



Growth Group Curriculum Winter 2021
The Songs We Sing - Psalms in the New Year
Week 3 – January 24, 2021 - Psalm 15

Growth groups are one of the best and easiest ways to find community at church. In this time of the virus and social distancing, please meet safely outside or online. If your growth group would like to meet online or if you are aware of needs that the church can help fill, please let us know at connect@ljpres.org. Thank you for loving and caring for each other.

Setting the Context

Psalm 15 opens with two questions, “who may dwell in your sacred tent, and who may live on your holy mountain?” David is wondering who can enter God’s temple without fearing the wrath of God. His concern is that entering into God’s presence can be dangerous because of God’s holiness. The image of God’s holiness being something to fear is not something we hear very often in the 21st century, but we see it on a number of occasions in the Old and New Testament.

David’s question is answered by a priest or temple prophet who would have been interpreting the law. The answer at first glance seems like a checklist of rules to qualify for temple entrance. However, that was not the intention. Rather, these 10 commands, which are reminiscent of the 10 commandments, were for the protection of the people, and based on a process of self-assessment.

The directives given in Psalm 15 are based on relationships with others and one’s ability to judge oneself. Psalm 15 calls believers to a higher standard. A life that is not lived for self, for status, for power, for religiosity, but solely for the glory of God. While we no longer enter into the literal presence of God in the temple, this psalm is still instructive for us today.

As a follower of Christ, we must be able to have humility to assess our own actions. This assessment is not based on how many times we go to church, how much we read our Bible, or how often we serve. Instead, it is an assessment of the heart behind our actions. Are we living with integrity (walking blamelessly)? Is our faith being lived out on a regular basis in our world?

We also must assess our relationships. It’s easy to believe that as long as our relationship with God is healthy, then we are a “good” Christian. However, this psalm reminds us that the relationships we have with others directly impacts our relationship with God. If we despise someone, are inconsistent with our words, or use our position of power to harm someone, our relationship with God is at stake. On the flip side, if we do not prioritize a relationship with God, we will cause harm in our relationships.

La Jolla Presbyterian Church • 858-454-0713 • www.ljpres.org



The psalm ends by saying that if we follow its directions our lives will reflect a certain stability. We will be able to enter the “sacred tent” or worship space and meet with God. Within the “sacred tent”, or the presence of God, we will find ourselves standing on a firm foundation.

Exploring the Text

Read Psalm 8

¹LORD, who may dwell in your sacred tent? Who may live on your holy mountain? ²The one whose walk is blameless, who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from their heart; ³whose tongue utters no slander, who does no wrong to a neighbor, and casts no slur on others; ⁴who despises a vile person but honors those who fear the LORD; who keeps an oath even when it hurts, and does not change their mind; ⁵who lends money to the poor without interest; who does not accept a bribe against the innocent. Whoever does these things will never be shaken.

Questions

If you are answering these questions alone, we would urge you to try journaling. Rather than just pondering the answers, try writing them out along with a prayer to the Lord.

- 1) What is your first memory of “going to church?”
- 2) Do you find it surprising that the question about “how one prepares to worship God” (verse 1) is answered by a list of do’s and don’ts (verses 2-5a), about how one relates to others?
- 3) How would you define “worship?” In John 4:24 Jesus says, “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” How does this idea connect with what we read in Psalm 15?
- 4) Psalm 15 seems to say that it is a good idea to do an “inventory check” of how you have been treating others, before you go to worship. Why do you think David makes that connection? Have you ever done anything like an “inventory check” before going to church?
- 5) Pastor Paul talked about the difference between being tourists and pilgrims when it comes to our faith. When it comes to living out your faith do you feel more like a tourist or a pilgrim?
- 6) How does “worship” impact the way in which you live out your faith on a daily basis?
- 7) The word for walking “blamelessly”, in verse 2, could also be translated as integrity. How do you define integrity? Share about someone you know whose life is marked by integrity.
- 8) We are told, at the end of verse 5, that if we live out what is written in Psalm 15 we will never be shaken. What does that mean to you?

