

Sunday, August 7, 2016
Pastor Don Denyes

Introduction to Psalm 85

When we think of psalms that pertain to Jesus' death on the cross, Psalm 85 typically does not come to the top of the list. Yet in this psalm, God speaks to us about the forgiveness of our sins, the re-direction of His wrath, the restoration of His people, the fulfillment of His promises, the presence of His glory, His righteousness, and His mercy. In other words, this psalm is deeply about the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Like so many other psalms, these truths about God are communicated in a beautiful way. We, as listeners and readers, cannot help but come away in awe of Christ and the glorious way God made peace with us

Context

This psalm was written by the sons of Korah. Korah had led a rebellion against the LORD in the wilderness and was immediately punished together with his co-conspirators (Num. 16). However, some of his sons were spared and made to be servants in the Tabernacle and later the Temple (1 Chr. 6:31ff.; 9:19). These men were spared God's wrath that day in the wilderness and their gratitude for that grace continued down through the generations.

Structure

- I. Former Blessings (1-3)
- II. Present Distress (4-9)
- III. Future Hope (10-13)

Read and Reflect *(Use this section to write down any thoughts you had on the sermon. Make sure to note any questions you had about something in the passage or in the sermon.)*

Read Psalm 85

“Rivals Reconcile”

I. Look Back on Former Blessings (1-3)

II. Look Around at Present Distress (4-9)

III. Look Forward to Our Future Hope (10-13)

Discuss

1. In the first three verses of Psalm 85, the psalmist looks back on the blessings his people had received from the hand of God in the past—the tangible blessings, but especially the forgiveness of their sins. As you think about your own life, what blessings have you received from God?
2. The psalmist prays “restore us again... revive us again.” What does He mean? And what would it look like for us, as Christians, to experience revival today?
3. One of the many glorious truths of the gospel is that the righteousness of God and the mercy of God “kiss” or find their perfect balance in one act. Yet for many of us, we tend to view God more through one lens or the other—either God as righteous Judge or God as merciful Savior. Which do you tend toward? Why is that? What can we do as a group to better keep both truths in mind?
4. Verses 10-13 describe a future hope for the psalmist and the people of God at a time before Jesus came to earth. Jesus’ incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension were phase one of that glorious future hope. For those of us living now, between Christ’s first and second coming, how would you describe our future hope?
5. How does the cross impact the way you view yourself? How does it change not only your identity, but also your self-image? How does it change the way you view other people?

Go Deeper *(This section is especially for leaders to consider as they prepare for the Growth Group meeting)*

Gospel Connections: The heart of the gospel is that God has reconciled people to Himself through the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross and His subsequent resurrection. In order to fully appreciate this, we must recognize the dilemma we were in before. As unreconciled sinners, we lived under the righteous wrath of God. We had failed to keep His laws and because of that we were damned to eternity apart from God. But God, because Christ took that wrath on Himself, is able to forgive us our sins and make peace with us.

Whole Bible Connections: The repetition of the word “land” in Psalm 85 is significant (v. 1, 9, 12). The land of Canaan was given to Israel as part of God’s covenant with them. He chose Israel to be His treasured possession and gave them the land. But when they broke the terms of the covenant, God took the land away from them. So all of the psalmist’s prayers in Psalm 85 are centered around the covenant relationship—either lamenting its brokenness, or hoping for its restoration. In Jesus, God has made a new covenant with His people. This time that covenant is between God and people from every tribe and tongue who confess Jesus is Lord. So the hope of “righteousness and peace” kissing each other, is fulfilled on the cross, and seals for us a New Covenant.

Theological Connections: God is both righteous and merciful. This is how He identified Himself to Moses in Exodus 34:6-7 and He has not changed (Heb. 13:8). Therefore, God could not forsake one aspect of His character in order to appease another. Whatever would happen in salvation would be consistent with the entirety of God’s holy character. So, in sending Jesus, God was able to fulfill the pouring out of His wrath on mankind, while still being able to save some because Jesus would suffer God’s wrath on their behalf. It is important as we read the Bible not to underemphasize any aspect of God’s character. It is impossible to overemphasize His glorious attributes, but we most certainly can underemphasize them. So if we speak about His love, we must also speak about His wrath. If we speak about His grace, we must also speak about His justice. In that way, He is glorified for who He truly is.