

The Saving Face of God Psalm 80:1-7

This psalm is titled To the Chief Musician. Set to “The Lilies.” A Testimony of Asaph. A Psalm. As with Psalms 45, 60 and 69, this psalm is Set to “The Lilies.” The phrase may refer to the general beauty of the composition, to the tune, or even to a six-stringed instrument known as the Shoshannim (the literal translation of the Hebrew).

Charles Spurgeon comments, *“If by the Asaph of David’s day, this Psalm was written in the spirit of prophecy, for it sings of times unknown to David.”*

James Montgomery Boyce says, *“Here not only the southern kingdom but also the northern kingdom – it calls God the ‘Shepherd of Israel’ and speaks of Ephraim and Manasseh, two of the major northern tribes – and since it asks for Israel’s deliverance, it is best seen as a plea for the deliverance of the northern kingdom sometime before its fall to the Assyrian armies in 721 B.C.”*

Intro:

You will read this Psalm tomorrow. All three of the Psalms that you will read tomorrow are fantastic. Keep each of them in context as being written just before the Assyrian invasion of northern Israel. They are not so much Psalms of lament as they are Psalms of terror. The psalmist is encouraging Israel to remember who God is when contrasted with the Assyrians.

I am convinced, as I mentioned in the Connect this week, that what we need to practice certain Christian disciplines during Covid-19 in order to keep our spiritual lives healthy and that a clear, biblical vision of God is first and foremost.

Remember Isaiah, *“In the year that King Uzziah died”* is like saying, *“In the year that Covid-19 hit...”*

First: Israel’s Shepherd. 1-2a

- a) An Anthropomorphism – *“Give ear.”* Of course, God is a Spirit (John 4:24) and doesn’t have ears. But is there anything God doesn’t hear?

You probably have your own favorite verses about God hearing us, but here are a few -

1 John 5:14 – *And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.*

1 Peter 3:12 – *For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer.*

Psalm 18:6 - *In my distress I called upon the LORD; to my God I cried for help. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears.*

Psalm 34:17 – *When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears...*

Psalm 145:18 - *The LORD is near to all who call on him*

We may be separated from one another during the week. Some of you are in the sanctuary this morning and others of you at home. But you live in God's world and he is always at home. He is not even a room away.

b) A title – *O Shepherd of Israel, you lead Joseph like a flock*

Joseph was prominent among Jacob's 12 sons. His two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim inherited his place among the 12 tribes of Israel. They were also were the largest tribes. And they were the Northern Tribes. For that reason, Israel is sometimes referred to as Joseph (Ez 37; Am 5; Ze 10; Ps 81; Ob 1).

God identifies himself as a shepherd and is often spoken of as a shepherd, but it might surprise you to know that in the Psalms, only here and in Psalm 23 is God spoken of as a shepherd.

Asaph may have used the term because it reminded Israel of Moses and David; and of one greater than Moses and David

There are few images that speak to God's care of us than that of a shepherd.

Psalm 23 –

- He makes me lie down in green pastures
- He leads me beside quiet waters
- He refreshes my soul
- He guides me along the right paths
- I fear no evil in the darkest valley because he is with me
- His rod and staff comfort me
- He prepares a table before me in the presence of my enemies
- He anoints my head with oil
- My cup overflows
- His goodness and mercy follow me each day
- I will dwell in his house forever

When Jacob/Israel blessed Joseph, he said, *“My ancestors, Abraham and Isaac, worshiped our God, and that God has led me all my life”* (Gen 48:15).

Think about the gravity of that statement -

- Beersheba, where he was born and raised
- Bethel where he saw the ladder vision
- Haran, his uncle Laban's city (500 miles from Beersheba)
- Mizpah, (just outside of Damascus) where God intervened when Jacob fled Haran
- Mahanaim, where a host of angels comforted him
- Peniel where he wrestled with God
- Succoth where he built a house (still on the east side of the Jordan)
- Shechem where he bought land and built another house in Canaan
- Bethel, where he renewed his vow to God and built an altar
- Bethlehem, where Benjamin was born and Rachel died in childbirth
- Hebron, where he met his aged father Isaac and fashioned Joseph's coat of many colors. It was from here that he lost Joseph.
- Beersheba, where he sacrificed on the way to Egypt
- Egypt, where he met Joseph once again and made his home in Goshen.
- Hebron, where he was buried in the family tomb

Practical Application: Encourage yourself by creating a time or place map of God encounters, times and places God has providentially revealed himself to you and/or acted on your behalf

How is God able to be in so many places and do all of these things?

c) *A Difference - You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth.*

In Is 6, it's seraphim who fly before the throne, crying, "Holy, Holy, Holy..."

- Guardians of the Garden – Gen 3:24
- Attendants of God's throne – Ps 18:9-10; 80:1; 99:1)

Ezekiel sees them as living creatures who have four faces: man, lion, ox and eagle, the figure of a person with human hands but feet of cattle. Each has four wings; two stretched upward and two stretched downward and from whose bodies lighting proceeds (Ez 1). <https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/cherubim-1/>

God isn't a normal shepherd. He's a divine shepherd who commands angels to minister to his people (Hb 1:14).

From this experience, we are left to say with Jeremiah, "*Ah, Sovereign LORD, you have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for you*" (29:17).

Second: The Psalmist's Plea 2, 3, 7 & 19

2 - Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh, stir up your might and come to save us!

These three tribes were together on the East side of the Tabernacle in the wilderness. They were the three tribes that went to retrieve the ark when it was stolen (Nu 2; 10).

The God who led them out of Egypt, through the wilderness and into the Promised Land, is sufficient to now save them

Practical Application: It is often good to rehearse God's past goodness in order to sustain present our faith

3 - *Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved!*

7 - *Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved!*

19 - *Restore us, O LORD God of hosts! Let your face shine, that we may be saved!*

a) Restore us

Asaph's plea is not for rescue but reformation. He does not say, "Turn our captors" but "Turn us."

b) Let your face shine

Of course, this thought comes from Moses's meetings with God where God's face shone toward him (Ex 34). Also, when God placed him in the cleft of the rock and showed him his backside (Ex 33:22).

To have someone's face is to have their favor, their blessing.

It is not God who has turned his face. Israel, like Peter, has turned away from God.

Luke 22:61-62 - *The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times." ⁶² And he went outside and wept bitterly.*

Did you see that? Jesus looked at Peter, but Peter looked away. He looked away and then he went away. And the same thing happens to us.

c) That we may be saved

To have God's face is to have his salvation. His face is salvation.

Gospel: God has not turned his face from us. In fact, he turned his face from Jesus at Calvary so that he might never turn his face from us.

In Jesus, God is *“just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus”* (Ro 3:26).

This is what I mean by gaining a vision of God in Scripture. To see God’s face is to see your salvation; to know that you are saved and to be assured of it.

ILL – Think of all the people in the Gospels who came saw Jesus’s face and were saved. There is even a record of one woman who didn’t see his face and was healed

T - Mark 5:21-36 – This unnamed woman was healed before she saw Jesus’s face, before Jesus saw her face. But then, when she saw his face, everyone knew she was healed.

Conclusion:

- Psalm 79 asks for deliverance through judgment on the enemies.
- Psalms 80 asks for deliverance by turning the hearts of God's people back to God.
- In Psalm 81 we find God's response.

God’s ultimate response is, of course, in the Great and Good Shepherd (John 10:14) who is Jesus.

Real salvation is seeing him.

Community Groups:

- 1 – How are you doing during Covid-10?
- 2 – What specific prayer requests might you have?
- 3 – To whom are you ministering during this time?
- 4 – What about your daily Bible reading?
- 5 – Read Psalm 80.
- 6 – Are Israel’s circumstances anything like ours?
- 7 – What does the Bible tell us about God hearing us?
- 8 – When you think of Psalm 23, how has God shepherded you?

9 – What historic places or times in your life demonstrate God’s shepherding of your life?

10 – Why is it beneficial to think about God’s past goodness to us?

11 – What specific goodnesses could you now recall?

12 – Why is seeing God’s face, having God turn his face toward you, a symbol of salvation?

13 – How does Jesus fulfil the heartbeat of this Psalm?

14 – Take time now to consider how you might minister to one another

15 – How might you minister to the church body?

16 – How might you minister to our community?

Family Tree of the Twelve Tribes

12 Tribes of Israel



