PSALMS 123-126

REVIEW…

- Psalms of Ascent…
  - Psalms of Ascent are FIFTEEN songs written for Pilgrims coming to Jerusalem – **Psalms 120-134**
  - THREE times they were required come to City – **Exodus 23:14-17**
    - For the feast of Passover – Pentecost – and Tabernacles…
    - Jerusalem sits above the about 1000 meters sea level [highest in area]
    - Therefore UP to people always go Jerusalem – they ASCEND…
  - These Jews for are the SONGS the have been singing THREE thousand years…
  - As they came up to Jerusalem – came to WORSHIP the Lord in the Temple!
- **1st – LORD…**
  - 1st – **FORGIVENESS OF THE PSALMS 123**
    vs. 1 Looking to God…

- Unrepentance…
  - A Song of Ascents.
  - Unto You I lift up my eyes - O You who dwell in the heavens!
  - The Pilgrim had a PROBLEM – he was really UPSET with arrogant and proud people…
  - The suggestion is that someone SINNED against the PILGRIM…
  - But rather than REPENT – the person was ARROGANT – and refused to apologize…
  - As a result – the Pilgrim did not know what to do with his FRUSTRATION…
  - So he looked UP [lifted eyes] – to the One who DWELLS [participle] in Heaven!
  - People do dumb things – and some people – do them a LOT…
  - If they REPENT – then it is a lot easier for us to FORGIVE…
  - But what if people are PROUD – refuse to admit their MISTAKE…
  - How are we as Christians supposed to deal with UNREPENTANCE…
  - The answer is to LOOK up – and see how God dealt with us!
- Example of God…
  - A servant owed his Master EIGHT billion pesos [10 thousand talents] - **Matthew 18:23-35**
  - Which makes the next statement obvious – he was not able to pay...
  - But the master wiped away the debt - he was completely forgiven...
  - But that man went out and would NOT forgive a fellow servant who owed 500 pesos!
  - If we focus on what how others have SINNED against us – we become ANGRY...
  - We want them to pay back their DEBT - every peso they have cost us...
  - But our problem is we are looking in the wrong direction...
  - We are looking at what they have done to US - rather than what we have done to God...
  - When we consider all that Jesus has forgiven us – EVERYTHING…
  - How could we not FORGIVE our brother what little DEBT they may owe us!

- 2nd – The Master … vs. 2
  - We are the servant…
    - Behold - as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters.
    - As the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress.
    - So our eyes look to the LORD our God - until He has mercy on us!
    - In the same way a SERVANT – watches his MASTER to follow His commands…
    - We also should have our EYES on the LORD [יְהוָה]
    - So we can show the same GRACE [חָנַן] to others – the LORD showed to us!

  - How much Grace…
    - When Peter asked the Lord how many times do we need to FORGIVE – **Matthew 18:21**
    - Jesus told Peter we must FORGIVE – 70x7 – a number that only appears TWICE in the Bible!
    - **Daniel 9:24** – "Seventy sets of seven [70x7] has been decreed... to bring an end to sin."
    - How often are we to forgive someone who sins against us – until there is no more SIN…
    - If they keep committing the same SIN – we keep FORGIVING...
    - There is NEVER any reason when we do NOT to forgive – not even one!
  - Not an option…
    - Jesus asked the disciples a question – **Luke 17:7**
    - If they worked for a very wealthy man – after plowing his field...
    - They would NOT sit down and eat his food with him – they would serve Him dinner…
    - And they would not expect thanks for all their work - it was their job!

- We are the servants of Christ - Jesus has sent us out to work in His fields - **Luke 10:2**
- He commands us to forgive others – EVERY time – for ANY sin…
- And we are not to expect thanks for obeying - it is not an option - it is our JOB!

- 3rd – Why Forgive… vs. 3-4
  - Sin against God…
    - Have [grace] on us - O LORD - have mercy on us! For we are exceedingly filled with contempt.
    - Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorn of those who are at ease.
    - With the contempt of the proud!
    - The Pilgrim pleads with the Lord to have GRACE on them…
    - Because they realize the MUST forgive – yet they were VERY angry…
    - They were very [רב] full of CONTEMPT [judgement] – overflowing with SCORN [mocking]
    - Because of the ARROGANT and PRIDE of those who had hurt them!
    - When we are hurt by someone - and refuse to forgive – we are SINNING…
    - We DAMAGE relationship our with the Lord – we end up needing GRACE…
    - Because with unforgiveness in our hearts - God does not hear our prayers - **Mark 11:25**
  - How to FORGIVE…
    - **Luke 17:6 –** "If you have faith as a mustard seed - you can say to this mulberry tree - Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea."
    - The MULBERRY tree is famous in the Middle East for having incredibly deep roots...
    - The tree can grow very quickly - and because of its roots it is VERY difficult to kill...
    - Even cutting to the base is no guarantee - it must be pulled out by the roots!
    - The fruit is VERY sour and bitter - and its wood is commonly used to make coffins!
    - The way to FORGIVE - is FAITH in Jesus - He can tear out the roots of UNFORGIVENESS…
    - He can send them away into the farthest sea - never to be seen again...
    - Because FORGIVENESS is not just for the one whom did us wrong - it is also for us...
    - It sets us free – so we do not dwell on the past - we get to move forward in Christ!

- **2nd – Let Israel Say… Psalms 124**
  - 1st – God on our side… vs. 1-3
    - Timing… vs. 1
      - A Song of Ascents. Of David!
      - One of FOUR Psalms of Ascent that are credited to King David…
      - There is some debate over if he wrote the Psalm…
      - Some scholars argue it was written after the Babylonian Captivity [536 B.C.]
      - But the Psalm more likely is referring the Captivity in Egypt [time of Moses]
      - Giving us NO reason to DOUBT the authorship given in the introduction!
    - Remember… vs. 1
      - If it had not been the LORD who was on our side. Let Israel now say!
      - The Pilgrim wanted Israel to REMEMBER what God had done for them…
      - Therefore He encouraged [jussive] them to SAY…
      - What would have happened if the LORD had NOT been in our side!
      - There is POWER in speaking the TRUTH out loud…
      - We might know it in our HEART – but when we say it with our MOUTH…
      - Other people can be encouraged by hearing what God has DONE!
    - Armies of Pharoah… vs. 2-3

- If it had not been the LORD who was on our side when men rose up against us.
- Then they would have swallowed us alive when their wrath was kindled against us!
- If the LORD had NOT been on our side when MAN [אָדָם] attacked us…
- Israel would have been destroyed [eaten] when by their WRATH!
- After TENTH plague – the Pharaoh let Israel go free…
- But after he hardened his heart – and chased after Israel to the Red Sea…
- The Children of Israel LOOKED with their eyes – and were AFRAID!
- **Exodus 14:13** – "Moses said to the people - Do not be afraid."
- Fear is not a response – it is a choice – we chose based on what we are looking at…
- If we are looking at our circumstances – then we choose to be afraid…
- If we look to the Lord – then we by FAITH – have nothing to FEAR!

- Stand Still…
  - **Exodus 14:13** – "Stand still and see the salvation of the LORD."
  - All Israel had to do was STAND still [hithpael] – choose to do NOTHING…
  - Then they would SEE the SALVATION [יְשׁוּעָה] of the LORD – He would win the battle!
  - God does NOT expect us to fight a war - He just tells us to STAND - **Ephesians 6:10-11**
  - And when we STAND – we SEE Jesus - and FIGHTS the battles for us!
  - **Psalm 46:10** – "Be still – and know that I am God."

- 2nd – The Waters… vs. 4-5
  - Then the waters would have overwhelmed us. The stream would have gone over our soul.
  - Then the swollen waters would have gone over our soul!
  - If the LORD had not been with Israel – the OCEAN would have covered them…
  - They would have DIED [soul] – in the overflowing waters!
  - God caused a strong east wind blew all night - and the waters were divided…
  - Do NOT think of a shallow crossing - the Red Sea is upwards of 1500 meters deep…
  - With a WALL of water on either side – Israel walked through on DRY ground - **Exodus 14:22**
  - **Psalms 77: 16,19** - "When the Red Sea saw you - O God - its waters looked and trembled! The sea quaked to its very depths... Your road led through the sea - your pathway through the mighty waters - a pathway no one knew was there!" [NLT]
  - I am sure the Children of Israel looked at the Red Sea - and THEY trembled...
  - Yet the Red Sea looked at God - and IT trembled - it was nothing compared to God!
  - Often - we look at our trials and problems - and we tremble in fear...
  - Yet our problems look at the Lord - and THEY tremble - they are no match for God…
  - He parts the ocean of our difficulties - stacks them up on both sides of us…
  - He leads us on the path no one even knew was there - through the trials…
  - The Lord does not take away our problems - He leads us through them!

- 3rd – The Trap… vs. 6-7
  - Blessed be the LORD - who has not given us as prey to their teeth.
  - Our soul has escaped as a bird from the snare of the fowlers.
  - The snare is broken - and we have escaped!
  - BLESSED [בָּרַךְ] – to kneel down as a way of saying THANK you…
  - Israel KNELT before the LORD – because God saved [niphal] them from the TRAP!
  - **Exodus 14:3** – "Pharaoh [thought] - the Israelites… are trapped in the wilderness!" [NLT]
  - Ironically the TRAP was not for Israel – it was for Egypt…
  - When the Pharoah saw Israel walking through the parted ocean – he chased them…
  - But once Israel was safely on the others side – the waters came crashing down – **Exodus 14:27**
  - God used the Red Sea as the weapon the wipe out the mightiest army on earth!
  - Our God is always one step ahead of the ENEMY – and He ALWAYS wins…
  - He is the God who sent METEORS down in the days of Joshua…
  - The God who used CLAY jars TRUMPETS in the days of Gideon…
  - The God who took down a GIANT – with just the sling of David…
  - The God who took the CROSS – and used it to defeat SIN…
  - With a God like that on our side – no wonder we KNEEL and give Him THANKS!
- 4th – Our Help… vs. 8
  - Our help is in the name of the LORD - who made heaven and earth!
  - Our HELP comes from putting our FAITH – in the name of the LORD…
  - The one who made the HEAVENS – and the EARTH – **Genesis 1:1**
  - But Genesis tells us that God [אֱלֹהִים] was the creator…
  - Specifically – it was the WORD of God – that spoke and made all things!
  - **John 1:3** – "In the beginning was the Word [λόγος]… and all things were made by Him."
  - The NAME that we look to for our HELP – is Jesus – who is the LORD [יְהוָה]
  - He is the one who keeps us safe from all HARM in life…
  - He is the only one who can SAVE us – and give us ETERNAL life!
  - **Acts 4:12** – "There is no other name under heaven… by which we must be saved."

- **3RD – TRUST IN GOD… PSALMS 125**

- 1st – Trust is faith… vs. 1-2
  - Trust the Lord.. vs 1
    - A Song of Ascents. Those who trust [participle] in the LORD!
    - The word FAITH [πίστις] - appears 244x in the NT…
    - One of the most important TRUTHS – we are SAVED by FAITH – **Ephesians 2:8**
    - Yet the word is scarcely used in the OT – only TWO times [אֱמוּנָה] in the NKJV…
    - **Habakkuk 2:4** – "The just shall live by his faith [אֱמוּנָה]."
    - TRUST [בָּטַח] – confidence – is the OT equivalent of FAITH [πίστις]!
    - I actually PREFER the word TRUST to the FAITH…
    - FAITH is hard for us to relate to daily life – hard to DEFINE…
    - We did not wake up this morning and wonder how our FAITH was doing…
    - But it is easier to grasp that we need to put our TRUST in the LORD!
  - Unshakable… vs. 1-2
    - Are like Mount Zion which cannot be moved but abides forever.
    - As the mountains surround Jerusalem - so the LORD surrounds His people.
    - From this time forth and forever!
    - Mount ZION is another name for Jerusalem [western hill of the city]
    - A city that God has said He will put His name on FOREVER – **II Kings 21:7**
    - Because the LORD is in ZION – it can never be SHAKEN…
    - So also are those who put their TRUST in the LORD…
    - He will surround them like the mountains surround Jerusalem – now and forever!

    - Jesus talked about great FAITH – **Matthew 8:10** – and little FAITH - **Matthew 8:26**
    - Leading many to believe FAITH is measurable – we either have a LOT or a LITTLE…
    - But Jesus would clarify when the disciples asked to INCREASE their FAITH!
    - **Luke 17:6** – "If you have faith as a mustard seed."
    - FAITH is not about quantity or quality – it is about WHO we put our trust in…
    - We have great FAITH when Jesus is the one we are putting our trust in…
    - When we put our TRUST in Him – nothing in this life will EVER be able to MOVE us!
- 2nd – Righteous Land… vs. 3
  - For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest on the land allotted to the righteous.
  - Lest the righteous reach out their hands to iniquity!
  - The wicked TRIBE [שֵׁבֶט] would NOT be welcome with the RIGHTEOUS [צַדִּיק] in Jerusalem…
  - Because if they did – then the RIGHTEOUS might be tempted by their SIN [עָוֶל]
  - This was a warning to the Pilgrims who worshiped other gods…
  - They would have NO place alongside those who put their TRUST in the LORD!
  - After the death of Solomon – the nation of Israel divided into TWO kingdoms…
  - The TEN tribes of the North were still required to go to Jerusalem [South] to worship…
  - King Jeroboam feared this might lead them to rebel against him…

- So he created the Golden Calves for Israel to worship instead [as Aaron did at Mount Sinai]
- **I Kings 12:28** – "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods - O Israel - which brought you up from the land of Egypt."
- Trusting in the Lord is NOT an easy thing to do…
- FAITH means putting our TRUST in something that we CANNOT see – **Hebrews 11:1**
- Therefore it does NOT take much for us to be persuaded to our TRUST somewhere else…
- Which is why we must be so careful about the INFLUENCE we allow around us…
- If we are surrounded by those who put their TRUST in the world…
- There is a very good chance we will also reach out our hand and SIN!
- **I Corinthians 15:33** – "Do not be deceived [πλανάω]: Evil company corrupts good habits."

○ 3rd – Narrow Path… vs. 4

- Do good - O LORD - to those who are good - and to those who are upright in their hearts!
- The LORD must [imperative] to GOOD [hiphil] – to those who are GOOD [טוֹב]
- Those who have a heart - that follows the NARROW [straight] way – **Matthew 7:14**
- The problem is – no one has EVER been GOOD [טוֹב] – we have a WICKED heart!
- **Psalms 14:1** – "There is none who does good [טוֹב]"
- If the qualification for coming to the LORD – was GOOD works…
- Then no one would ever be able to come to the God…
- But God does not ask us to be GOOD – He asks us to put our FAITH in Jesus…
- Because then Jesus will do what we could NOT – He will transform us - so we become GOOD!
- **John 6:29** – "This is the work of God - that [we put our FAITH] in [Jesus]."

○ 4th – Wide Path… vs. 5

- As for such as turn aside to their crooked ways.
- The LORD shall lead them away with the workers of iniquity. Peace be upon Israel!
- Those who TURNED off the STRAIGHT path – **Mathew 7:13**
- Chose instead the WIDE [crooked] path – it LED [hiphil] them away from the LORD…
- They were taken away from Jerusalem – so Israel could have PEACE [שָׁלוֹם]!
- The way to Jerusalem [narrow path] was hard [uphill] – but it brought you to the LORD…
- The way to EVERY other road [wide path] was much easier – but it led away from God…

- That was the choice of the PILGRIM – which PATH did they want to take!
- Living a life defined [participle] by putting our TRUST in the LORD is not easy…
- But it is the CHOICE that will lead us into the presence of our King – bring us PEACE!

- **4TH – GREAT THINGS… PSALMS 126**
  - 1st – The Restoration… vs. 1
    - The Captivity…
      - A Song of Ascents. When the LORD brought back the captivity of Zion!
      - The order of these Psalms is not random…
      - **Psalms 125** - ended with Israel TURNING away from the Zion…
      - **Psalm 126** - begins with God TURNING [שׁוּב] Israel back to Zion!
      - Because God NEVER stops fighting for us – even when we walk away from Him…
      - He is the GOOD Shepherd – who leave the 99 – to find the one – **Luke 15:4**
    - 70 years…
      - As a RESULT of Israel turning away from the Lord – the people were scattered [diaspora]
      - 722 B.C. - because of sin – the Northern Kingdom of Israel fell - **II Kings 17:18**
      - 586 B.C. – the Southern Kingdom was taken captive to Babylon - **II Chronicles 36:21**
      - But the Lord gave Southern Kingdom a PROMISE – they would come back!
      - **Jeremiah 29:10-11** – "Thus says the LORD: After seventy years are completed at Babylon - I will… cause you to return to [Jerusalem]. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you says the LORD - thoughts of peace and not of evil - to give you a future and a hope."
      - This is a VERY well known verse – often quoted as a blessing…
      - But the CONTEXT is the judgment of God – 70 years of CAPTIVITY!
    - A Dream…
      - We were like those who dream!
      - When Israel returned from Babylon at the end of the 70 years…
      - The people could NOT believe it – to them is seemed almost like they were dreaming!
      - Daniel READ the prophecy of Jeremiah – and KNEW their time was almost up – **Daniel 9:3**
      - It is believed he went to Cyrus – King of Medo Persian empire…
      - And showed him the prophecy of Isaiah – written 150 years earlier!
      - **Isaiah 44:28** – "Who says of Cyrus - He is My shepherd and he shall perform all My pleasure. Saying to Jerusalem - You shall be built. And to the temple - Your foundation shall be laid."
      - Those who READ the Bible – should NOT be surprised by anything the LORD does…
      - Because He tells us before exactly what He is going to do – so we KNOW beforehand…
      - God does not want to surprise us – He tells us – but only if we take the time to find out!
      - **Amos 3:7** – "The Lord GOD does nothing - unless He reveals His secret [through His Word]."
  - 2nd – Results… vs. 2-3
    - Then our mouth was filled with laughter - and our tongue with singing.
    - Then they said among the nations - The LORD has done great things for them.
    - The LORD has done great things for us - and we are glad!
    - There were TWO result of the RESTORATION of Judah…

- FIRST - Israel was filled [niphal] with laugher and singing – God had done great [גָּדוֹל] things…
- SECOND - Unbelievers [גּוֹיִם] continually [imperfect] said – the LORD does great things for Israel…
- Because when God restores – He is not just after the LOST sheep…
- He also wants the testimony of that SHEEP – to cause others to come back to the LORD!
- After the restoration of Peter – God used him and John to heal a lame man – **Acts 3:1-10**
- And when they were called to answer how before the Sanhedrin [leaders of Israel]
- Peter and John boldly preached Jesus – and the leaders were amazed by the simple fishermen!
- **Acts 4:13** – "When they saw the boldness of Peter and John - and perceived that they were uneducated [ἀγράμματος] and untrained [ἰδιώτης] men - they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus!"

- When God does a work – uses illiterate [ἀγράμματος] idiots [ἰδιώτης]
- Which should give us JOY – because we realize God does the work – NOT us – **I Corinthians 1:26**
- And because God uses foolish people – the world do not give credit to us...
- They instead stand amazed because they see Jesus working through us!

- 3rd – The Flood… vs. 4
  - Bring back our captivity - O LORD - as the streams in the South!
  - When Israel came back from Captivity – only FIFTY thousand returned – **Ezra 2**
  - The majority of Judah – and ALL of the Northern Kingdom were still scattered [diaspora]
  - The prayer of the Pilgrim – is for God to send back ALL of the captives…
  - Like a FLASH flood – when the stream in southern Israel would overflow in the rainy season!
  - Up until 1948 – the majority of Jews in the world lived OUTSIDE of Israel…
  - But after the creation of the nation of Israel [holocaust] – the FLOOD began…
  - Today there are over EIGHT million Jews living in Israel – over half the total world population!
  - **Isaiah 43:6** – "I will say to the north - Give them up! And to the south - Do not keep them back! Bring My sons from afar - and My daughters from the ends of the earth."
  - It is NOT enough that we REPENT and come back to Jesus…
  - There is a whole world that walking down the WRONG path…
  - We are praying for a FLOOD – for countless multitudes to come to Jesus…
  - We are praying for the Lord to send out laborers – because the Harvest is RIPE!

- **Matthew 9:38** – "Pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

- 4th – Sowing… vs. 5-6
  - Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy!
  - He who continually goes forth weeping - bearing seed for sowing.
  - Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing - bringing his sheaves with him!
  - The pilgrims SOWED while weeping – because of the TRIBES that were still scattered…
  - But in the end they would REAP with joy – because God would bring the lost TRIBES home…
  - Without a doubt – they would rejoice – seeing the FRUIT of the restoration of Israel!
  - In order to see a great HARVEST – we must first PLANT a lot of SEED – **Matthew 13:3**
  - And not every SEED is going to bear fruit – not everyone will believe – **Romans 10:14**
  - But the promise is – if we SOW [the Gospel] – we will one day REAP [people getting saved]
  - And that will bring GREAT joy as we see people coming to the LORD!