

Summer in the Psalms

Psalm 22

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish? My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, but I find no rest.

Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the one Israel praises. In you our ancestors put their trust; they trusted and you delivered them. To you they cried out and were saved; in you they trusted and were not put to shame.

But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by everyone, despised by the people. All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads. “He trusts in the Lord,” they say, “let the Lord rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him.” Yet you brought me out of the womb; you made me trust in you, even at my mother’s breast. From birth I was cast on you; from my mother’s womb you have been my God.

Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help. Many bulls surround me; strong bulls of Bashan encircle me. Roaring lions that tear their prey open their mouths wide against me. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted within me. My mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death.

Dogs surround me, a pack of villains encircles me; they pierce my hands and my feet. All my bones are on display; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.

But you, Lord, do not be far from me. You are my strength; come quickly to help me. Deliver me from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dogs. Rescue me from the mouth of the lions; save me from the horns of the wild oxen.

I will declare your name to my people; in the assembly I will praise you. You who fear the Lord, praise him! All you descendants of Jacob, honor him! Revere him, all you descendants of Israel! For he has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help.

From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly; before those who fear you, I will fulfill my vows. The poor will eat and be satisfied; those who seek the Lord will praise him—may your hearts live forever!

All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him, for dominion belongs to the Lord and he rules over the nations. All the rich of the earth will feast and worship; all who go down to the dust will kneel before him— those who cannot keep themselves alive. Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord. They will proclaim his righteousness, declaring to a people yet unborn: He has done it!



In Psalm 22, David opens by reflecting on his overwhelming feelings of abandonment and loneliness, feeling as though all the people around him have turned against him and mocked him because of his faith in YHWH. He has this creeping feeling that he is far from God's earshot. Exhausted from it all, he cries out in a way that is raw and broken, acknowledging the hurt on all sides. As he goes down the list of aches, he is asking that the Lord be not far from him, reminding himself of the things he has known to be true of YHWH—that he is holy, faithful, and the source of David's strength.

How many times have you felt like you were surrounded on all sides, that your strength was like dried-up baked clay or like your heart was melting like wax within you?

When we feel this way, we must be honest and cry out to the God who sees us and loves us, especially when we feel tempted to believe the lie that he will not hear our cries. In our crying out, in bringing our sorrows, worries, and stresses into the presence of God, we are reminded of what is really true—that the Lord is faithful to meet us and to answer.

Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Isn't the contrast between Psalm 22 and 23 crazy? How can the same person who wrote, "My God, My God, why have you abandoned me" in Psalm 22 also write some of the most comforting and famous verses of Psalm 23? Something happens when we bring our worries, name our aches, and cry out our anxieties in the presence of the One who created us. The power of his presence can bring us back to the truth, can shift our perspective, reminding us of our identity and offering strength for the next moment. Our crying out may not change our circumstances per se, but it can form us into the type of disciple who, in the midst of the darkest valley, can proclaim, "I fear no danger, for you are with me, Lord; your rod and your staff, they comfort me."

Reflection 1

What is something that you need to cry out in the presence of the Lord?

Reflection 2

Looking back on your life, what were the moments where you could say, "I fear no danger, for you are with me, LORD; your rod and your staff comfort me"?

Reflection 3

What is something that resonated with you from Psalms 22 and 23?



Schedule

July

Week 9: Psalms 22 + 23

* Available Thursday, July 10

Week 10: Psalm 46

* Available Thursday, July 17

Week 11: Psalm 73

* Available Thursday, July 24

Week 12: Psalm 103

* Available Thursday, July 31

