

May 4

Psalm 122, 124, 133, 134, 135, 136, 138,

Hi everyone. I'm Margie Alford, the Connections worship leader and I am honored to lead you in the next few days with our on-line accelerators.

Don't you love the Psalms? As a worship leader I'm so drawn to this section of the Bible.

Your reading today consisted of Psalms 122, 124, 133, 134, 135, 136 and 138.

My notes are from John Soper and the Expositor's Bible Commentary.

Psalm 122

The very first verse of Psalm 122 is a great one for us that are joining together at church every weekend. "I rejoiced with those who said to me, let us go to the house of the Lord" It is great coming together with everyone on Sundays.

It's been so amazing to hear story after story of what God is doing through Project 4:4 as I walk the halls of Christ Community. And to know how many chronological Bibles have been purchased and to see our attendance up, it's so cool to see CCC taking this all so seriously. Just having us literally on the same page every day. What a great moment in our church life.

Psalm 124

Psalm 124 starts out with these words:

If the Lord had not been on our side, let Israel say,

If the Lord had not been on our side, when men attacked us and so on....

The repetition of "if the Lord had not been on our side" is for the purpose of emphasis. Because the Lord has been with his people, they have not perished and they have hope.

The Old Testament saints had an amazing awareness of God's presence in their midst even though they had not yet seen the Messiah – Jesus.

One interesting note: the phrase "had been on our side" is the past tense of the name Immanuel – which means God with us. And of course that is one of the names of Jesus.

When Jesus came to this earth He was referred to as Immanuel – God with us.

Psalm 133

In verse 1 of Psalm 133, the psalmist pronounces a blessing on those who live together in unity. The Jews, just like those of us today that gather together, came from many different walks of life, regions and tribes as they gathered for one purpose: the worship of the Lord in Jerusalem. Unity is a good thing... it brings blessing from God with it.

Where god's people are living together "in unity" , "there" the lord sends blessing.

Psalm 134

There are many Bible passages like Psalm 134 that speak of praising God and then the lifting of our hands to the Lord as a very appropriate display of worship. John Soper wonders why so many of us have such a hard time with that in our sometimes

undemonstrative church culture. Soper says he used to say in our “undemonstrative culture” but he doesn’t do that anymore. He speaks of attending too many sporting events where there are uplifted hands all over the place to believe that Americans are unresponsive and unemotional.

But in our sometimes undemonstrative church culture, some of us have been schooled against the idea of overly fervent demonstrations in worship. That is probably not a good thing. It surely is not a Biblical thing. Not only is there no law in Scripture against raising your hands in worship, there are a lot of positive commands to do precisely that!

Here are some things that raising hands typically signify universally:

First, they are a signal of surrender. Someone on a battlefield will lift their hands in the air. They are surrendering and they are looking for help from anyone who will give it. If you are on the battlefield and you lift your hands, you have just declared that you surrender. It doesn’t matter what language you speak, everyone understands that.

Second, upraised hands are a signal of love and trust. Every parent knows that because they know the joy of walking through the door and being greeted by a child running full speed toward them with uplifted arms. It signals acceptance and love and it says “Please pick me up and hold me.”

Third, uplifted arms are a signal of excitement. You are sitting on the fifty yard line and there are three seconds left in the game. The quarterback drops back and lets go with a long pass. That pass is caught and the receiver stumbles into the end zone just as time expires and your team wins the big game. So you sit in the stands and politely clap. I don’t think so. You jump out of your seat. You throw your arms into the air and you cheer for everything you’re worth because you’re celebrating the victory.

Those are the three reasons why people most commonly lift up their arms, and it would seem to me that all three would be applicable in the context of a worship service.

Psalm 136

This great Psalm of thanksgiving was associated with the great annual feasts, especially with the Feast of Passover. The literary form is an antiphonal hymn. Antiphonal singing is dividing the group of singers into two groups and they sing or chant alternately.

So, you can see the call and response, as it were, in this Psalm.

“His love endures forever” is the response..... Memorize these words and you half of this Psalm memorized!

Psalm 138

I am sure you noticed in the very first verse of Psalm 138 a reference to other "gods" -- "Before the gods I will sing your praise. We have encountered that very same phenomenon in other Psalms as well. We know that He is the great God above all gods. Are we to take from this an understanding that there are other "gods" beside the God of Israel? No, we are not. In dozens of different places the scripture tells us in no uncertain terms that there is only one God and the other "gods" and idols that men worship are nothing -- they do not exist.

The references to other "gods" in this Psalm are merely acknowledgements that other people worship false gods which do not really exist. The Bible teaches a religion of

monotheism -- one God, even though idol worshippers are normally polytheistic -- worshipping many gods.

As we close our time today, I want to leave you with this last verse of Psalm 24:

Our help is in the name of the Lord the maker of heaven and earth.

See you tomorrow everybody. Have a good one!