



PROVERBS+

Bible Jam Session 4 – Winter/Spring



NOTE:

New Semester Schedule:

Feb. 22; March 1, March 8

March 15 – Reflection (No Class)

March 22, March 29, April 5, April 12

April 19 & 26 – Reflection Days (No Class)

May 3, May 10, May 17, May 24 (TBD)

Semester Complete.

FEBRUARY 22, 2022

WWW.SAYVILLEUCC.ORG

Bible Jam – Session 4, February 22, 2022

Prayer of Lament *By Kristine Houghtalen*

God of mystery who is found in the spaces between our desire and your grace,

You have always been there to guide us when we have lost our way. When we are embroiled in wrestling between our own ego and our worthiness of your love, you have been there filling the spaces between.

The darkness that we so fiercely challenged in the past seems to have a grip on us once more and is trying to pull us back from the light of your love.

We have stood up to hatred and intolerance and fought for justice and acceptance.

But, like a weed growing between the cracks, we are being forced apart.

We are tired, fearful and saddened as the spaces between have widened and the landscape has changed. Mountains have appeared where once the view was unobstructed.

We have let others fill the space between with discourse, hatred, and false witness as we celebrated and enjoyed the view from our own window without ever walking out the door.

We humbly put our desire to control aside and ask you to fill the spaces between, so that there is no room for hatred and anger and we can find a path back to love and acceptance.

Calm our minds so that we may know your presence;
Teach us to listen so that we hear your call and allow us to be a conduit of your love once more.

It is through you that mountains can be moved and we bow our heads in readiness.

IMPRECATORY PSALMS — A GUIDE

[Bart Hennigan](#) | June 9, 2020 | [Prayer](#), [Spirituality](#) | [2 Comments](#)

I have been pretty angry lately. I started to write out a litany of why, but the list is too long. And I'm mad about the same things everyone else is, anyway. You don't need the reminder. But I have been [thinking about the Psalms](#) a lot the last couple of months.

I've been reading Walter Brueggeman's book *Spirituality of the Psalms*. Where he makes the case that we need the imprecatory psalms.

[These Psalms] lead us into dangerous acknowledgment of how life really is. They lead us into the presence of God where everything is not polite and civil.

I've never really been that into the imprecatory psalms. Calling on God's divine wrath mostly offends my sensibilities. I'm much more of a "God is Love" kind of person. Most of the time. Last week I went to a couple of Black Lives Matter protests here in Tyler, TX. Thankfully, they stayed peaceful, and many, many people honked and showed their support. But there were also people who yelled at us from their cars, cursed us, and made impolite gestures with their hands. Some counter protesters even showed up, though I never saw them. The next day, as a part of morning prayer, the BCP called for Psalms 140 and 142. With the protest experience still ringing in my ears, imprecatory psalms suddenly made a lot of sense to me.

Brueggeman, building on the work of Claus Westermann, outlines the format of imprecatory psalms. Using that outline, I wrote an imprecatory psalm myself, and I found it quite a cathartic experience. It's a form of [spiritual writing](#) (a written prayer), but it has a structure that is poetic and has an important turn towards the end. Even though my general thoughts on prayer tend to align with Kierkegaard ("The function of prayer is not to influence God, but rather to change the nature of the one who prays."), I found this to be a wonderful practice. Hopefully, this can become a helpful part of your practice as well.

Plea

The first move of an imprecatory psalm is the *plea* of the penitent person to the Divine, which is broken into five elements.

1. Address to the Divine. This is going to be an intimate discussion with a God who knows, and is known by, you.
2. Complaint. The idea is to talk freely with God about the issue, and make one's complaint into God's problem to deal with.
3. Petition. The psalmist cries out for decisive action. "This element is perhaps the most intense because it is spoken as a bold imperative." Now that the problem is God's to handle, the psalmist **expects** God to act.
4. Motivations. The psalmist might list reasons for God to act. The reasons could be the psalmist's innocence or an enemy's guilt or just because of who God is.
5. Imprecation. "This is the voice of resentment an vengeance that will not be satisfied until God retaliates against those who have done the wrong." This is the psalmists moment to be brutally honest about what they want God to do.

Praise

The second move is the *praise*. Brueggemann theorizes that there was some liturgical move in the Temple where a priest answered in the place of God, which allowed for the movement from *plea* to *praise*. Psalm 13 is one example, where some change happens between verses 4 and 5. To duplicate that effect in my own psalm, I added a line between the *plea* and the *praise*, which indicates God has spoken in some way. It is a modification to the historical format, but I like the effect.

1. Assurance of being heard. The psalmist affirms that they have been heard by the Divine.
2. Payment of vows. The psalmist tells God how they will respond, once God acts.
3. Doxology and praise. God has heard the complaint, and the psalmist affirms that God is "generous, faithful, and saving."

Using this outline, I created the following psalm. Feel free to use, or adapt, it to fit your needs. I also encourage you, dear reader, to write one of your own when you are dealing with anger at people or systems that seem beyond you.

Grace and Peace to you all.

A Psalm for the current moment.

O Ground of All Being from whom all people arise,
How can You let this all continue?
How long must we suffer this illness which ruins our lungs and kills our elders?
How long will You let Your people live without living wages and adequate healthcare?
How long must gender and sexual minorities suffer intolerance and abuse?
How long must our sisters and brothers of color have the knee of racism upon their neck?
How long must we suffer the whims of Empire?
We cannot take these things much longer, O Lord.
We need Your justice and Your mercy.
For You are Love, and You must love all of Your people.
So cleanse us of this disease and give us back our breath, O Healer.
Bring care for the poor, unemployed, and uninsured, O Provider.
Bring tolerance and inclusion to gender and sexual minorities, O Spirit.
Destroy those systems that enable and encourage Your white children to kill and oppress Your children of color, O Protector.
And smash this Empire, Almighty.
You tell us not to fear.
You are the One Who Sees All.
You know the ways in which we require help.
We will celebrate in Love and Unity Your victory over our current troubles.
And I will trust You, for You are the Redeemer, who will sanctify and reconcile All to You.

Amen.

Example of an Penitential/Imprecatory Psalm (PM)

139 O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me!

² Thou knowest when I sit down and when I rise up;
thou discernest my thoughts from afar.

³ Thou searchest out my path and my lying down,
and art acquainted with all my ways.

⁴ Even before a word is on my tongue,
lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether.

⁵ Thou dost beset me behind and before,
and layest thy hand upon me.

⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is high, I cannot attain it.

⁷ Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?
Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

⁸ If I ascend to heaven, thou art there!
If I make my bed in Sheol, thou art there!

⁹ If I take the wings of the morning
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,

¹⁰ even there thy hand shall lead me,
and thy right hand shall hold me.

¹¹ If I say, "Let only darkness cover me,
and the light about me be night,"

¹² even the darkness is not dark to thee,
the night is bright as the day;
for darkness is as light with thee.

¹³ For thou didst form my inward parts,
thou didst knit me together in my mother's womb.

¹⁴ I praise thee, for thou art fearful and wonderful
Wonderful are thy works!
Thou knowest me right well;

¹⁵ my frame was not hidden from thee,
when I was being made in secret,
intricately wrought in the depths of the earth.

¹⁶ Thy eyes beheld my unformed substance;
in thy book were written, every one of them,
the days that were formed for me,
when as yet there was none of them.

¹⁷ How precious to me are thy thoughts, O God!
How vast is the sum of them!

¹⁸ If I would count them, they are more than the sand.
When I awake, I am still with thee.^[b]

¹⁹ O that thou wouldst slay the wicked, O God,
and that men of blood would depart from me,

²⁰ men who maliciously defy thee,
who lift themselves up against thee for evil!^[c]

²¹ Do I not hate them that hate thee, O Lord?
And do I not loathe them that rise up against thee?

²² I hate them with perfect hatred;
I count them my enemies.

²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart!
Try me and know my thoughts!

²⁴ And see if there be any wicked way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting!

Lent & Easter Lectionary for 2022

- March 2 Ash Wednesday
- Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 or Isaiah 58:1-12
Psalm 51:1-17
2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10
Matthew 6:1-6; 16-21
- March 6 First Sunday in Lent
- Deuteronomy 26:1-11
Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16
Romans 10:8b-13
Luke 4:1-13
- March 13 Second Sunday in Lent
- Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18
Psalm 27
Philippians 3:17-4:1
Like 13:31-35 or Luke 9:28-36 (37-43a)
- March 20 Third Sunday in Lent
- Isaiah 55:1-9
Psalm 63:1-8
1 Corinthians 10:1-13
Luke 13:1-9
- March 25 Annunciation
- Isaiah 7:10-14
Psalm 45 or Psalm 40:5-10
Hebrews 10:4-10
Luke 1:26-38
- April 3 Fifth Sunday in Lent
- Isaiah 43:16-21
Psalm 126
Philippians 3:4b-14
John 12:1-8

April 6 Maundy Thursday
Holy Thursday

Exodus 12:1-4, (5-10), 11-14
Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19
1 Corinthians 11:23-26
John 13:1-17, 31b-35

April 7 Good Friday

Isaiah 52:13-53:12
Psalm 22
Hebrews 10:16-25 or Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9
John 19:1-19:42

April 10 Liturgy of the Palms, Palm Sunday
Sixth Sunday in Lent

Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29
Luke 19:28-40

April 10 Liturgy of the Passion
Sixth Sunday in Lent

Isaiah 50:4-9a
Psalm 31:9-16
Philippians 2:5-11
Luke 22:14-23:56 or Luke 23:1-49

April 17 Easter Sunday

Acts 10:34-43 or Jeremiah 31:1-6
Psalm 118: 1-2, 14-24
Colossians 3:1-4 or Acts 10:34-43
John 20:1-8 or Matthew 28:1-10

46 Days 13% of the Year

Book of Proverbs:

The book of Proverbs shares short sayings of God's wisdom. They remind us to fear God and offer practical instructions on how we can live well.

When was it written? Always partially a “best” guess. Started in the reign of Solomon and was mostly completed by his death in 931 BCE. It’s final form was completed at the end of Hezekiah’s reign around 686 BCE. So, over nearly 300 years it evolved.

Purpose? “Proverbs accomplishes something no other biblical book does: it simply compiles numerous short instructions for living an effective life on earth. While other books articulate profound theological truths, lengthy narratives of triumph and failure, or prophetic preaching to a disobedient people, Proverbs concerns itself completely with instructing people in the path of wisdom. The writers of the book recognized the varied circumstances of a person’s life and provided principles to apply in a variety of situations rather than instructions to follow in only a few specific instances.

Proverbs states its theme explicitly very early in the book: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Proverbs 1:7). The fear of the Lord refers to our viewing Him with the respect He deserves. It means living our lives in light of what we know of Him, holding Him in the highest estimation, and depending on Him with humble trust. Only then, Proverbs teaches, will we discover knowledge and wisdom (see also 9:10).

In writing the Proverbs, Solomon hoped that his readers would attain practical righteousness in all things and that we would do this by living our lives under the authority and direction of God. He specifically explained the book’s purpose in 1:2–6, focusing on imparting understanding that would impact every facet of our lives. Much of the book emphasizes listening to others so that we might learn from them and apply the combined knowledge of those who have gone before us to the unique circumstances of our own lives (1:5, 8). Wisdom then involves appropriating a measure of humility, first before God and then before others. If instead, we decide to speak rashly rather than listen attentively . . . well, Proverbs deals with that too (12:15; 13:3).”

A “Handful” from the Book of Proverbs

Proverbs 3:5

Trust in God with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.

Proverbs 22:6

Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.

Proverbs 1:7

The fear (awe) of God is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Proverbs 14:12

There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death.

Proverbs 4:23

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.
(Matthew 6:21) (*Before you give someone your heart, you must determine the condition of theirs.* www.insightnews.com)

Proverbs 30:5

every word of God is flawless; God is a shield to those who take refuge in God.

Proverbs 27:17

As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

Proverbs 16:3

Commit to God whatever you do, and God will establish your plans.

Proverbs 16:9

In their hearts human beings plan their course, but God establishes their steps.

Proverbs 16:18

Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.

Proverbs 15:1

A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.