

Saturday, 8/4

Pray for the mind-renewing influence and illumination of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Read: Psalm 73:18-28

Examine: What is truly good? The goodness of God is not defined by the *shalom* the wicked enjoy, nor is it denied by the affliction suffered by the pure in heart. The ultimate misery is to be far from God (v 27). The everlasting *shalom* is to be near God (v 28). The goodness of God is the self of God. God is good to the pure in heart precisely in being their God. It is Himself that He gives to His people.

Apply: Read Romans 8:18-39 and reflect on how our own experience of the world is woefully inadequate when compared to this heavenly perspective. Where is your wisdom, your pride, your hope, your security, and your treasure? To draw near to God is our wisdom, our honor, our safety, our peace, and our riches.

Pray to be every mindful of and more and more aware of God's presence, His peace, and
His nearness to you at all times. Thank God for His goodness and mercy...always!

Be Thou My Vision

Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art.
Thou my best Thought, by day or by night,
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.

Be Thou my Wisdom, and Thou my true Word;
I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord;
Thou my great Father, I Thy true son;
Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one.

Be Thou my battle Shield, Sword for the fight;
Be Thou my Dignity, Thou my Delight;
Thou my soul's Shelter, Thou my high Tower:
Raise Thou me heavenward, O Power of my power.

Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise,
Thou mine Inheritance, now and always:
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart,
High King of Heaven, my Treasure Thou art.

High King of Heaven, my victory won,
May I reach Heaven's joys, O bright Heaven's Sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,



Taking Gathered Worship Home

Family and Individual Devotions

Meditations in the Psalms

Week of July 29, 2007

N *aught be all else to me, save that Thou art... Thou and Thou only, first in my heart... I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord.* These phrases from the beloved hymn “Be Thou My Vision” (Dal-lan For-gaill, 8th C; trans. [Ma-ry E. Byrne](#)) are echoes of the final verses of Psalm 73. They point to lines of devotional intensity that have made the Psalm a classic of prayer and contemplation. In this Psalm, the psalmist is struggling with the disparity between his faith and his experience of “the real world.” His bitterness and estrangement at its beginning is soon replaced by pure devotion to God at the Psalm’s conclusion. The meaning and the mystery of the Psalm lies in its transition from one to the other. As we read and study this Psalm this week, look at the following structure: Each section of the Psalm is marked by a Hebrew emphatic particle at the beginning of verses 1, 13, and 18 (“surely” in the NIV/NAS; “truly” in the KJV). The first section describes the predicament of the psalmist: he begins to doubt the goodness of God (vv 1-3) because of the success and “peace” (*shalom*) of the wicked (vv 4-12). The middle section (vv 13-17) is the key transition. The last section is the psalmist’s resolution as he comes to understand God’s providence in the undoing of the wicked (vv 18-20) and the true peace (*shalom*) and well being that comes to those who are “with” or “near” God.

Sunday, 7/29

Read: Psalm 73:1

Examine: The Psalm begins and ends with statements about the goodness of God. But how God’s goodness is experienced and understood will undergo a profound recasting in the course of this Psalm. God is good to Israel, His Church; and the next line clarifies that the true Israel, the true Church, is composed of those who are “pure in heart.” God’s goodness is a sure blessing for the pure in heart, those who respond to God’s call with a singleness of devotion (Psalm 24:4; Matt 5:8).

Apply: The Danish Lutheran theologian Søren Kierkegaard said that purity of heart is to will one thing, the love of God. But who among us has such purity of heart, such singularity of devotion? Martin Luther said that God comes to us as both giver *and* gift: He gives us the faith to love and desire Him, and gives Himself to us in response. It is God

Himself who is the goodness God gives to those He chooses to be with.

Pray: Use this Psalm today as your prayer. Pray through the entire Psalm and let the Spirit lead your heart by using these words.

Monday, 7/30

Read: Psalm 73:2-12

Examine: The Psalmist looks at the abundant life of the wicked, their arrogant self confidence and social influence, and wonders, in comparison to his own life, if his faith is really a sham. Even the author of Ecclesiastes notes that there doesn't seem to be much advantage to going through the trouble and turmoil of all these religious motions (Ecc. 9:2,3). Does God really care anymore? Does He even know what's going on? (v 11).

Apply: Sound familiar? How much more would we have if we could devote Sunday mornings to more productive projects? If we held on to our tithe? If we didn't have all those Christian scruples to hold us back at work and play? Are you, like the Psalmist, envious of the prosperity and peace of the wicked? The Psalmist admits that this temptation was almost his destruction. The Psalmist clings to this one great truth: God is good...always and forever. And goodness in life is to possess God above all else.

Pray that God would instill in your heart a desire for Him above all else.

Tuesday, 7/31

Read: Psalm 73:13-16

Examine: The Psalmist cannot rescue himself from the perplexity of his experience by the effort of his own reasoning (v 16). "It just doesn't make sense," he cries, "all this seems (to my own thinking) so vain." But he knows he is looking in the wrong place; true folly is trying to find the truth of faith in the independent work of the human intellect. Reason cannot by itself unravel experience to supply the ground for faith.

Apply: Scripture teaches us repeatedly that the only true wisdom is that found in God's own self-revelation. It is from God's own perspective and through the lens of His word that we must judge what is just and good in the world. The Psalmist knows that the peace of the world is not like the peace that God brings (John 14:27, 16:33), nor are the riches of the world the same as God's riches (Eph 1:18). Indeed, it is God Himself who is our peace, our desire, and our prize.

Pray for God's own wisdom and guidance, that transcends that of the world's wisdom, in dealing with your decisions this week.

Wednesday, 8/1

Read: Psalm 73:17

Examine: This is the key turning point of the Psalm. To enter the sanctuary of God is to enter into the powerful presence of God. The reality of God flooded the Psalmist's heart as

he understood himself and his experience in new light and with an eternal perspective. The fleeting peace, prosperity, and power of the world is no longer attractive or something to covet in comparison with the eternal peace, riches, and power we have in Christ Jesus, who is the true Sanctuary, the presence of God amongst His people.

Apply: Apply: John Calvin in his commentary noted that that the word "sanctuary" also alludes to the external manner of teaching (as the book of the law was laid up in the sanctuary), not merely the Temple itself. God, for us, is to be found present in His Word, in His Church where the Word is preached and presented in the Sacraments, and in the company and fellowship of His people. While God is always near to us, it is here that we come near to Him in a special way. "The greater our nearness to God, the less we are affected by the attractions and distractions of earth." (Charles Spurgeon)

Pray that God would put in your heart a desire to be near Him in His word everyday.

Thursday, 8/2

Read: Psalm 73:17

Examine: With this renewed eternal perspective, the Psalmist reaffirms his faith in God's providence and His covenant faithfulness. We are reminded that it is not uncommon for our sinful nature to struggle with our experience, to deny that God cares for and governs the world, and to maintain that all is the result of chance (and how much more so for those without God?). Yet God Himself draws us to His sanctuary and into His presence, and wonderfully preserves us by His hand, less our own sinful nature overtakes us.

Apply: It's so very easy to profess with our lips God's eternal providence in governing the world and looking after His children. But when doubts and worries overtake us, we find that this doctrine is dislodged from our minds, and we manifest that it has not yet been truly lodged in our hearts. We need constantly to flee to the sanctuary, to God's presence in His word, for strength and encouragement. And there we will find Him with open arms!

Pray for the world and our nation, that God's providential care would sustain His people and His Church.

Friday, 8/3

Read: Psalm 73:18-28

Examine: God is sovereign and righteous, and it is in His sovereignty and covenant faithfulness that we take refuge (v 28; note the covenant name YHWH used). Viewed from the perspective of their end, the wicked are unreal, like a bad dream. The Psalmist now sees that very things which he envied in the wicked will be their destruction. He further encourages himself to hope that the same God who had delivered him from this evil work would preserve him to His heavenly kingdom (v 24; see also Paul's words in 2 Tim. 4:18).

Apply: Read Romans 12:1-2. We ought to be of God's mind, for His judgment is according to truth, and not to admire and envy that which He despises and will despise; for, sooner or later, He will bring the entire world to be of His mind.