

Sunday Morning Message

July 2, 2023

Title – *Psalm 80 – Visit This Vine*

Text – Psalm 80

Congregational Reading – Psalm 80:14 - 19

Introduction

"14 Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; 15 And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch that thou madest strong for thyself." (Psalm 80:14-15)

The context of this passage of Scripture involves a period in the history of Israel, which is the vine referenced in v.14, when the people of God were under judgment due to their falling away from Him. Most people believe that it specifically involves the time of the Babylonian captivity. You will remember that God raised up the nation of Babylon to come and judge the southern kingdom of Judah in 586 BC because God's people had turned away from Him and had fallen deeply into idolatry and immorality. The psalmist was pleading with God to return His favor to the vine of Judah, which was the southern kingdom of Israel, and to allow her to be restored to a place of God's blessing, a place of divine provision and miraculous protection.

As a child of God today, I desire the same thing for my home, my church, and my nation. I so desperately want to see God move in my family and in my church, my community, and my nation. I want to see the evidence of God's hand in the place where He has called me to live and to minister. I want God to visit the vine called Jersey Shore Baptist Church. I want God to use this place as a bright light in a dark world. I want to see multitudes of souls saved here in and through this place, and I want to see wayward saints return to the vineyard.

I believe this can happen. I believe we can see a great revival, even in these last days. But how is it going to happen? The answer to that question is found in vs. 3, 7, & 19. Three times the psalmist pleads with God:

"Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved."

Notice that it begins with a movement of God. The Psalmist asks God to move in the hearts of the people and cause them to desire to be turned toward the things of God:

*"13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."
(Philippians 2:13)*

I guess that's kind of what God has called me to do as a preacher. My job, in part, is to plead with the people and exhort them to turn away from the world and their sin and turn back toward God. There cannot be a salvation without a turning. Don't misunderstand, I do not believe that this Psalm is specifically dealing with the salvation of an individual soul from the eternal penalty of Hell, but the principle can be applied. For a person to be saved they obviously must turn to God, and to be moving in the direction of God, one must be moving away from their sin.

The same is true for the revival of our worldly, cold, and indifferent hearts within the community of believers and specifically within this local church. We need to turn away from our sin and all the trifles that this world has to offer and turn back to God with all our hearts. We are living here on this earth and within this community for a purpose, but merely living here is not that purpose. We are here to glorify our Lord in this dark world by shining the light of His glorious gospel to everyone that we meet.

As we think about our nation, which is a place that was founded primarily by people who sought freedom to worship God. It was John Winthrop who referred to the New World as "a city upon a hill," which was a direct reference to what Jesus was talking about in His Sermon on the Mount when He said, "*Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid*" (Matthew 5:14). America became that city upon a hill, a place where the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ could be preached freely, and from here spread to the uttermost parts of the earth. However, she has become a cesspool of immorality. America, like the nation of Israel from this psalm, has turned her back on God and turned to the idols of entertainment and pleasure. Just think about the hot button topics of our day: abortion, homosexuality, transgenderism, hormonal treatments sex-altering medical procedures for children, without parents' permission. There was a time when topics like this would not even be whispered by even the most liberal in society, but today it is being shouted from the housetops, and even from within the mainline denominational churches. How far we have gotten away from God. America needs revival. The vine of America needs God to visit her again.

Transition

As we read through this psalm, let us consider where we have spiritually fallen as a nation, and let us pay particular attention to the areas where individually we are slipping away from God.

Introduction to the Psalms of Asaph

Psalm 73 through 83, as well as Psalm 50, are attributed to Asaph. Asaph was a musician who was also a worship leader in the sanctuary. (See 1 Chronicles 15:16–19; 16:4–7, 37–42; 2 Chronicles 5:12–14; 29:13; 35:15).

Introduction to Psalm 80

“To the chief Musician upon Shoshannimeduth, A Psalm of Asaph.”

“Shoshannimeduth” – means “lilies”. Remember, the Lord Jesus is the Lily of the Valley. This is the same Hebrew word that is found in the introduction of Psalm 60, though the English translation, “Shushaneduth,” is slightly different.

The context of this psalm possibly deals with the destruction of the northern kingdom by the Assyrians, or as in some of the other psalms that we have seen, it could be reflective of the Babylonian captivity. Either way, it is apparent that this Asaph was not the same person that was the worship leader in David’s day. The name, “Asaph,” became a title of sorts for the worship leaders in the Temple who descended from the original Asaph.

I. The Ruins of the Present (vs. 1 – 7)

1. Notice in v. 1 – “O Shepherd of Israel” – We have seen in Psalm 23 that the Lord is our Shepherd. According to John 10, Jesus is the Good Shepherd. Also, in Hebrews.

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,” (Hebrews 13:20)

2. Notice in v. 2 - Joseph, Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh – The two half-tribes of Joseph were Ephraim and Manasseh. Benjamin was Joseph’s younger brother. According to Numbers 2:17 – 24, during the wilderness wandering the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin made up the west side camp surrounding the Tabernacle. These were the tribes that followed the ark of the covenant as the Israelites travelled eastward.

3. Notice the four references to the word “shine” in vs. 1, 3, 7, and in 19. This also can be seen in Psalm 31:16, and Psalm 67:1; and in Psalm 119:35. It speaks of having God’s favor and blessing. When God’s face is shining on you, you are being blessed of God.

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them.” (Numbers 6:22-27)

4. Notice vs. 4 – 6 - You can see why I placed the title, “**the ruins of the present,**” for this portion of the psalm. It is clearly talking about a time in Israel’s history when God was no longer blessing them abundantly as He once did. It speaks of God’s anger in v. 4, and their tears in v. 5. It also speaks of fighting and enemies in v. 6. Israel had no enemies when they were in a right relationship with God.

II. The Remembrance of Past (vs. 8 – 11)

These verses speak of Israel in her heyday when God was abundantly blessing them. During the reign of King David and early in the reign of Solomon, Israel had no enemies and was the capital of the world economically, politically, and spiritually.

We cannot help but make the comparison to America. She was once the strongest and the greatest in every category, but today we see her weakening. She has turned her back on God and she is beginning to see the consequences of that decision.

Notice in v. 8 Israel is compared to a vine.

Turn to Isaiah 5:1 – 7

Turn to Matthew 21:33 – 46 – The vineyard of Israel is still in ruins today because they have not turned to the Lord.

This psalm tells the story of the once tremendously blessed nation of Israel that had turned her back on the Lord and was now reaping the judgment that came because of her actions. It is important also to remember that the judgment depicted in this psalm came about after years of repeated warnings from the Lord and calls for repentance.

Note – America had better learn from this. We also as individuals would do well to learn from this.

"Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded." (James 4:8)

III. The Return of the People (vs. 12 – 19)

Throughout the psalm, the psalmist gives the cure. If God is going to visit the vine (v. 14), the people of God will have to repent and turn back to Him. God's face shines on the nation, on the community, on the church, on the individual Christian that is in a right relationship with Him:

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." (2 Chronicles 7:14)

Conclusion

America is no longer the shining light for the Lord as it once was; it is no longer "the city upon a hill," and it is all because we have forsaken God. We still send out more missionaries than any other Christian nation, but the number of Christians in America in proportion to the population is decreasing, and the number of missionaries sent per number of church members is also decreasing. Nations like Brazil, South Korea, India, and even Palestine send

out more missionaries proportionately than America does. And we are losing more and more ground every day. We need as a nation to turn back to the Lord.

But America corporately is moving in the wrong direction because the individual Christians are moving in the wrong direction, away from God.

Ask yourself the following questions:

1. Am I as spiritually minded today as I once was?
2. Did I used to spend more time in prayer in the past than I do today?
3. Did I read my Bible more in the past than I do today?
4. Was there a time in my Christian life that I had a greater burden for souls than I do today?
5. Did I used to go to church more often than I do today? Have I become far more tolerant about missing church today than I used to? What are the reasons today that I would allow compared to the time when I was the closest to the Lord?
6. Am I as separated from the world today as I once was? Are there places you will go today that you wouldn't have gone in the past? Are there activities that you wouldn't do in the past that you are willing to do today? Are there things that you would not dare wear in the past that you are perfectly OK with today?

If your answers to these questions indicate that you are moving away from God, then where do you think you will end up five or ten years from now?

Where do you think your children will end up? Or your grandchildren? Are they going to keep moving away, perhaps further, and faster than you are.

Psalm 80 reveals a once prosperous nation of Israel that was now in a bad way and was looking back trying to figure out how they got so far away from God, and how they were going to get back to where they needed to be.

America needs to do the same thing. She is away from God because her churches are away from God, and her churches are away from God because the individual Christians are away from God.

The reason why America is in the mess that is in today is because you and I are in a mess spiritually. We (Me, You) are the reason that America is failing, and we (Me, You) are the only hope for fixing the problem. We need God to visit our individual vines, and to visit our churches, if we are ever going to see a change in this nation. *"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."* (2 Chronicles 7:14)