

**WBC Verse for the Year 2020**

*‘The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness’*  
(Lamentations 3 verses 22-23)

## Psalm 74

As mentioned in our last Sunday service sheet, here is a summary on Psalm 74, with some things to reflect on.

A video of this is available online - <https://youtu.be/wWYzWGlrGfc>

\*\*\*\*\*

As we saw on Sunday, the background for Psalm 73 & 74 are laments whilst being in exile. In Psalm 73 we focussed on the psalmist's personal lament. Here, in Psalm 74 is a corporate one.

### **READ: PSALM 74 verses 1-2**

A feeling of eternal rejection, and a cry to ‘remember’

Unlike Psalm 73, there is no opening with an expectation of God's goodness to his people. We are straight in with the weight of rejection. Presumably the Psalmist has been in exile for some time at this point as he feels rejected ‘for ever.’ He talks in terms of God's anger ‘*smouldering*’ - it feels continuous, as if it is unrelenting. All this against God's ‘sheep.’ Psalm 23, remember gives us this wonderful picture of God as shepherd, leading, guiding, protecting his sheep. For now, his sheep feel abandoned, they feel lost and without hope!

‘*Remember*’ says the Psalmist (v2) - Remember your covenant with your people. That you ‘*purchased*’ (acquired) Israel. They

were chosen by God to be his inheritance (Deut 9:29). They were the ones God had redeemed from slavery in Egypt.

At this point, the psalmist, God's people, feel lost. Abandoned. God appears silent. They don't know the future. So we have this urgent, heartfelt plea!

### **READ: PSALM 74 verses 3-11**

God's temple in ruins, his presence removed?

The pain and anguish of the psalmist continues, it develops over verses 3-11 as he recalls the destruction of God's temple. He pleads, verse 3 for God to turn, to look, to see, to act!

Take a look at the language of destruction. The wielding of axes in a forest (v5), The beauty of God's temple, destroyed, v6 [*for carved panelling, see 1 Kings 15:15*]. God's sanctuary burned to the ground, his dwelling place defiled.

Total destruction is on their hearts as they act with a desire to crush God's people completely. ‘*They burned every place where God was worshipped*’ (v8) - their intent is to totally remove God's presence from the land.

Then, v9 - back to the present, the psalmist once again voices this feeling of abandonment. No miraculous signs, no prophets left - and there seems no let up! - ‘*none of us knows how long this will be.*’

This leads, verses 10-11 to this questioning appeal - How long? ... Will? ... Why? You can sense the frustration of the psalmist - Why are you not doing something about this, God?

### **READ: PSALM 74 verses 12-17**

A confidence in God to redeem

At verse 12 the psalmist comes out of the pit of despair and turns to confidence in God's redemption for his people. Notice the imagery as he looks back at God's powerful control over creation,

as he recalls the parting of the red sea (v13, see Exodus 14). Sea, remember, being itself a picture of chaos and destruction. The sea, with all its hostile powers (monster, leviathan, vv13,14) has been tamed.

This image of God's salvation work is bound up with his control over creation. How (v15) not only had God dried up the river [red sea], but how in the desert, he provided water (Exodus 17:6, Numbers 20:11).

God had revealed his power in and over creation, and so the psalmist testifies to his rule over creation, establishing it, setting its boundaries, verses 16-17.

As the psalmist recollects God's power over creation, his confidence grows that God can redeem it.

Which leads to ...

### **READ: PSALM 74 verses 18-23**

#### **A plea for God to restore**

The psalm concludes with a plea for God to bring about restoration. Notice how there are a series of appeals over these verses addressed to God. 'Remember' (v18), 'Do not' (v19), 'Have regard' (v20), 'Do not' (v21), 'Rise Up' (v22), 'Remember' (v23), 'Do not' (v23).

This all starts, v18 with an appeal for God to act for the honour of his name. That God should act for His glory!

So the psalmist continues, appealing for God to remember his people in their affliction. To remember his covenant with them. To act and defend the rights of the poor and needy in their oppression.

To do so is to defend His cause (v22).

\*\*\*\*\*

So - from the pit of despair at feeling God has abandoned his people, the psalm grows in confidence that God can bring about

redemption, which leads the psalmist to plead for him to do so.

Today, we sing this psalm in light of God's redemption through Jesus. He has gained the victory over sin in his death and resurrection, and yet we still live in a broken and fallen world. He was there in the beginning, involved in creation. His Miracles reveal his power over creation. As his church, we long for his return and to bring full restoration to his creation.

### **REFLECTION**

*Spend some time re-reading the passage, and thinking about the following*

The psalmist voices feelings of abandonment as they live in 'exile' and long for God to act, feeling rejected, longing for him to act.

*Do you ever feel like that? How? Why?*

*How does this psalm help you?*

*How does the flow of this psalm help model how we can approach God with any laments we have?*

In verses 3-9 the psalmist laments a broken church.

*In what ways is the church broken today?*

*Spend some time in prayer for God's restoration.*

*How does reflecting on God's power in and over creation give you confidence now and for the future?*

*In what senses do you long for God to rescue his people today?*

*How does this psalm help you to pray?*

\*\*\*\*\*

***These are just some thoughts.***

***What else strikes you about this passage?***