

Sermon: 26 April 2009

Most researchers see a close link with Psalm 3 on the grounds of similar expressions found in both like: Many who say and “lying down an sleeping..”. However we do not have any other evidence to prove it. Psalm 4 starts by a description of how it should be sung namely for the leader or choirmaster with stringed instruments. So it was used in worship sung or chanted by musical accompaniment.

The context of the Psalm is uncertain but from the content it seems likely that the Psalmist was under great distress. But despite his distress he starts his song by saying how he has experienced God’s goodness in his past. He speaks of God as the God of his right who has supported and helped him. The expression on his right means protection in times of war because your right hand was usually the hand that you used to hold your sword to protect yourself. The word “right” also has a legal background and can mean acquittal, innocence, and justice. David appeals to God to help him again in his time of need not because he deserves it but because God has so graciously helped him in his past.

In verse 2 He cries out again: “How long... meaning how long will the situation that he is trapped in drag on. From the words that he is using it seems likely that he is the accused of false accusations at the hands of those “who love vain words and seek after lies”. The Hebrew text sometimes uses “vain words” and “lies” satirically to refer to idol worshipping. However in this context it seems more likely that the psalmist is suffering under false accusations of powerful men in his society. The Hebrew text speaks of “sons of man” which could mean people that has power to bring charges against the psalmist which could lead to the death penalty. This was and still is a very common human phenomenon where people of power sometimes misuse their power to harm the vulnerable and the weak. The psalmist however challenges these slanderous accusations by affirming his faith in the Lord who knows the faithful and those who are looking for justice. He knows he can trust God because He has always shoed his mercy and steadfast love.

In verses 4 and 5 he addresses those people that are slandering him. He advises them to stop because what they are doing is sinful. They must look into their hearts or inner beings and reflect on their sins while they are lying un their beds. But they must declare publicly that they have sinned against God and that they intended to change their hearts accordingly. They must offer the right sacrifices fitting their injustice and with the correct frame of mind. It must be appropriate sacrificial sacrifice as the outward sign of their true inward motivation namely their trust in God. They must be willing to commit their whole lives in confidently in the hands of God.

In verse 6 the Psalmist recognizes the difficult questions people sometimes have to take the next step namely to commit their lives to God. It can also be that he refers to his attackers who struggle to trust God or his companions who long for a deeper faith but find it difficult to share the psalmist confidence. But the psalmist concurs with them in their uncertainty and shares with them a prayer based on the priestly blessing. "Let the light of your face shine upon us, O Lord." Or in other words, please be with us.."

The psalmist declares in verse 7 and 8 that he is not troubled anymore by the slanders of his attackers. God has put gladness in his heart. Despite the falseness and the injustice, he has peace and can have a good sleep. He knows that God is a God of justice. God is the only ONE who will put the wrong to right, who will end the injustice he is suffering!

This Psalm has a very powerful and strong message for us today. We often feel the same feelings that the Psalmist experienced. Sometimes especially we as Christian followers feel victimized by the slanders or comments of others especially when comes to ethical matters such as abortion, cloning etcetera or practical matters such as going to church. Sometimes we as individuals suffer under the comments of others. And it sometimes drags us down. We also live in a world that is surrounded by falseness. People often do not say what they mean, or do what they mean or say. People can sometimes rely so much on material things for comfort, peace, happiness and security. The press and the media feed these expectations by offering more "material things" in a attractive way that can easily be mistaken as real.

Money became the powerful tool by which people are judged or condemned.

This Psalm gives us the right perspective on how to treat the falseness around us, be it ourselves, other people, the times we live in or material things! We must discern what is really important, God or any other false sense of peace, security and hope. If it is God then we must trust him in everything we do, say and think. We know now what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. We have seen a glimpse of God's face in the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ. Yes we are the faithful followers of his power over death.

The Psalmist reminds us of God's justice. He knows not only our hearts but also everyone that exists on this earth. We cannot allow falseness to prevail. We cannot let the world continue to think that material things can provide hope, peace and happiness. We as the followers of God's mercy must show everyone around us what the presence of God through faith really means. To be a follower of God means that we must trust him and leave the injustices and falseness for him to handle.

But the psalmist also urges us to pray for everyone that is trapped by the falseness around them. And if it is you or me that is living a false life or a life with a mask on our faces, it is time to take it off and ask the Lord's forgiveness.

May we always pray that God's light will be within us to discern the wrong from the right, the injustice from the justice and the unreal hopes for the real hope of Jesus'

resurrection! May the realness of God's presence this morning at Communion help us to be faithful followers of Gods light in the days to come...

Amen



Readings for the week

Psalm 4

There is a close relation between Psalm 3 and Psalm 4 with regard to the content, style and language. Psalm 4 needs to be read simultaneously with Psalm 3. Psalm 4 tells us about the faithful believer who realizes that no other gods can be of any help. They cannot provide food, happiness or peace. It is only the Almighty God that can provide real peace and happiness. It has a powerful message for us too. We can sometimes rely so much on false material things that provide us only for a limited time with a false sense of happiness, peace and comfort. We must accept like the Psalmist that there is things money cannot buy or provide. If we trust in God the Almighty. if we believe that He is our only Saviour then we will have peace and happiness! No other thing on this earth can give us the surety and the hope that we received through the resurrection of Jesus Christ!

Other readings: Acts 3.12-19; 1 John 3.1-7; Luke 24. 36b-48.