

Surrounded by God

Psalm 125

Last week Tom and Sherry Oster hosted a group of us for dinner and prayer. Something they love to do. **They invited our Spiritual Disciplines class over.** Tom was teaching on prayer so we thought it would be good to practice it together. We had an amazing meal... then we went into their den to pray.

Before we prayed Tom reminded us **prayer is a great privilege**; we don't do it enough; **we need to learn how to pray in quietness** together; to be **silent** before the Lord; to pray **beyond the sick list** and beyond **the perfunctory**.

Then Tom said, let's begin our prayer time **setting our gaze on God**. For the first 10-15 minutes of this hour of prayer... let's praise/adore/worship God himself. Offer prayers about who he is/his goodness and his greatness... before we ask him for stuff.

If you're not sure how to do this, he said, follow the Psalms; because most of the Pss begin w/ God...that's how they teach us to pray God-centered.

Psalm 125 is a perfect example. It describes who God is/what he is like. **The redeemed imagination of the song-writer pulls us with him into praise!** This is some of most captivating imagery found anywhere in Psalter.

As the mountains surround Jerusalem so the Lord...

What is God like? Why should we trust him above all things?

I want to show you 3 promises that flow directly from **who God is**; promises that flow out of the **attributes of God**; practical, life-giving promises:

1. Stability & Permanence (v 1)
2. Security & Presence (vv 2-3)
3. Goodness & Peace (vv 4-5)

1. Stability & Permanence (v 1)

The promise of stability and permanency. **Stability**—as in something big and immovable, not small and wobbly. Not like the table at Brambleton Deli...

Read v. 1

Mt Zion is about 2500 ft above sea level. The name Mt Zion is first used in the Hebrew Bible to refer to the city of David. It would eventually take on the common name, Jerusalem.

In the Hebrew Scriptures it became synonymous w/ the City of David.

A perfect place to build a fortress for a kingdom. In other words, as you learn to trust in the Lord, you will take on the stabilizing character of God himself. The character of solidity. The substance of one who is solid and immovable. Like a massive mountain of stability.

① King David saw it as a ② A Rock solid site for Jerusalem and a place to establish a throne!

When trials come, you will be increasingly stable. Your panic level will go down. When the drama of life and storms of life pop up out of nowhere... you will be anchored and protected and safe.

Thus I was heading over to Salem one afternoon last week... when a powerful thunderstorm ripped right through the Lakeside area... wind was wild... started bending over trees... sideways rain...

Psalm 46—read it all 46:1-5a / 10-11

Are you feeling the instability of modern life? I asked Chat what some of the more de-stabilizing factors of modern life are today:

- ✓ **Digital Disorientation** (24-hour news/wars/politics; social media feed; instant communication, instant messaging = cognitive overload/mental exhaustion)
- ✓ **Unhealthy Family Structures** (cohabitation, low view of marriage, gender confusion / distortion of sexual identity, no respect the sacredness of life itself)
- ✓ **Financial Pressure and Work-Life Imbalance** (massive student loans; graduates w/o jobs; unaffordable housing... working more hrs/ no sabbath concept)
- ✓ **Social Isolation** (smartphone/screens at home are replacing face-to-face presence/communication; the term "absent presence" is a thing: *we share a physical space but we are emotionally disconnected*). Same room but...

What do you think we need now more than ever? We need a center. We need a foundation. We need the solidity of God.

Be still + know Him!

How it works in the Psalm!

Appl. →

SLIDE

SLIDE

2. Security & Presence (vv 2-3)

Read v. 2

Mountains are not only stable but also protective.

Mount Zion was *not* the highest peak of the mountain range around Jerusalem. But, the surrounding mountains had the effect of creating a great wall of protection. Invading armies would not have easy access. In other words, Jerusalem was a perfect place to build a fortress for a kingdom.

Illus Here is picture that helps... (image of ancient Jerusalem)

Just as Jerusalem was a protected city, so God surrounds those who trust him. *Those who step into the mighty Fortress who is our God—a bulwark never failing... those who step, by faith, into that Fortress are secure!*

Trusting God means you have access to the most secure place on planet.

Illus A friend of mine was in military training at Fort Knox this summer. Which is famous for housing billions of \$\$\$ worth of gold ~~bullion~~ that belongs to the US Treasury. So, people say, that place is locked up tighter

Being a Xn is like sitting in the middle of Fort Kn—protected by God himself

But there is another thing about v 2 that I want you to see.

Surrounded by God also carries with it a sense of presence. God surrounds us w/ presence (Van Gem).

As the mountains surround Jeruslm, God's surrounding presence is with us. His surrounding presence is near/it's real. This was a big theme in Israel's history. It's also a big theme for the church. After his death, burial, and R, before he ascended to the Father... Jesus promised his presence...the Spirit...

I like thinking of God's presence more in connection to emotional security than physical safety. At least in our context—because most of us are more threatened by emotional/psychological fears than the bandits up in Floyd Co.

Illus Peterson pp 86-87

Are you feeling insecure this morning, or craving approval, or depressed, or just emotionally exhausted... hear the soul-satisfying word of the Gospel fr Ps 125!

As the mtns surround Jerusalm... the Lord surrounds those who trust in him!

3. Goodness & Peace (vv 4-5)

The third promise is also tied to who God is. **God is good**—he is the fountainhead of all goodness and every good thing.

As a moral person—someone who knows the difference between right and wrong—you kinda expect v. 4 to read like this:

"If we do good, O Lord, then you will be good to us, right?"

But that is not what it says. *Because all goodness begins with God. And those who trust in the Lord will discover true goodness. Goodness that will change who they are first—a change on the inside of us.*

As you grow in your faith, you learn to pray like this... **v 4—which is a prayer!**

v. 4 → **Do good, O Lord, to those who are good** (who have discovered your goodness by faith)... not by our own climbing the ladder of good works.

v. 5 → *But to the crooked + evil v. 5 → those who turn aside to their crooked ways...*

Some of us have been memorizing/meditating on Ps 16:

Psalm 16 says—"Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.

I say to the Lord, 'you are my Lord and I have **no good** (thing) apart from you.'"

(2x5)

Train yourself to believe that!

Peace

The psalm ends with a **benediction of peace!** This a beautiful promise of peace—that is again tied to the God-centeredness of this entire song.

Are you looking for peace and stability and a sense of presence... even being able to be present among others in a peaceful state?

Peace be upon Israel... and may peace be upon us as his new covenant people. Peace be upon the church!

Close:

Jesus—Our Stability, Security, and Peace

I want to close with a story that you may have heard before. It's well known.

The context for the story is that Jesus had been teaching people about who God is and what he is like:

God loves humility and mercy and peacemaking / he wants us to love our enemies / he wants us to pray with authenticity and a heart to forgive others; God wants us to seek first his kingdom above all else...

All this teaching is in what we now call the Sermon on the Mt.

Then at the very end of all that, he told this story or parable:

(warning)

Matt 7:24-27

Jesus—Our Stability, Security, and Peace

If you trust in Jesus + the Words of Jesus;

in him + his gospel!

You will have a solid life!

- A solid person

- a person of substance + goodness + life!

Eternal life yes -
but an even better
quality of life now!