

KIOH 2010 All Saints Day Ray Slade

Just recently I have developed something of a new addiction. Worry not I am not talking drugs or gambling but 'codewords'. These are puzzles in the papers that look like a crossword but there are no clues. Each box has a number from 1 to 26. You have to work out the letters to give the numbers. They give you perhaps three to get started. Generally a puzzle will have lots of es as and ss but only one q, one z etc.

A word that keeps cropping up is the word 'psalm'. It's tricky to spot because so few short words starting with p have s as the second letter. Once you've done a few you quickly spot the word psalm making its appearance!

We just had a short reading of a Psalm, Psalm 62. The book of Psalms is the biggest book in the Bible and its bang in the middle. There are 150 of them and it's a bit like a hymn book or **hymnal** (another favourite word with h and m separated not by a vowel but a y.)

The Psalms are very old, written hundreds of years before our Lord. What I like about the Psalms is the way so many **human emotions**, good and bad are covered. Reading and meditating on the Psalms **really can help us**.

Of course there are many high spots in the Psalms:

23 The Lord is my shepherd

42 As the deer pants for streams of water so my soul pants for you O my God

121 that we read together earlier

Sometimes they don't sound quite right

94 Rise up Judge of the earth and pay back to the proud what they deserve

64 Hear me as I voice my complaint (sounds like taking something back to Argos!)

Sometimes you hear a voice of utter despair and feeling of being let down by God

10 Why, Lord, do you stand far off, why do you hide yourself in time of trouble?

74 O God why have you rejected us for ever? Why does your anger smoulder against the sheep of your pasture?

22 My God, my God why have you forsaken me? I cry out day by day but you do not answer

(This latter being the words of our Lord on the cross from his memory of learning the psalms.)

These seem quite wrong words to use when praying and in a sense they are but we get a wonderful indication of how God understands our frustrations and our anger **even with Him** when we hit difficult times in our lives such as the **loss of a loved one – a time of real and deep personal grief**.

And yet we know deep down that God is there and he is concerned for us, he wants us to turn to him and he will engage with support and help. **That is why we are here today.** The Psalms **keep bringing us back to this**, and certainly our earlier short reading does.

Psalm 62 v 1-3 & 5-8

Truly my soul finds rest in God; my salvation comes from him.

Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I shall never be shaken.

How long will you assault me?

Would all of you throw me down – this leaning wall, this tottering fence?

Yes, my soul finds rest in God; my hope comes from him.

Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I shall not be shaken.

My salvation and my honour depend on God; he is my mighty rock, my refuge.

Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him,

For God is our refuge.

From those last lines we get a picture of God a safe place, a refuge, somewhere where we will experience protection, security, freedom from anxiety, depression, despondency. Maybe those things are still kind of there in a bodily or mental sense but deep down, in one's inner spirit, in one's inner life **God is there for us if we turn to him.**

The key phrase is **trust in him**. The word **trust** is important. It is stronger than **believe**. The story is told of a famous tightrope walker who could wheel a barrow full of bricks across a vast chasm. He would invite on lookers to join him in the barrow instead of the bricks. 'Do you believe I can do it?' 'yes'. 'Then get in'. 'Ah maybe not!' What is lacking is the total confidence and **trust**. **Trust** goes beyond the passive and into active commitment. **The psalmist invites us to trust in God at all times.**

Hard though this might be in a time of grief, or of reliving it, the writer assures us that that **is** our way forward.

Come to God quietly, humbly, prayerfully and seek from him that genuine rest, hope and security to which the psalmist refers.

My prayer is that our time together today will in a very tangible sense take us towards that place where we really do trust in him.

As 2 NT writers put it:

1 Peter 5 v 7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

James 4 v 8 Come near to God and he will come near to you.

Copies available afterwards!

