**Meditation on the Imagery of the Psalms**

1. **Meditation by Confessing Faith in the Lord with Psalm 23**
2. Visual meditation

* Focus on imagery: pictures
* Use of imagination to see what is said
* Working out the story from the sequence of pictures
* Eye for the unexpected
* Seeing what is otherwise unseen: mystery
* Vision of God and his dealings with us

1. Type of Psalm
   * Individual psalm of trust: 4; 11; 16; 27; 62; 63; 73; 91; 123
   * Focus on lifelong experience rather than particular experience
2. Structure
   * The Lord as shepherd: 1-4

* His ample provision (1b-2a)
* His guidance in the right way (2b-3)
* His presence and protection in danger and death (4)
* The Lord as host: 5-6
* His protective hospitality (5a)
* His generosity as a host (5b)
* The constant enjoyment of the Lord's goodness in his house (6)

1. Meditation on Jesus as our Shepherd and our Host
   * The Lord as the shepherd:1-4
     + Provision by the Lord
       - Kings as shepherds with people as flock in the ancient world
       - Lord as Israel’s shepherd
       - Two surprises

* God as personal shepherd
* David as a sheep
  + - * Provision with all necessities for life
* Green pastures
* Israel in the promised land
  + - Guidance by the Lord to place of rest
      * Guidance to restful waters
      * Restoration of soul: satisfaction
      * Direction on right paths
* Paths that go the right way: don’t get lost
* Paths that lead to the right place
* Reason: Why for his name’s sake?
  + - Protection by the Lord as bodyguard
      * Valley: ravine that leads into the underworld, the place of darkness, chaos, and death
      * Presence of Lord as guardian and guide
      * Comfort with protective club and helpful staff
      * No fear of evil/disaster in threat of death
      * Surprise: journey through death valley
* The Lord as a generous host: 5
* Elaboration of images of food and drink from verse 2
* Use of tables only for kings and important guests
* Altar at the temple: Lord’s table (Ezek 44:16; Mal 1:7,12)
* Provision of holy food for God’s guests rather than God
* Surprise: God as host who waits on his guest and prepares a

royal banquet for his guest

* Sanctity of guests in antiquity
* Honorary member of the family
* Protection by it and its gods
* Attack on guest as sacrilege
* God’s protection of his guest by provision of hospitality
* Challenge to enemies
* Human and spiritual enemies: devil and evil spirits
* Honour as guest: royal treatment
* Anointing of head with perfume: guest, king, priest
* Filling of personal bowl: overflow
* Enjoyment of God’s hospitality
* Interpretation of imagery: shepherd and host in 6
* Journey: green pastures ► tranquil waters ► death valley ►

Lord’s house

* The house of the Lord = temple
* Surprise: pursuit by enemies or evil ► lifelong pursuit by the Lord’s goodness and kindness
* Occasional visitor ►permanent resident of the Lord’s household
* Right of access
* Provision of food and other needs
* Privilege of table fellowship: family
* Protection by God’s holiness

1. **Application**

* Who is the shepherd and host?
* Lord God
* Jesus: see John 10:1-30
* Who is the sheep?
* David
* Israel ► the church
* Each Israelite ►each Christian ► me
* What is the journey?
  + Israel to Promised Land
  + Israelites to temple
  + Christians to the Lord’s house in the Lord’s Supper
  + Each believer through life and death to our heavenly home
  + Church from earth to heavenly homeland

1. **Meditation on the Church as the City of God with Psalm 46**

* Our fear of chaos
* Natural chaos: earthquakes, tidal waves ► global warming
* Political chaos: revolution and war
* Social chaos: breakdown of social order, families, and marriage
* Mental chaos: confusion, mental sickness and insanity
* Spiritual chaos: no safe place of refuge
* Symbols of stability and chaos in the ancient world
* Stability in natural world
* The earth
* The mountains as the pillars of the earth and the sky
* Stability in society
* Strongholds, fortresses and cities as places of refuge
* Armies with weapons
* Chaos
* The sea with is water
* Earthquakes that make the earth quake and mountains fall.
* Volcanoes that make the earth melt
* Defeat in war by other nations and kingdoms
* Canaanite mythology
* Attack by the gods Yam: Sea alias River and Mot: Death on the Earth and the Mountain home of El, the supreme god
* Their defeat by Baal with his thunderbolt voice to protect the land and life on it.
* The vision of stability in Psalm 46
* Speakers: the people of God
* Focus: the city of God = Jerusalem
* Division into two or three parts
* Refrain in 46:8 and 11
* Selah in 46:3, 8, 11
* Key words and contrasts
* **Falling**: mountains in 2 and kingdoms in 5 ► city in 5
* **Roaring**: waters in 3 ► nations in 6
* **Earth**: giving way in 2, melting in 6 ► desolations in 8, cessation of war in 8, Lord’s exaltation in 10
* Ps 46:1-3: God as the only safe place in disaster
* Comments
* **Strength** = stronghold
* **Ever present** = always able to be found, most available, readily accessible
* Questions
* What is a refuge and in what ways is God like a strong refuge?
* Where, surprisingly, is God most helpful and why?
* What is so frightening about the situation that is depicted in 2-3?
* What is the point of the contrast between God and the natural catastrophes in these verses?
* Ps 46:4-8: God’s home in his holy city
* Comments
* The picture of the **river** with its **streams** recalls the spring that watered the Garden of Eden in Gen 2:10-11.
* The holy place is the temple.
* **The Most High** is the supreme God.
* God does not **lift** his hand but **his voice** against the pagan nations that attack his holy city.
* **Lord Almighty** = Lord of Armies
* Like all cities in the ancient world, Jerusalem had its acropolis as a fortress within the city.
* Note the link between the confession: “The Lord Almighty is with us” verse 8 and God’s promise to Jacob in Gen 28:15.
* Questions
* Why was Jerusalem called **the city of God**, and what impact did his presence have on it?
* What kind of water does God provide for his people in his city? See Ps 36:7-9.
* When would God help his city, and how?
* Which armies does the Lord of Armies use to defend his city against the chaotic powers of the nations?
* What is the only safe fortress for the citizens of Jerusalem?
* Ps 46:9-11: God’s surprising intervention
* Comments
* Normally **desolations** are shocking ruins that are left after defeat in war.
* **Be still** = let go, relax hands, drop weapons, stop fighting, give up, surrender
* Questions
* Who addresses whom in verse 8?
* What is the shocking work that God is said to do on earth in 6-9? See also Isaiah 2:4; Zech 9:10.
* How does God disarm those nations and kingdoms that attack his holy city?
* How does God’s invitation in verse 10 elaborate on verse 6?
* What does God want to accomplish by disarming the nations and not destroying them?
* How does God’s exaltation ‘among the nations’ in verse 10 differ from his exaltation ‘over the nations’ in Ps 99:2?
* General Discussion
* What is the city of God in the New Testament? See Matt 5:14; Gal 4:26-27; Heb 11:10, 16; 12:22-24
* What is the river that we have in the church? See John 7:37-39.
* In what ways is this psalm relevant to us?

1. **Meditation by Praising God with Psalm 92**
2. Verses 1-4: a Song of Praise for the Lord’s Craftsmanship

* Comment
* Lyres and harps were used by the musicians at the temple in the daily morning and evening services
* They sang their psalms as the burnt offering was offered up on the altar for burnt offering
* Questions
  + In what ways is the singer in this psalm like a temple musician?
  + What does his song of praise proclaim?
  + Why does he praise the Lord’s love/mercy in the morning and his faithfulness in the evening?
  + What is the reason for his song and its content?

1. Verses 5-7: God’s Skill in Dealing with the Wicked

* Comment
  + The wicked are those whom the Lord condemns.
* Questions
  + To what kind of craftsman does verse 5 compare the Lord, and why?
  + In what ways are the wicked like grass?
  + Why do foolish people not understand the Lord’s treatment of the wicked?

1. Verses 8-11: the Singer as a Soldier in God’s Army

* Comments
  + The adjective translated as ‘fine’ in verse 10 means ‘luxuriant’ and ‘fresh.’ It is used again in verse 14 for the righteous.
  + The singer here is a compared with a soldier in God’s army.
  + As symbols of God-given strength (1 Sam 2:10), royal status (Deut 33:17; Ps 112:9) and power to save (Ps 18:2; Luke 1:69), horns were placed on the crown of kings.
  + God **exalts/raises** up the horn of his king (1 Sam 2:10) and his people (1 Chr 25:15; Ps 75:10; 148:14), so that it is high/exalted (1Sam 2:1; Ps 89:17, 24: 112:9).
* Questions
  + How would we expect God to deal with his enemies?
  + How does verse 9, rather surprisingly, say that he deals with them?
  + In what ways is the singer like a wild ox with large horns and how would we expect him to use his powerful horns?
  + How does the pouring of oil affect the singer and so equip him to deal with his enemies?
  + What is so amazing about the role of the singer in God’s defeat of his enemies?

1. Verses 12-15: the Fruitfulness of the Righteous

* Comments
  + Note the change of subject here from the singer to the righteous people who have been vindicated by the Lord either in his court or in battle.
  + The distinctive characteristics of palm trees
* Habitat: desert with access to underground water supply
* Life span: oldest for more than 1,000 years
* Fruit of dates and honey: twice a year
  + The distinctive characteristics of the cedars of Lebanon
* Mt Lebanon: home of the gods for pagans
* Cedar: king of the trees in the Middle East ►symbol of kingship
* Habitat: king of the mountains
* Timber: sweet and indestructible
* Use: palaces of kings and temples of gods
  + The literal sense of verse 14b is: ‘they will be luxuriant/fresh and juicy/fat.’
  + Note the repetition of ‘proclaim’ from verse 2 in verse 15
* Questions
  + Where are the righteous planted, and how does their habitat affect them?
  + In what ways are the righteous like a palm tree?
  + In what ways are they like the cedars of Lebanon?
  + What is the fruit that the righteous still produce in old age?
  + In what ways is the Lord like a rock for the righteous?
  + How does the destiny of the righteous differ from the fate of the wicked in verse 7?

1. **General Discussion**

* Who is the singer in this psalm?
* Why does the singer on identify himself and us with the righteous in verses 13-16?
* Why is it good to praise the Lord? See also Ps 147:1
* Why was this psalm set to be sung on the Sabbath at the temple and the synagogue?
* How do we reign with God according to Rev 5:8-10?