



Week Six Devotions

Provided by the Ministry and Program Staff of
The Presbyterian Church of Stanley

Day 36

Scripture: Nehemiah 13:15-Job 7:21

The book of Esther holds a dubious distinction. It is the only book of the Bible, both in the Old and New Testaments, that does not mention God. For this reason, both some Jews and later on some Christians, raised objections about it being in their respective canons. By the way, if you have not yet seen the excellent movie adapted from the Book of Esther, *One Night With the King*, it's one your whole family can enjoy.

The theme of the book at the evil Haman schemes and plots to destroy the Jewish people and is eventually hanged on the very gallows he constructed is that evil may seem to carry the day, but it will never triumph over good, particularly against God's chosen ones. Although, His name is never mentioned, it is very clear that God is working to trap evil in its own devices. That sometimes how God works. Not out in front, shrouded in mystery, and with very little fanfare. In fact His name may be scarcely mentioned—but He is still at work, wringing good from evil, turning all things to good for those whom love Him, who are called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28) What is He doing for you today? Do you recognize Him?

Eric Laverentz, Senior Pastor

Day 37

Scripture: Job 8:1-Job 24:25

In the midst of Job's mourning and misery, Job's friends seek to console him. More than that, they seek to counsel him. Presumptuously, Job's friends determine he has lost favor with God. Their supposed sympathy and prideful counsel stems from an arrogance of assumption that, somehow, Job is at fault.

Job's reply to their counsel displays wisdom of the human condition and humanity's estranged relationship with God. In a few simple words, Job shows that it is God who makes people righteous and that humanity can do nothing to gain God's favor. Job says, "...how can a mortal be just before God?" Job explains that it is not according to our righteousness that we are spared from suffering or hardship in this life.

Job continues, though, in his understanding of God's desire for us to be in relationship with him and rely upon him in the hard times. Job says, "But I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to argue my case with God." Job knows that God is there to listen, rely upon, and restore. In our suffering, Job shows us that we are allowed to go to God with questions, with pain, with heartache, and confusion—that, indeed, God's desire is for us to do so – and, to know that righteousness before God does not protect us against the suffering that life can bring, but reliance upon God brings about healing that few obtain.

Bo Burgener, Associate Pastor for Mission & Evangelism

Day 38

Scripture: Job 25:1-Job 41:34

Job 28:28 "And he said to man, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding.'"

Chapter 28, a wisdom hymn, is an interlude which marks the transition between the two major parts of the book—the previous dialogue between Job and his friends, and the forth-coming long discourses by Job (chaps. 29—31), Elihu (chaps. 32—37), and God (chaps. 38—41).

In this chapter Job summarized his stance before God. Rather than being in rebellion against God, as his friends accused, Job claimed that he feared God and sought to depart from evil (v. 28). He continued to follow the instruction he had received while growing up, namely, that people should trust and obey God because He governs the world in infinite wisdom

The point of Job's soliloquy is this. People have been extremely clever and industrious in exploring, discovering, and extracting earth's richest physical resources. Nonetheless they have not been able to do so with what is even more essential to their welfare, namely, wisdom. The reason for this is that wisdom does not lie hidden in the earth but in the person of God. The key to obtaining that wisdom is orienting oneself properly toward God through study of scripture, prayer and worship. The burning question then for all of us becomes, "Are we oriented properly toward God or are we oriented to our own desires?"

Molly Jones, Associate Pastor for Discipleship

Day 39

Scripture: Job 42:1-Psalms 24:10

Over the years people have read the Psalms and been comforted, encouraged and strengthened by them. Even non-Christians are familiar with the words of some of the more well known psalms.

What is it about the Psalms that speaks to us in such a profound way? I believe it is the deep emotions of the writers and the intimacy expressed in these conversations between the writers and God. There is no human emotion that is withheld from God. The psalmists freely express everything from joy, fear, adoration, faith in God's power, and even anger at God's seeming inactivity. The writers of the psalms poured out their hearts to God. What a model for our prayer life! As we read the psalms, we find that there is nothing in our lives that we cannot share with God. God wants us to share our struggles, joys, fears and frustrations with Him. The more we learn to share the intimate details of our lives with God, the more we will grow in our faith that God is present and active in everything we do.

Jan Zimmerman, Children's Ministries Director

Day 40

Scripture: Psalms 25:1-Psalms 45:14

Throughout these Psalms David is calling out for God's protection, mercy, love and forgiveness. David calls out for protection from the various people that are trying to cause him harm physically or attack him verbally. Maybe scripture uses people like David to show us that we are not much different than the people we study. Verbal attacks/gossip is one of the most hurtful things that occur within Church. All of us heard this statement "I heard that" followed by what we thought we heard. This has led to some hurtful misstatements about a person's character. Like David we have to learn to trust that God hears our prayers, and that God knows our heart. Psalm 40:1-3 says it all

1 I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry.

2 He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.

3 He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the LORD

Harlan Harper, Youth Ministries Director

Day 41

Scripture: Psalms 45:15-Psalms 69:21

Psalm 51 is one of the most famous Psalms. In fact it is one that we use often as a Prayer of Confession in worship. Psalm 51 was written by David after he realized his great sin in stealing Uriah's wife Bathsheba from him and orchestrating his death. Few of us can scarcely imagine a sin of this magnitude. We all have sin in our life of course and here in the Psalm we can see two things David got right. First, he did not hide from God. Hiding from God only begets more sin. God is never surprised by our sin. He knows a word before it is in our tongue. And we need never believe that our sin has changed God's opinion of us or that He does not love us absolutely. "Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever." (Hebrews 13:8) We cannot change His opinion of us. Hiding our sin-sick soul is the last thing we should do—baring it is the first.

Secondly, David calls for the Holy Spirit. (Take not your Holy Spirit from me." (Psalm 51:11) David wants a clean heart. He wants a new spirit. He wants joy. He wants to be made clean. He knows that this kind of thing is the work of the Holy Spirit. What was true for him in 1000 B.C. is true for us today. If you want to experience God's grace and love and change—call for the Holy Spirit.

Eric Laverentz, Senior Pastor

Day 42

Scripture: Psalms 69:22-Psalms 89:13

The Psalms are the emotional cries to God, as well as songs of praise to God—affirmation of all that God has done. It's important to remember that the Psalms were separate writings by different people through the many years of history. They talk about the different happenings through the Old Testament times—some good, some bad. Many of the Psalms were written as songs to help the people remember the stories of their past, and be able to pass them on to their children.

I recognized several passages as songs that we sang in the church where I grew up, and some still today...Psalm 84:10, *"Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere"*...Psalm 86:11-12, *"Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name. I will praise you, O Lord my God, with all my heart, I will glorify your name forever."* The main theme from other verses in the Psalms are where many of our praise songs began...*"your righteousness reaches to the skies, O God...I will sing of the Lord's great love forever...Sing for joy to God"*...and the tradition continues as we pass these songs on to our children—to help us always remember that God Reigns.

Debbie Miller, Finance/Stewardship Director