

A SEASON OF REORIENTATION

²⁰ *Very truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy.* ²¹ *A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world.* ²² *So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.*

John 16:20-22

- I. The Psalms are the international prayer book of Israel and the Church.
 - A. The Psalter, the 150 Psalms are given to mentor us in our relationship to God over the full range of human experience throughout all the seasons of life.
 - B. The Psalms offer us a rich, diverse, and varied language of faith.
- II. A mature language of faith embraces the three categories of the Psalms.

A. Psalms of Orientation. (Psalm 145)

¹ *A psalm of praise. Of David. I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever.* ² *Every day I will praise you and extol your name for ever and ever.* ³ *Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom.* ⁴ *One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts.* ⁵ *They speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty-- and I will meditate on your*

wonderful works. ⁶ They tell of the power of your awesome works-- and I will proclaim your great deeds. ⁷ They celebrate your abundant goodness and joyfully sing of your righteousness. ⁸ The LORD is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. ⁹ The LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made. ¹⁰ All your works praise you, LORD; your faithful people extol you. ¹¹ They tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might, ¹² so that all people may know of your mighty acts and the glorious splendor of your kingdom. ¹³ Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures through all generations. The LORD is trustworthy in all he promises and faithful in all he does. ¹⁴ The LORD upholds all who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down. ¹⁵ The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time. ¹⁶ You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing. ¹⁷ The LORD is righteous in all his ways and faithful in all he does. ¹⁸ The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. ¹⁹ He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them. ²⁰ The LORD watches over all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy. ²¹ My mouth will speak in praise of the LORD. Let every creature praise his holy name for ever and ever.

B. Psalms of Disorientation. (Psalm 88)

¹ A song. A psalm of the Sons of Korah. For the director of music. According to mahalath leannoth. A maskil of Heman the Ezrahite. LORD, you are the God who saves me; day and night I cry out to you. ² May my prayer come before you; turn your ear to my cry. ³ I am overwhelmed with troubles and my life

draws near to death. ⁴ I am counted among those who go down to the pit; I am like one without strength. ⁵ I am set apart with the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave, whom you remember no more, who are cut off from your care. ⁶ You have put me in the lowest pit, in the darkest depths. ⁷ Your wrath lies heavily on me; you have overwhelmed me with all your waves. ⁸ You have taken from me my closest friends and have made me repulsive to them. I am confined and cannot escape; ⁹ my eyes are dim with grief. I call to you, LORD, every day; I spread out my hands to you. ¹⁰ Do you show your wonders to the dead? Do their spirits rise up and praise you? ¹¹ Is your love declared in the grave, your faithfulness in Destruction? ¹² Are your wonders known in the place of darkness, or your righteous deeds in the land of oblivion? ¹³ But I cry to you for help, LORD; in the morning my prayer comes before you. ¹⁴ Why, LORD, do you reject me and hide your face from me? ¹⁵ From my youth I have suffered and been close to death; I have borne your terrors and am in despair. ¹⁶ Your wrath has swept over me; your terrors have destroyed me. ¹⁷ All day long they surround me like a flood; they have completely engulfed me. ¹⁸ You have taken from me friend and neighbor-- darkness is my closest friend.

C. Psalms of Reorientation. (Psalm 73)

¹ A psalm of Asaph. Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. ² But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold. ³ For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. ⁴ They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. ⁵ They are free from common human burdens; they are not plagued by human ills. ⁶

Therefore pride is their necklace; they clothe themselves with violence.⁷ From their callous hearts comes iniquity; their evil imaginations have no limits.⁸ They scoff, and speak with malice; with arrogance they threaten oppression.⁹ Their mouths lay claim to heaven, and their tongues take possession of the earth.¹⁰ Therefore their people turn to them and drink up waters in abundance.¹¹ They say, "How would God know? Does the Most High know anything?"¹² This is what the wicked are like-- always free of care, they go on amassing wealth.¹³ Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure and have washed my hands in innocence.¹⁴ All day long I have been afflicted, and every morning brings new punishments.¹⁵ If I had spoken out like that, I would have betrayed your children.¹⁶ When I tried to understand all this, it troubled me deeply¹⁷ till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny.¹⁸ Surely you place them on slippery ground; you cast them down to ruin.¹⁹ How suddenly are they destroyed, completely swept away by terrors!²⁰ They are like a dream when one awakes; when you arise, Lord, you will despise them as fantasies.²¹ When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered,²² I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you.²³ Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand.²⁴ You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory.²⁵ Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you.²⁶ My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.²⁷ Those who are far from you will perish; you destroy all who are unfaithful to you.²⁸ But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign LORD my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds.

III. Psalms of Orientation (Psalm 145)

- * The world makes sense
- * God is present.
- * All is as it should be.
- * Life is predictable and reliable.
- * Good is good; evil is evil.
- * Right is right; wrong is wrong.
- * Nothing is amiss.
- * God blesses the righteous and punishes the wicked.
- * The universe is running the way God intended it to.
- * The implication is that if you believe the right things and behave in right way you will always be blessed like this.
- * There is an absence of tension of any kind.
- * Nothing is gray; all is perfect clarity.

The resulting response -worship!

IV. Psalms of disorientation/Language for the “excluded middle” (Psalm 88)

- * Nothing makes sense.
- * Nothing is as it should be.
- * God is absent; heaven is silent.
- * Evil is rewarded; good is punished.
- * Reality comes unhinged.
- * All is grey.
- * No answers are given.

- * Chaos and confusion reign.
- * There is an absolute tension without resolution, which leads to anger, rage, lament, and grief.

The resulting response is Hopelessness.

V. Psalms of Reorientation (Psalm 73)

- * The past is embraced and learned from. But can never be returned to again.
- * God's fulfillments are always greater than his promises. Therefore, he leads us in a brand-new way which we could never have conceived.
- * We wind up facing God alone as our unchanging reward.

IV. All three in one Psalm

A. Psalm 73:1 Orientation

B. Psalm 73:12-14 Disorientation

C. Psalm 73:15-17 Reorientation

D. Psalm 73:18-26 Resolution comes.

Repentance and rest are realized.

Reality is radically re-conceived.

No answers are given and nothing changes but the Psalmist.

God goes from being the provider to being the blessing provided.

Conclusion

Real Life in God embraces all three categories: orientation, disorientation, and reorientation. We must have a language, a spiritual syntax of meaning, a grammar wide enough and deep

enough to embrace all the realities involved in a walk with God.