

REDEEMER

R E P O R T

SEPTEMBER 2007

CHRIST AND THE PSALMS

BY TIM KELLER

Each year I use the slower summer months to deepen my prayer life. This year I did something that I have sometimes recommended to others, but which I have not worked very hard at myself. Let me share it with you.

Between his resurrection and ascension Jesus spent 40 days instructing his disciples in how to read the Bible ‘Christocentrically.’ He taught the disciples on the Emmaus road (Luke 24:25-27) and in the upper room (Luke 24:44-47) that the ‘*the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms*’ were all about him. The apostles learned their lessons. In Psalm 69 David says, “*The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.*”

(v.9) This is something that any faithful witness will experience, and there is nothing in Psalm 69 that seems to have reference to any Messianic figure. Yet Paul quotes it as being descriptive of Christ (Rom 15:1-4). (For other examples, see Romans 15:8-9 using Psalm 18:49 and Hebrews 10:5-7 citing Psalm 40:6-8) And during Jesus’ life, he himself constantly quotes all sorts of ordinary Psalms as if they all referred to him. If we go back and read these Psalms, we realize that we would never have understood them as references to Christ if he hadn’t told us.

What does all this mean? There are a number of Psalms

(e.g. Psalms 2, 22, 110) that seem to be talking prophetically of a future Messiah, some great King or sufferer who will put the world right. These have traditionally been called ‘Messianic Psalms’ and read with reference to the person and work of Christ. But the usage of the Psalms by Jesus and his apostles shows that they considered *every* Psalm to have at least some reference to Jesus and his saving work. So what does this mean for us practically? It opens up a spiritually rich way to read, meditate, and pray the Psalms.

It is normal to read the Psalms *personally*. That is, we identify with the Psalmist, with his fears,

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PROVOKING OUR COLLECTIVE COMMUNITY IMAGINATION – PART II

BY MARK ROBINSON

So getting into a small group is necessary, desirable, helpful, obedient, etc. Agreed, right?

But as we all know, insight is not the same as change. *Money* magazine surveyed the principal reasons Fortune 500 CEO’s were fired. Lack of implementation/execution was the number one reason. These were intelligent,

highly capable women and men, full of inspiring ideas for what the company could be and where it could go. Yet those lofty visions were not translated into on-the-ground corporate realities. So, being stirred by a fresh vision of the necessity of small group life is not enough—the path to isolated individualism is

paved with the good intentions to develop authentic, rewarding community life. Having perceived the need, we need to act.

The call is to pursue a safe place where you can know and be known by others. In a big church like Redeemer, participation in community life happens in small

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DOES YOUR WORK MATTER?

BY KATHERINE LEARY

My work matters to God, but does *yours*? After all, I work at a church. So where does that leave the rest of you?

No doubt that there are things that are easier about working at a church like Redeemer (compared to business, entertainment, education, healthcare, and everywhere else) when you're trying to live out your faith in everything you do. It's frowned on if we yell, swear, and overly abuse our colleagues, for example.

But one of the things that Luther made very clear 400 years ago was that a "priestly calling" was in no way more pleasing to God than any other calling or vocation. (He even intimated that any calling was to be preferred over a career in the church!) In fact, in the early days of Redeemer we often referred to ourselves as a "priesthood of all believers"—everyone in the church was being called to become Christ's ambassadors in and to NYC.

No one's role or vocation—from Tim Keller's to the most recent college grad—was more important a "calling" in the eyes of God or the church. As a matter of fact, the role of the now large Redeemer staff can best be compared to that of a back office support organization to those of you in line organizations in the worlds of finance, government, law, education, healthcare, and the arts. When we as a church aim to renew the city, we mean for *all* the people of the church to join

in doing that—in our various neighborhoods, social circles and vocations.

That we are charged with that role is clear. But moving from the *vision* of gospel-centered cultural renewal to the *strategic plan* and actual *tactics* is more problematic. What career and then job do we pursue? What can we do that's of any importance in those careers and jobs? How, if we take off our masks of pretence, could we possibly contribute anything that God would want to use to build His kingdom here on earth?

Of course, the problem of career decision-making is hardly a uniquely Christian dilemma. A whole industry of self-assessment, coaching, and training has developed to help us cope with our increasing scope of opportunity and to work within our strengths such that we increase our odds of success and happiness. Fortunately we can secure professional, paid help to compensate for living in a highly mobile, individualistic society in which it's hard to develop friendships and relationships that can meaningfully speak into these decisions. (Others in Redeemer would like to counter that cultural norm by creating a different kind of community that forms deep relationships, so you might want to consider joining in.)

For a Christian the challenge is four-fold:

1. What work do I do that reflects my desire to glorify God?

2. How do I grow so that my character demonstrates God's Love?
3. How do I make it possible for others to know and serve God?
4. How do I serve God in ways that make a difference in the future of the world and contribute to His coming Kingdom?

In his book, *Seven Days of Faith*, R. Paul Stevens has a chapter called "Hope: Making Our Mark on Heaven." He talks about the promise that Christ will come again, renew all things and that through serving him we get to contribute to that "renewing." Stevens captures the heart of our hope: "Being heavenly minded allows us to work on insoluble problems in the world with hope but without being naively confident in our own efforts or burning out in discouragement while we try to make the perfect future happen." What do we need? Faith, hope and love—both in our hearts and in every task of every job we do.

This fall, let's recommit to exploring who God is in the context of our work and work lives. The many leaders of ministries through Redeemer's Center for Faith and Work (CFW) look forward to the opportunity to talk with you at our church-wide fall kickoff event on September 20.

Note: Paul Stevens is the speaker at CFW's Fall Retreat on "Calling" September 7-9, 2007.

REDEEMER REPORT

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HUNTER COLLEGE AUDITORIUM East 69TH (Between Park & Lexington) services at 10:30AM • 6:00PM	ETHICAL CULTURE West 64TH and CPW service at 9:15AM	FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH Corner of West 79TH and Broadway service at 5:00PM & 7:15PM
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CFW UPCOMING EVENTS

Date & Time	Event & Location
Wednesday, September 5 at 7:00PM	Graduate Students Book Club <i>Redeemer Offices</i>
Thursday, September 6 at 7:00PM	Law Professions Dinner <i>Redeemer Offices</i>
Friday, September 7 to Sunday, September 9	CFW Retreat <i>Trinity Conference Center</i>
Wednesday, September 12 at 7:00PM	Marketing Professions Strategy Dinner <i>Redeemer Offices</i>
Wednesday, September 12 at 7:00PM	Graduate Students Group Kickoff (tentative) <i>New York University</i>
Thursday, September 13 at 7:00PM	Healthcare Fellowship Prayer Meeting <i>www.faithandwork.org/healthcare</i>
Sunday, September 16 at 12:00PM	Healthcare Fellowship Luncheon <i>Meet at 69th St. entrance at Hunter College</i>
Wednesday, September 19 at 7:00PM	Faith in Power: When Leaders Bring Values to Work <i>Redeemer Offices</i>
Sunday, September 20 at 6:00PM	Redeemer Connect? Ministry Fair <i>Manhattan Center Grand Ballroom, 311 W. 34th St. (8th & 9th)</i>
Monday, September 24 at 7:00PM	Financial Services Ministry Monthly Fellowship <i>Redeemer Offices</i>
Tuesday, September 25 at 7:00PM	Advertising Group Kickoff <i>Redeemer Offices</i>
Thursday, September 27 at 7:00PM	Healthcare Fellowship Prayer Meeting <i>www.faithandwork.org/healthcare</i>

Please go to www.faithandwork.org to RSVP or register for all CFW events. We hope you'll join us!

doubts, guilt, joys, aims, and griefs. We watch how he processes them before God. Then we may follow along his example, do the same thing with our own concerns, sins, and problems.

It is less typical, but proper, to also read the Psalms *communally*. Ancient people had no identity or value apart from their role in their community. The Psalms were ways that the community of Israel healed and repaired itself, celebrated God's goodness to it, related to the world and other nations, and evaluated its own culture. Christians today should not miss the communal and cultural implications of the Psalms. They help us think about how we are called to live as the people of God before the watching world.

Lastly, however, we should also read the Psalms *Christocentrically*, as Jesus and the apostles did. How can we do that? First, we should remember that Jesus during his life on earth would have prayed all the Psalms constantly. Imagine how Jesus, knowing he had come to die and rise again for us, would have sung these divine songs. Think of how he would have responded to those Psalms in which the author cries out that he is an innocent sufferer, a victim of injustice, that he is being attacked 'without cause' (Ps 35:7) or that he is suffering though he has done nothing wrong (Ps 7:3-4).

All such talk from flawed human beings is only relatively true. But Jesus knew that he would be the victim of the ultimate injustice. The criminals (we human beings) would attack the perfect Creator and Judge of the world. Jesus quotes this Psalm in John 15:25 showing that he knew he was the one truly, completely innocent sufferer. He would die in our stead to pay for our sins so the Father can receive us despite

our wrongdoing.

Think of how Jesus would have responded to the Psalmist speaking of the cruelty of betrayal. Close companions and friends sometimes turn on us. "*If an enemy were raising himself against me, I could endure it...but it is you...my companion, my close friend*" (Psalm 55:12-14). Nothing cuts deep like this experience, and most of us have felt the pain of it. But Jesus knew that all human beings have betrayed God. We have all refused to give him his due. He also knew that he would be betrayed and abandoned by his closest friends. Just as Judas and Peter are about to do their dirty work, Jesus quotes Psalm 41:9 ("*my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me*"). Over the years he had read these betrayal Psalms knowing that, though we have been faithless to him, he would be faithful to us, even unto death, so that we betrayers could be saved.

Why should we discipline ourselves to read the Psalms 'through Jesus?' Suppose you have been badly betrayed by a friend or loved one. You are filled with anger and anxiety over it. So you open your Bible to Psalm 41 and 55 and see the Psalmist wrestling just like you but, in the end, forgiving and trusting God. So you try to be like David—you try to do the same thing. But your heart remains hard. Now on top of feeling angry and anxious you also feel guilty. Psalm 41 as an example may be a crushing pattern that we can't live up to. But if we begin to read it Christocentrically, and think about how *we* have been faithless to Jesus, but he has been faithful and merciful to us, that will humble us and affirm us powerfully. It will make it far easier to walk away from the pride and self-righteousness fuelling

our bitterness.

If you read this way, the insights will be endless. Psalm 27 speaks about hunger for the beauty of God (v.4) who will never forsake us (v.10). It will lead us to think of Jesus who was forsaken for us, and who lost all his heavenly beauty (Isaiah 53:2) so that we would be made beautiful to God (Phil 3:8-9). Psalm 29 speaks about the power of God over the flood and storm, and how God sometimes seems to be asleep in the storm when we are sinking (Psalm 44:23). It will lead us to think of Jesus, who with a word showed his power over the storm, though appearing to be asleep (Mark 4). Don't try to hurry Jesus. He knows what he is doing.

Don't just think about how Jesus would have sung a particular Psalm. Once you have thought things out, sing the Psalm *to* Jesus. When you come to a Lament, you nearly automatically think of it in reference to suffering or feelings you have had. Remember what he suffered. When you come to a Psalm of refuge, remember that we 'hide' in him and he covers our sins from punishment, which is the only real danger. When you come to a Psalm of wisdom, remember that the gospel is the only way to make sense of the ambiguities of life—you are a righteous sinner, living in the overlap of the ages.

So consider a 'tri-perspectival' approach to reading the Psalms. Read them *personally* (How does this tell me about my own heart?) Read them *communally* (How does this tell me I should be living among the people of God?) And read them *Christocentrically* (How would Jesus have read this Psalm? How does this Psalm shed light on who Jesus is and what he did?)

REDEEMER'S SUMMER 2007 REAL ESTATE REPORT

Thank you to everyone who participated in our focus groups, discussion groups, and congregational surveys. Over the summer we have been reviewing the information you have given us and been consulting with the leaders of Redeemer's various ministry fronts, and are pleased to let you know that we have determined the types of programs we will be designing our new building at 150 West 83rd Street to house.

We are also excited to announce that we have selected an architectural firm and a construction management firm for Redeemer's first permanent

location! The building will be designed by Gertler & Wentz Architects, LLP, and the construction will be overseen by Sciamè.

We are now looking at several different proposals for the schematic design of the building, and are engaging in a crucial pricing exercise that will help us decide on a final layout.

All the designs include a worship sanctuary that will be able to seat about 900 people (plus an overflow room) and a fellowship hall for coffee and pastries after each service. In addition to classrooms for the children's ministry and offices for counseling and for pastoral work,

our design will include space for the School of Gospel Foundations, making SOGF classes finally available to West Side members of our congregation!

Perhaps most excitingly, we will also be building a community space, allowing us to open our doors to our new neighbors and show gospel hospitality to the city in a way in which Redeemer has never before been able.

Again, we thank you for all of your support and your prayers. We are humbled by God's provision, and look forward to serving our church, our city, and our world together.

PROVOKING IMAGINATION PART – II

(CONT'D FROM PAGE 1)

groups. Fellowship Groups are the most effective way we have to live fruitfully and spiritually beneficially with one another. These are the communities in which we can care for and be cared for by others. The simple challenge is to step out courageously in faith and join one.

Quite frankly, it is just plain fun to meet new people and to connect with fellow urbanites around things as diverse as Bible discussion and barbecue, community service and Coltrane. Fellowship groups hold the prospect of enjoying God's world with his people even as both are renewed and transformed in the process.

Bethany Jenkins, a Fellowship Group leader, was surprised by what happened when she took a risk and started her Fellowship

Group: "I talked with another friend who was already in a Redeemer group. Although neither of us had ever led a group before, we decided to try it out and knew, at least, we had one member—my roommate. We told a few people about the group, those people told their friends, and a month later we had 15 people and were over capacity. Within a year, we separated into four groups to accommodate more people. Again, friends told friends and very shortly all four of those groups were full and had to turn people away."

Not all groups will experience this same rapid growth. But it is an example of what can happen when people put feet on their desires for genuine community and get involved. Bethany admits that she did "...nothing spectacu-

lar. I saw a need, I talked with a friend about it, and we took a risk." God loves it when we take a risk for the sake of meeting His people's needs. When we bring people together in fellowship, we are helping one another experience His kingdom.

The gospel calls us to do more than admire the idea of authentic community. We are called to follow the One who laid down His life so that we could find our own, even as we lay down our own lives for others. We are called to make room for them and participate in our new life together.

If you've had your imagination stirred by the call to real life together, then make that into a reality and join or lead a Fellowship Group.

