

Dec 19/21 - Read Psalm 85 – Leader's Guide

1. In v. 1-3, the psalmist is doing two things: he remembers God's historic favour to Israel and he puts God on the spot about His legal obligations to fulfill the covenant promises. From this psalmist's approach, what do we learn about prayer to God?

We can be honest and audacious in our prayers while remembering who God is. Putting God on the spot does not mean we are arm wrestling with God to make Him do what we want. Rather, we are grabbing hold of God because He's the only One who is trustworthy and able to do something about any situation (i.e. just like Jacob who grabbed hold of God and wrestled with Him until dawn just for a blessing). And we are expressing our very raw and human emotions, not as a way to vent, but as prayer; and prayer has a direction and has velocity: a trajectory towards God.

2. In v. 4-7, the psalmist prays for complete restoration. How can we specifically pray for restoration for ourselves, for those we love, and for all the world?

Answers may vary but it would likely include relief amidst pandemic and the end of the pandemic. Make time to pray for one another in regards to personal requests for restoration.

3. In v. 8-9, the psalmist makes a wish to hear God speak peace to his people. This calls back to the creation event and also the revelation of God through the prophets. How have you experienced God's speaking His word of peace to you this past year?

Answers may vary as people feel free and comfortable to share their personal experiences of God's word of peace transforming their lives.

4. In v. 10-13, the psalmist imagines a world being perfected in front of him. Divine virtues like long-lost companions finally reunite in an embrace in the new creation, with everything in harmony. How can we foster prophetic imagination and eschatological (i.e. future) hope as a church?

Fostering prophetic imagination or eschatological hope means, first, looking back to the cross as our defining identity and history individually as a Christian and corporately as a community of faith, and second, looking forward to the promise of new creation as the destiny of the universe (i.e. not total annihilation or destruction or nothingness like a nihilistic future, which is a secular atheistic perspective). A prophetic imagination takes seriously the images, visions, and pictures of the future as described in the Bible as what will really happen to us and the world. And then, we live out this eschatological hope in prayer, in speech, in working out in our lives as though this new world is breaking into our present world wherever Christians (i.e. we) are present -- that is, in our houses, in our schools, in our workplaces, in the Internet, in our gardens, in our patios, in restaurants, etc.