

Playlist: Living on a Prayer

Psalm 130

Small Group Discussion

Intro Questions:

- Do you listen to playlists? If so, what is one of your favorite ones, and why?
- If you don't listen to playlists, what is one of your favorite songs, and why?
- Do you have a favorite Psalm? How has it been meaningful to you?

Background:

- On Sunday we learned that the book of Psalms contains 150 songs—poems designed to be sung as prayers—written by various authors in ancient Israel, over a span of about 900 years. They were compiled into one collection, kind of like a hymnbook, after God's people came back from Exile in Babylon. Each song was intended to be useful for helping people to pray or worship in a specific kind of occasion or circumstance. As a collection they offer us *language to communicate with God, to have life-long friendship with God, in any circumstance that life could bring.*

Psalm 130

1. As you open your Bible to Psalm 130, what do you notice about the heading to this Psalm? (It is a "Song of Ascent." Psalms 120-134 fall into this category.)
 - What was the purpose of a "Song of Ascent?" (Hopefully someone who heard the sermon can answer this question. (Jerusalem, the central place of worship for God's people, was situated high in the mountains. When Jewish people would make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the 3 annual feasts, it was literally a journey of ascent. These songs were written for that journey, preparing to meet God in worship and celebration.)
 - In what way can this kind of Psalm be useful for our own preparation for times of worship?
2. Beyond preparing to meet God in worship, Pastor Josh brought out three aspects of our becoming—our lifelong process of renewal and formation—that we see in Psalm 130. These aspects could apply to a particular experience, where you are seeking renewal, in addition to the lifelong process of renewal. Flesh out these principles as you work through the verses and questions below.
 - Read vv. 1-2 aloud. What can you gather from these words about the writer's circumstances?
 - Read v. 3 aloud. What reality is the psalmist acknowledging here?
 - Pastor Josh said that the process of renewal (becoming) always begins with two acts, which we see in these verses. They are:
 - Acknowledging where you find yourself—being honest about your present state of being (vv. 1-2)
 - How do you feel about the idea of expressing raw, unrefined emotion to God?
 - If you were being totally honest before God about your current mental, emotional, and spiritual state, what would your words to him sound like?
 - Acknowledging your character before God—the weakness of your moral record (v. 3)
 - How does this kind of acknowledgement play a vital role in our process of renewal or life-long becoming? How can we make it a habit?

- How does this recognition free us up for healthier relationships with other people?
- Read v. 4. According to this verse, why is there safety in confessing your brokenness to God?
 - In the second half of v. 4, what kind of life results from honest confession and the experience of God's forgiveness?
- Read vv. 5-6.
 - Based on these verses, Pastor Josh said that renewal requires expectant waiting. What does it mean to wait for the Lord?
 - How does the metaphor, "more than watchmen wait for the morning," inform your understanding of this waiting?
 - Has there ever been a time when you have eagerly waited for the Lord? How did that turn out?
 - What does it look like to make this sort of "waiting" part of our approach to all of life with God?
 - On Sunday we heard that the more aware we are of our desperate need for God (point 1), the more eagerly we wait for him. How does this dynamic work?
- Read vv. 7-8.
 - What movement, or progression, do you see in the tone of the Psalmist from verse 1 through verse 8?
 - Here we see two references to "Israel." Based on what you learned in the Big Story series, how/why can we (Gentile Christians) apply what is said here of Israel to ourselves?
 - Pastor Josh said that we see here that renewal is guaranteed because of God's character. What aspects of the Lord's character (v. 7) give us assurance that he will bring about our renewal and lifelong formation?
 - What does the Psalmist have in mind in v. 8, when he says that the Lord himself will redeem Israel? How can we understand this claim better from our perspective than the ancient Jews could? How is this understanding a full expression of God's "unfailing love?"
 - How does this understanding of the gospel (v. 8) contribute to our lifelong formation? How does it change us?
- 3. Pastor Josh concluded by saying, "**A life of renewal is born when you acknowledge your character and rest in God's character.**"
 - Where in this spectrum do you need to give emphasis in your life today—more on acknowledging your character, or resting in God's character? How is it possible to do both?
 - How does this Psalm most apply to where you currently find yourself?
 - In Tim Keller's book, *Songs of Jesus* (a devotional guide through Psalms), he offers the following as a prayer of response to Psalm 130: "Lord, I thank you for the joy of forgiveness. I remember the surprise of it. My guilt was like low-level chronic pain... Let me remember my forgiveness so that I have a light heart that is quick to enjoy life and other people." How does remembering God's forgiveness enable us to "have a light heart that is quick to enjoy life and other people?"

Prayer and sharing:

- Spend some time sharing where each of you is presently, in life and in relationship to God.
- Pray for one another based on what has been shared.