

## **Nov 28 - Psalm 80 "Struggling for Hope"**

1. What sorts of things instigate a crisis of faith? How do we usually respond to them?

The psalmist writes in the midst of a crisis. The Assyrians have conquered the northern kingdom of Israel and now threaten Judah. Such a reality would trigger a crisis of faith – how could this happen to us? We are God's chosen, the sheep of his pasture? The Psalm is written out of that context and invites a particular response.

### **Read Psalm 80**

2. (vs. 1-3) The psalmist invites us in the midst of such a crisis of faith to bring ourselves face to face with God in prayer. What keeps us from prayer in the midst of such a crisis?
3. (vs. 4-7) The Psalmist lays the blame for what is happening to them at the feet of God. Is God indeed to blame? How would having such a perspective impact how the psalmist navigates the crisis?
4. (vs. 8-16) The Psalmist is reminding God of His purposes for Israel. God's purpose was that Israel would live in such a way that they would reflect the character of their God and point to His renewing purposes for the world. This was so that the nations around them would come as well to see and know the God they worship that his renewing purposes would cover the face of the earth (Deuteronomy 4:6-8). The image of the vine and its fruit was used to point to this purpose for Israel. What is the Psalmist's grievance with God in light of this imagery?
5. It was St. Athanasius who said 'you can go to the Psalms with whatever need or trouble you are facing to find words to give expression to the deep movements and currents of your heart. Why is this profitable for us as people of faith to find words to express these movements?
6. St. Athanasius also affirmed that when we bring those movements of our hearts before God we allow the character of the God that we pray to to shape those movements, to bring healing and wholeness and restoration. Where do you see evidence of a trajectory toward this healing in the Psalm itself?
7. Do you have an experience where you bared your heart in prayer where God indeed met you where you were to heal, shape and transform? Consider sharing this for the mutual benefit of your group.