

Psalms of Blessedness: The Antiphons

Theme

The Psalms form the pattern for true worship, describing the blessed human who is ultimately realized in Christ who humbled himself even to death on the cross for our salvation.

Outline

The Psalms
The Beatitudes
The Refrains
The Quiet Prayers

Scripture References¹

Genesis 1.26–27
Leviticus 19.9–10
Ruth 2
Psalm 1
Psalm 88.8 (89.7)
Matthew 5.1–12
Luke 6.20–26
John 19.5
1 Corinthians 1.18–31
Ephesians 1.8
Philippians 2.5–11

Glossary

Antiphon: Lines drawn from the Psalms sung alternating between chanter and congregation.

Quote

The way up is the way down, pivoted upon the Cross.

— Fr John Behr expanding on the ancient saying in *John the Theologian & his Paschal Gospel*

Resources

John the Theologian & his Paschal Gospel: A Prologue to Theology; John Behr
The Mystery of Christ: Life in Death; John Behr
The Life in Christ; St Nicholas Cabasilas

¹ References from the Greek Bible; differing Hebrew Bible references are noted in parentheses.

The Quiet Prayers of the Antiphons

1st Antiphon:

O Lord our God, whose might is beyond compare, whose glory is incomprehensible, whose mercy is boundless, and whose love toward mankind is ineffable: Do thou thyself, O Master, in thy tender compassion look down upon us and upon this holy house, and grant us and those who pray with us thy rich mercies and compassions.

For unto thee are due all glory, honor, and worship to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

2nd Antiphon:

O Lord our God, save thy people, and bless thine inheritance; preserve the fullness of thy Church, sanctify those who love the beauty of thy house, glorify them in recompense by thy divine power, and forsake us not who hope on thee.

For thine is the might, and thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.

3rd Antiphon:

O thou who hast given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplications unto her: and dost promise that when two or three are gathered together in thy Name thou wilt grant their requests: Fulfill now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants as may be most expedient for them, granting us in this world the knowledge of thy truth, and in the world to come, life everlasting.

For thou art a good God and loveth mankind, and unto thee we ascribe glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

Extended Edition E-mail

Scriptures References²

Genesis 1.26–27

Then God said, “Let us make humankind according to our image and according to likeness, and let them rule the fish of the sea and the birds of the sky and the cattle and all the earth and all the creeping things that creep upon the earth.”

And God made humankind;

according to divine image he made it;

male and female he made them.

Leviticus 19.9–10 NETS

And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not make a thorough job of your harvest, to harvest your field altogether, and you shall not gather what falls down of your harvest. And you shall not harvest your vineyard over again or gather the grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the guest; it is I who am the Lord your God.

Leviticus 19.9–10 ESV

When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge [or corner], neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the LORD your God.

Ruth 2

A bit long to reproduce here, but Boaz, the kinsman-redeemer, invites Ruth to reap the harvest with his workers instead of gleaning from the corners/edges of the field obligated to be left over for the poor from the Leviticus passage.

² Bible Versions:

ESV: English Standard Bible (a revision of the Revised Standard Version)

OSB/SAAS: Orthodox Study Bible/St Athanasius Academy Septuagint

LES: Lexham English Septuagint (a diplomatic translation of the Vatican Codex)

LEB: Lexham English Bible (From Hebrew OT, and Greek NT)

NET: New English Translation (with extensive translation notes) (not related to the NETS)

NETS: New English Translation of the Septuagint (an academic translation of the Septuagint , in these quotes proper names have been standardized)

Psalm 1 NETS

Happy [Blessed] the man

who did not walk by the counsel of the impious,
and in the way of sinners did not stand,
and on the seat of pestiferous people did not sit down.

Rather, his will is in the law of the Lord,
and on his law he will meditate day and night.

And he will be like the tree

that was planted by the channels of waters,
which will yield its fruit in its season,
and its leaf will not fall off.

And all that he does, he will prosper.

No so the impious, not so!

Rather, they are like the dust that the wind flings from off the land.
Therefore the impious will not rise up in judgement,
nor sinners in the council of the righteous,
because the Lord knows the way of the righteous,
and the way of the impious will perish.

Psalm 88.8 (89.7) NETS

God is glorified in a council of holy ones³,
great and awesome to all that are around him.

Psalm 91 (92) NETS (the usual first antiphon)

A Psalm. Of an Ode. Regarding the day of the sabbath.

It is good to acknowledge the Lord

and to make music to your name, O Most High,
in order to declare your mercy in the morning
and your truth every night

on a ten-stringed harp,

with an ode on a lyre,
because you, O Lord, made me glad by your work,
and at the deeds of your hands I will rejoice.

How were your deeds extolled, O Lord!

Your thoughts reached great depth!
A foolish man will not know,
and a stupid one will not understand these things.

³ Or 'angels', but now after Christ's Resurrection, the saints are also among the holy ones..

When the sinners sprang up like grass
also all who practice lawlessness popped up
so that they may be destroyed forever and ever.
But you are most high forever, O Lord,
because, look, your enemies, O Lord,
because, look, your enemies shall perish
and all those who practice lawlessness shall be scattered.
And my horn will be exalted like a unicorn's,
and my old age with thick oil.
And my eye looked at my enemies,
and among those who keep rising against me, doing evil, my ear will hear.
A righteous one will flourish like a palm,
and like a cedar in Lebanon he will increase.
Planted in the house of the Lord,
in the courts of our God, they will flourish.
In prosperous old age they will still increase,
and they will be living in comfort,
to declare that the Lord my God is upright,
and there is no injustice in him.

Matthew 5.1–12 ESV

Seeing the crowds, he [Jesus] went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.
And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:
"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.
"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.
"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.
"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Luke 6.20–26 ESV

And he [Jesus] lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said:
"Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

"Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied.

"Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.

"Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.

"But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

"Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry.

"Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.

"Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.

John 19.5 ESV

So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Behold the man!"

1 Corinthians 1.18–31 ESV

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written,

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."

Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

Ephesians 1.7–10 ESV

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

Philippians 2.5–11 ESV

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 3.1 ESV

Finally, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you.

2 Thessalonians 1.5–10 ESV

This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering—since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day *to be glorified in his saints*⁴, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.

⁴ Psalm 88.8 (St Paul uses the LXX. Hebrew [89.7] has a different wording.)

Quotes

It was for the new human being that human nature was created at the beginning, and for him mind and desire were prepared.... We have memory in order that we may carry Him in us, since He Himself is the Archetype for those who are created, It was not the old Adam who was the model for the new, but the new Adam for the old, even though it is said the new Adam was generated according to the likeness at the old (Rom. 8:3) because of the corruption which the Old Adam initiated. The latter Adam inherited it in order that He might abolish the infirmity of our nature by means of the remedies which He brings and, as Paul says, so "that which is mortal might be swallowed up by life" (2 Cor. 5:4).

For those who have known him first, the old Adam is the archetype because of our fallen nature. But for Him who sees all things before they exist the first Adam is the imitation of the second. It was in accordance with His pattern and image that he was formed, but he did not continue thus.... Accordingly, it was the former who received the law but the latter who fulfilled it. Of the old Adam obedience was demanded; the new Adam, as Paul says, displayed it "unto death, even death on a cross" (Phil. 2:8)....Our nature from the beginning tended to immortality; it achieved it much later in the body of the Saviour who, when He had risen to immortal life from the dead, became the leader of immortality for our race.

To sum it up: the Saviour first and alone showed to us the true human being, who is perfect on account of both character and life and in all other respects....

So then, for all these reasons humanity strives for Christ by nature, by his will, by his thoughts, not only because of His Godhead which is the goal of all things, but because of His human nature as well. He is the resting place of human desires; He is the food of our thoughts. To love anything besides Him or to meditate on it is a manifest aberration from duty and a turning aside from the first principles of our nature.

St Nicholas Cabsillas *Life in Christ*

Again and again... This is not a repetition of earlier supplications; it is a search for new awareness.

Priestmonk Gregorios *The Divine Liturgy* (italics and ellipses in original)