

Week 9: November 3, 2010
THE 611
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XIX. Psalms: The first library of prayers. Next to the Our Father, the Psalms are God's own response to the question: "How are we to pray". Joining its composer, we pray these hymns with David and every faithful Jew who would have prayed these songs of prayer. Moreover, by praying the Psalms, we pray as Christ prayed as such hymns were on his own lips. The Psalms are the prayer of the Church because they are the words of humble and contrite praise that bring continuity to the age of anticipation to the age of the Church. In addition, the Psalms are ecumenical. They are the most immediate way to bridge the gap between Jews and Christians. The Psalms are not only OT Scriptures, but they are about NT Liturgy. The Psalms give us a window into the inner drama of the already discussed liturgical current. We ought to see our own struggle on every page (Kreeft).

1. In light of a good working hermeneutic, the Psalms ought to be understood out of the context to which they were given—as hymns offered up during liturgy. That is to say, the Psalms are to be sung, or chanted. We are to read the Psalms like we would read sheet music. For this reason, we sing the psalmody during Mass and enter into the liturgical progress in history. We ought to be singing with a robust spirit! Are we in the spirit of David?

- a. Liturgical singing is our own song of praising, our newfound freedom in the rising again in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. The new song of the New David has intoned the New Covenant.
 - i. This "new tune" is the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit inspires...what is charismatic, is song, this is rooted in the identity of the Church (1 Cor.12:3; Rom.12:6-8).
- b. Song was the very fabric and identity of who the Israelites were as a nation, and moreover, culture (cf. Exodus/Freedom).
 - i. Song of Songs: An alliance of love and Song: Beautiful love poems of Israel where in the serenading of human love, the mystery of the love of God and Israel shines through. The Psalms are poetry. Our reading of the Psalms ought to resonate with the sense of a lover searching for his beloved (Kreeft).
 - ii. "The Psalter becomes the prayer book of the infant Church, which, with equal spontaneity, has become a Church that sings her prayers"—PBXVI.
 1. The Roman author Pliny cites that Christian singing was at the very heart of their Christian liturgy.
- c. The Psalms should be spoken aloud, because the audible word bears the echo of the soul crying out to God. Music and the soul were intertwined.
 - i. The Psalms were written from the most extreme place of faithfulness and faithlessness. They come to us out of the most far reaching depths of the soul. For they are cries of joy and despair; praise and complaint; certainty and doubt. They cover the whole range of man's intellect and will, mind and heart.
- d. In reading the Psalms, we should be attentive to the ways in which they are ordered by the particular genre of hymn. Whether it be praise, repentance, adoration, the Psalms have a particular thrust that needs to be honored for what it is.

- i. Certainly, like anything, we have our favorites. We go back to a particular Psalm pending the particular situation that we find ourselves in. It has been said, that Psalm 23 is the most popular verse in all of Scripture. Why? It resonates with man's journey.
2. While the Psalms cover the wide spectrum of man's faith experience, we must focus in on the centerpiece to the table of Psalms: that of praise, worship, and adoration.
 - a. By practice, praise is other-entered and draws us into the mystery of the triune God. The act of praise, worship, and adoration allows us to focus with a singular vision on God.
 - b. It does not mean removing entirely one's concerns by way of responsibilities, cares, etc..., but the opposite, it provides for us a means into offering up our responsibilities, cares, etc...
3. As already noted, the Psalms are rich with liturgical character. For this reason, the Christology within each Psalm is rich. Whether it be a Psalm used for praise or teaching; a Psalm of repentance or royalty, or one of the messianic Psalms, Christ discloses and reveals the energy of every word and every line. That being said, let us turn our attention to an example of a Psalm and how would have been used in OT Liturgy and how this is fulfilled in Christ.
 - a. Among other liturgical feasts, the Psalms recount one of our great liturgical ancestors, the Todah. Like the Eucharist, the Todah hymn means thanksgiving, or thank offering. Collectively, the Todah Liturgy is a sacrificial meal shared with friends in order to celebrate one's gratitude with God.
 - i. We see Kings such as Jehosephat (cf. 2 Chr.20) and Hezekiah (Is.38) offer up Todah hymns in their time of battle.
 - b. The Todah begins by recalling some mortal threat and then celebrate man's deliverance from that threat. It is a most powerful expression of God's mercy.
 - i. Psalm 69 is a prime example of a Todah Cry and the eventual celebration of God delivering them (read).
 1. "Save me O God."
 2. "I will praise the name of God with a song...the Lord hears the cry of the needy."
 - ii. Psalm 22, which Christ himself cried out while dying on the cross, begins with a cry of dereliction, ends on a triumphant note of salvation. His own hope of deliverance.
 - c. "Structurally speaking, the whole of Christology, indeed the whole of the Eucharistic Christology, is present in the whole of the spirituality of the Old Testament"—PBXVI. Word and meal! An unbloody offering of unleavened bread and wine.
 - i. Rabbi Gamaliel also stated: "In the coming messianic age, all sacrifices will cease except the Todah sacrifice. This will never cease in all eternity."

XX. Proverbs: Understanding Wisdom. Off the top, what the Book of Proverbs tells us about wisdom can at times lead us away from the book itself. While communicating timeless truths regarding the folly of human nature and the beauty of God, man has the tendency to lean on contemporary authors who offer us exciting stories and talk about virtues in creative ways. Essentially, what is "dull" and "unexciting" is often what we need to be attentive to. Therein lies the wisdom of God found in Proverbs: its platitudes are what gives it its transcendent character. A

New York Times Best Seller List will offer us authors who talk about God, but are they giving us insight into the way God works (Kreeft). God is the answer not Joel Osteen, Billy Graham, etc...

1. The Book of Proverbs offers us insights into practical wisdom. First, that it is more than mere personal opinion and what someone thinks, it is attainable by a person who is “less” than clever or original. Second, that the questions concerning the deepest questions about life: right from wrong, evil and good; light and darkness; hope and despair, etc.... That is to say, virtue is enough. Third, because we can ascertain the meaning of life, we must rise above the folly of vanity, which highlights one of the greatest of proverbs. Lastly, that ordinary experience is often a greater teacher than any media outlet or professor (Kreeft).
 - a. Like the Psalms, a reading of the Proverbs has to be done with great care. These books do not belong to the narrative, they are spelling out the drama of man within the narrative. For this reason, before we pick up the Sacramento Bee, let us first pick up the buzz about heaven. We will be made more whole by reading first the Book of Proverbs and second your local newspaper.
2. The Book of Proverbs were written, for the most part, by Solomon. As 2 Kings 4:32 reminds us: he was a man of 3000 Proverbs (and still fell!!!). Once again, we have the rise and fall of a Political giant tied to the wisdom, or lack thereof, to man. Even a treasury of wisdom to the lengths of Solomon’s, not lived, is no treasury at all.
 - a. Sequentially, most scholars hold that Solomon wrote Song of Songs in his youth, Proverbs in his Middle Ages, and Ecclesiastes in his later years.
3. Style of Proverb. Like that of the Psalms, the literary genre of the proverb is parallelism by couplet. That is to say, Solomon’s wisdom highlights the right way by contrasting it with the evil ways of the secular world and all of its sale pitches. There has been various kinds of wisdom found in Proverbs. They include:
 - a. Practical wisdom with an emphasis on prudence: “look before you cross the road.”
 - b. The extolling of virtues such as justice, charity and chastity, because they are right in of themselves: “virtue is its own reward”
 - c. Wisdom as Godlike. More than the first two it is “the fear of the Lord”: Awe like reverence before the Father in all things. This is what is missing in the world today. Here we move from what is practical to what is gift!
4. Proverbs 8:22-31: Wisdom is treated as a person. Wisdom is personified in Jesus Christ. For it is in Christ Jesus that all the hidden treasures of God’s wisdom are revealed (cf. Col.2:3). The Hebrew word for proverb is *Mashal*, a word that translates our understanding of “parable”, “allegory”, or “riddle”. This highlights the way in which Christ conceals from the proud and reveals to the humble.
 - a. James 1:5: More than human ingenuity, wisdom gives us a right understanding of our relationship with God
 - b. 1 Cor.1:30: Highlights the fact that we are to see that every spiritual blessing comes from God and our boasting of self-sufficiency clouds our understanding of this wisdom (*cf. wow on wisdom*).