

092522

Weary of Conflict, Longing for Peace

Psalm 120



Background:

Psalm 120 is the first in a collection of psalms (120-134) known as the “Songs of Ascent.” These songs were gathered together to be sung by pilgrims as they went up to Jerusalem three times a year for the great worship festivals of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. These yearly pilgrimages shaped Israel’s identity in the saving acts of God’s grace. “Pilgrim” is an essential aspect of our identity as followers of Jesus. As God’s elect, we are not at home in this world. We are citizens of another world, making our way to a heavenly “city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God” (Heb 11:10). Psalm 120 gives voice to the pain and alienation we experience as foreigners and exiles in a strange land, juxtaposed with deep longings for God that break us out of our paralysis and launch us on our pilgrimage.

Sermon Text (ESV):

Psalm 120

- 1 In my distress I called to the Lord, and he answered me.
- 2 Deliver me, O Lord, from lying lips, from a deceitful tongue.

3 What shall be given to you, and what more shall be done to you, you deceitful tongue?

4 A warrior's sharp arrows, with glowing coals of the broom tree!

5 Woe to me, that I sojourn in Meshech, that I dwell among the tents of Kedar!

6 Too long have I had my dwelling among those who hate peace.

7 I am for peace, but when I speak, they are for war!

Discussion Questions:

- Preparation
 - What is one thing you hoped to talk about today/tonight?
 - What question(s) did you come away with from the sermon?
- Sermon Questions
 - As you reflect on the sermon, what stands out to you most?
 - Verses 1-2 open the psalm in distress, and it becomes clear that the pilgrim has been slandered by a gifted and forceful liar. Can you share of a time when you were slandered, or your reputation tarnished dishonestly? How did you react/respond? Would you have responded any differently today?
 - Brian asserted that when we're comfortable we can become lazy and take things for granted. How have you seen that play out in your life? What is the remedy?
 - It is challenging NOT to seek revenge, especially when God's timeline for justice/vengeance is unknown (although assured eventually). In these situations, are you more tempted to take the "monastery" approach (avoid the world) or the "fight fire with fire" approach (become like the world)? Why?
 - How can you aim to keep the one right response at the forefront of your mind: embrace God's long view of justice and salvation (Isaiah 2:4)? Pray among your group for help in maintaining this long view.