

# Psalms

17th June- 21st July



“Your word is a lamp for my feet,  
a light on my path.”  
Psalm 119:105

The book of Psalms is a compilation of 150 poetic prayers and hymns. The Psalms were written by many authors (almost half are ascribed to David) and they span the history of the Old Testament. So the Psalms give us an insight into the life and spirituality of the Hebrew people and have been used continually in both Jewish and Christian worship.

The book was compiled sometime after the exile, possibly in the second century BC, with a specific purpose. The book ends with five Psalms of hallelujah which is a Hebrew response of worship to God. To fulfil this purpose of worship the book of Psalms has been compiled into five distinct collections.

Book 1: Psalm 1 -41  
Book 2 Psalm 42 - 72  
Book 3 Psalm 73 - 89  
Book 4 Psalm 90 - 106  
Book 5 Psalm 107 -150

Each collection ends with a similar hymn of praise, which could be paraphrased with the phrase ‘may the Lord God of Israel be blessed forever, amen, amen.’

The opening Psalm declares ‘Blessed is the one whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. This ‘law of God’ is known as the Torah which are the first five books of the Bible.

Another key theme is God's promise to King David that from his descendants will come a messianic King and an everlasting kingdom of peace (2 Samuel 7). This is expressed in Psalm 2 and ends with the phrase "Blessed are all who take refuge in him" (Ps 2:12), drawing draws our attention back to the blessing of Psalm 1.

So the Psalms are an expression of a new Torah of prayer and worship as the Hebrew people strive to be faithful to God and wait for the Messianic King who will bring peace.

This book of worship and prayer is woven through Psalms of lament and praise. The Psalms of lament express suffering, petitioning God for help and for God to remain faithful to his promise. In contrast Psalms of praise celebrate the steadfast love and faithfulness of God, and the provision of abundant good gifts of creation.

The earlier psalms are predominated by expressions of lament. This lament is culminated in the central psalm, which is an expression of complete despair (Psalm 88 is central in terms of number of words). After Psalm 88 lament is outnumbered by Psalms of praise that culminate with the five psalms of hallelujah.

These Psalms of lament and praise are not a response to a fixed world but a worshipful response that

constructs a new world by our participation through speech and action. They express that God is active and the world is not fated, but open. They equally express that we are active in our participation of creating and shaping the world.

So we discover in the book of Psalms a worshipful response through lament and praise that is a subversive, counter-world to our own world. We will discover a counter-world of:

- trust and faithfulness to our anxiety of scarce resources.
- abundant good gifts to our greed
- dependency to our self-sufficiency without God
- raw truth telling to our denial and collusion of unjust societal systems
- hope to our despair
- deep memory to our amnesia of turning a blind-eye

Through the prayerful reading of the Psalms we will construct a new world for us to inhabit that is subversive to our world. To aid this spiritual activity I encourage you to apply the spiritual practice of Lectio Divina.

1. Read the Psalm several times, listening for a word or phrase that speaks out to you
2. Read the Psalm again, pondering why this word or phrase spoke to you
3. Read the Psalm a final time, praying for wisdom of what God might be saying to you

In addition to reading the Psalms, I also encourage us to engage with Ignatian spirituality. This was developed over 400 years ago by Ignatius of Loyola. It is rooted in the belief that God is present in the world and uses the prayerful practice of what is called "Examen" to reflect on the day. See below.

1. **Gratitude:** spend a few moments in thankfulness for the gifts and blessings of the day
2. **Ask:** pray that God might enlighten you to his presence in the events, people and places of your day.
3. **Examine:** review the moments of your day, so that you can reflect on what has happened; who you have encountered; where you have experienced joy or trouble; what success or challenges you experienced; and where was God's presence.
4. **Forgiveness:** pray for forgiveness for the time you have acted or spoken in way contrary to God's will.
5. **Resolve:** decide what of your behaviour or attitude you will seek to change for tomorrow

In addition to a prayerful reading of Psalms, Gracious Street will provide other ways that will help to enrich our experience. You can follow a live reading of the Psalms online, listen and share your thoughts in a WhatsApp group, discuss the Psalms in a pop-up house group and celebrate the Psalms at a Sunday

service. You may also wish to walk alongside someone as you read the Psalms together.

On the following page is a selected list of Psalms. We will read five Psalms each week between Monday and Friday. At the end of the five weeks we will have read 25 Psalms from the five books of Psalms. For now let us end with a prayer.

'Take Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all that I have and possess. You have given all to me. To you, O lord, I return it. All is yours, dispose of it wholly according to your will. Give me your love and your grace, for this is sufficient for me. Amen'

Ignatius Loyola

Week 1: Book I of Psalms

Mon 17th June	Psalm 1 & 2
Tue 18th June	Psalm 8
Wed 19th June	Psalm 19
Thur 20th June	Psalm 22
Fri 21st June	Psalm 23

Week 2: Book II of Psalms

Mon 24th June	Psalm 42
Tue 25th June	Psalm 46
Wed 26th June	Psalm 51
Thur 27th June	Psalm 65
Fri 28th June	Psalm 71

Week 3: Book III of Psalms

Mon 1st July	Psalm 73
Tue 2nd July	Psalm 77
Wed 3rd July	Psalm 84
Thur 4th July	Psalm 85
Fri 5th July	Psalm 88

Week 4: Book IV of Psalms

Mon 8th July	Psalm 90
Tue 9th July	Psalm 95
Wed 10th July	Psalm 100
Thur 11th July	Psalm 103
Fri 12th July	Psalm 106

Week 5: Book V of Psalms

Mon 15th July	Psalm 107
Tue 16th July	Psalm 121
Wed 17th July	Psalm 133
Thur 18th July	Psalm 139
Fri 19th July	Psalm 150