

Home group notes - w/b 10th November 2014 – Being real with God

Use as much or as little as you wish. Allow time for prayer even if you cut short some of the study. You don't have to use all of these notes, and it doesn't matter if you get diverted into something else the group needs to study.

Remembrance Sunday gives an opportunity to lament, to be thankful, and to come to terms with evil and how we should deal with it. What better place in the Bible to look for help with these themes than the Psalms?

Read Psalm 1. In what ways do you find this psalm helpful? In what ways unhelpful? This is probably a personal reaction and depends how life is treating you at present. *This is an example of an 'ordered' psalm. It is how things ought to be. Good people are blessed; bad people are blown away like chaff.* Is the world like this for you? If not, in what ways?

But notice the good advice in verses 1-2, whatever situation we find ourselves in currently. How might this apply to us individually and corporately?

Read Psalm 55. Are you able to be 'real' in church, or do you have to pretend that you never think things like verse 15? (And there are plenty worse in other psalms!). Explore some of the feelings presented here. *Interesting to note how verses 6-8 are easily taken out of context!* Verses 12-14 speak of betrayal – have you had any experience like this? How about Christians in other places now? What about verse 11 – ring any contemporary bells?

This is an example of a 'disordered' psalm. Bad people seem to be flourishing. Good people are betrayed and persecuted. Destructive forces seem to have the upper hand. However, in Biblical thought, the 'disorder' is still to do with God. He knows about it and seems to be allowing it, for whatever reason.

Look at verses 22-23. These do re-state the 'ordered' thoughts of Psalm 1, but it is like an afterthought, as if spoken through gritted teeth. How do you react to singing praise in church while things are not good in your life? See if you can help one another.

Read the very last phrase of the whole psalm. What has changed?

Can you trust that God is there and is who we say he is, despite disorder? In Hebrew thought this is an act of bold faith, not pretence. Shouting and cursing, being badly treated... but God is still there *in* the darkness to be shouted at and questioned.

Read the psalm again, and do so through Jesus' eyes during his Passion. What has changed with the New Covenant?

Read Luke 6:27-36 (one of Sunday's readings). Do you think Jesus' words are *meant* to be humanly impossible? What do they make you feel? If you feel you don't always live them out, read Ps 35:7-9 (*another psalm of disorder*) and see that you are not alone! God is rather we are honest than pretending; then he can work in us his miracles, including those in Lk 6 about loving enemies.

Prayer: Use Ps 55. Start by asking God 'why?', when there are things you don't understand, or where the innocent seem to suffer or Christians are persecuted. 'Lord, we trust you are in charge, but we don't understand why these things are happening (*get people to name some*). These things make us angry..... Lord, confuse the wicked! Confound their words! I see violence and strife, destructive forces at work..... I see betrayal of trust..... but as for me, I trust in you.'

Then from Luke 6: 'Lord don't let these things eat us up and paralyse us from trusting you or doing whatever we can do. We now hand over to you those we don't agree with, those who hurt us or others, and by an act of will we claim your power to ask your blessing on those who are evil, that they may change and so may we. In Jesus' name, Amen'