



ADULT UNIT II: Expressing Hope
ADULT GENERAL LESSON TITLE: Expectant Watchfulness
ADULT TOPIC: God Redeems Us

LESSON 9
DATE: July 28, 2024

DEVOTIONAL READING: Matthew 25:1-13
BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Psalm 130
PRINT PASSAGE: Same

Home Daily Bible Reading

July 22	M	2 Peter 1:16-21	Await the Dawning Day
July 23	T	2 Peter 3:1-15a	Await and Hasten God's New Creation
July 24	W	Psalm 59:1-9, 17	I Watch for God My Fortress
July 25	Th	Matthew 25:1-13	Watch and Be Ready
July 26	F	Matt 25:14-21, 24-30	Watch and Work Faithfully
July 27	Sa	Lamentations 3:25-36	Wait for God's Salvation
July 28	Su	Psalm 130	Wait and Hope in the Lord

EXALT!

Invocation – Teacher or learner

Celebration – “Just as I Am, without One Plea” - #415 AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal

Declaration – Psalm 130 (Read together by class, by a volunteer or responsibly)

Waiting for Divine Redemption

A Song of Ascents

¹ Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. ² Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications!

³ If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? ⁴ But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered.

⁵ I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; ⁶ my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, more

than those who watch for the morning.

7 O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is great power to redeem. 8 It is he who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities.

Affirmation – We develop confidence in God’s steadfast love and desire to forgive. (*Spoken together by class and teacher*).

ENGAGE: (5-10 min.)

People are often their own worst enemies. What are ways to address the enemy that is “us”? Psalm 130 reminds us that our sins may drag us down, but the Lord’s power to redeem us will set us on our feet again.

Break into small groups and discuss the following questions: 1) Under what types of circumstances do you/we experience the need for forgiveness? What about our need to forgive others? Is this also sometimes a pressing need? Why or why not? Do we sometimes experience a strong need to forgive ourselves? Why might it be necessary sometimes to forgive ourselves in order to find peace? 2) Within the same vein, consider the fact that we often have difficulty accepting forgiveness as well as extending forgiveness to others? Give examples. Why do you think this is so? 3) Consider the problem of evil. Is it a universal existence that impacts all people? How do you cope with it?



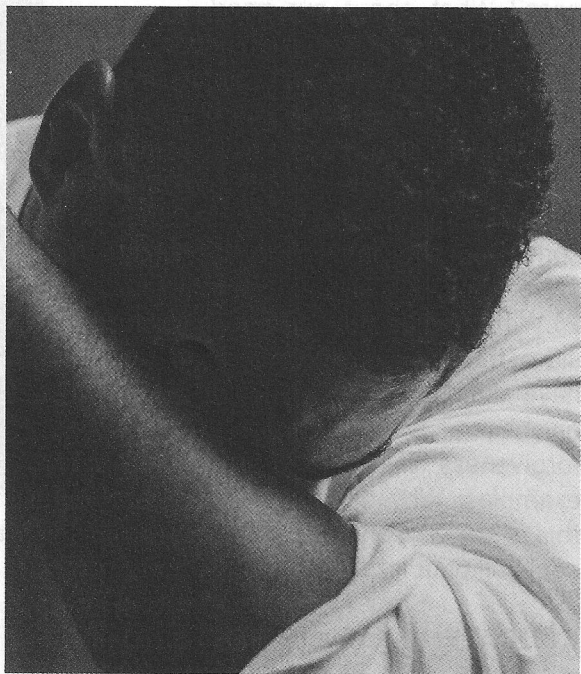
EDUCATE: (10-15 min.)

Psalm 130:1-4: This penitential psalm was a favorite of Martin Luther’s, and it was the inspiration for his hymn “Out of the Depths I Cry to Thee,” which is a

direct quotation of verse 1. Luther considered it one of the “Pauline” psalms, not to claim Paul’s authorship but to acknowledge the theological similarity to Paul’s message. The “depths” (v. 1) are a common metaphor in the psalter to indicate the spiritual affliction suffered by the speaker. Here it is a feeling of being separated from God on account of one’s iniquities (vv. 3, 8). Particularly “Pauline” is the psalmist’s question, “If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand?” (v. 3). The answer to the rhetorical question, of course, is “No one.” The psalmist laments human nature’s tendency toward sin in contrast to God’s righteousness. The psalm focuses not on the outer, but rather, on the terrible inner forces of human sin that come “from the human tendency to allow vices [evil] to overcome us. That tendency threatens to take over everything we do and are thwarting our best plans and spoiling our best intentions” (*Ibid.*, p. 410).

Psalm 130:5-8: Also, strikingly “Pauline” is the pairing of human iniquity with divine forgiveness, love, and mercy. The latter is expressed in verse 4– “But there is forgiveness with you”—and verse 7– “For with the Lord there is steadfast love.” God’s posture toward humanity is not one of judgment but of mercy. And so, moving from an attitude of despair (“out of the depths”), the “focus shifts toward God’s inclination to save and the consequent hope that” (*Ibid.*, p. 411) all

Israel may share. Thus, God’s mercy is the psalmist’s and the people’s source of hope (v. 5) as the Lord is the source of redemption (vv. 7-8). Indeed, divine forgiveness turns this penitential psalm, which began with a lament (v. 1), into a song of praise. In summary, “The poem, though very short, moves in several steps, from a statement of need addressed to God, to an acknowledgment of God’s mercy and confession of hope, to an address to all Israel.... [Beginning with] a cry to God, as most laments do... [the psalm moves quickly to praise] born out of gratitude for God’s generous response

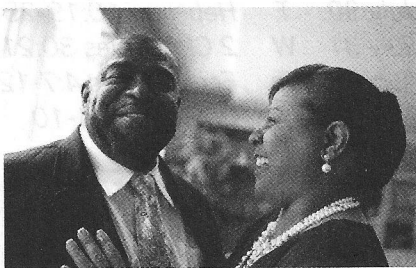


to the petition for help” (*Ibid.*) “As laments often do, the psalm ends with an expression of deep trust in God (example: Psalm 22). This ending repositions

the whole poem because it moves the readers from focusing on the individual to God's care for the whole people. In God's great mercy lies hope for Israel and everyone within it.... There is a tight connection between the individual's experience and the community's proclamation. The people of Israel were the community whom God rescued from evil in all its manifestations, of which we are the spiritual descendants. The people announced and celebrated the good news that such a deliverance had occurred (example: Exodus 15), and they sought more of it. And, of course, that understanding also applies to the church, the community grafted into Israel (Romans 9-11). We also experience, both as individuals and as a community, the power of God's forgiveness, which we imitate in our dealings with others" (*Ibid.*, pp. 414-415).

ELEVATE: (10 min.)

Gather in small groups and share your perception of the truth and validity of the following: 1) We are steadily gaining a spiritual understanding of our need for forgiveness, and we connect God's hearing of our prayers with God's forgiveness and redemption. 2) We accept forgiveness from God and therefore respond by forgiving others. 3) We grow in dependence upon God as we fail in living up to God's standards of righteousness and constantly pray for forgiveness and strength to overcome our weakness.



iTHINK: (5-7 min.)

1. Sing or read together Martin Luther's hymn "Out of the Depths I Cry to Thee." What does this song have in common with the psalm?
2. Examine the psalmist's comparison of those who wait on God's answers to "those who watch for the morning."
3. Write a psalm to God asking for forgiveness.
4. Write a response to that psalm in the form of a letter from God.
5. Outline the psalm according to theme. What do we learn about the psalmist's perspective on redemption?
6. Explore the "depths." What does the psalmist mean by the "depths"? What helps others when they are in the depths? Explore the difference between empathy and sympathy.

KEY VERSE: O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with him is great power to redeem. Psalm 130:7