

The United Benefice of Peasedown St John with Wellow
The Parish of Peasedown St John

Hard Times

Psalm 120

Passage, Sermon Notes and Questions

Please feel free to take these sermon notes home with you and you may wish to find some time during this week to consider the questions below.

1. Passage

Psalm 120 - NIV

- 1 I call on the LORD in my distress, and he answers me.
- 2 Save me, O LORD, from lying lips and from deceitful tongues.
- 3 What will he do to you, and what more besides, O deceitful tongue?
- 4 He will punish you with a warrior's sharp arrows, with burning coals of the broom tree.
- 5 Woe to me that I dwell in Meshech, that I live among the tents of Kedar!
- 6 Too long have I lived among those who hate peace.
- 7 I am a man of peace; but when I speak, they are for war.

2. Sermon Notes

In Psalm 120 we have the privilege of being able to see the inner struggles of a believer, who is finding that being a believer is hard going: 'I call on the LORD in my distress' verse 1

For some of us, life may be comfortable at the moment and we are somewhat complacent about the future, but the unknown Psalmist of Psalm 120 reminds us that our complacency is misplaced. For others of us, life is hard and difficult at the present time. For us the Psalmist of Psalm 120 has a bracing but ultimately deeply comforting message.

In summary the Psalmist points out four key lessons:

- i. Believers get attacked
- ii. Attacks cause Suffering
- iii. Suffering prompts Prayer
- iv. Prayer gets answered

2.1 Believers get attacked (Verses 5-7)

- Psalm 120 represents the heartfelt outpourings of a believer struggling to live among hostile unbelievers.
- 'Meshech' represents people totally alien to this believer and all he stands for. 'Kedar' represents near neighbours who are deeply hostile.
- In effect our Psalmist is a Christian living in a non-Christian society that has no sympathy for the faith that the believer knows to be the truth.
- The weapons that this society uses against him are lies, deceit, hatred and even violence. 'Lying lips and deceitful tongues', (verse 2) have pinned him down in such a way he can see no way out unless God rescues him. He wants to live in peace, but the non-Christian society living around him won't let him.

- God's people have always been under attack from lies that ultimately lead on to violence and even murder.
- This shouldn't surprise us or make us despondent, because behind all opposition to the truth of God's gospel is Satan.
- The New Testament consistently teaches that all believers should expect to be on the receiving end of opposition. Jesus said 'Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.' Matthew 5:11

2.2 Attacks cause Suffering

- Attacks hurt believers. They certainly hurt our Psalmist. That's why he's pouring out his heart to God 'I call on the Lord in my distress.'
- He's reached the end of his tether and he knows that his only hope is if God rescues him. So that's what he's asking for: 'Save me, O Lord...' (verse 2) 'Woe to me...' (verse 5) 'Too long have I lived...' (verse 6)
- Don't we sometimes feel like that? Does that drip, drip, drip of hostility to our faith bring us so low spiritually that we know that only God can keep us going?

2.3. Suffering prompts Prayer (Verses 1-2)

- This believer's distress has driven him to his knees.
- It is at our low points that we learn that we cannot do without God.
- When things are going well in our lives, we start to think it's down to us and God becomes an optional extra.
- The Psalmist encourages us that when we are exhausted from sorrow and suffering as a result of being under attack, we must make sure we pray. Allow our distress to drive us to our knees.

2.4. Prayer gets answered (Verses 3-4)

- Our Psalmist is confident that God answers prayer.
- When we pray in our suffering we must be confident that God will do what needs to be done. He will rescue us. He will put things right

3. Questions to consider

3.1 What is the Psalmist suffering from? Do we suffer in a similar way today? If so what form does this suffering take?

3.2 How does the Psalmist react to his suffering? How do we react to our suffering? What does the Psalmist encourage us to do when we are going through hard times?

3.3 A close friend of yours from church confides in you that they are finding things really tough at the moment. What would you say and do?

If you would like to discuss these questions further please feel free to call me on 01761 432293.

4. I refused to be discouraged author: anon

I refuse to be discouraged,
To be sad, or to cry;
I refuse to be downhearted,
and here's the reason why . . .

I have a God who's mighty,
Who's sovereign and supreme;

I have a God who loves me,
and I am on His team.

He is all wise and powerful,
Jesus is His name;
Though everything is changeable,
My God remains the same.

My God knows all that's happening;
Beginning to the end,
His presence is my comfort,
He is my dearest friend.

When sickness comes to weaken me,
To bring my head down low,
I call upon my mighty God;
Into His arms I go.

When circumstances threaten
to rob me from my peace;
He draws me close unto His breast,
Where all my strivings cease.

And when my heart melts within me,
and weakness takes control;
He gathers me into His arms,
He soothes my heart and soul.

The great "I AM" is with me,
My life is in His hand,
The "Son of the Lord" is my hope,
It's in His strength I stand.

I refuse to be defeated,
My eyes are on my God;
He has promised to be with me,
as through this life I tread.

I'm looking past all my circumstances,
To Heaven's throne above;
My prayers have reached the heart of God,
I'm resting in His love.

I give God thanks in everything,
My eyes are on His face;
The battle's His, the victory's mine;
He'll help me win the race.