



CELL GUIDE

TOPIC Song For Dark Times

SPEAKER

DSP Chua Seng Lee

THEME Lessons From Selected Psalms

DATE

11 & 12 June 2022

MESSAGE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

In the second sermon of this series, DSP Seng Lee drew lessons from Psalms 88 to help us learn how Christians can face dark times, have hope, gain new insight and still find Jesus in our darkness.

SONG FOR DARK TIMES

The book of Psalms is a book that we can draw strength through difficult times. Psalms 88 was penned by Heman¹ - a wise, talented, accomplished and blessed man. Why would such a man pen this sad song and why did God even allow it to be included in the Bible? There are four lessons we can learn from Psalms 88:

1) Darkness can be long

The psalmist trusted God as His Saviour and called on God with great intensity; yet constantly, he still faced darkness. It was both an outward darkness (reality of threat on his life) and inward darkness (the absence of God with no assurance of hope) (v1-2). His pain was so intense that he felt God had forsaken him (v5) and withheld his protection from him (v3-5).

As a Christian, we can also experience darkness (e.g. sickness, unresolved conflict, unanswered prayer) and it could last for months or even years. However, experiencing darkness does not mean that we are weak in our faith. The spirituality of a person is defined by his walk with God, not by the seasons in his life. We need to recognise that darkness can be real and long for certain people so we should not belittle their pain and suffering.

2) Acknowledge the Grace of God – God understands

The psalmist's words are a reflection of how we tend to focus on the moments of agony (v10-12) and exaggerate our pain (v15-18) instead of looking at the truth when faced with darkness. God understands human pain and our weakness. He knows how we speak when we are desperate. Despite the wrong words, the psalmist's prayer remains right in God's sight because he chose to hold on to God and direct his struggles to him.

¹The name "Heman" means faithful

When we journey with people who are going through pain and darkness, we need to extend grace by accepting them where they are at and embracing them, just as how God has given us grace.

3) Right response matters

In his darkness, the psalmist continued to cry out to God (v1, v9, v13) and held on to his hope in Him. He responded to God rightly. He chose to remain connected to God, and because of that he was eventually restored.

In the case of Job, Satan accused Job of having a transactional relationship with God. He said that Job loved God only because of God's blessings and not because of who God is (Job 1:9-10). Even though Job complained and made accusations against God in the midst of his sufferings, Job responded rightly. He never turned away from God and stayed connected to God in his prayer (Job 42:7).

We should not be like Job's friends who misrepresented God. As we come alongside others who are going through dark times, hyper positivity may hurt them instead of help them. Instead, we should encourage them to keep holding on fervently to God. In this way, they may respond rightly to God and in God's own timing, they can experience the restoration of God.

4) Keep focusing on Jesus

Jesus is the only person who has experienced true darkness (with God's absence). At the cross, he was forsaken by God because He bore the sins of the world. He received the wrath of God on our behalf. Even his disciples and friends left him. He faced darkness for our sins as he died for us. (Matt 27:46)

Because of Jesus' death, the answers to the six rhetorical questions in Ps 88:10-12 are "Yes and Amen!" Because of Jesus' resurrection, the dead shall rise and praise God. The lovingkindness of God will be experienced even in places of destruction. The wonders of God will not cease even in the darkness. In Christ, we are never alone.

As how Jesus was with the psalmist in Psalms 88, Jesus is with us in our dark times (Ps 34:18). We just need to keep focusing on Jesus.

CONCLUSION

As a Christian, we will face trouble and storms in life because these are part of the fallen world we live in. However, Jesus promises that He will be with us even in our troubles. Just as how God was with the psalmist in his darkness, Jesus is the light in our darkness and He is with us. Though darkness may be long, God understands what we are going through. His grace is with us when we go through darkness. We just need to respond rightly, keep on focusing on God and hold on to Him fervently.

QUESTIONS

1. Read Psalms 88. Share one key takeaway you have learnt from this particular psalm and/or DSP Seng Lee's sermon.

2. Recall a time when you have experienced darkness in your life. For example, sickness, unresolved conflict, suffering, trials etc. What brought you through that experience? How can you continue to focus on the Lord in times of darkness?

3. Do you know a person who may be going through a difficult time in this season? Ask the Lord to reveal how you can pray and journey with them.