

The Psalms Prepare for the Messiah
The Love of the Coming One
Psalm 119:161-168
Sermon Outline

Introduction: Nearly everybody has a vision for the good life. We stitch it together from multiple sources and sometimes struggle living up to it. We can be haunted about whether it is right. The Bible has a vision for the good life—a vision we glimpse in the psalms and see fully in Jesus.

I) The good life often meets with resistance

A) vs. 161: *Princes pursue me without cause, but my heart stands in awe of you.*

B) Meaning for us

“Going with the flow” versus courage

Picking what we fear

C) Jesus

II) The good life loves the Scriptures

A) Evidence

The standard: *words, law, righteous rules, commandments, testimonies, precepts...*

Not just adherence, but love: *Awe... rejoice... love (3x)...praise... hope...do...keeps...love exceedingly*

B) Meaning for us

Anybody can set the bar for himself

Try letting God set the bar and see where that takes you.

C) Jesus

III) The good life loves the Author of the Scriptures

A) Evidence

...your words...your word...your law...your righteous rules...etc.

All my ways are before you

B) Meaning for us

The great danger of being religious

C) Jesus

IV) Jesus and us

A) Finally, a really good man

B) The purpose of Jesus' life

Questions for Reflection this Week

- 1) Everybody has a vision of the good life—even if it is “don’t get caught” or “be happy”. Describe at least two such visions that are common today. Where do they come from? How does one evaluate them?
- 2) Reflect on the following: “It is easy to ‘go with the flow’ whether that flow is toward the right or toward the left. This is perhaps obvious with conservatives who tend, sometimes blindly, to cling to what is comfortable and familiar. But it is also true with liberals. “Question authority” sounds courageous, but it isn’t if one happens to be surrounded by a culture that questions authority all the time. The morally courageous thing to do is to press past the slogan and ask some questions of it: Which authority? Why? Why should I submit to the anti-authority zeitgeist of the age or group I presently inhabit?”
- 3) Think of ways in which Jesus showed himself to be at odds with the culture in which he found himself. Think past the obvious differences he had with the Pharisees.
- 4) List the number of different terms for the Bible that appear in Psalm 119:161-168. Why so many different words? What nuances can you detect in them?
- 5) There is much more than a formal adherence to the Scriptures in Psalm 119:161-168. Where do you find evidence in our passage of passionate engagement with the Scriptures? Where do you find it in Jesus’ response to the wilderness temptations (see Luke 4:1-13)? Compare your attitude toward the Scriptures with that of Jesus and the psalmist.
- 6) Reflect on the following: “Many feel no need for God or for his forgiveness because they do not know what his standards are, much less have they tried to live by them for any length of time.”
- 7) Every reference to Scripture in our text is preceded by the pronoun “your”, making clear that the psalmist loves the Scriptures not for their own sakes but for the sake of their Author. A great danger for religious people is to use keeping God’s standards as a way of pushing him away. How have you seen people do this? How have you?
- 8) Reflect on the following: “What the world has always desired is a really good man—a longing we see in our tendency to idolize leaders and lovers. But people always disappoint us. With Jesus we at last, and for the first time, have a man who does not disappoint, a man who fulfills the idea of Psalm 119, who fully reflects God, who gives us hope for a new humanity, and who offered his life in place of ours so that we could be forgiven, reconciled and made part of God’s plan to restore the human race and the world.”