



Reflections

March 2014 - *Rediscovering Our Delight in God Through the Psalms*

Growing up in the reserved culture of 20th Century Great Britain, C.S. Lewis found that the Psalms opened up a whole new way of approaching God. He writes in his book, *Reflections on the Psalms*,

“If we think ‘mirth’ an unsuitable word for them (The Psalms), that may show how badly we need something which the Psalms can give us perhaps better than any other book in the world.

David, we know, danced before the Ark. He danced with such abandon that one of his wives (presumably a more modern, though not better, type than he) thought he was making a fool of himself. David didn’t care whether he was making a fool of himself or not. He was rejoicing in the Lord...



The most valuable thing the Psalms do for me is to express that same delight in God which made David dance. I am not saying that this is so pure or so profound a thing as the love of God reached by the greatest Christian saints and mystics. But I am not comparing it with that, I am comparing it with the merely dutiful ‘church-going’ and laborious ‘saying our prayers’ to which most of us are, thank God not always, but often, reduced. Against that it stands out as something astonishingly robust, virile, and spontaneous; something we may regard with an innocent envy and may hope to be infected by as we read...

I want to stress what I think that we (or at least I) need more; the joy and delight in God which meet us in the Psalms, however loosely or closely, in this or that instance, they may be connected with the Temple. This is the living centre of Judaism. These poets knew far less reason than we for loving God. They did not know that He offered them eternal joy; still less that He would die to win it for them. Yet they express a longing for Him, for His mere presence, which comes only to the best Christians or to Christians in their best moments. They long to live all their days in the Temple so that they may constantly see ‘the fair beauty of the Lord’ (27,4). Their longing to go up to Jerusalem and ‘appear before the presence of God’ is like a physical thirst (42). From Jerusalem His presence flashes out ‘in perfect beauty’ (50,2). Lacking that encounter with Him, their souls are parched like a waterless countryside (63,2). They crave to be ‘satisfied with the pleasures’ of His house (65,4). Only there can they be at ease, like a bird in the nest (84,3). One day of those ‘pleasures’ is better than a lifetime spent elsewhere (10)...

There (in the Psalms)... I find an experience fully God-centered, asking of God no gift more urgently than His presence, the gift of Himself, joyous to the highest degree, and unmistakably real. What I see (so to speak) in the faces of these old poets tells me more about the God whom they and we adore.”

C.S. Lewis was a world renowned literary scholar who was well versed in all of the great writings of the world. And yet, the Psalms, more than any other book, helped him enter into the presence of the Lord and echo the hunger and thirst that he had for God. We, also, can discover a greater delight and joy in the Lord as we allow the Psalmists to lead us in praise, thanksgiving and worship.

*“As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God.
2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?”
PSALM 42:1-2, (NIV)*

¹C.S. Lewis. *Reflections on the Psalms*. Harcourt, Brace & Co.: New York, 1958, pp. 44-53.