

Psalm 123 “The Servant Teaches the Master the Pattern of Discipleship”

This psalm was more than likely written by or from the perspective of a slave, written by someone at the bottom rung of the economic ladder. The crowd going up to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast would have been a mixed crowd, included would be slaves and free people, masters and servants. All of them would be singing this song. There will be some for whom this psalm may for various reasons be expressing their own hearts cry, however for the vast majority of us we are simply listening in – so the sermon and the questions are exploring what it would look like to truly hear the cry of this psalm.

Read Psalm 123

1. (vs. 3-4) What is it that causes the most distress for the psalmist? Why is it that such things go right down to the soul (vs. 4), to the very core of who a person is?
2. Part of truly hearing the cry of the oppressed is to honestly ask the question – do I in my attitude, behavior, or words make others feel how the psalmist feels? When you reflect on such a question what bubbles up to the surface?

Part of the antidote to such prideful contempt is found in the Psalm. The language of the Psalm moves from an I to a we. The psalmist is inviting everyone to learn from the slave the posture of coming before God rightly as a servant to a Lord King.

3. What impact does it have on our hearts to learn from those who we might believe we are smarter than, spiritually more attune than, morally superior to? How does it change our relationship with that person?
4. Of all the metaphors used in the bible to describe our relationship with God, that of a servant to a King is our least favorite. Why is that?

The question is not whether we are serving something or not, the question is what are we serving? For we are all serving something, we are all enslaved to something, something is ultimately driving us – be it career, wealth, beauty, comfort, male / female affection, success etc. and such things are cruel taskmasters – they are never satisfied - always keeping us striving, chasing, performing, worrying.

5. What is it that our society is serving? What are you serving? What impact does that have on your heart and life?

Read John 13:3-5; 12-17

6. The Psalmist tells us that when we are serving God we can expect mercy. It is Jesus who reveals perfectly the heart of God’s mercy. What is the character of the King we are serving? What does it look like to serve this King?