

**Sing Psalms**  
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Open the Bible right to the center and you will find the book of Psalms.

A collection of songs, something like the hymnal of ancient Israel.

I have always thought it was wonderful that if you simply place a Bible in your lap and let it fall open, it opens right on the book of Psalms. Almost as if the Spirit placed the words we most need in the place easiest to find.

This year during the season of Lent we are going to be turning our attention to the Psalms.

As we have done already this morning, we will sing a Psalm each week between now and Easter. And in doing so, we will be joining our voices to that ancient chorus stretching across millennia.

Singing the Psalms is likely a new experience for many of us, but Lent is a great time to try out something new. To take on a new spiritual practice and see where it might lead us.

Unlike other parts of the Bible the Psalms do not tell a story, nor do they offer moral teachings or wisdom. Instead they are the words of people lifted up to God. Prayers and please, longings, despair, pain, hope, faith, and joy.

The Psalms give us beloved lines of praise and thanksgiving like:

“This is the day that God has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it”

“The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want”

“God is slow to anger and abounding in Love.”

“The Lord is my light and my salvation— whom shall I fear?”

And, “I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.”

But the Psalms speak also out of the depths of human pain offering lines like:

“God, why are you so far away?”

“I am lonely and afflicted. Relieve the troubles of my heart and free me from my anguish.”

“My God, why have you forsaken me?”

John Calvin called the Book of Psalms “an anatomy of all the parts of the soul.”

That is that in reading the Psalms we find words given to express every part of our soul, our fears, our trust, our hope, our despair, all of it.

In the Psalms the Bible preserves not just the most pious things people might say to God, but also words of anger directed toward God. Words that express a feeling of abandonment. Words that long for vengeance against enemies, words that wonder if God is with us after all.

So each week we will take a Psalm and sing it, sing it to one another, and to God. And then we will reflect together on it. How does it feel to sing these things? Do they express something of my faith? Do they give voice to something in my heart?

Our first Psalm is a Psalm of praise, it is lifting up a song of praise for the beauty and goodness of God’s creation. Psalm 8 invites us to see God’s signature on the majesty of creation, the beauty of the sky stretched above, the simple gift of earth beneath our feet.

This is a Psalm of awe.

It asks the question that I expect many of us have had well up in our hearts when taking in a stunning sunset, or gazing up at a sky full of stars:

“when I look at your heavens...” we sing...  
“who are we, that you are mindful of us?”

Yet, the Psalm interrupts itself, yet we humans are indeed made in God’s image, marked with honor, and dignity.

Much of the Bible is God’s word to us.

The Psalms are our words to God.

This is the great gift in the Psalms. They show us the place of feelings in our faith. Today’s feeling may be a more simple one, reverent awe in the face of God’s creation. But the Psalms will lead us to other feelings, harder ones.

Holding these words lifted up to God in the pages of our sacred text reminds us no feeling is the end of faith. No suffering, no despair, no feeling of abandonment, no hopelessness, need be the end of our hope in God.

The Psalms hold it all. They give voice to every part of our souls.

They give us the most beautiful language imaginable to sing God's praises and thank God for the beauty of life.

They give us the assurance that even the hardest things we feel today, faithful people have felt these things all along, and no experience, no matter how unimaginably tragic, can mark the end of faith.

Singing the Psalms gives us our vocabulary for prayer. It teaches us that God can hold all that we bring before God in prayer.

Singing Psalms reminds us that faith is not just for the moments we are feeling good. Rather faith is what holds us when we have gotten beyond the end of our rope. It is the net that catches us when we lose our grip. It is the arms into which we fall when nothing else is able to hold us up.

This will be our shared practice during the season of Lent as a community. We will deepen our faith by engaging with the Psalms. Discovering the treasure that lies in these words. Expanding our vocabulary for prayer. And reminding ourselves that God's love for us can hold anything at all.