



BY STREAMS OF LIVING WATER

A Six-Part Worship Series on the Psalms

5. Rains of Justice

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Sermon Series Focus

For the most profound and enduring prayers of all time, both Christians and Jews look to the Psalms.

These timeless writings become our words when we have none. With vivid word pictures that capture our imagination, and in the beautiful artistry of the language, we will discover that the Psalms are empowering for faith as we learn to sing and pray them together in sincere devotion to God.

Sermon Series Purpose

- Deepen our individual and corporate prayer lives through the reading and study of the Psalms, as well as expand our appreciation for biblical literature
- Understand and experience a wider variety of personal and corporate prayer (e.g. desire, praise, confession, lament, justice, thanksgiving, etc.)
- Rediscover the power of faith that is not meant to be solely expressed intellectually, but emotionally as well; seeing that music, art, ritual, and passion are holy

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1. Soul Thirst (desire & longing)
2. Duty & Delight (praise & gratitude)
3. Clean Hearts (confession & renewal)
4. Tears of Lament (disorientation & lament)
5. **Rains of Justice** (vengeance & vindication)
6. Giving Thanks (thanksgiving & hope)

Rains of Justice

- Though one of the strongest biblical images of God is of a just Judge, the people of God have not always made justice a priority. Yet God deeply desires justice, and we should want to see justice done as well (Micah 6:8, Amos 5:24).
- Because the psalmists believed God was just, they cried out to God for justice to fall like rain upon the earth.
- As we reflect on the justice psalms, and express our honest feelings with the psalmists, we ultimately look to Jesus to see what Judge, judgment, and justice really look like.
- **Rains of Justice** will encourage us to cry out to God in the way of the Psalms for the justice of the Kingdom.

Psalm 72:1-2, 6-7 NIV

- ¹ Endow the king with your justice, O God,
the royal son with your righteousness.
- ² May he judge your people in righteousness,
your afflicted ones with justice.
- ⁶ May he be like rain falling on a mown field,
like showers watering the earth.
- ⁷ In his days may the righteous flourish
and prosperity abound till the moon is no more.

God as Righteous King & Judge

- **God as King**—1 Samuel 10:17-19; Isaiah 9:6-7; Matthew 2:1-12; John 18:33-37; Revelation 17:14
- **God as Judge**—Genesis 18:24-26; Job 9:15; John 5:16-30; Acts 10:42, 17:31; Revelation 19:11-12
- What does the Bible mean when it talks about concepts like **judge, judgment & justice**?
Who gets to judge? Is all judgment bad? What does justice look like? Well, what lenses are you using?

Psalms of Vengeance

Imprecatory psalms are prayer songs against the enemies of the righteous; those that pray evil against or call down curses on the psalmist's enemies.

Ps. 5,10,17,35,58,59,69,70,79,83,109,129,137,140

- **Psalm 58:6-11** “break their teeth”
- **Psalm 109:6-13** “may his children be beggars” & “may his creditors call in all his debts”
- **Psalm 137:8-9** “dash their infants against rocks”

Psalm 58:6-11 NIV

⁶ Break the teeth in their mouths, O God;
LORD, tear out the fangs of those lions!

⁷ Let them vanish like water that flows away;
when they draw the bow, let their arrows fall short.

⁸ May they be like a slug that melts away as it moves along,
like a stillborn child that never sees the sun.

⁹ Before your pots can feel the heat of the thorns—whether
they be green or dry—the wicked will be swept away.

¹⁰ The righteous will be glad when they are avenged,
when they dip their feet in the blood of the wicked.

¹¹ Then people will say,
“Surely the righteous still are rewarded;
surely there is a God who judges the earth.”

“Now the word is Christians ought not to use these Psalms because Christians ought not to feel that way. Agreed. But what if you feel that way? We do have from time to time yearnings for vengeance. So the question is not that we should feel that way, the question is if you feel that way what are you going to do with it?

I can think of only three things you can do with your thirst for vengeance: **1.** You can act it out (like get a gun); **2.** You can deny it (but then it comes out somewhere else you didn't plan on, in your family or somewhere else); **3.** The third thing you can do is give it over to your therapist, give it over to God. And I propose that's what they are doing in these Psalms. They are saying, I'm being eaten alive by my anger and I'd like to hand it off to you.”

Walter Brueggemann, The Psalms: The Hard Road from Obedience to Praise (2009 DVD Lectures)

Psalm 73:1-3 NIV

¹ Surely God is good to Israel,
to those who are pure in heart.

² But as for me, my feet had almost slipped;
I had nearly lost my foothold.

³ For I envied the arrogant
when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

Psalm 73:4-8 NIV

- ⁴ They have no struggles;
their bodies are healthy and strong.
- ⁵ They are free from common human burdens;
they are not plagued by human ills.
- ⁶ Therefore pride is their necklace;
they clothe themselves with violence.
- ⁷ From their callous hearts comes iniquity;
their evil imaginations have no limits.
- ⁸ They scoff, and speak with malice;
with arrogance they threaten oppression.

Psalm 73:12, 16-17 NIV

¹² This is what the wicked are like—
always free of care, they go on amassing wealth.

¹⁶ When I tried to understand all this,
it troubled me deeply

¹⁷ till I entered the sanctuary of God;
then I understood their final destiny.

Luke 18:1-5 NLT

¹ One day Jesus told his disciples a story to show that they should always pray and never give up. ² “There was a judge in a certain city,” he said, “who neither feared God nor cared about people. ³ A widow of that city came to him repeatedly, saying, ‘Give me justice in this dispute with my enemy.’ ⁴ The judge ignored her for a while, but finally he said to himself, ‘I don’t fear God or care about people, ⁵ but this woman is driving me crazy. I’m going to see that she gets justice, because she is wearing me out with her constant requests!’”

Luke 18:6-8 NLT

⁶ Then the Lord said, “Learn a lesson from this unjust judge. ⁷ Even he rendered a just decision in the end. So don’t you think God will surely give justice to his chosen people who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? ⁸ I tell you, he will grant justice to them quickly! But when the Son of Man returns, how many will he find on the earth who have faith?”

Why We Can Wait on God's Justice

- Are we to “act justly” and seek to manifest the Kingdom on the earth or not? Yes, but be careful...
- The “social gospel” (hug a peasant near you) devoid of conversion (inner change) isn't the Gospel of Christ; true justice comes through the heart, not the law
- Also, the NT is crystal clear that only Christ can, in the Father's good time, bring the fullness of Kingdom justice; the Second Coming/Final Judgment sorts it all out
- In the meantime, we work for justice in a slow, power-under, “mustard seed” way; when hearts and minds are changed, we see the breaking-in of Kingdom justice

Paul, Romans 12:17-21 NIV

¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

¹⁹ Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. ²⁰ On the contrary:

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;

if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.

In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Psalm 37:1-6 NIV

- ¹ Do not fret because of those who are evil
or be envious of those who do wrong;
- ² for like the grass they will soon wither,
like green plants they will soon die away.
- ³ Trust in the LORD and do good;
dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.
- ⁴ Take delight in the LORD,
and he will give you the desires of your heart.
- ⁵ Commit your way to the LORD;
trust in him and he will do this:
- ⁶ He will make your righteous reward shine like the
dawn, your vindication like the noonday sun.

Psalm 37:7-9 NIV

- ⁷ Be still before the LORD
and wait patiently for him;
do not fret when people succeed in their ways,
when they carry out their wicked schemes.
- ⁸ Refrain from anger and turn from wrath;
do not fret—it leads only to evil.
- ⁹ For those who are evil will be destroyed,
but those who hope in the LORD will inherit the land.



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Sermon audio & slides in PDF can be downloaded at:
www.christiansburgmennonite.org