

Lent Sunday 2, **I Am Your God**

Scripture focus: Psalm 50, verses 1, 7-8, 14, 16-17, 19, 21-23

Through the words of this Psalm, the Lord reminds us that He is God and He is our God.

I Am God...

First, as the LORD introduced himself to Moses, 'I am ... God.' (see Ex.3:6). He is God regardless of whether we acknowledge him or not. He speaks and summons the Earth, from the rising to the setting of the sun. In a few words we are reminded of his creational majesty and as we imagine what this looks like, are invited into the mystery and majesty of his creation.

His creation really is beautiful to behold ... In the beginning God created by speaking his commands, his vision...

'Be Still and know that I am God' (Psalm 46:10 NIV). Last week we were called into the solitary places, choosing to lay aside the distractions of modern life. This week pause a moment to consider images of His creation, all that he has made...

I Am Your God...

With his wonder reset inside us, we are invited to hear His Word to us, 'Listen my people and I will speak' (Ps.50:7 NIV). The creator is speaking a message to us, let us pay attention for surely his word is full of wisdom and potential!

What is it that he has to say? His message is one of bringing blessing into the wilderness and, slightly scarily, he includes a word of correction saying that he testifies against his people (v.7), but it is said within the context of a blessing:

"I bring no charges against you concerning your sacrifices; 'Sacrifice thank-offerings to God, fulfil your vows to the Most High, and call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honour me.'" (Ps.8:14-15 NIV)

Here we are brought into the heart of relationship with the Lord, that acts of love to Him and on behalf of him to others are a pleasing and accepted sacrifice.

We learn too, that it is a two-way relationship; call on him and He will answer.

However, this is an ideal and is not the fully lived experience, for our lived experience includes the trouble of our hearts.

The Summons...

The Psalmist is laying out a call to the people, sharing God's summons to his presence, the LORD speaks and summons the earth' (Ps.50:1 NIV) and there is a question on how well, or not, the people have pursued a right-relationship with the LORD.

There is example of it from the story of Job where the 'angels came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came with them' (Job 1:6 NIV)

What is our answer to the Lord on the judgment seat? Before we fully form our answer to the question, the Psalmist shares both blessing and warning.

Lent Sunday 2, **I Am Your God**

Warning ... We have a tendency toward the self and away from the sacrifice of praise and thanks. As Eugene Peterson points out,

“The fact is that much of what we encounter in this world under the name of God or goodness is neither God nor good. Not everything that happens is going to turn out to be good simply because we put a happy face on it.”ⁱ

To those who reject God and especially to those who make a pretence to follow God but whose hearts are very much focussed on the self, he has a very hard and sobering warning, saying that those they don't even have a right to take His word upon their lips and when those people speak deceitfully and continue in a façade, because God has remained silent, (see verses 16-21) will find themselves undone when it comes to facing him on the judgement seat.

Blessing ... The Psalmist, a man called Asaph and a Levite who served in the Temple, was well aware of the Israelites history in praising God in one moment but ditching him when they doubted. The good news is that despite the wayward ways of the people, the Lord is clear and gives notice to them, so that they may correct their ways and receive his blessing.

While there will always be people who reject God outright, the message to those who are His is to be aware of those tendencies and to keep coming back to Him, resetting the relationship. In him is a secure relationship of hope and promise, for it is formed in the crucible of love. Sometimes even the best of us do or say something to hurt the One (Lord) and ones (others) that we love.

Timothy Keller suggests that ‘behind the insecurity many experience is a guilty conscience’ but rather than living fearfully we can live boldly because our ‘sins are covered by God’s grace’.ⁱⁱ

Psalm 32:1-5 from The Message says,

Count yourself lucky, how happy you must be - you get a fresh start, your slate’s wiped clean.

Count yourself lucky - God holds nothing against you and you’re holding nothing back from him.

When I kept it all inside, my bones turned to powder, my words became daylong groans.

The pressure never let up; all the juices of my life dried up.

Then I let it all out; I said, “I’ll come clean about my failures to God.”

Suddenly the pressure was gone - my guilt dissolved; my sin disappeared.ⁱⁱⁱ

Respond in Prayer,

With the assurance the Lord gives at the end of Psalm 50, “those who sacrifice thank-offerings honour me, and to the blameless I will show my salvation”

Let us first respond using Ps.51:10-12

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.

Lent Sunday 2, **I Am Your God**

Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.
(NIV)

And, as we turn our attention to being in communion with the Lord again, a prayer penned by Keller,

“Father, when I don’t confess the things I know I’ve done wrong, I overwork and overcommit. I see now that this is because I am trying to atone for my own sins. But I can’t. Let me rest in your Son’s sacrifice, and rest content.^{iv} Amen.

ⁱ Eugene H. Peterson, *As Kingfishers Catch Fire: Conversations in the Ways of God Formed by the Words of God* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2018), p.202.

ⁱⁱ Timothy Keller, *The Way of Wisdom: A Year of Daily Devotions in the Book of Proverbs* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2019), p.110.

ⁱⁱⁱ Eugene Peterson, *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002)

^{iv} Keller, p.110.