

Notice the different ways that the psalmist either speaks to or speaks about God:

47:1: “God”--this is not a name but a noun. It speaks of the transcendent one. Think “the exalted divine one.”

47:2: “LORD”--God’s “personal name.” More than a title or a noun, the psalmist is speaking about God on a first name basis.

47:2: “the Most High”--a descriptive phrase. Refers to God’s supremacy above all powers and authorities. Think “God who is above and over all.”

47:6: “King”--a noun emphasizing God’s rulership and dominion. Think “God who rightly and powerfully rules.”

47:9: “God of Abraham”--a phrase identifying God as the one who entered covenant with and who is keeping the promises He made to Abraham. Think, “the God who enters into relationship.”

What comes to mind when you begin to notice the richness of language used to describe and speak of God?

Why might the psalmist use such a variety of language in his worship and prayer?

Do you have favorite ways of speaking to and about God? If so, what are they? Why do you prefer some ways of referring to God over others?

Take some time with Psalm 47. Talk with God, drawing on the language the psalmist used. Explore, in your prayer, the rich dimensions that are captured by the various ways of speaking to God.

Day Five

On one occasion, when Jesus was speaking to those who had

gathered around Him to hear Him speak, He commented on what they (and *me*) could find in drawing near. Read Matthew 11:28-30.

What is it that Jesus promises for the one who comes to Him?

How might this idea of “finding rest” relate to our study of “turning down the noise” in our lives?

Whether we are overwhelmed by the “noise” of life or staggering under the “weight” of life, what we so desperately need is what Jesus wants to offer us. So, in thinking about that . . .

What “noise” of life bothers you the most? What, more than anything else, seems to crowd out the quietness in your soul?

What “weight” of life burdens you the most? What, more than anything else, seems to weigh you down and keep you from rest?

Turn back to the Psalm we began with. Read Psalm 131.

Picture the child, nestled in his mother’s arms. Imagine that child, warm and safe and calm in her mother’s embrace. That is the picture of what God desires for us. What would it be like for you to find yourself there?

Talk with the Lord about the noise and weight that you are wrestling with. Ask Him for the kind of rest and quiet you need. Discuss with Him what you would like to come to find, from Him and in Him, in the next few months as we explore the psalms together. And, celebrate and rejoice in the journey He has you on to draw you, ever deeper, into His quiet rest and comfort.

Psalms:

Turning Down the Noise

May 30, 2010

Day One

This week we begin a new series. We will be spending this summer in the Psalms, exploring the “noise” in our lives and how we can turn it down.

What is this noise? Everything from the clamor of our self-imposed busy-ness to the internal “conversation” that we have as we try to make sense of life. The crush of countless projects calling for attention and the cacophony of criticism (both self-imposed and raised by enemies, both natural and supernatural), can drown out the message of the Gospel and the word of God’s love. So, we want to explore how to turn down the noise and hear what God is saying so we can live in the kind of life He wants for us.

As we read psalms, we have to keep in mind that they are not “sets of instructions” or “steps to take.” What we have in the psalms are heart-felt, worshipful responses of the heart of a friend of God. Keep that in mind as you read Psalm 131.

This psalm has three simple sections:

In verse 1, the psalmist tells us how he has oriented his life.

In verse 2, the psalmist explains what the experience of that life is like.

In verse 3, the psalmist invites others into his experience.

As you look at the first verse, what comes home to you about how the psalmist sees himself?

What would be the opposite orientation of life to what is

described by the psalmist in verse one? In other words, what is his heart *not* oriented around?

What is the picture that comes to your mind as you read the description in verse two of the psalmist's experience of this life orientation? (A "weaned child" is an infant who has learned to take food, one who doesn't fuss and clamor to be fed.)

What is implied by the psalmist saying that he has calmed or quieted his soul (in verse two)?

What would be the connection between what the psalmist is explaining as his own experience and the invitation that he extends to the people of God in the last verse?

Remembering that the psalms are not *instructions or rules for life* but descriptions of how one friend of God lived, what can you learn from the example of Psalm 131 about quieting the noise in your own soul?

Day Two

One of the things underscored in the psalm we looked at yesterday was the disposition of the heart of the psalmist. He found a variety of ways to speak of not being "lifted up" (131:1). What was the idea conveyed by that language?

The "lifting up" of oneself is a colorful way of speaking about pride or haughtiness. Clearly, such a disposition will only tend to turn up the noise in one's life--as one tries to "make much" of himself or herself. Thus, a proper humility might be one way to turn down that noise. Let's explore that a bit today.

How do the following passages contribute to your understanding of the disposition of heart the psalmist wrote about?

Proverbs 11:2:

Proverbs 16:18:

Proverbs 21:24:

Proverbs 29:23:

What do James and Peter tell us about pride and humility and their part in our growing relationship with God in James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5-6?

What could someone who set his or her heart to not "think too highly of oneself" expect to find with God?

Why would an appropriate humble attitude of heart, one free from pride and from thinking "too high" be essential to a quietness of soul?

Day Three

At the end of Psalm 131, the psalmist calls on people to "hope in the LORD" (131:3). When you see the word "LORD" spelled with *small capital letters*, it is the translator's way of indicating that the *name of God* is in view. "Lord" (in the Old Testament; initial capital but the rest in small letters) means "master" or "ruler" and it is a title that is used to refer to God. "LORD" (in the Old Testament) is a convention that allows the word for "master" to stand in place of the personal name of God (sometimes rendered *Yahweh*).

What are the implications of recognizing that David, the psalmist here, speaks of God by using His personal name?

Is there a difference in referring to someone by title and calling them by name? If so, what is the difference?

Reread Psalm 131:1-3. What does the psalmist call people to at the end of the psalm?

Often, when we think of "hope," we think in terms of "wishful thinking" or "maybe things will turn out better." But, biblically, hope is neither wishful nor uncertain. More often than not, when Scripture speaks of "hope" the idea is one of *future confidence*. With this in mind, what is it that the psalmist is calling for in 131:3?

What would it look like for you to "hope in *Yahweh*"?

Psalm 130 is also one that touches on this idea of hoping in Yahweh. Read 130:1-7.

Where does hoping in Yahweh fit in the flow of this particular psalm?

What other metaphors or ideas help explain and illustrate what it looks like to hope in Yahweh?

In Psalm 130, what is the foundation or basis for this hope that the psalmist calls for? Why "hope in the LORD"?

In Psalm 130, the psalmist's soul "waits;" in 131, the psalmist's soul is calm and quiet. How do you think genuinely hoping in the LORD gives rise to such appropriate "quietness" and serenity?

Day Four

One of the things we notice in journeying through the Psalms is the variety of ways that the psalmist refers to God. (We touched on that yesterday, noting the use of the personal name of God in Psalm 131.) Let's explore this variety as it is found in Psalm 47.