

4TH SUNDAY OF EASTER
Our Time is Now:



We Need These Psalms Today!

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
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April 21, 2013 Rev. Larry Moffet

God bless Dan Goeller for giving us a fresh way to sing the Psalms. God bless our musicians for helping bring the Psalms back into our lives. God bless Brent, whose connection with Dan introduced him to these settings of Psalms in the style of movie score music.

This music does for the Psalms what the cinema scores do so well for movies: the score creates multiple levels to help us experience the story consciously and subconsciously.

We almost lost these Psalms. For the last 100 years worshipers have sung them less and less in the worship of God. We need these Psalms.

The Psalms are the main worship songs of both Jews and Christians. The Psalms were Jesus' songbook and prayer book. He quoted them on the cross: **Into your hands I commend my spirit.** *Psalm 31:5.*

My God, My God why have you forsaken me? *Psalm 22:1*
I thirst. *Psalm 42:1* **It is finished.** *Psalm 22:31*

We need these Psalms. They guide us in how to deal with the struggles of our lives. One of the reasons they have been diminished in the past several generations is because they are full of raw emotions. Whatever you are thinking or feeling you can say to God. We often have problems today dealing with our emotions. We cut off what we can't control. We set up systems and processes that we think should take priority over relationships.

The Psalms show us a different way.

One thousand years before Christ faithful people figured out how important it was to sing what we feel... and then move on.

We need these Psalms today because they show us how to do just that.

**The Psalms show us how to feel what we feel,
say what we need to say, even to God,
and then move on.**

They often turn on a dime.

They are agile.

They guide us into deep emotional and spiritual maturity.

My God, why have you forsaken me moves on quickly
to **You are my strength.** *Psalm 22:19*

The most beloved Psalm 23 starts in a very different place--a quiet affirmation and gratitude:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

Then it quickly acknowledges life is tough:

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death...

At that very moment the Psalm shifts from talking about God to talking to God.

Your rod and your staff comfort me.
You prepare a table for me in the presence of my enemies.

**These Psalms embrace all of life.
They help us realize that all that we experience
is redeemed by God's love.**

We need these Psalms today. They show us that the way to grow spiritually and emotionally is to be honest about what we experience, and then be ready to move on to deeper relationships with God and all people.

¹The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

²He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:

he leadeth me beside the still waters. ³He restoreth my soul:
he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

⁴Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;
thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

⁵Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:
thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. (KJV)

We need these Psalms today because they show us how move from deep personal experiences with God to taking action for the good of all God's children:

⁷Show us your steadfast love, O Lord, and grant us your salvation.

⁸Let me hear what God the Lord will speak,
for God will speak peace to God's people...

¹⁰Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet;
righteousness and peace will kiss each other. *Psalm 85:7-10*

While asking for protection, Psalm 16 shifts into awareness that even in our vulnerable state we are in God's Eternal Presence, experiencing the pleasures of being connected with the source of all life, who loves us intimately with a steadfast, self-giving love:

Keep me safe, O God,

for I have come to you for protection.

²You are my Lord; every good thing I have comes from you.' ...
[⁶ ... I have a goodly heritage.] ...

⁸I know you are always with me; I will not be shaken.
For you are right beside me.

⁹Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices;
my body can peacefully rest.

¹⁰For you will not leave my soul among the dead,
or allow your holy one to rot in the grave.

¹¹You reveal path of life to me.

Granting me the joy of your Presence;

and the pleasures of living with you forever. *Psalm 16, 1-11*

We need these Psalms today.

Let's share the meal that God gives us in the presence of our enemies,
the table of love for God and all people.

May we always sing these psalms. O, how we need these Psalms today!

PSALM 16 Keep me safe, O God,
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and the pleasures of living with you forever.

JOHN 10:10-16 I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

¹¹I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

¹²The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them.

¹³The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. ¹⁴I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me,

¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father.

And I lay down my life for the sheep.

¹⁶I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey (Louisiana) writes: In the midst of chaos and what seems to be a time of great uncertainty, I find comfort in knowing so many of the faithful turn to prayer and visions of hope.

One of my favorite writers, Macrina Wiederkehr, says,

"It (hope) is a seed that grows wildly when it is nurtured."

In times like this past week, all we can do and "be" is persons of hope.

We are called to nurture the seeds of hope that they may grow wildly, giving hope by living out of our own hope.

After all, we are resurrection people, people of light and life.

We understand that nothing can separate us from the love of God; neither life, nor death, nor anything in all creation.

Not even bombings and explosions separate us from the love of God.

That, my friends, is HOPE worth nurturing.