Human wrath serves only to praise” him (v. 10) because by rising from the grave they put him in, “he disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it” (Colossians 2:15). The resurrection is a fearful omen for powers-that-be, who were “stripped of their spoil” (v. 5). Their tools of ruling are broken—the cross, the “rider and horse” (v. 6), the “weapons of war” (v. 3). Death-dealing powers are powerless. Even the guards of Christ’s grave “sank into sleep” (v. 5) as they “shook for fear and became like dead men” (Matthew 28:4).

Evening—Read Psalm 77

“YOUR WAY WAS THROUGH THE SEA”

In sleepless nights of worry, when a wall of dark, foreboding water is ahead, we “call to mind the deeds of the Lord” (v. 11). We are guided today by the same right hand that split the Red Sea for Israel and made a “path through the mighty waters” (v. 19)—Jesus, the Way himself. We follow in faith his unseen footprints through the troubles that lie ahead. And we are not alone. God leads us in the physical fellowship and leadership of the Church, as he did with Moses and Aaron.

JULY 13

Morning—Read Psalm 78:1–39

“THEY FORGOT WHAT HE HAD DONE”

They forgot, but we will not. Forgetfulness is the subtlest enemy of our life with God. All we have to do is *nothing*, and forgetfulness creeps in to separate us from our story and source of life. As the adage says, “Those who forget history are doomed to repeat it.” Part of prayer is actively watering those seeds of salvation by remembering and giving thanks for what God has done—not only in our personal experience but in the whole history of salvation. We tell these stories not only to ourselves but also to our children.

Evening—Read Psalm 78:40–72

“WITH SKILLFUL HAND”

Like a shepherd, the Lord has always been with his “flock” as Guide and Protector—showing forth both mercy and power, gentleness and strength. These are not two opposing forces or emotions of God, but manifestations of his one perfect love for his people.

JULY 14

Morning—Read Psalm 79

“THE FLESH OF YOUR FAITHFUL”

In compassion, we pray with the persecuted Church throughout the world, who know more immediately than we the fellowship of Christ’s suffering.

Evening—Read Psalm 80

“LET YOUR FACE SHINE”

God has planted his people as a vine in the desert. He clears and cultivates the ground for a garden of peace in the wilding world. But we need the sun to survive and spread. The Church withers without the light of God’s saving gaze, which scatters the shadows and sustains our life. As flowers to the sun, we reach and bend with our whole being to the face of God.

JULY 15

Morning—Read Psalm 81

“A VOICE I HAD NOT KNOWN”

God cares for us even when we do not notice. We often chock things up to chance and move on, but in hindsight we can see God’s traces in our personal history—tell-tale signs of grace and guidance like cherished friends and “luck.” All of these blessings flow through our lives like “honey from the rock” (v. 16), gifts of God that fill our mouths and hearts with gratitude.

Evening—Read Psalm 82

“GIVE JUSTICE”

All politics of earth answer to the King of kings and Lord of lords—specifically for the responsibility to care for “the lowly and the destitute,” (v. 3) “the weak and the needy” (v. 4). As Judge of nations, Jesus draws the line by how we feed the hungry, welcome strangers, clothe the naked, care for the sick, and visit the imprisoned (Matthew 25:31–46).

JULY 16

Morning—Read Psalm 83

“DO NOT KEEP SILENCE”

The noise of the world makes God’s silence unbearable. Why does his voice—his justice and grace—not rise above the ruckus? We want a God to show up like a storm that stirs and shakes the earth and “sets the mountains ablaze” (v. 14). But God does not simply fight fire with fire, noise with noise. Instead, like Elijah, we hear God in “sound of sheer silence” (1 Kings 19:11–13). God’s Word emerges from this stillness.

Evening—Read Psalm 84

“EVEN THE SPARROW FINDS A HOME”

“Happy is everyone who trusts” in God (v. 12), for his generosity leaves no room for fear and worry. Even insignificant creatures like sparrows “neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them” (Matthew 6:26). They are at home—known, blessed, and cared for—in the presence of God: “Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father” (Matthew 10:29).

JULY 17

Morning—Read Psalm 85

“RESTORE US AGAIN”

God’s character—faithfulness, righteousness, peace, love (v. 10)—does not remain a distant and abstract idea. It shows and speaks to us, meets and dwells with us in the material world. God’s character is Christ, who restores us from brokenness and revives us in that very character—faithful, righteous, peaceful, and loving. This is what “salvation at hand” (v. 9) means: not that we get to go to God some day, but that God has come to us in Christ—“from the ground...from the sky” (v. 11)—to make us like him here and now.

Evening—Read Psalm 86

“GLADDEN THE SOUL OF YOUR SERVANT”

This persistent series of petitions flows from a “devoted,” “whole,” and “undivided” heart. A heart like his should be our first and final prayer. As we “seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness” (Matthew 6:33), purity of heart is our compass star—the goal and guide that keeps our eyes on the prize and focuses our prayer. If we are splintered within, our prayer will wander in the obscurity of our scattered, distracted, and selfish desires.

JULY 18

Morning—Read Psalm 87

“ALL MY SPRINGS ARE IN YOU”

We are citizens of the City of God by our birth from the springs of baptism. As adopted children—resurrected and registered in the book of life (Revelation 20:12)—we await the arrival of this New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:2).

Evening—Read Psalm 88

“DO YOU WORK WONDERS FOR THE DEAD?”

The psalmist prays through the whole night (v. 1, v. 13) in distress unrelenting to the very last line: “my companions are in darkness” (v. 18). He has been discarded anonymous into the grave, his questions haunting the air without answer. This is a psalm for Holy Saturday, when Jesus—forsaken and crucified—is buried and descends to the dead. We rest in the reality of his death, preparing for the hope of resurrection morning and God’s answer to the psalmist’s questions.

JULY 19

Morning—Read Psalm 89:1–18

“A COVENANT WITH MY CHOSEN ONE”

These verses are a prelude to the covenant that God makes with David to establish his line as kings forever. God’s power and faithfulness are the foundation of this promise, which is not a mere contract (which would be hard to imagine being moved to *sing* about). Covenant names the caring relationship between Creator and creation, specially concentrated in his faithfulness to his people.

Evening—Read Psalm 89:19–52

“THE FOOTSTEPS OF YOUR ANOINTED”

How do we make sense of God’s promises in the shadow of the cross, where we are led by the footsteps of Christ—“the anointed one” himself? Turning appearances and expectations upside-down, God fulfills his covenant through crucifixion. The crown set on the king (v. 19) is made of mockery and thorns. “The enemy shall not outwit him, the wicked shall not humble him” (v. 22), because he willingly accepts their schemes, ridicule, and execution. The foe he crushes (v. 23) is death itself. So although verses 38–51 trouble the psalmist’s trust, they actually show the way in which God goes about *keeping* his promises and establishing his eternal Kingdom.

JULY 20

Morning—Read Psalm 90

“TEACH US TO COUNT OUR DAYS”

Some of us might think that Moses’ 120 years disqualify him from a meditation on the brevity of life. But beneath any moroseness and melancholy we see that *finitude is a blessing*. We are made *humble* and *wise* by the measure of our mortality—more able and grateful to belong and bear fruit within the limits God has made and placed us. Not only that, but in the morning, the fading grass “flourishes and is renewed” (v. 6). We are never not finite, but God, by becoming man in Jesus, unites and fills our human life with divine life.

Evening—Read Psalm 91

“WITH LONG LIFE I WILL SATISFY THEM”

Certainly this is an ironic promise to follow up Psalm 90. However, “long life” is actually a weak pitch for what is promised and provided in the Christ: *everlasting, abundant, resurrected* life. New creation! So we take prayerful refuge in him who longs to gather us “under his wings,” if we will let him (Luke 13:34).

JULY 21

Morning—Read Psalm 92

“FRESH OIL”

This image of “anointing” occurs often in the Psalms. Pouring or marking someone with oil set them apart for a purpose—kings and prophets, for example. Our anointing is the Holy Spirit himself—the Breath of new creation filling our lungs, setting us apart for the special mission of bearing God’s image and shaping in us that very image (Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18). Give thanks for the Gift of the Spirit, who “produces fruit” in us (Galatians 5:22–23)! How great are his works!

Evening—Read Psalm 93

“THE THUNDERS OF MIGHTY WATERS”

The sea—fount of life and force of destruction—is a moving analogy for God’s overwhelming power and peace. The sea is both fearful and alluring; we find ourselves both tantalized and trembling before its vast horizon and its unseen, unfathomable depths that contain life abundant beyond reckoning. The image also evokes creation, when God’s Spirit “swept over the face of the waters” (Genesis 1:2). Contemplating this image, one understands why Christian spiritual writer Bonaventure refers to God as an “infinite sea of love.”

JULY 22

Morning—Read Psalm 94

“THOSE WHOM YOU DISCIPLINE”

Proverbs puts it bluntly: “Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but those who hate to be rebuked are stupid” (Proverbs 12:1). Instruction, correction, and consequences shape our character—who we are and how we act; this is the Spirit’s work of *sanctifying* us. For us to resist and insist we do not need to change is simply stubborn and stupid—not to mention arrogant and scornful to salvation.

Evening—Read Psalm 95

“LET US”

“Today, if you hear his voice” jumps of the page and grabs us by the shirt collar. “Today” is always the living present—not just then but now and everyday. The author of Hebrews takes up this psalm in chapters 3 and 4 of his letter. In short, his advice for hearing this word spoken anew to us is this: Let us, without hard or unbelieving hearts, “make every effort to enter God’s rest” (4:11) by holding fast to Christ (4:14), boldly approaching him to receive mercy and grace (4:16), and encouraging one another (3:13). We are in this together. The path to peace stands open to us.

JULY 23

Morning—Read Psalm 96

“A NEW SONG”

The openings of the next four psalms alternate in a rhythm of “Sing to the LORD a new song,” and “The LORD is King.” Psalms 96 and 98 call on all creation—nations and peoples, forests and fields, skies and seas, trumpets and lyres—to join in praise of God, who is coming in victory to “judge the earth.” Psalms 97 and 99 invoke images and events from Israel’s history as symbols of God’s reigning presence in and over the earth.

Evening—Read Psalm 97

“CLOUDS AND THICK DARKNESS”

These images of cloud, darkness, lightning, and mountain intentionally allude to when God descended on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19:16–20; 20:18–21) to meet Moses speak his covenant promises to his people, as well as instructions for righteous living and building the tabernacle. The foundational message in this story is simple and repetitive: The LORD—and no one else—is God. Therefore, “all worshippers of images are put to shame,” (v. 7), including the Israelites themselves whom Moses found worshipping a golden calf when he finally came down the mountain in Exodus 32.

JULY 24

Morning—Read Psalm 98

“THE VICTORY OF OUR GOD”

Again we “sing a new song” to celebrate the coming of the Lord to claim victory and establish justice. Our voices and instruments join a song already ringing in the air of nature itself rejoicing. This seems a strange scene when the occasion is “judgment.” Who in “all the earth” is happy about being judged? This is something to sing about because “judgment” means the final victory over death in Jesus, “his right hand and holy arm” (v. 1)—not merely an “afterlife” for humans but the restoration of the whole cosmos.

Evening—Read Psalm 99

“THE LORD IS KING”

Israel’s history again invites us into the Kingdom of the same God who answered Moses and Aaron “in the pillar of cloud” (v. 7, Exodus 13:21–22). He stayed with them, led them, communicated with them, corrected and forgave them, just as he does for us today through his Holy Spirit.

JULY 25

Morning—Read Psalm 100

“ENTER HIS GATES WITH THANKSGIVING”

Worship is not something we just show up for; we actively engage and participate. Worship is work. Just listen to all the different action words packed into this brief call to worship: “make a joyful noise,” “worship,” “come...with singing,” “know,” “enter,” “praise,” “give thanks,” “bless.” Worship is *dynamic*.

Evening—Read Psalm 101

“I WILL WALK WITH INTEGRITY OF HEART”

This is a song “of loyalty and of justice,” (v. 1) faithfulness and integrity within the household of our hearts—the temple of the Holy Spirit—which must be actively and attentively watched over and tended to. We pray this vow because discipleship is not something we just stumble upon. We “*study* the way that is blameless” (v. 2), never assuming we have arrived. We are *always* but beginners, starting fresh “morning by morning” (v. 8) in order to strengthen our resolve to follow God in all things.

JULY 26

Morning—Read Psalm 102

“AN OWL IN THE WILDERNESS”

Trouble tends to isolate us in the idea that my problems are mine alone. We “lie awake...like a lonely bird on a housetop” (v. 7). The psalmist’s solitary struggles are answered by the Kingdom of God. He remembers he is not alone. We are part of a people spanning generations, members of the family of God himself. Gathered under this household, no distress divides us; we share in both struggle and security, groaning and praising. Ultimately all our personal problems pale in comparison to God’s “compassion on Zion,” his precious people (v. 13).

Evening—Read Psalm 103

“BLESS THE LORD”

The psalmist draws out our praise and blessing to God by enumerating “all his benefits” (v. 2), not as an abstract list but as a reality we encounter. God forgives, heals, redeems, crowns, satisfies, works justice, reigns, and does not deal with us according to our sins. He is merciful, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, compassionate, everlasting, and enduring in faithfulness. Our contemplation of these actions and attributes lead us to bless the Lord along with all creation.

JULY 27

Morning—Read Psalm 104:1–23

“YOU MAKE”

The psalmist reflects on God’s *providence*—not in superstitious speculations but in simple observation of the stuff of dirty, daily human life: plants, wine, oil, and bread. “Providence” is not just a far off, inscrutable plan for the universe; it is present in the very seasons and systems by which all nature lives and moves. This vision of the world blesses our own work as cooperation with God’s work of providing. Our human rhythm of work and rest—“labor until the evening” (v. 23)—participates in the labor of God himself.

Evening—Read Psalm 104:24–35

“YOU RENEW THE FACE OF THE GROUND”

“How manifold are your works” (v. 24) that “all look to you” (v. 27). God not only creates but constantly sustains. Providence means provision. The Lord feeds every creature —“living things both small and great” (v. 25)—from the palm of his own hand: the Son. He creates and renews them by his own breath: the Spirit. God cares for us with the same love and generosity that exists eternally between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

JULY 28

Morning—Read Psalm 105:1–22

“MINDFUL OF HIS COVENANT FOREVER”

This is our history, and these are our ancestors: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph. The promises the Lord made to them tell us who we are. When we are insignificant in numbers and voice, the Lord watches over us. When we are out of place, he provides a home for us. When there is famine, he has already prepared a feast to feed us. When we are surrounded by impossible circumstances, he strengthens us.

Evening—Read Psalm 105:23–45

“HE BROUGHT HIS PEOPLE OUT WITH JOY”

Just as Moses brought God’s people out of Egypt, Christ leads us in the New Exodus, deliverance from death itself. The “cloud for a covering” (v. 39) and Israel’s passing through the Red Sea foreshadow our baptism in Christ, passing from death to life (1 Corinthians 10:1–2). Christ is both the “food from heaven” (v. 40; John 6:48–51) and the rock from which “water gushed out” (v. 41; 1 Corinthians 10:4). To suffer with Christ is greater wealth and joy than all the “silver and gold” (v. 37) plundered from Egypt (Hebrews 11:26).

JULY 29

Morning—Read Psalm 106:1–23

“THEY FORGOT”

Continuing with the storytelling, Psalm 106 reemphasizes the theme of remembrance. We must be humbly willing to see ourselves in the mirror of history, praying with this psalm: “both we and our ancestors have sinned” (v. 6). We are in the same boat with those who have gone before us—and a crowded boat it is. We tell stories of the people of God failing, forgetting, and rebelling because we do the same—and rely on the same faithful God.

Evening—Read Psalm 106:24–48

“HE REMEMBERED”

One word stands as the fulcrum of this story and song: “nevertheless” (v. 44). Despite our constant rebellion and forgetfulness, God is faithful to save. This psalm was written during Israel’s exile among other nations—far from home and God’s promises. They remember what God has done in their history to understand what is happening in their present and to have hope for their future. Today, these stories of God’s faithfulness “gather us” (v. 47) from the scattered corners of our own forgetfulness. In every mess we make for our ourselves, the Lord delivers us from dispersion, division, distraction, and despair.

JULY 30

Morning—Read Psalm 107:1–32

“LET THE REDEEMED SAY SO”

Consider some parallels of these four stories in the ministry of Jesus himself: feeding crowds far from towns (Mark 6:30–44; 8:1–10), freeing the man possessed by a legion of demons (Mark 5:1–20), forgiving and healing the paralytic (Mark 2:1–12), and calming the storm with the disciples crying out in fear (Mark 4:35–41). Every form and facet of God’s salvation comes to us to Christ. And every story ends the same: “Let them give thanks for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind.”

Evening—Read Psalm 107:33–43

“THERE HE LETS THE HUNGRY LIVE”

The Lord shows himself to be our only source of life by leading us from prosperity through poverty to his own blessed and plentiful life. He brings water in the driest place, feast out of the famine. Just as God delivers Israel from the desert into the land of promise and plenty, he leads us out of all our most desperate need—“oppression, trouble, and sorrow” (v. 39)—to new life, to “sow fields and plant vineyards and get a fruitful yield” (v. 37). Only God can do this.

JULY 31

Morning—Read Psalm 108

“I WILL AWAKE THE DAWN”

We open by echoing the end of Psalm 57. Here, God’s glory spreading “over all the earth” (v. 5) is given shape within a political landscape very real to the Israelites singing the psalm: Manasseh, Ephraim, and Judah are tribes of Israel. Shechem and Succoth, Moab and Edom and Phillistia name either hostile nations or portions of the promised land. Replace these with places and peoples familiar to us, and the message is powerful: God’s reign is real in the Church and in the world as we know it.

Evening—Read Psalm 109:1–19

“CURSING AS HIS COAT”

If we are honest, we know this rant. We have made it ourselves in some form against somebody. Holding a grudge can be like putting on a heavy coat every morning. Our mind is constantly burdened by spinning resentful stories about whoever we are cursing and refusing to forgive. Bitterness seeps into the depth of who we are: “soak into his body like water, like oil into his bones” (v. 18). So in the middle of this psalm that seems to be loaded with curses, we receive an ironic warning about cursing itself.

AUGUST 1

Morning—Read Psalm 109:20–30

“LET THEM CURSE, BUT YOU WILL BLESS”

In a swarm of curse, complaint, and accusation, this line breaks through the surface. With God there is calm and confidence, freedom from the furious need to point fingers and take revenge for ourselves. We imitate our generous, forgiving God when we obey Paul’s command: “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them” (Romans 12:14).

Evening—Read Psalm 110

“SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND”

The New Testament writers quote this psalm more than any other and use it with more variety than any Old Testament passage. For them, this psalm is a compact and compelling prophecy of the mystery of Jesus our Lord, God’s “mighty scepter,” (v. 2) who was resurrected “from the womb of the morning,” (v. 3) ascended, and is seated at the right hand of the Father to rule as “a priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek” (Hebrews 5:6). Though the rhetoric of the psalm is warlike, the New Testament uses it to praise the Prophet, Priest, and King who *suffers* violence with and for us.

AUGUST 2

Morning—Read Psalm 111

“THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM”

“The fear of the Lord” is hailed this way in Proverbs as well (Proverbs 1:7; 9:10). The true meaning of this “fear” is expressed by every line that comes before: awe and praise of God for his works, commands, provision, power, and redemption. This fear begins and brings wisdom by opening our eyes to the overwhelming light of Wisdom itself.

Evening—Read Psalm 112

“THEY RISE IN THE DARKNESS”

Jesus is the Light and the life of all humanity (John 1:4–5; 8:12). It is *his* abundant life that angers those who live in the darkness. But we, by sharing that same life, are *also* “the light of the world,” which cannot be hidden (Matthew 5:14–16). Our grace, mercy, and righteousness (v. 4), our generosity and justice (v. 5), our fearless and steady hearts (v. 8), shine the light of resurrection in the darkness of death.

AUGUST 3

Morning—Read Psalm 113

“WHO IS LIKE THE LORD?”

A brief survey of the way God works presents a series of shocking paradoxes: a hundred-year old barren woman giving birth, a shepherd boy becoming king, divine power in a whisper, a pregnant virgin, God himself as a infant in a horse trough, King of Creation executed as a common criminal, a terrorist turned apostle and missionary. The moral of the story: God is unlike any other power, and he turns the world upside-down. Expect the unexpected.

Evening—Read Psalm 114

“FROM A PEOPLE OF STRANGE LANGUAGE”

Israel passed through the Red Sea and were freed from slavery to a foreign nation. When we pass through baptism we are freed from sin and death. As we take hold of our freedom, the language and logic of sin becomes strange to us on the other side. We are still wet from the waters—still very familiar with sin—but the longer we walk in the way of Christ, the more we see sin as petty and pathetic—nothing compared to the power of God.

AUGUST 4

Morning—Read Psalm 115

“NOT TO US”

God of heaven gives us the earth to care for and cultivate. With the stuff of this gift we make lifeless gods that make us lifeless humans—but “the dead do not praise the LORD” (v. 17). Our God is “God not of the dead but of the living” (Luke 20:38). Jesus says this not to declare the finality of death but to support and celebrate the resurrection. The mystery is that heaven itself comes to earth. God will give life to even the dead.

Evening—Read Psalm 116

“IN THE LAND OF THE LIVING”

The Lord’s forgiveness is our healing and help. Facing this overwhelming gift, we wonder “What shall I return to the Lord for all this bounty to me?” (v. 12). Our “return” to the Lord is worship. We gather “in the presence of all his people” (v. 14, 18) to call on his name, to pay vows, to give thanks, and to “lift the cup of salvation” (v. 13) in Communion. This is what it looks like to walk and work “before the Lord in the land of the living” (v. 9).

AUGUST 5

Morning—Read Psalm 117

“PRAISE THE LORD”

Sometimes things are simple. This, the shortest psalm, concentrates themes of the whole book and cuts to the heart of the matter: God is faithful, loving, and worthy of worship from everyone and everything. Praise the Lord.

Evening—Read Psalm 118

“THE STONE THAT THE BUILDERS REJECTED”

In Jesus, God himself came to his own—his creation and his chosen people—and was rejected, put to death (John 1:11). Nonetheless, through the resurrection—“the day that the Lord has made” (v. 24)—Jesus has “become our salvation” (v. 21), inviting us to enter the gates of righteousness to become children of God (John 1:12). That Christ empowers us to pray in earnest, “I shall not die, but I shall live” (v. 17), is entirely “the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes” (v. 23).

AUGUST 6

Morning—Read Psalm 119:1–32

“LONGING FOR YOUR RULES”

Psalm 119 is a journey unto itself, an acrostic poem of the whole Hebrew alphabet—conveying the message that all human words are encompassed and exceeded by God’s Word. At first, this venture seems an obsessive and odd piece of overkill. How can someone rejoice this much over *rules*? The psalmist understands that God’s commands do not build a constricting cage but rather lay the boundary-lines of the fullest kind of life—the fences of a free, open field. Remember also that we pray all of this about Jesus himself—the Word of God.

Evening—Read Psalm 119:33–64

“I HURRY AND DO NOT DELAY”

The psalmist’s excessive song is not an empty romantic gesture. He seeks to *keep* the law as a life lived, not just *admire* it as a list. The urgent and ultimate purpose is obedience: “Be doers of the word and not merely hearers who deceive themselves” by talking a lot about it and never obey it (James 1:22). This is why the Word is revealed to us most fully in an actual human being who presents and practices this life himself.

AUGUST 7

Morning—Read Psalm 119:65–96

“YOU ARE GOOD AND DO GOOD”

God speaks with authority, or *exousia*—literally meaning “from being/essence/nature.” God’s authority flows from who he is; his word and deed is good because he is good. For *us*, there is “a limit to all perfection” (v. 96) and less harmony between what we are and do. This is why Jesus teaches “as one having authority” (Matthew 7:29). Only he can claim this because only he, being God, is infinite in goodness—“exceedingly broad” (v. 96). With this authority, Jesus accomplishes everything this psalm asks of God: teaching, creating, enlightening, loving, fulfilling promises, showing mercy, doing justice, and saving.

Evening—Read Psalm 119:97–128

“A LAMP TO MY FEET, A LIGHT TO MY PATH”

What we find illuminated at our feet is not always easy and even terrain. The Word of God is sweet as honey in the mouth (v. 103), but can make the stomach bitter (Revelation 10:10). Our early encounters with Scripture can be elating and comforting but if we read honestly, this soon gives way to the difficult and confusing. The Word of God is a mystery and mirror that confronts us with the truth. It is a soul-slicing sword that lays alarmingly bare who we are before God (Hebrews 4:12), which induces the humble stomachache of self-knowledge.

AUGUST 8

Morning—Read Psalm 119:129–152

“I RISE BEFORE DAWN”

The first waking moments of the morning are primetime for prayer in the Word. The whole day changes if we begin it by *listening*—allowing God’s to be the first voice in our ear, so that his promises rather than our plans set the trajectory of the day: “My eyes are awake before each watch of the night that I may meditate on your promise” (v. 148).

Evening—Read Psalm 119:153–176

“I LONG FOR YOUR SALVATION”

The Word of God is “great spoil” (v. 162). His Kingdom is treasure hidden in a field, a priceless pearl (Matthew 13:44–46), pursued with complete and almost reckless devotion: “seven times a day I praise you” (v. 164). We abandon ourselves to God who does not abandon us. He comes “to seek our and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10)—all of us who have “gone astray like a lost sheep” (v. 176).

AUGUST 9

Morning—Read Psalm 120

“TOO LONG”

The next fifteen psalms are “songs of ascents,” a collection the Israelites sang while “going up” to Jerusalem for festivals. These are traveling songs for our daily journey of following and seeking God as our destination—our pilgrimage site. This first song aches with homesickness, just as our hearts long for God. Many phrases are repeated throughout these psalms, including the word *shalom* (“peace”—v. 7), which expresses for us this ultimate “homeland”—all creation restored to well-being in the presence of God.

Evening—Read Psalm 121

“I LIFT UP MY EYES TO THE HILLS”

Hills throughout Israel became popular places of idol worship, where people sought aid and favor from any god under the sun. We are similarly surrounded by “help” from the hills of the world, cultural fads and phenomena that promise us health and happiness. We lift our eyes higher to the *Creator* of the hills, the tireless God who guards us day and night. While idol worshippers often made a wild show of waking up their drowsy deities, we know that our God “will neither slumber nor sleep” (v. 4).

AUGUST 10

Morning—Read Psalm 122

“LET US GO TO THE HOUSE OF THE LORD!”

A perfect psalm for Sunday mornings: “Time to go to church!” There is no reluctance or obligation in the psalmist’s anticipation. Our worship together is an occasion for excitement. There is also no question of a “Church of Holy Mattress.” God’s people *gathers* in sacred space to do something we simply cannot do alone at home.

Evening—Read Psalm 123

“TO THE HAND OF THEIR MASTER”

With our eyes wide and fixed on Jesus, we learn the skill of *service* and *self-sacrifice*. This was one of Jesus’ most constant lessons—so much so that Mark shows him repeating it to his dull disciples three chapters in a row, each time after predicting his own death (Mark 8:34–38; 9:33–41; 10:42–45). We learn from the example of our enthroned Master who suffers “more than his fill” of contempt and scorn and still uses his authority to wash feet (John 13:3–17) and die for his sheep (John 10:11)

AUGUST 11

Morning—Read Psalm 124

“IF IT HAD NOT BEEN FOR THE LORD”

Our bold testimony is this: God is on our side. The evidence is not prosperity, power, or success. God’s being for us does not mean the justification of our every venture; it means rescue from sudden and sweeping danger. At the start, the psalmist pauses and summons everyone to join, because “God’s help is not a private experience; it is a corporate reality” (Eugene Peterson).

Evening—Read Psalm 125

“THOSE WHO TRUST IN THE LORD”

Our life of faith does not always seem this invincible. If someone can’t think of exceptions to feeling always safe and mountain-steady, they are either lucky or deluded. We *are* shaken and moved by events and experiences. Fortunately, the picture of faith is not of an individual impeccably walking a tightrope; it is a well secured city, a community of those watched over by God and each other.

AUGUST 12

Morning—Read Psalm 126

“SHOUTS OF JOY”

Using this phrase three times, the psalm is brimming with a joy different from “pleasure” or even “happiness.” Joy is not the absence of sadness, struggle, or pain. Suffering is not joy’s opposite but rather its seed. Israel’s history teaches us that we don’t conjure joy by eliminating or escaping hardship. It is the surprising gift we discover by passing *through* hardship with God. Tears water the arid ground, which yields a harvest of laughter and blessing.

Evening—Read Psalm 127

“IN VAIN”

In the cult of constant work and worry there is no peace. *Rest* is an act of trust in the God who cares for birds and lilies. Wendell Berry poetically captures this:

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children’s lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

AUGUST 13

Morning—Read Psalm 128

“THE LABOR OF YOUR HANDS”

Psalm 127 taught us that our working and watching is fruitless without God. Psalm 128 reveals the place of true blessing and prosperity: in fear of the Lord and walking in his Way—that is, Christ. In the household of the Church, God’s children are “olive shoots around your table” (v. 3). As Christ himself says, “I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

Evening—Read Psalm 129

“PLOWED ON MY BACK”

God “has cut the cords of the wicked” (v. 4), those used to flog the Son of God himself. The forces of evil “made their furrows long” (v. 3) in Jesus’ back, unknowingly sowing the seeds of salvation in his suffering. We ascend the hill of resurrection in him who puts to shame the broken chains of death.

AUGUST 14

Morning—Read Psalm 130

“WHO COULD STAND?”

We find ourselves between revealing law and redeeming grace—death and life. None can stand on their own two feet in the light of God’s law. “But there is forgiveness with you” (v. 5), because of the grace of Christ. In him, the law is fulfilled and we are forgiven and free. The law shows our need for Christ, who promises and provides new life in the Spirit (Romans 7). Knowing our need, the way up the hill from here involves hopeful *waiting*—“my soul waits for the Lord” (v. 6)—on the Spirit, our power and source of life.

Evening—Read Psalm 131

“LIKE A WEANED CHILD”

Worship is not a castle we storm. To ascend the hill of God’s presence, we descend the hill of human pride—until our soul is “calmed and quieted” (v. 2). The humble are exalted; we die to ourselves to live to God. We let go of the fretting and frustration of thinking we can completely control or even understand things “too great and too marvelous,” (v. 2), learning instead to be quiet and content in the arms of God who nurtures and nourishes us in stillness.

AUGUST 15

Morning—Read Psalm 132

“A PLACE FOR THE LORD”

In God’s mysterious plan, David’s devotion to building a dwelling place for God is fulfilled in Jesus, in whom “the fullness of God was pleased to dwell” (Colossians 1:19) among us (John 1:14). Everything gathers together in him (v. 7; Colossians 1:20; Ephesians 1:10). He is the “horn to sprout up for David...a lamp for my anointed one” (v. 17). He is the Son of David (v. 11), the King set on an everlasting throne, and in him we are also sons and daughters, receiving an “inheritance” (v. 12; Ephesians 1:11).

Evening—Read Psalm 133

“WHEN KINDRED LIVE TOGETHER IN UNITY”

This psalm takes a strange turn for readers today. The image of an oil-drenched beard is more repelling than compelling for us. For Israel, this was a symbol of the priesthood: oil anointing the head and beard of Aaron. When we dwell together as brothers and sisters in Christ, the set apart purpose of the priesthood comes alive in us. We offer ourselves as sacrifices, proclaim the story of what God has done, and communicate the ways and words of God to one another, fulfilling our anointing as “a royal priesthood, a holy nation” (1 Peter 2:9).

AUGUST 16

Morning—Read Psalm 134

“BLESS”

We are always expectantly wanting to be “blessed.” But blessing is first (and second) an action we take toward God. As we arrive at the threshold of worship, this final song of ascents concludes the collection simply: Bless the Lord. Bless the Lord. And the Lord bless us.

Evening—Read Psalm 135

“HE IT IS”

Echoing Psalm 115, this song contrasts the God of Israel with every other god, playing on the name God reveals for himself—YHWH, “I AM WHO I AM.” God’s overwhelming name is not so vague as it may seem. It conjures stories and scenes of active involvement—both in nature and in history. Unlike the inert idols of “silver and gold” (v. 15), HE WHO IS is not static or absent; he is dynamically present and powerful, performing “signs and wonders” (v. 9).

AUGUST 17

Morning—Read Psalm 136:1–9

“HIS STEADFAST LOVE ENDURES FOREVER”

Our prayer with this psalm draws our mind from God’s works and wonders to their source in his steadfast love. Everything God does is because of this love. The movements of creation are the work of God’s “understanding” (v. 5)—his Wisdom and Word in whom, through whom, and for whom all things were made (Colossians 1:16–17; John 1:3). The Word himself is creation’s loving pattern and purpose, revealed to us in Jesus.

Evening—Read Psalm 136:10–26

“GIVE THANKS TO THE GOD OF HEAVEN”

In steadfast love God not only creates; he sustains and saves. It is once again God’s eternal Son—“a strong hand and an outstretched arm” (v. 12)—that works these wonders of salvation. He lead us out of slavery to sin and death into a land of promise, protection, and provision. And the song ends as it began—with gratitude.

AUGUST 18

Morning—Read Psalm 137

“BY THE RIVERS OF BABYLON”

A short and shocking psalm from a time of exile. Israel is alienated—displaced and dispersed among oppressive foreign nations. Not even their songs have meaning so far from home. As citizens of heaven—not at home in the present world—we join with Israel’s groaning and also learn to pray with compassion for persecuted pilgrims—actual refugees and immigrants in our world—by dashing our comfortable, complacent hearts against the Rock, who is Christ.

Evening—Read Psalm 138

“THE WORK OF YOUR HANDS”

Salvation is neither the snap of a finger nor a fire escape. It is more like a work of art—the ongoing work of God, who faithfully continues his creating and crafting in and among us and “will bring it to completion” (Philippians 1:6). On this journey we continue to face troubles and enemies, but the longer we walk we find again and again that God has “increased the strength of my soul” (v. 3), until our “whole heart” (v. 1) gives thanks to God “who will fulfill his purpose for me” (v. 8).

AUGUST 19

Morning—Read Psalm 139

“DARKNESS IS AS LIGHT TO YOU”

We cannot live as fugitives from God. From heaven to hell and everywhere in between, he is always already there with us. Nothing we do, nowhere we go, can separate us from him (Romans 8:38–39). The mystery of God’s presence led St. Augustine to refer to him as “closer to me than I am to myself,” praying: “You were within me and I was outside myself” (Augustine, *Confessions*, 3.6.11, 10.37.28). God knows us better than we know ourselves. Mindful of this inescapable light, we pray “search me, know me” from the inside out.

Evening—Read Psalm 140

“PROTECT ME FROM THE VIOLENT”

This starts a short series of psalms all praying for deliverance from evil and enemies. In his own life, Jesus runs the gauntlet of these persecutions, suffering in sum the stirring slander and plots of the violent, even to the point of death. Our “strong deliverer” (v. 7) does not always prevent our pain and persecution, but he strengthens us by his compassionate example.

AUGUST 20

Morning—Read Psalm 141

“SET A GUARD”

We continue praying for protection from evil, this time *within*. The psalmist is honest about our own proclivity for sin. We are not so far from the company of those we call “wicked.” Those who are clearheaded about this welcome and cherish accountability: “let the righteous strike me; let the faithful correct me” (v. 5). As a member of the Body, my sin is not just my problem (1 Corinthians 6:15). The community of faith is a gift for protection and perseverance against the destructive capabilities in our own hearts (Hebrews 3:12–13).

Evening—Read Psalm 142

“THEY HAVE HIDDEN A TRAP FOR ME”

All of the last three psalms use this image of the wicked setting a trap. We do not have to go out of our way to find opportunities to fall and fail; they are “in the path where I walk” every day (v. 5). Loneliness is one of the easiest of these traps on the daily journey. Even when I walk weak and alone, God knows my way (v. 3). Even when it seems that “no one cares for me” (v. 4), the hope remains *communal*: “the righteous will surround me” (v. 7).

AUGUST 21

Morning—Read Psalm 143

“PRESERVE MY LIFE”

“Pursued” and crucified—his life “crushed to the ground” (v. 3)—Christ descended “down to the Pit” (v. 7) into “darkness like those long dead” (v. 3). God answers with the morning of resurrection and the destruction of death. The same Spirit who lifted Jesus up from the grave will also lift us up and “lead us on a level path” (v. 10).

Evening—Read Psalm 144

“BOW YOUR HEAVENS AND COME DOWN”

With the Lord as our deliverer, there is no limit to hope. Salvation does not stop at rescue from flood and sword. Heaven itself—the dwelling place of God—comes down to stay with us: Creator and creation restored to peace and well-being. We are filled with visions of abundance, harvest and home, life together whole and healthy.

AUGUST 22

Morning—Read Psalm 145

“ALL FLESH WILL BLESS HIS HOLY NAME”

With many different synonyms for worship—extol, bless, praise, laud—we sing to the King whose Kingdom is all creation, not just Israel. For “the Lord is good to all” (v. 9) and “all flesh will bless his holy name.” (v. 21). As servants and subjects of the Kingdom of God, we worship with whole cosmos. As Eugene Peterson puts it, “Praise is a collaboration between the material of creation (‘all your works’) and the people of the covenant (‘all your saints’).”

Evening—Read Psalm 146

“PRAISE THE LORD!”

Every remaining song begins and ends with this: “Hallelujah!” As the Psalms round the corner for the homestretch, everything is *praise*. This is where all roads lead. Although the Book of Psalms is filled with many different kinds, its Hebrew title is *Tehillim*—“songs of praise.” Even the detours of doubt, lament, and complaint are drawn together into the final and unending word of praise. The psalmist begins by praising God for his care for the vulnerable and disenfranchised: the hungry, the prisoner, the blind, the lowly, the stranger, the orphan, the widow. “Princes” and politicians make for incompetent caretakers in comparison to the Creator of heaven and earth.

AUGUST 23

Morning—Read Psalm 147

“THE LORD BUILDS UP JERUSALEM”

Despite his mastery and provision over nature, God’s desire and delight is not a perfectly ordered system, a flawlessly crafted creature (v. 10). The psalm turns on this point—that God instead takes particular pleasure in personal relationship with his own precious people (v. 11). This was a song of comfort and hope for Israelites being gathered home from exile, praising God for the assurance of his personal care over them.

Evening—Read Psalm 148

“ABOVE BOTH EARTH AND HEAVEN”

Worship is not a private matter. It is not even just a “public” matter. It is *cosmic*. The entire universe is involved. Repeatedly drawing language from Genesis 1, this song sweeps from angelic beings all the way to the least of animals and through all human society. Nothing escapes the scope of God’s glory. Every voice joins in.

AUGUST 24

Morning—Read Psalm 149

“ALL HIS FAITHFUL ONES”

The company of those who worship God is not exactly a somber, straightedge bunch. They are a bit wild—singing and dancing all day and night with instruments and swords! The Hebrew word here translated “victory” or “rescue” (v. 4) is *Yeshu’ah*, quite literally the name “Jesus.” The cause of all this ruckus and revelry is Christ himself, who is our “adornment”—our victory, rescue, and reason to celebrate.

Evening—Read Psalm 150

“EVERYTHING THAT BREATHE”

Fittingly, the whole Psalter culminates and concludes with a universal call to worship. Everything is a living instrument of praise, created to create the music of God. The whole chorus of creation lifts its astonishing voice—the very life in its lungs—to worship its Creator and King. Draw a deep breath and join in. Hallelujah!

NOTES

