**Autumn 2020: Time in the Psalms: Psalm 51**

This autumn we are spending time looking at the Book of Psalms. Within the Psalms we find so much of life, faith, love, hope, fear, joy, anger and plenty more. Most of all, we find the key elements of worship & praise of God and trust in Him. Each week we will look at a different aspect of faith and Christian life through the lens of one or more Psalm.

**A Session Outline - 40 mins total, but can be longer or flexible if you wish**

**Introduction - 10 mins (longer if you’re in a group I suspect!)**

1. How are you?
2. What notable things have happened recently?
3. Is there anything distracting you from focusing on God today? If yes, think or talk about that and then pray and give it to God as you begin.

**Time With the Bible - 15-20 mins**

*What does this passage tell me about God?* To answer this question, you might want to think about whether the passage speaks about God directly or indirectly. Is there a prophecy quoted, or does the passage remind you of another part of scripture? If so, spend some time following the leads. How does the passage remind you of what you’ve known about God before? Does it make you think differently about God than you have done before?

*What does this passage tell me about myself?* To answer this question you might want to ask how you felt as you read the passage and how you feel as you reflect on it now. Do you identify with a particular character? Does it make you feel happy or sad, hopeful, excited, confused or any other emotions?

If you feel challenged, or as if something in the passage is really speaking to your or feels personal to you today, spend a few minutes thinking: what is it? What about it feels important to you?

*What is this passage inviting me to do differently?*

As Christians we are meant to live according to the truth that is in Jesus and to not be the same as before we knew him (Ephesians 4:20-24). As we learn the good news of Jesus and the truth about his love we are bound to change.

Spend time thinking about things in your life you might want to be or to do differently as a result of today’s study and pray about those things.

For each session, we will also provide a few questions to pick out the key elements of the passage and try and help you to be guided through the study.

**Time in Prayer - 10 mins**

Each time you meet or spend time reflecting alone, make sure you leave plenty of time to pray. You could pray about:

The Church and its leaders, both ours, Churches nearby and the worldwide Church

Situations locally or in the world around us

Things shared by people during your time together

Those who are afraid, sick or those who are bereaved

Committing to God that you will follow through on what you’ve been invited to do by today’s study.

Your neighbours and the street you live in.

Those who govern us locally, nationally and internationally.

In this session and the next, we will be looking at the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament as a particular theme. It can sometimes be thought that the Holy Spirit became an active part of God’s world at Pentecost in the New Testament, but this is not the case. Even the first two verses of the Bible make this plain ‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.’ (Genesis 1:1-2). Perhaps you can think of other instances of the Spirit’s life and work being mentioned in the Old Testament as a starting point for your discussion or personal reflection today.

**Study Questions**

1. Reading Psalm 51 as a whole and particularly verses 1-9, David is acutely aware of his own sin and shortcomings and repeatedly asks God for mercy. Is this something you feel yourself needing to do? How easy is it to accept that we might be forgiven by God when we ask for it?
2. It seems that David desires intimacy with God but also has a deep sense of how unworthy he is of it. Feeling unworthy of love, from God or anyone else, even ourselves, can happen to any of us and can be a powerful feeling. What can we do as a Church to help one another accept that God loves all of us and counts those who trust in Him as His children and friends?
3. In verses 10-12, David’s plea to God reaches a kind of fever pitch with his cry ‘don’t cast me from your presence, don’t take your Holy Spirit from me’. First of all, what does this tell you about David’s sense of his relationship with God in better times?
4. David seems to view the Spirit as something that God could choose to take from him, implying that at some point he also understands that God has given him the Spirit. What does being given the Spirit mean to you for your life? What do you think it means to walk by faith?
5. Finally, spend some time looking at verses 12-17 ‘Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you. Then I will teach your ways to rebels, and they will return to you. Forgive me for shedding blood, O God who saves; then I will joyfully sing of your forgiveness. Unseal my lips, O Lord, that my mouth may praise you. You do not desire a sacrifice, or I would offer one. You do not want a burnt offering. The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit. You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God.’ What does this section tell you about how David himself saw the work of the Spirit in his life at this moment?

**Something To Do This Week**

Take any opportunity that comes to joyfully sing of God’s forgiveness.