

# PRAYING THE PSALMS 2025

## Session VIII: With all Creation

Instrumentation is explicitly mentioned, which gives a clue to how the Psalms might have been accompanied in Temple worship: trumpets and flutes, harps, lyres and other stringed instruments, tambourines and cymbals.

And looking back to Ps 148 and even further back to Ps 19 there is a sense in which our praise is offered up along with that of all creation.

Now, some of our most well-known Hymns of Praise are based upon Psalms:

*Praise my soul the King of heaven (Ps 103)*

*All people that on earth do dwell (Ps 100)*

And there are many modern songs of praise inspired by Psalms:

The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want (Ps 23) Stuart Townend

Create in me a clean heart, O God (Ps 51)

*Dave Fellingham*

But, within Singing the Faith, what about?

**No 112 'O Lord, our Lord, throughout the earth' (Ps 8)**

We noted very early on the predominance of psalms of Lament, and yet we have generally been less able to give expression to such difficult emotions in worship.

But what about the following song inspired by Psalm 13?

**No 630 'How Long, O Lord, will you forget?'**

How might such a song of lament might be used in public worship?

**Final Prayer:** O God, our loving Creator, we thank you that you have made us for relationship with you. We thank you for the Psalms; for those who wrote them, edited them, copied them, set them to music, read, sung and prayed them down the centuries. Form within us the mind of Christ, that the Spirit of Jesus may live in us and your way is known on earth, we pray for his sake. Amen

**Read Psalm 119v169-176** as our prayer.

**Taking Stock:** So, we've travelled and prayed our way, more or less, through the whole Book of Psalms. As we reach the end of our pilgrimage, let's take stock:

**Conversation:** *Together or in small groups.*

1. What has surprised you? What have you learned?
2. How will your prayer life change, if at all?

**The End of the Road?**

So, as we near the end of the road on our pilgrimage, we turn to our final gospel reading, which finds the disciples at what they thought was the end of the road.

**Read Luke 24v13-35**

I want to suggest that we read this passage, very familiar to some of us, as if it were a Psalm of Lament.

It begins with despair, defeat and exhaustion.

It continues with lots of questions; asked in the felt absence of God yet in the presence of this stranger: Why had this happened? Wasn't Jesus the Messiah, after all? And what are we to make of the women's tale of an empty tomb and a vision of angels?

Yet still God seems absent. Only as they, with the stranger's encouragement, begin to look back over Jesus' life and his words, and set these alongside the Hebrew scriptures, do things begin to make sense.

Yet still God seems absent, for it is only when they enter the house and persuade this stranger to stay with them, that it becomes *God's* house.

As they share bread and wine, they experience communion with each other and surprisingly with God. For suddenly they realise this stranger is Jesus, risen from the dead.

Everything is changed. God, only God, could have done this. They rush to share their experience and thrill to remember at how their hearts had burned within them as the risen Jesus talked to them on the road and opened the scriptures up to them.

Later, when Jesus appears amongst all the disciples in the room in Jerusalem, he says:

*“These are my words that I spoke to you whilst I was still with you – that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”* (Lk 24v44)

**Conversation:** *Together or in small groups.*

Looking back over the Book of Psalms, in what way are the Psalms fulfilled in Jesus?

**Creation in the Psalms:**

A couple of weeks ago, reflecting upon part of Psalm 119 and Psalm 104, we noted some key points about the way the Psalms speak of God’s creation:

Most fundamentally, the Psalms affirm God as the Creator of the world:

*“The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it;  
the world, and all who live in it;  
For he founded it upon the seas  
and established it upon the waters.”* (Ps 24v1)

Not only is God the Creator; God is the Ruler of the earth; and creation responds to God’s voice: (Ps 50v1)

*“The Mighty One, God, the Lord, summons the earth;  
From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets.”*

God speaks, and creation joyfully obeys.

The Psalms affirm, then, that it is not just Israel that is God’s servant, but that all things serve and worship God; the clouds are God’s chariot, the winds his messengers, flame and fire his servants (Ps 104v3-4). Psalm 148 explicitly imagines God being praised firstly ‘*from the heavens*’... by the angels, by the moon, by the stars, by the waters above the skies (in the Hebrew understanding of cosmology)... and secondly God being praised ‘*from the earth*’... sea creatures, lightning and hail, mountains and trees, domestic and wild

animals, and all people, from the most humble to the most powerful... all are caught up in the worship of God.

Creation not only serves and praises God; it also reveals God to us. The Celtic Christian Church talked of the ‘little book’ of the scriptures, and the ‘big book’ of creation; not to minimise the place of the bible but to recognise the way the world around us speaks to us of God:

*“The heavens declare the glory of God;  
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.”* (P 19v1)

As well as creating and ruling the world, the Psalms affirm that God sustains the earth, which is what Psalm 104 so lyrically celebrates (Ps 104v10-23); the grass growing for the cattle to eat, plants for people to use and even wine to gladden the human heart (v14-15).

Like Genesis, the Psalms present God as creating and sustaining through his word:

*“He sends his command to the earth;  
his word runs swiftly;  
He spreads the snow like wool  
and scatters the frost like ashes.”* (Ps 147v15-16)

Similarly, the Psalms make the link between God’s wisdom and God’s creation:

*“You set a boundary that the (waters) may not pass,  
So that they might not again cover the earth.”* (P104v9)

For us to live sustainably and abundantly, the psalms remind us that we need to live within the boundaries and rhythms which God has wisely established.

Finally, the Psalms acknowledge creation as providing the means whereby as God’s creatures and children, we find proportion and wonder:

*“When I consider the heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have set in place; what are mere mortals that you are mindful of them; human beings that you care for them”* (Ps 8v3-4)

**Read Psalm 150**

Every single verse of this final psalm exhorts us to ‘Praise’. Most of the verses are exhortation; only one verse gives a reason for such praise (v2); for the most part God is just praised for who God is, not what he has done for us.