

Expectant Watchfulness

Lesson for July 28, 2024

Unit II: Expressing Hope

Adult Topic: God Redeem Us

Scriptural Background: Psalm 130

Printed Text: Psalm 130:1-8

Key verse: “O Israel, hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is unfailing love. His redemption overflows.” (Psalm 130:7, NLT)

When the first missionaries came to Alberta, Canada, they were savagely opposed by a young chief of the Cree Indians named Maskepetoon. But he responded to the gospel and accepted Christ. Shortly afterward, a member of the Blackfoot tribe killed his father. Maskepetoon rode into the village where the murderer lived and demanded that he be brought before him. Confronting the guilty man, he said, "You have killed my father, so now you must be my father. You shall ride my best horse and wear my best clothes." In utter amazement and remorse his enemy exclaimed, "My son, now you have killed me!" He meant, of course, that the hate in his own heart had been completely erased by the forgiveness and kindness of the Indian chief.

Today in the Word, November 10, 1993

Unifying Principle

People are often their own worst enemies. What are the ways to address the enemy that is “us”? Psalm 130 reminds us that our sins may drag us down, but the Lord’s power to redeem us will set us on our feet again. (*Sunday School Commentary, 2023-2024*, Townsend Press, p. 417)

Key Terms

1. **Abundant** (verse 7) – Plentiful; in great quantity; fully sufficient; as an abundant supply. In scripture, abounding; having in great quantity; overflowing with.
2. **Cried** (verse 1) – Called. To utter a loud voice in weeping; to utter the voice of sorrow; to lament.
3. **Forgiveness** (verse 4) – The act of forgiving; the pardon of an offender, by which he is considered and treated as not guilty.
4. **Hear** (verse 2) – To attend; to listen; to obey.
5. **Lord** (verse 3) – Used as a proper name for God. A master; a person possessing supreme power and authority; a ruler; a governor.

6. **Morning** (verse 6) – The first part of the day, beginning at twelve o'clock at night and extending to twelve at noon.
7. **Wait** (verse 5) – To stay or rest in expectation; to stop or remain stationary, till the arrival of some person or event.

Lesson Background

Psalm 130 is another in the series titled *A Song of Ascents*. It begins with a personal testimony of God's rescue from the depths of guilt. From there, the author ascends step by step to a place where he can give confidence to others in their trust in God. This psalm is one of the penitential psalms in the Book of Psalms in the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Old Testament. Known by its opening words in Latin, "De Profundis," which translates to "Out of the depths," Psalm 130 is a heartfelt cry for mercy, forgiveness, and redemption.

It is thought to have been written by David either when persecuted by Saul, and in great distress, and fearful he should perish by him; or else when in great distress of mind because of sin, after the affair of Bathsheba; and it is reckoned therefore among the penitential psalms. Though others think it was written by Ezra, or some other godly person in captivity.

Unlike some Psalms that indicate some historical situation from which they were composed, Psalm 130 has no such superscription. We are not given any hint as to the historical situation prompting the psalmist's composition.

It is one of the seven penitential psalms (Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143). These psalms are characterized by expressions of sorrow for sin and a plea for God's mercy and forgiveness. The psalm is structured in the following manner:

- A. Lament (verses 1-2)
- B. Confession (verses 3-4)
- C. Waiting for the Lord (verses 5-6)
- D. Confidence in Redemption (verses 7-8)

Psalm 130 is a powerful expression of human sorrow, repentance, and trust in God's mercy, and it holds a significant place in both Jewish and Christian religious traditions.

Lesson in Depth

I. Confidence of Forgiveness (Psalm 130:1-4)

Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord. Out of deep waters, out of the depths of the sea; not literally, as Jonah, who really was there, and from there cried unto the Lord, (Jonah 2:2), but figuratively; meaning that he had been in the depths of sin, or brought into a low estate by it, as all men are: they are brought into debt by it, and so to

a prison, the prison of the law, to be under its sentence of curse and condemnation; to a ditch, a horrible pit, a pit wherein is no water, and out of which men cannot extricate themselves; to a dunghill, to the most extreme poverty and beggary; to a dungeon, a state of slavery, bondage, and captivity; into an hopeless and helpless condition. The depths the psalmist was now in were a deep sense of sin, under which he lay, and which brought him low; as every man is low in his own eyes, when he has a thorough sense of sin. Then he sees himself unworthy of any favor from God, deserving of his wrath and displeasure; as a polluted guilty creature, loathsome and abominable; as wretched and undone in himself; as the chief of sinners, more brutish than any man, and as a beast before the Lord. But then, though the psalmist was in the depths of distress for sin, yet not in the depths of despair; he cried to God, he hoped in him, and believed there was pardon with him: or he might be in the depths of afflictions; which are sometimes, because of the greatness of them, compared to deep waters; to the deep waters of the sea, which threaten to overflow and overwhelm, but shall not (see Psalm 42:7) and in such circumstances the psalmist cried to God for help and deliverance; not to man, whose help is vain; but to God, who is able to save, and is a present help in time of need.

Theodoret, an influential theologian of the School of Antioch, understands this of the psalmist's crying to God from the bottom of his heart, in the sincerity of his soul; and so his cry is opposed to contrived and hypocritical prayers.

Lord, hear my voice: God is a God hearing prayer; sometimes his people think he does not hear them; but he always does, and in his own time answers.

Let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications: His prayers put up in an humble suppliant manner, for grace and mercy; not pleading merit and righteousness. These he desires God would hearken to and hear, listen unto, bow and incline his ears, as he is sometimes said to do, which is a wonderful instance of his condescension.

If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities....: Or “observe” them. Not but that God does observe the sins of men – he sees all the evil actions of bad men done in the dark, which cannot hide them from him; and all the iniquities of good men, so as to correct and chastise for them, but not with his eye of vindictive justice. Or “keep” them should he keep a watchful eye over them, make strict inspection into them, enter into a critical examination of them, and of all their aggravated circumstances. Should he keep them in mind and memory, retain them in the book of his remembrance; should he lay them up, and keep them sealed among his stores, in order to be brought to light, and brought out as charges another day, and to the condemnation of men. Should he set them before him in the light of his countenance, and not cast them behind his back and into the depths of the sea; should he visit for them in a way of wrath, or enter into judgment on account of them, with men in their own persons. Demanding satisfaction for them at their own hands, without any regard to the sacrifice and satisfaction of his Son; all a man's righteousness, repentance, humiliation and tears, would stand him in no stead, would not answer for him, or atone for his sins. Still his iniquities would remain marked before God, the consequence of which would be eternal damnation (Jeremiah 2:22).

O Lord, who shall stand?: *To stand* is a judicial phrase, and notes a man's being absolved or justified, upon an equal trial. Not one, since all are sinners. The Arabic version adds, "before thee" in his presence; in the house and courts of God, or at his bar hereafter. The wicked shall not stand in judgment (Psalm 1:5). Or who can stand before his vindictive justice, or bear his wrath and vengeance? No one can. (See Nahum 1:6 Malachi 3:2.)

But there is forgiveness with thee: Years of previous relationship with God had taught the psalmist that there is, in fact, forgiveness with God. When we are hit hard with our awareness of sin, it can be hard to believe, but it is true: there is forgiveness with God.

"You may not find forgiveness with other people. Your husband or your wife may not forgive you, if you have wronged him or her. Your children may not forgive you. Your coworkers may not forgive you. You may not even be able to forgive yourself. There is one who will, and that one is God. Write down where you can see and reflect on it often: Our God is a forgiving God." (Boice)

That thou mayest be feared: One of the great purposes of God's great forgiveness is to build a sense of gratitude and reverence in those He forgives. His pardon should lead to purity and His forgiveness to an appropriate fear of displeasing the One who has been so gracious.

"Those who have been forgiven are softened and humbled and overwhelmed by God's mercy, and they determine never [again] to sin against such a great and fearful goodness. They do sin, but in their deepest hearts they do not want to, and when they do they hurry back to God for deliverance." (Boice)

II. Hope for Redemption (Psalm 130:5-8)

I wait for the LORD, my soul waits: Having made his cry from the depths to God (Psalm 130:1-2), the singer then determined to **wait** upon God and the rescue He would bring.

In His word I do hope: The waiting was not passive or inactive. The psalmist used the time to actively set his **hope** upon God's promises, revealed in His **word**.

My soul waits for the Lord: Here, using the word *Adonai*, the psalmist again expressed his trust in *Yahweh Adonai (the LORD...the Lord)*. This phrasing used both *Yahweh*, the name for the covenant God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and *Adonai*, the normal name for a master or lord.

More than those who watch for the morning: The poet used a vivid image to express his patient anticipation in waiting on God. We see a watchman in the darkness of the early morning, scanning the horizon for the first sign of the dawn. The watchman doesn't doubt that morning *will* come, but only wonders *when*, and watches for it diligently. So, it was for the singer who watched for God and the help God promised to bring.

Some think **those who watch** were military guards, others think they were priests waiting for dawn so the morning sacrifices could be started for the day. It doesn't really matter if the watchmen were military or priestly; they waited for the morning with certain expectation that it would come.

O Israel, hope in the LORD: With this verse the phrasing turns from the personal to the public. What the psalmist learned in waiting upon God and trusting Him from the depths is now put to use as he calls upon Israel to put their **hope** in Yahweh Adonai.

Hope in the LORD: The psalmist put his faith and hope in the Lord Himself, not in the mercy or redemption God would bring. He looked to the Giver before the gift.

“Cease looking for the water, and look for the well. You will more readily see the Savior than see salvation, for he is lifted up, even he who is God, and beside him there is none else. You will more easily fix your eye on Jesus than upon justification, sanctification, or any other separate blessing.” (Spurgeon)

For with the LORD there is mercy: What he learned in his personal life, he can put to application for the whole nation. When God's people humbly look to Him, there is **mercy** and **abundant redemption** for both the individual and the community.

Abundant redemption: “Are our sins great? with God there is mercy, matchless mercy. Are our sins many? with God is plenteous redemption, *multa redemptio*; he will multiply pardons as we multiply sins, Isaiah 55:7.” (Trapp)

He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities: This is the confident conclusion to the psalm, demonstrating trust that God *will* indeed bring the redemption and rescue to both the individual and the nation overwhelmed in the depths of their sin. What God has demonstrated in the private life, He will also perform for the community that cries out to Him.

“Nothing could be further from the shut-in gloom and uncertainty of ‘the depths’ than this. The singer is now liberated from himself to turn to his people and to hold out hopes that are far from tentative.” (Kidner)

Lesson Summary

Psalm 130 offers several profound lessons that are relevant to both our personal spirituality and broader ethical considerations. Here are some key lessons that can be drawn from this psalm:

1. **Acknowledgment of Human Frailty**

- **Honesty in Prayer:** The psalmist's cry from the depths demonstrates the importance of being honest and vulnerable before God. It teaches that acknowledging our weaknesses, sins, and struggles is the first step towards healing and redemption.

- **Humility:** Recognizing one's own limitations and failings fosters humility, which is crucial for personal growth and spiritual development.
2. **The Power of Repentance**
 - **Seeking Forgiveness:** The psalm emphasizes the importance of repentance and seeking God's forgiveness. It reassures that no matter how deep one's sins, God's mercy is available.
 - **Transformation:** True repentance leads to transformation and renewal, indicating that personal change is possible when one turns to God sincerely.
 3. **Hope and Trust in God**
 - **Patience and Waiting:** The psalmist speaks of waiting for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, symbolizing trust and patience. It teaches that while answers may not come immediately, trust in God's timing is essential.
 - **Hope in Redemption:** The psalm conveys a message of hope, affirming that God will redeem Israel (or the individual) from all sins. This encourages believers to remain hopeful even in dire circumstances.
 4. **The Nature of God's Forgiveness**
 - **Abundance of Mercy:** The psalm highlights that with God, there is forgiveness and steadfast love. It teaches that God's nature is inherently merciful, providing a foundation for faith and trust.
 - **Encouragement to Forgive Others:** Understanding God's forgiveness can inspire individuals to practice forgiveness in their own lives, fostering reconciliation and peace.
 5. **Shared Responsibility**
 - **Collective Hope:** The psalmist not only prays for personal redemption but also for the redemption of Israel. This broadens the scope from individual concerns to communal well-being, teaching that one's faith and actions should also be oriented towards the community.
 - **Solidarity in Suffering:** Recognizing that others also struggle and need redemption fosters empathy and solidarity. It encourages supporting one another in times of need.
 6. **Depth of Relationship with God**
 - **Intimacy in Prayer:** The depth of the psalmist's plea indicates a close and personal relationship with God. It teaches that such a relationship involves honest communication, trust, and an ongoing dialogue with the divine.
 - **Spiritual Depth:** Crying "out of the depths" suggests that true spirituality engages with the deepest parts of human experience, including suffering and despair, and finds hope and redemption there.

In summary, Psalm 130 teaches lessons about humility, repentance, trust, hope, the nature of divine forgiveness, communal responsibility, and the depth of a personal relationship with God. These lessons are timeless and applicable to various aspects of life, offering guidance for personal spirituality and ethical living.