



Daily Devotionals – October 16 to October 22, 2021

By Dr. Charles Qualls and Rev. Steve Gibson -- Franklin Baptist Church

October 16 - Psalm 96

by Rev. Steven R. Gibson

Praise to God Who is Coming to Establish Justice

¹ O sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. ² Sing to the Lord, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day. ³ Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples. ⁴ For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; he is to be revered above all gods.

⁵ For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the Lord made the heavens. ⁶ Honor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. ⁷ Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. ⁸ Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts. ⁹ Worship the Lord in holy splendor; tremble before him, all the earth.

Devotion:

Psalm 96 comes from the enthronement Psalms and follows the normal pattern:

Invitation to Praise (V1-3; 7-9)

Reasons to Praise (V4-6)

The Psalmist utilizes “sing” over and over in this Psalm. Singing has always been a part of religious celebrations, so the opening of this Psalm is nothing new. Some scholars believe Psalm 96 is the liturgy that accompanied David’s movement of the ark to Jerusalem. Other scholars believe another option such as the return of the exiles from captivity in Babylon. Another possibility is the new song does not necessarily celebrate God’s action in the past, it very well could be celebrating God’s future acts. In any case, the new song remained an important pillar in the life of the Hebrews. This new song celebrates God’s establishment of justice and righteousness.

This Psalm articulates the good news that God reigns and rules over the world. Because of this, when God assembles the peoples of the earth, all the earth is included. The animals, the fish, the birds, the heavens, the earth, the seas, the trees and plants -- everything. Assembling all the earth will most certainly include people who do not look like us, people whose faith is different from us. The inescapable truth is that all of humankind and all of the earth are in this grand adventure together.

Esteemed scholar Walther Brueggemann asserts the Psalm 96 is an “act of profound hope. But, he adds, it is also more than hope. The conviction that God rules the world empowers us even now, in the face of old injustice and brokenness, to defy such realities as we live under God’s claim and sing a new song.”

When is the correct time to sing a new song? The answer is simple -- we sing a new song every day that the Lord gives us.

Prayer:

Dear God, thank you for allowing us to sing a new song. Grant to us the courage to sing a new song every day. Amen.

October 17 - Exodus 39:32-43
by Dr. Charles Qualls
Just as the Lord had Commanded

32 In this way all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting was finished; the Israelites had done everything just as the Lord had commanded Moses. 33 Then they brought the tabernacle to Moses, the tent and all its utensils, its hooks, its frames, its bars, its pillars, and its bases; 34 the covering of tanned rams' skins and the covering of fine leather, and the curtain for the screen; 35 the ark of the covenant with its poles and the mercy seat; 36 the table with all its utensils, and the bread of the Presence; 37 the pure lampstand with its lamps set on it and all its utensils, and the oil for the light; 38 the golden altar, the anointing oil and the fragrant incense, and the screen for the entrance of the tent; 39 the bronze altar, and its grating of bronze, its poles, and all its utensils; the basin with its stand; 40 the hangings of the court, its pillars, and its bases, and the screen for the gate of the court, its cords, and its pegs; and all the utensils for the service of the tabernacle, for the tent of meeting; 41 the finely worked vestments for ministering in the holy place, the sacred vestments for the priest Aaron, and the vestments of his sons to serve as priests.

42 The Israelites had done all of the work just as the Lord had commanded Moses. 43 When Moses saw that they had done all the work just as the Lord had commanded, he blessed them.

Devotion:

In the Moses narrative, the Children of Israel were charged with taking care of the stone tablets upon which the Ten Commandments had been written. An ornate box was constructed, you probably remember, that was called the *Ark of the Covenant*. The Ark was held to be inhabited by something that was almost like the glory of God. The ark traveled ahead of the Israelites, even into battle. As long as the box was with them, surely they could not be defeated, so powerful was God's presence on their side.

Any unauthorized person who opened the Ark, Israelite or enemy in combat, would suffer immediate death. This was the most sacred physical possession they had as a nation. Its symbolism was powerful, being as God was practically seen to dwell within its walls. Soon, there would be an order from God to give the ark a dwelling place. Since the Israelites were still a nomadic people, there would have to be some flexibility in this. They were still making their circuitous route through the wilderness, and then would have years of conquest ahead once they crossed over into the Promised Land.

After all their rebellion and sin earlier in the wilderness journey, now God gave them specifications for a "tent of meeting." V32 reports that Israel was faithful in carrying out the building of such a tent, just as God had specified. The notion was that wherever they traveled, in pretty short order a distinct and sacred space for worship could be set up. It was all portable. Then, the Ark of the Covenant would have a holy ground upon which God's chosen people could carry out their appointed worship practices. Much, much later during Solomon's reign they would build the first permanent temple on the hill in Jerusalem.

How satisfying is it when we carry out what we feel to be God's will or instruction for us!? There is something attractive about a church, or a family, that hears God's voice and then responds faithfully. I like to cheer on my favorite sports teams. But when it comes to us being faithful to God's commands, I don't want to be sitting over in the stands. I don't want to be on the sidelines. I want to be part of what's going on. I hope you do, too.

I recall a minister of music at my home church saying something profound to me once. He said, "I served in the jungle in Vietnam. I was in the Army. It was horrific. But I'd rather be in Vietnam than to know that I was not following God's will for my life."

Prayer:

Lord, direct our steps. May we hear your calling and respond as faithfully as Israel did to your orders in this Exodus story. Amen.

October 18 - Exodus 33:12-23
by Dr. Charles Qualls
My Presence Will Go With You

12 Moses said to the LORD, "See, you have said to me, 'Bring up this people'; but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight.' 13 Now if I have found favor in your sight, show me your ways, so that I may know you and find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people."

14 He said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."

15 And he said to him, "If your presence will not go, do not carry us up from here."

16 For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people, unless you go with us? In this way, we shall be distinct, I and your people, from every people on the face of the earth."

17 The LORD said to Moses, "I will do the very thing that you have asked; for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name."

18 Moses said, "Show me your glory, I pray." 19 And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you the name, 'The LORD'; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. 20 But," he said, "you cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live."

21 And the LORD continued, "See, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock; 22 and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by; 23 then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen."

Devotion:

If you read this scripture text just now and thought, "That reminds me of something," then you're on the right track. If you read it and a hymn started playing along in your head, then you're right with me.

Fanny Crosby wrote what I think is a beautiful hymn based on this text. "He Hideth My Soul" gives song and voice to what seems to have happened here. Moses had earned God's mysterious "favor." But overall, he was still feeling a bit insecure about his and Israel's relationship with the Creator. Moses asked to actually see God. God told him that no one could look on the face of God and survive.

The chorus goes like this –

***"He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock
that shadows a dry, thirsty land;
He hideth my life in the depths of his love,
and covers me there with his hand,
and covers me there with his hand."***

Sometimes, that song will pop into my head and I'll hum or sing it as I go. I have always connected with that hymn. By extension, also with this story. On the one hand, our God is a force so mighty -- so formidable -- that we could not even look upon God's face and survive. Yet, so loving and tender that God understands and looks upon us with the compassion of a parent.

Moses wanted God's presence to go with Israel as they moved. He felt so strongly about it that he pleaded with God -- "If your presence will not go, do not carry us up from here. For how shall it be known that I have

found favor in your sight, I and your people, unless you go with us? In this way, we shall be distinct, I and your people, from every people on the face of the earth."

Prayer:

Lord, help us to walk in step with your presence. Lead us to be what you always wanted us to be -- a distinct people who humbly reflect you. Amen.

October 19 - Psalm 98

by Dr. Charles Qualls

A New Song?

O sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things. His right hand and his holy arm have gotten him victory. 2 The Lord has made known his victory; he has revealed his vindication in the sight of the nations. 3 He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.

4 Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises. 5 Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody. 6 With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before the King, the Lord. 7 Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who live in it.

8 Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills sing together for joy 9 at the presence of the Lord, for he is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.

Devotion:

O sing to the Lord a new song!

To be something Baptists patently do not like in church, we sure like the message of this line from Psalm 98. I've never quite figured out our odd relationship in that way. We love to quote the above line. But introduce a new hymn (or "song") and you'll find out how unpopular the notion can actually be though. All I can do is laugh.

No one is certain what propelled the writer of this psalm to these particular words. These lavish praises of God seem to fit a moment, but we do not get to know which moment either in his life or in Israel's larger history. So, take your time and read them. Get the essence the writer offers for use as poetry in worship, or as the lyrics to a hymn that is now long lost to time.

This believer has reached back and examined God. He has taken in the whole of his life, or his people's lives. The preponderance is that God is merciful and to be appreciated for all that God is -- and all that God has done.

Sometimes, life can make us feel powerless. Sometimes, life may get so bad that we even wonder where God is in our despair. The psalmist has tried life on for size. On balance, he has drawn the conclusion that God has immeasurable power over the Earth. Hills will sing, floods will clap their hands and even the sea will roar its approval. For God is the Almighty one. Even in challenging times, in God's time our Creator's presence will be made known. In time, we may even write our own new song of testimony.

Prayer:

"Lord, I believe. Help thou my unbelief." Amen.

October 20 - Numbers 12:1-9

by Dr. Charles Qualls

Don't Make Me Come Down There!

12 While they were at Hazeroth, Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married (for he had indeed married a Cushite woman); 2 and they said, "Has the Lord spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also? And the Lord heard it. 3 Now the man Moses was very humble, more so than anyone else on the face of the earth. 4 Suddenly the Lord said to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, "Come out, you three, to the tent of meeting." So the three of them came out. 5 Then the Lord came down in a pillar of cloud, and stood at the entrance of the tent, and called Aaron and Miriam; and they both came forward. 6 And he said, "Hear my words:

When there are prophets among you, I the Lord make myself known to them in visions; I speak to them in dreams. 7 Not so with my servant Moses; he is entrusted with all my house. 8 With him I speak face to face -- clearly, not in riddles; and he beholds the form of the Lord.

Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" 9 And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them, and he departed.

Devotion:

You've heard me say a dozen times: *Where humans are gathered, goofy things will happen.* It's just true, y'all.

Here were Aaron and Miriam, with Moses nowhere around. So, they decided to talk about him. Clearly, they envied his status by this point. Jealousy has broken so many relationships across human history. It has started wars, torn up teams, broken up companies and sparked political strategies. Now in Numbers 12, Moses' blood relatives were jealous of his role in leadership of the people. They were also jealous of the intermediary connection he had with God. So, they grumbled about him while they thought no one was around.

There is a smokescreen here, as jealous people do often throw down a diversion in an attempt to hide their main problem --

Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married (for he had indeed married a Cushite woman).

Who is this mysterious "Cushite" whom Moses had married? Was this a second wife to the one we know as Zipporah? The biblical Land of Cush seems to carry at least three possible understandings. One of them refers to a place in Africa where the Midianites hailed from. Zipporah's father was said to be a Midianite. So, possibly she is one-and-the-same as the Cushite woman.

Let's not get distracted though. Because that complaint about him marrying a Cushite woman was only a smokescreen. Their true hearts shone through in V2 as they raised the question, "Has the Lord only spoken through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also?" Now, Aaron and Miriam were leaders among the Children of Israel in their own rights. They were highly regarded. Still, sibling rivalry -- and institutional jealousy of a leader -- is such a real part of gathered life.

- "I'll bet she's not a real blonde!"
- "Look, everybody thinks she's beautiful...but she's got fat ankles."
- "He thinks he's all that, but he's really not."
- "I don't see what the big deal is. He's not all that good at _____. Not any better than I would be if I just got the same chance that he got."

On and on it goes. The voices of envy.

Don't you LOVE it that God calls them all out and exposes Miriam and Aaron. Moses would've never known what they had said behind his back. Except that God knew. "***Come out, you three, to the tent of meeting.***" In

my mind, I picture Moses with his long grey beard and robe, Aaron dressed in ornate priestly garb and Miriam ceremonially adorned as a leader and a prophetess might have been. Three middle-aged or older adults standing in a line at the Tent of Meeting as God read two of them the riot act! "*Stop talking about your brother like that now.*"

Y'all, so much of what you think you get away with -- you don't really. These days there's a camera capturing just about every angle of our lives. Couple that with never knowing who's listening, who's repeating, who's recording or who's watching from the dark...we've got to behave. Here's the biggest thing, though. It's what our church leaders told us when we were little kids. "God's watching you." In Numbers 12, it actually seems to be true.

Another saying applies here: *Your true integrity is what you do when there is no one around to see.*

Prayer:

Lord, you are always with us. You are always watching and listening. May we always be of good conscience, just in case you called us out in front of the Tent of Meeting!" Amen.

October 21 - Matthew 17:22-27

by Rev. Steven R. Gibson

Jesus Again Foretells His Death and Resurrection

²² As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into human hands, ²³ and they will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised." And they were greatly distressed.

Jesus and the Temple Tax

²⁴ When they reached Capernaum, the collectors of the temple tax came to Peter and said, "Does your teacher not pay the temple tax?" ²⁵ He said, "Yes, he does." And when he came home, Jesus spoke of it first, asking, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tribute? From their children or from others?" ²⁶ When Peter said, "From others," Jesus said to him, "Then the children are free. ²⁷ However, so that we do not give offense to them, go to the sea and cast a hook; take the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth, you will find a coin; take that and give it to them for you and me."

Devotion:

Søren Kierkegaard famously wrote: "When humans are confronted with the gospel, the genuine response must be either faith or offense." This is especially true in this passage where Jesus once again foretells his passion and death. It is no wonder that the disciples were distressed -- wouldn't that be our reaction as well? Instead of either genuine faith or offense to the gospel, many people walk through life blissfully ignorant. Which option would you take? For many people, they do not want to deal with anything controversial. Many are blissful in their ignorance, anticipating a day when the world will be transformed and Christ will be the center of all.

The truth is that the gospel prompts hatred throughout the world. The world hates Christ for being God because he offends in his holiness. The world rejects Christ for being human because he insults through his lowliness. The disciples are troubled by Jesus coming betrayal. How would you act? Do you want a God who accepts betrayal? If Jesus accepts his betrayal, what does that say about God when calamities strike? Is this a God who can take care of us?

Then the narrative moves to Capernaum where the temple tax collectors came seeking information -- does your leader not pay the temple tax? The question is this -- does Jesus need to pay the tax to the temple in order for the temple to continue its role of worship? If he says yes, then does that indicate that he is subject to the temple leaders? If he does not, he is subject to the stigma of being a bad Jew who does not pay his fair share. So, we have the tension between the organized religion and the individual freedom. This is not a new question to consider because Christians throughout history have encountered this tension.

We essentially live as a resident alien, because our citizenship is in heaven, yet we belong to God. We pay the tax, but must never allow the state to blind our allegiance and our worship to the sovereign Lord, Jesus Christ.

Prayer:

Permit us Lord, to remain firm in our faith and allegiance to you, regardless of what others may say. Amen.

October 22 - Psalm 1

by Rev. Steven R. Gibson

The Two Ways

¹ Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers; ² but their delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law they meditate day and night.

³ They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper.

⁴ The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

⁵ Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; ⁶ for the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Devotion:

The book of Psalms begins with a Beatitude: "Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers; but their delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law they meditate day and night." (V1-2)

At the very beginning, we learn the way of happiness and life; they are contrasted with the vastly different way that the world defines happiness and success. For the world, happiness and success include acquiring wealth and possessions, but for the faithful happiness and success involve a life that is faithful to God's law. From the very onset, Psalms sets up a duality of life choices and the results of those choices.

The contrast is both immediate and stark. The wicked is the first step in a three step process. This process evolves from following the advice of the wicked, to taking the path that sinners tread, to sitting in the seat of scoffers. Notice the trend is progressively worse -- such is the case when sin is allowed to go unchecked.

The opposite path, the way of those who are happy (blessed) is full of light and life. The happy delight in God's law and because of their delight, they meditate upon the law both day and night.

The contrast continues in verse 3 with the analogy of the happy -- they are based upon solid footing like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in due season. They are marked by prosperity in all the things that they do. Because they are rooted in God's law, and because they meditate on God's law both day and night, then they prosper.

Psalm 1 offers two distinct realities:

- 1) The individual chooses to be self-instructed and self-directed or
- 2) The individual opens themselves to God's teaching and God's direction.

So, again the choice is ours to make -- to live in a self-guided legalism, or to be led by God's Spirit. Psalm 1 serves as an instruction Psalm which prepares us to hear an affirmation of God's sovereignty.

Psalm 1 sets the boundaries for the time it was written and also for today. Our choice is clear -- choose wisely.

Prayer:

Holy God, open our eyes that we may see your truth, open our ears that we may hear your truth, and open our hearts that we may love and serve you all the days of our lives. Amen.