**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 9-19-2021
David as Prayer**

One of the gifted singers and songwriters that I’ve enjoyed listening to at times in my life is John Denver. Perhaps you’ve sung along with some of his hits over the years yourself.

Denver had a real gift of writing songs that expressed deep emotions, like the joy in ‘*thank God I’m a County Boy*,’ or the sense of longing we feel in ‘*Take Me Home, Country Roads*,’ and the sadness expressed in songs like ‘*Leaving on a Jet Plane*.’

Songs can stir our emotions.

Maybe you can think of other songs that have been a blessing to you in the difficult emotions that you were experiencing.

At Chestnut Grove we believe that songs are very important. Even though these unusual days, we haven’t stopped singing; for singing and songs are meant to be one of the ways that we worship and celebrate God.

A person with a similar gift of song as John Denver was King David. Besides being King, David was also a singer/songwriter. The book of Psalm in our Bible has 73 psalms that are directly attributed to David. And most likely several more of the 150 psalms that are found in Scripture were written by David as well.

And one of the things that make the psalms so beloved to people throughout the generations is that they touch on all different emotions. There are psalms of celebration and psalms of sorrow and sadness and psalms of confession and psalms of remembrance and psalms of thanksgiving and psalms of anger and frustration. You name an emotion and you can find a prayer to match it in the psalms.

And oftentimes a psalm had more than one of these emotions expressed within it.

Friends, because the psalms are all equally inspired by God, they are a reminder that the Lord is not against us having a variety of emotions. God Himself has emotions and we are created as emotional creations made in His image.

But the psalms are one of God’s tools to teach us how we are to steward and care for our emotions.

Jesus said that the greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength. This would certainly include loving God with our emotions.

And because of the depths of emotions expressed in the psalms, many believers have found this book of Scripture to be perhaps the most comforting of any biblical book.

If you have ever seen one of those little pocket bibles, typically it includes the New Testament as well as two Old Testament books --- Psalms and Proverbs.

Today, I invite you to turn with me to one of the many powerful psalms of David, Psalm 139. This, like all the psalms, were written to be sung. They certainly do not have to be sung, but I thought it would be fun to sing this song today as we hear God’s Word together. And the nice thing about singing it is that all the notes have been lost to us. So, in some ways we can say that just as there is no wrong way to eat a Reese’s peanut butter cup, there is no wrong way for us to sing these psalms.

**Psalm 139**

**For the director of music. Of David. A psalm.**

**(I sing the psalm)**

**1You have searched me, Lord,
    and you know me.
2You know when I sit and when I rise;
    you perceive my thoughts from afar.
3You discern my going out and my lying down;
    you are familiar with all my ways.
4Before a word is on my tongue
    you, Lord, know it completely.
5You hem me in behind and before,
    and you lay your hand upon me.
6Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
    too lofty for me to attain.**

**7Where can I go from your Spirit?
    Where can I flee from your presence?
8If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
    if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
9If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
    if I settle on the far side of the sea,
10even there your hand will guide me,
    your right hand will hold me fast.
11If I say, “Surely the darkness will hide me
    and the light become night around me,”
12even the darkness will not be dark to you;
    the night will shine like the day,
    for darkness is as light to you.**

**13For you created my inmost being;
    you knit me together in my mother’s womb.
14I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
    your works are wonderful,
    I know that full well.
15My frame was not hidden from you
    when I was made in the secret place,
    when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.
16Your eyes saw my unformed body;
    all the days ordained for me were written in your book
    before one of them came to be.
17How precious to me are your thoughts,[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+139&version=NIV#fen-NIV-16257a)**] God!
    How vast is the sum of them!
18Were I to count them,
    they would outnumber the grains of sand—
    when I awake, I am still with you.**

**19If only you, God, would slay the wicked!
    Away from me, you who are bloodthirsty!
20They speak of you with evil intent;
    your adversaries misuse your name.
21Do I not hate those who hate you, Lord,
    and abhor those who are in rebellion against you?
22I have nothing but hatred for them;
    I count them my enemies.
23Search me, God, and know my heart;
    test me and know my anxious thoughts.
24See if there is any offensive way in me,
    and lead me in the way everlasting.**

Truly, sisters and brothers feel free to sing any of the psalms as well. The psalms were the hymnbook for the early church.

I chose this psalm because David is praying in a variety of ways. He is adoring God for His power and His knowledge of all things. He offers praise to God for creating him out of love and with such detail and he thanks the Lord for His countless thoughts towards him.

And yet in this same psalm, he asks God to slay the wicked and he asks God to test him and to lead him in the way everlasting.

Truly, there is a lot going on here. What are we to make of it all?

Particularly, what are we to make of David being angry at the wicked? As Christians, aren’t we to love our enemies and to pray for those who curse us? And here David is asking that the Lord slays the wicked. What are we to make of that?

Certainly, there is nothing wrong with David being upset with the evil behaviors of the wicked. As Christians, we are to continue to hate sin and to hate the evil actions of others. And there is nothing wrong with praying that the Lord would deal with an evil that is taking place. This is a good way to pray.

This hasn’t changed. But Jesus calls us to an even higher ethic. He instructs His followers to hate the sin, but love the sinner.

Also, these moments in the psalms where anger is expressed by David or others, are there to help us to constructively deal with our anger.

Friends, in this broken world, we will experience anger. We should experience anger. But the psalms can help us to deal with our anger in helpful ways, rather than destructive ways.

Paul writes in Ephesians 4:26 – **“Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.”** --- How do we do this? – oftentimes it is through prayer. It is through pouring out our righteous anger to God. Anger is not a sin. In fact, sometimes the proper emotion is anger. There would be something wrong if we were not angry. --- but we can be angry and not sin.

This form of prayer actually functions in a similar way to a punching bag. We can punch a punching bag left and right, but no one actually gets hurt in the process.

Likewise, pouring out righteous anger and frustrations to the Lord in prayer is a healthy and important thing to do. Rather than keeping our anger pent up within us, when we look at injustices in the world and abuse and other very troubling things, it is good and healthy for us to cry out to the Lord that those things are brought to the light and exposed and to pray that the Lord would bring His healing in those areas as well.

Additionally, the Hebrew word for ‘hate’ can have a broader meaning than to despise. It can also mean to ‘be unwilling or unable to put up with” someone.

In Psalm 139, David very well may be saying that I cannot put up with people that hate God. This is not inconsistent with Jesus calling us to love and to pray for our enemies.

So how are we to apply this psalm or other psalms to our lives?

Simply in this way. We are to take ALL our emotions to God in prayer. The good, the bad, and the ugly.

Friends, not all of us are called to become a John Denver or a King David singer/song writer, but we are all called to be people of deep, earnest prayer.

The Lord knows our circumstances and situations perfectly, better than we ourselves understand them. The psalms remind us that the Lord wants people that are real before Him in prayer. The Lord does not want us to put on a happy face when we do not feel happy. He wants us to be real with Him, honest with Him. And He want us to remember that He is good no matter what and He loves us no matter what.

Whatever emotions you are going through, the psalms invite you to turn it into a prayer.

--- NT passages – prayer on all occasions

Phil. 4:6-7 States **“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”** – so when we choose to do our part and keep praying, God will do His part and give us His peace in Christ Jesus.

1 Thess. 5:17 tells us to **“pray continually.”**

So let all of our emotions lead to prayer in our lives.

ACTS prayer model to help us:

Adoration

Confession

Thanksgiving

Supplication (the supplication or requests can and should include your angers and frustrations and sadness, etc.)

Feel free to write a new psalm or to sing a psalm as worship. Truly, no matter what you are going through today, one of the psalms of David would be fitting to help us in our walk with God through prayer.

Sources:

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BibleGateway.com