



“Reading the Bible Together”

**Issue 16.
Book of Psalms.
June 2010.**

Introduction:

Welcome Back!!

After our short break designed to help those who really wanted to continue but who needed time and space to catch up, hopefully now we are all more or less in the same place as we look to engage with the next great section of the Old Testament – the Book of Psalms.

There are still thirty, forty or even fifty people still involved in the project as we enter this next great section. And if you're new to the project or if you would like to make now the right time to start, you can either start here with Psalms or you can go back to the beginning and find all the previous sets of notes on the St Andrews Website: standrewscongresbury.org clicking on the section “the Church” and following the link to “Bible Studies.”

We also continue to meet on the first Wednesday in the morning and on the third Wednesday in the evening (after the Healing Communion) up in the Chancel so that anyone can share what they've learnt or ask questions or just share experiences of how the text has spoken to them. Please come along you would be very welcome as we share in an informal way over a cup of coffee.

To this month: the Book of Psalms:

The Book of Psalms is really a collection of collections and represents the final stage in a long period of compilation and grouping that goes back many hundreds of years. The story begins right the way back in the early monarchy of David, as many of the psalms are attributed to him and these are often referred to as “the prayers of David”. Then we find other psalms that are clearly liturgical and these are thought have come into being round about the beginning of the first Temple built by David's son Solomon. We move on to other collections of psalms, five in all, each having their own nuance or reason for coming into being.

The collection in the final form, as we have it today really came together at the time when the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek (called the Septuagint) round about the third or fourth century BC. The five books are made up of (Psalms 1-41, 42-72, 73-89, 90-106, 107-150) with Psalms 1 and 2 acting as an Introduction and Psalms 146-150 as a Conclusion of Thanks and Praise.

What we have here in the psalms then is quite literally a golden nugget of the prayer life and spirituality that was formed out of and also informed the prayer life of the chosen people of God for almost a millennium.

There are such gems here, and such variety too numerous to mention. There are psalms that are clearly set to music and to shared times of worship. There are psalms sharing the most personal and inmost thoughts of the psalmist with his Lord. There are psalms of joy for the coronation of a King, there are psalms of lament and of persecution and misery. There are psalms of great faithfulness and blessing, there are psalms of thoughts of alienation and despair.

What holds the whole Psalter together (the name give to the whole Book of Psalms) are two things. Firstly, they are poetic. Not necessarily poetic as we might understand the term, with rhyme and meter but in terms of a style, which has at its heart far less to do with theology and doctrine and far more to do with relationship, confession and love. In fairness, the Psalms do, in many cases, use a poetic device to demonstrate they are poetry and not just simply prose, and this is worth looking out for on occasions and that is, what they call, “parallelism” – where two phrases or

sections are put together in a psalm and are done so in such a way as one informing the other. Perhaps an example might help taken from the Lord's Prayer. When we pray we say, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." The first phrase "Thy Kingdom come," is informed by the second phrase "Thy will be done." Where and how do we know God's Kingdom? We are told it is whenever and wherever God's will is done, not only in heaven but on earth. Therefore God's Kingdom, we can conclude, is not just up in heaven, but here on earth, and it is wherever God's will is done. So look out for examples God's Kingdom, and look out for expressions of parallelism in the psalms.

And that leads on to the second point, as well as principally the Psalms being poetic and relation rather than doctrinal and theological, the psalms are also incredibly honest. Born out the desire to have relationship with God, rather than just know about God, the psalmist embarks on this great striving for honesty and integrity that often challenges our modern more politically correct and more sensitive ears.

So be warned, the Psalms can seriously damage you health, but not in a bad or unhealthy way, but in a way that calls you and I into a an ever deeper relationship with both God, self, creation and the community around us, wherever we call home. They will shock, they will encourage, they will make you laugh, make you smile, on occasion maybe even make you cry, but they will draw out of both their early hearers, such as Jesus, and from ourselves the very honesty and integrity in and through which they have been written and in and through which we can only ever meet in with God. Enjoy!!

Bible Together Meetings: April meetings will be:

Wednesday 2nd June 9.00am – 10.00am – in the Chancel.
 Wednesday 16th June 8.00pm – 9.00pm – in the Chancel as usual.

Scheme of Reading for January:

<u>Date:</u>	<u>Reference:</u>
Tues 4 th May	Book I - Psalm 1
Wed 5 th May	Psalm 2
(Bible Together Meeting today @9.00am)	
Thurs 6 th May	Psalm 3,4,5

Break for the rest of May so people can have a breather and catch up.

Tues 1 st June	Psalm 6,7
Wed 2nd June	Psalm 8
(Bible Together Meeting – even though I'm away)	
Thurs 3 rd June	Psalm 9,10, 11
Fri 4 th June	Psalm 12, 13, 14
Sat 5 th June	Psalm 15, 16, 17
Sun 6 th June	-----
Mon 7 th June	Psalm 18
Tues 8 th June	Psalm 19, 20
Wed 9 th June	Psalm 20, 21
Thurs 10 th June	Psalm 22
Fri 11 th June	Psalm 23
Sat 12 th June	Psalm 24, 25
Sun 13 th June	-----

<u>Date:</u>	<u>Reference:</u>
Mon 14 th June	Psalm 26, 27
Tues 15 th June	Psalm 28, 29, 30
Wed 16th June	Psalm 31
(Bible Together Meeting today @8.00pm)	
Thurs 17 th June	Psalm 32, 33
Fri 18 th June	Psalm 34, 35
Sat 19 th June	Psalm 36, 37
Sun 20 th June	-----
Mon 21 st June	Psalm 38, 39
Tues 22 nd June	Psalm 40,41
Wed 23 rd June	Book II – Psalm 42, 43
Thurs 24 th June	Psalm 44, 45
Fri 25 th June	Psalm 46, 47, 48
Sat 26 th June	Psalm 49, 50
Sun 27 th June	-----
Mon 28 th June	Psalm 51
Tues 29 th June	Psalm 52, 53, 54
Wed 30 th June	Psalm 55, 56, 57
Thurs 1 st July	Psalm 58, 59, 60
Fri 2 nd July	Psalm 61, 62, 63
Sat 3 rd July	Psalm 64, 65, 66
Sun 4 th July	-----