

Worship on the Journey

{the songs of ascent}

The Journey and God's Peace

Psalm 120

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| 1 | In my distress I called to the LORD,
and he answered me. | 5 | Woe to me, that I sojourn in
Meshech,
that I dwell among the tents
of Kedar! |
| 2 | Deliver me, O LORD,
from lying lips,
from a deceitful tongue. | 6 | Too long have I had my
dwelling
among those who hate
peace. |
| 3 | What shall be given to you,
and what more shall be done
to you,
you deceitful tongue? | 7 | I am for peace,
but when I speak, they are
for war! |
| 4 | A warrior's sharp arrows,
with glowing coals of the
broom tree! | | |

Overview

The Psalms of Ascent (Ps 120-134) offer us help on the journey of our lives as we walk with God through the good times and bad. These psalms draw us into worship on the journey: bringing who we are (transparency) to who God is (confidence) together with God's people (community).

Introduction

These themes show up right away in Psalm 120. The psalmist's confidence is in God as he cries out to him in his distress and asks that he deliver him (verses 1-2a). Yet he transparently and openly speaks of his relational distress even while maintaining that confidence (verses 2b-5). All the while there is a longing for a greater peace to come (verses 6-7). Therefore, you can trust God (vs 1-2a) in a difficult world (vs 2b-5) as you long for peace (vs 6-7).

1. You can trust God [Verses 1-2a]

The psalmist begins by noting his distress and putting his confidence in God as his Deliverer. In his pain he remembers that when he cries out God always hears him.

2. in a difficult world [Verses 2b-5]

The psalmist further unpacks and expresses the pain of his distress. His pain comes from the relationships around him. He does not hold back but gives full vent to the distress he is in.

3. as we long for peace [Verses 6-7]

Even as he cries out to God in his distress you can hear his longing for total peace (shalom). We can look forward to that day when all we know is God's shalom even as we get a taste of it in this world.

1. What recent or current distress do you find yourself in? Are relationships involved in that distress?
2. How do you tend to handle distress? Do you bring those hurts to God, simply stuff them internally, or give vent to them in unhealthy ways? Why?
3. Identify a time when relational distress was resolved. How was it reconciled? Did you see God working in specific ways to bring about that reconciliation?
4. Is there a broken relationship currently in your life? If so, how are you depending on God for help in walking through that?
5. Identify any New Testament references that reveal that Jesus understands relational distress (instances where people betrayed him or were cruel to him). How does that give you hope?
6. What is your reaction to the idea of the already/not yet of God's shalom? How does the idea of future perfect shalom to come in the new heavens and the new earth encourage you? Is that something you tend to think about or not? Why?