

Sunday school lesson: Prayer, Lent week 4

For this lesson you will need your Easter tree with Resurrection Egg #4.

Today is our 4th Sunday of Lent. So far we've talked about repentance and forgiveness (week 1), humility (week 2), charity (week 3). Today we are going to talk about PRAYER.

There are different types of prayer because there are different situations and emotions we experience day to day, even moment to moment. We can pray prayers of thanksgiving, prayers asking for healing, prayers when we're afraid... but today we are going to talk about prayer when we feel like God has forgotten about us.

Have you ever felt like God forgot about you? (take answers, listen)

The Psalms are full of different types of prayers, and they're a good place to go when we don't know what to pray. Today we are going to look at parts of Psalm 77 and we'll see how David felt like God forgot about him and how he prayed. I'm going to read through the first several verses and then we'll stop to discuss.

- 1 I cried out to God for help;
I cried out to God to hear me.
- 2 When I was in distress, I sought the Lord;
at night I stretched out untiring hands,
and I would not be comforted.
- 3 I remembered you, God, and I groaned;
I meditated, and my spirit grew faint.

You kept my eyes from closing;
I was too troubled to speak.
5 I thought about the former days,
the years of long ago;
6 I remembered my songs in the night.
My heart meditated and my spirit asked:
7 "Will the Lord reject forever?
Will he never show his favor again?
8 Has his unfailing love vanished forever?
Has his promise failed for all time?
9 Has God forgotten to be merciful?
Has he in anger withheld his compassion?"

Look back at verse 7. How is David feeling? What does he say? He feels like the Lord has rejected him, he feels like God will never show His face again

What about in verse 8? How does he feel? He wonders if God's unfailing love has vanished forever, he wonders if God's promise has failed

And what about in verse 9? He wonders if God has forgotten to be merciful, he wonders if God is angry with him and thus withheld His compassion

The wonderful thing about the Psalms is that they are so real. They speak to very real human emotions and show us it's okay to cry out to God in good times and in bad.

When we think of David, we think about him being a man after God's own heart. We think about him being king.

Sometimes we might think of David as some kind of super hero of the Bible. And yet, here he is, feeling like God has forgotten him.

How does it make you feel to know that David felt this way?

What should we do when we feel like God doesn't hear us? I think the temptation is to feel sorry for ourselves, or feel angry at God, or try to drown our sorrows with worldly things. But what should we do?

Let's see what David does.

10 Then I thought, "To this I will appeal:
the years when the Most High stretched out his right hand.
11 I will remember the deeds of the Lord;
yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago.
12 I will consider all your works
and meditate on all your mighty deeds."

So what did David do? He made his mind stop to remember all the years God had blessed him and all His mighty deeds in the past.

What do you suppose David was remembering? discuss answers...the rest of the Psalm goes on to describe how God rescued His people from Egypt and Pharaoh

Notice David said "meditate on all your mighty deeds." What does it mean to meditate on something? To think about it for a long time!

So we should really spend quite a bit of time thinking on all the miracles of God... not just a quick recall.

Philippians 4:8 says Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

We need to work to control our thoughts and focus on what is true, not what we feel.

Jeremiah 17:9 says The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

We often hear people say things like, "Trust your heart, follow your heart." But the Bible tells us we can't trust our hearts! They lie to us sometimes.

The last part of 2 Corinthians 10:5 says we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

So when I start to feel like God has forgotten me, what should I do? Remind myself that I might feel that way, but the Bible tells us that's not true!

Isaiah 49:16 says See, I have written your name on the palms of my hands.

If the God of the universe knows your name and has it written on the palms of his hands, do you think He's really going to forget you? We are forgetful people. We forget to thank God for our blessings. We forget to pray for others. We forget the promises of God.

Because we are a forgetful people, it's hard for us to imagine that God never forgets.

Just before Jesus went back to Heaven, He promised to be with us always.

Matthew 28:20 "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

So when our hearts feel like God is nowhere to be found, we focus our mind on what we know to be true about God from what He's told us in His Word.

Let's finish by reading a few more verses in Psalm 77:

13 Your ways, God, are holy.

What god is as great as our God?

14 You are the God who performs miracles;
you display your power among the peoples.

Let's open our next Resurrection Egg. (This egg has a rock)

So far we've had a piece of bread, a cross, a piece of cloth, and now.....
a rock.

Let's read our scripture for the rock--it picks up from last week's:

Matthew 27:57-60

57 As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. 58 Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. 59 Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, 60 and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away.

Let's close in prayer.

Faithful Friends

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