

Belmont Exeter House Group Notes

w/c 19th November 2023

Psalms of Christmas – Psalm 96

Christmas reminds of God's initiative in history and in our lives. He made the steps towards us to invite us into His kingdom. His arrival gives us hope of fulfilment when we are thirsty for something more. His coming brings us peace when we were enemies because of sin. When we recognize the Lord Almighty who comes in flesh to save us, we respond with joyful celebration, and in love towards Him and others.

As we prepare to celebrate the arrival in history of God in a body, we look at the themes of hope, peace, joy, love as we welcome the Lord Jesus into our lives and communities. His presence with us, Immanuel, is the work of God for which generations had been waiting. As they waited, they prayed, sung the stories of God's work in history, and looked for His coming salvation.

We've chosen these psalms as a soundtrack to help us share in the long preparation for Jesus' first coming, and to turn our eyes and voices towards praise of Immanuel, God with us.

Resources

Signposts – A devotional map for the Psalms, Derek Tidball, IVP
Psalms for Everyone (Psalm 73 – 150) – John Goldingay, SPCK
The Message of the Psalms (73 – 150) – Michael Wilcock, IVP

BIG IDEA: We prepare our lives in worship for the King who comes to live with us. How does praise and worship help you in your everyday circumstances?

Context: Psalms are often based around an event in Israel's history. The story behind this Psalm is found in 1 Chronicles 16 when the ark of the covenant is brought to its rightful home in Jerusalem. This event signifies the Lord's rule over the earth, the nation, and all peoples. This theme is echoed in the song of the angels to the shepherds that we read in Luke 2, 'good news to all people'.

WAY IN: Psalm 96 out loud all together as an act of praise. What struck you?
Or What is your favourite worship song and why?

DIG IN

1. Who is called to sing praise? And what themes do each of them sing?
(v1 – 3, v 4 – 10, v11 – 13)
2. Looking at verses 4 – 10, what evidence does the Psalmist give for God's greatness, and therefore our praise?
3. What is the value, if any, of this Psalm in collective worship?
4. How can we know Gods purposes will be achieved? (Ps 105 may help).

LIVE IT OUT

5. The psalm is confident in the rule and reign of God, but this can often seem at odds with our current experience. How do we bring these two together?
6. Often we sing grand words of worship, how does this shape our individual actions and attitudes?
7. This psalm is both a declaration of worship and a call to worship for all nations. Even in our 'post-Christian' culture at Christmas there is a single focus. How can we engage again, this year, with this moment to help others see the good news of God's reign?
8. Can you identify 2 or 3 people you'll pray for in the run up to Christmas and with whom you could share why Christmas is such a good news story for you, the difference following Jesus has made in your life.

PRAYER together in the pairs