

Sermon Notes for July 7

I have really enjoyed going deep into four different types of Psalms. This Sunday finishes the four-week series and next week is the beginning of a series utilizing Hebrews.

Our text today is Psalm 40:1-10. The band U2 used to end their concerts with a song entitled “40” - guess what that 40 was? You got it! Our Psalm!

Psalm 40 is a “thanksgiving song”. The best way to describe this is the back-end of a lamentation. The Psalmist has been delivered from the jaws of disaster by the Lord. Now is the time to “sing a new song!” - in Hebrew this is called *shir chadash*.

Dr. Rolf Jacobson of Luther Seminary provides a framework for a thanksgiving psalm:

“Psalm 40 is typical of the song of thanks because it:

- Describes the time of crisis and how the psalmist asked God for help (verses 1-3)
- Praises God (verses 4-6)
- Describes the help that God gave (verses 7-10)”

Psalm 40:1-10 (Voice)

I waited a long time for the Eternal;
He *finally* knelt down to hear me.
He listened to my *weak and whispered* cry.

He reached down and drew me
from the deep, dark hole where I was
stranded, mired in the muck and clay.
With a gentle hand, He pulled me out
To set me down safely on a *warm* rock;
He held me until I was steady enough to
continue the journey again.

*As if that were not enough,
because of Him my mind is clearing up.*
Now I have a new song to sing—
a song of praise to the One *who saved me.*
Because of what He's done, many people will
see
and come to trust in the Eternal.

In reading these verses, it made me ask the question, “Why don’t all folks ask God for help?” Lisa Ferentz, a Licensed Counselor, says that asking for help is something we learn. She says, if we grow up in a family where “reaching out was unacceptable, futile, or would cause more pain, it makes sense that you would go it alone whenever possible. Through their own actions, family members modeled whether or not asking for help was acceptable. They also taught you the extent to which outsiders could be trusted resources. And most importantly, your past experiences with family, teachers, peers, and other significant people in your life served to either reinforce the notion that help

was available, consistent, predictable and safe, or left you with the painful impression that your needs would go unheard and unanswered.”

(www.psychologytoday.com)

So if we want to get better at asking God for help, we have to practice asking MORE, and we need to be available and consistent and safe and reliable with others asking for help.

Now we get to the verses about praise:

Surely those who trust the Eternal—
who don't trust in proud, *powerful* people
Or in people who care little *for reality*, chasing
false gods—
surely they are happy, as I have become.

You have done so many wonderful things,
had so many *tender* thoughts toward us,
Eternal my God,
that go on and on, ever increasing.
Who can compare with You?

Sacrifices and offerings are not what You want,
but You've opened my ears, *and now I understand.*

Burnt offerings and sin offerings
are not what please You.

There is a story (I've lost the source) about a tailor that asks his rabbi, in effect, is God a glory-hog? The tailor says he likes compliments on his work, but if everyone, everywhere, all the time, told him how magnificent his tailoring was, he would start to despise everyone! The rabbi replies that God is very busy and that God hears all the prayers, the cries for help, the cursing, and yes, even the praise. Luckily for us, because of God's great love for us, God can deal with everything, even the praise.

Mike Colaw of Wesleyan.org says, "Worship of God is participating in making love bigger, making joy bigger, making peace bigger."

{When we praise God we are expanding the kingdom of God!}

“Do you see it? (God) is not a cosmic (grump) demanding attention. We have a proposal to continue growing in beauty. The kind that all our hearts deep down really want. The kind that fairy tales are based on. ‘Happily ever after’ wants you.”

And here is the help that God provided:

So I said, “See, I have come *to do Your will*, as it is inscribed of me in the scroll.

I am pleased to live how You want, my God.
Your law is etched into my heart *and my soul.*”

I have encouraged *Your people* with the message of righteousness,
in Your great assembly (look and see),
I haven’t kept quiet about these things;

You know this, Eternal One.

I have not kept Your righteousness to myself,
sealed up in the secret places of my heart;

instead, I *boldly* tell others how You save and
how loyal You are.

I haven't been shy to talk about Your love, *nor*
have I been afraid to tell Your truth

before the great assembly *of Your people*.

So we ought to always be doing God's will. But
how can we know? Our denomination's
website, umc.org, talks about John Wesley
making a long discernment about whether or not
to accept his retiring father's church in England,
thus providing support to his family, or to
become a missionary in Georgia. He became the
missionary and did a job, not too well. Did God
fool him into making a bad choice? No!

“We too face decisions with no clear answer.
The best we can do is seek God's will using
every means at our disposal. Then we can take

comfort in knowing that God is with us and will work his will in either good choice we make.”

When it comes to the best God-songs, they are from the very best of our heart-tunes. Dr. John Piper sums it up: “God is most glorified when we are most satisfied in God.”

AND THAT’S THE MESSAGE!