

## “REENGAGING IN JUSTICE”

**INTRODUCTION:** When the second temple Levites put the Psalter together, they grouped Psalms in small collections...

1. One of those collections **Elmer A. Leslie** calls “Hymns to the Lord as Judge and Prayers for the Turn of Fortunes.”

a. *Psalms: Translated and Interpreted in the Light of Hebrew Life and Worship*; p. 58-59, 117-118.

b. A subset of a great collection of Psalms for the Hebrew New Year

i. A preparatory night hymn (Psalm 134)

ii. Enthronement Psalms (Psalms 47, 68, 93, 96-99)

iii. “New Songs” to God the King (Psalms 33 and 149)

iv. New Year’s Songs and Prayers

v. Hymns of National Thanksgiving

vi. Hymns to the Lord as Judge and Prayers for the Turn of Fortunes

c. *Certain psalms which have their worship setting in the ceremonies of the Hebrew New Year emphasize the Lord’s judgment of the earth, of the world, and of the nations. This is in harmony with what has ever been, and still is, the central emphasis of the Hebrew New Year celebration—the idea of the Kingdom of God. Moreover, this concept rests upon the deepest element in the religion of Israel, which goes back to Sinai and to Moses—the covenant which the Lord made with Israel. The New Year is the time when the covenant is annually renewed, when a new series of God’s dealings with His covenant people begins. (pp. 58-59)*

*The New Year festival as one of the central emphases celebrates the Lord as Judge. In one highly imaginative psalm, grand in conception, the newly enthroned King as Judge of the whole earth pronounces a death sentence upon the gods who had hitherto enthralled the earth in chaos. Other psalms which present the Lord as Judge think of Him, not as sentencing the gods and men, but rather as determining the fortunes and fixing the fates of mankind. (pp. 117-118)*

2. Whether this is so or not remains a speculation by Old Testament scholars. But, the observation is correct: *Israel thought of God as King, a sovereign King able to change the fortunes of men.*

3. **The status quo of this fallen world is not the final state. God is in heaven, and heaven rules over the earth: the Kingdom of God.**

*In the LORD I take refuge;  
how can you say to my soul,  
“Flee like a bird to your mountain,  
for behold, the wicked bend the bow;  
they have fitted their arrow to the string  
to shoot in the dark at the upright in heart;*

*if the foundations are destroyed,  
what can the righteous do?"*

*The LORD is in his holy temple;  
the LORD's throne is in heaven;  
his eyes see, his eyelids test the children of man.  
The LORD tests the righteous,  
but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence.  
Let him rain coals on the wicked;  
fire and sulfur and a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup.  
For the LORD is righteous;  
he loves righteous deeds;  
the upright shall behold his face. (Psalm 11:1-7)*

*The LORD looks down from heaven on the children of man,  
to see if there are any who understand,  
who seek after God.*

*They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt;  
there is none who does good,  
not even one. (Psalm 14:2-3)*

*Now I know that the LORD saves his anointed;  
he will answer him from his holy heaven  
with the saving might of his right hand. (Psalm 20:6)*

*The LORD looks down from heaven;  
he sees all the children of man;  
from where he sits enthroned he looks out  
on all the inhabitants of the earth,  
he who fashions the hearts of them all  
and observes all their deeds.*

*The king is not saved by his great army;  
a warrior is not delivered by his great strength.  
The war horse is a false hope for salvation,  
and by its great might it cannot rescue.*

*Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him,  
on those who hope in his steadfast love,  
that he may deliver their soul from death  
and keep them alive in famine. (Psalm 33:13-19)*

*Steadfast love and faithfulness meet;  
righteousness and peace kiss each other.  
Faithfulness springs up from the ground,  
and righteousness looks down from the sky. (Psalm 85:10-11)*

*Let this be recorded for a generation to come,  
so that a people yet to be created may praise the LORD:*

*that he looked down from his holy height;  
from heaven the LORD looked at the earth,  
to hear the groans of the prisoners,  
to set free those who were doomed to die,  
that they may declare in Zion the name of the LORD,  
and in Jerusalem his praise,  
when peoples gather together,  
and kingdoms, to worship the LORD. (Psalm 102:18-22)*

*“What profit is an idol  
when its maker has shaped it,  
a metal image, a teacher of lies?  
For its maker trusts in his own creation  
when he makes speechless idols!  
Woe to him who says to a wooden thing, Awake;  
to a silent stone, Arise!  
Can this teach?  
Behold, it is overlaid with gold and silver,  
and there is no breath at all in it.  
But the LORD is in his holy temple;  
let all the earth keep silence before him.” (Habakkuk 2:18-20)*

4. Psalm 82 is one of these *New Year Hymns*. And the Levites selected this hymn for our weekly meditation...
  - a. **LXX**: *A Psalm for the third day of the week*
  - b. i.e., *Tuesday*
    - i. Sunday...Psalm 24 – *God the Creator*
    - ii. Monday...Psalm 48 – *God in His City*
    - iii. Tuesday...Psalm 82 – *God the Just Judge*
  - c. Psalm 82 is also a **lament** Psalm
  - d. A *Communal Lament* (for the whole nation)
  - e. One of 18 communal laments in scripture
5. More than one-third of the Psalter is made up of laments
  - a. 38 individual laments
  - b. 18 corporate laments
  - c. *Lament*: a **complaint** uttered to God calling God to act in manner to correct what is wrong or fix what is tragic.
6. **William L. Holladay**: *The Psalms Through Three Thousand Years: Prayer Book of a Great Cloud of Witnesses*; p. 293.

*If poetry may reshape our world, then most emphatically the poetry of the lament psalms has power to reshape our world because of the conviction that God is there, the conversation partner. The psalmist offers a detailed list of complaints, convinced that God will listen and thereby change the psalmist's circumstances for the better... Of course, the psalmist and his community have a passionate desire to see their circumstances change; but in that passionate desire they have a lively conviction that they are in conversation with God, and that in their circumstances they are struggling with God's will.*

7. Suffering, evil, tragedy, injustice, oppression, terror and “natural” disasters are a very real part of human life. And therefore, *Israel included songs and prayers* about these things in their *corporate worship*.
  - a. Historical Psalms: review and remembrance
  - b. Imprecatory Psalms: destruction of our enemies
  - c. Lament Psalms: asking God to rise up and do right
8. We Americans like everything *upbeat, happy-go-lucky, “positive”*. We like to pretend, to escape, to gloss over.
  - a. The American #1 value: *Be happy!*
  - b. Impossible all the time; but we pretend we are.
  - c. “How are you doing?” Standard answer “*Great! Fine!*”
  - d. **Ralph E. Hudson:** “*And now I am happy all the day!*”
9. Really? Happy *all* the day? *Every* day? *All* the time? I think not!
10. We don't need to skip over the Psalms of Lament. Reading them, praying them, even singing them will add a richness and a reality lacking in our worship, so shaped by Christian pop radio!
11. **William L. Holladay**; pp. 293-294.

*The laments comprise more than one-third of the Psalms, yet they are strikingly underused in our worship... Yet if a congregation were thoughtfully guided, the laments could greatly extend its sensibility. In laments the psalmist speaks for those who are innocent, whose rights have been ignored; the laments speak for those who are marginalized in the community. In these psalms, worshipers who are marginalized could find their voice. Who might these marginalized be among us? There are whole segments of our population that are marginalized: the elderly, ethnic minorities. They are the homeless. There are those suffering from AIDS. And, beyond our own communities, there are victims of war, refugees, children. Any folk who are marginalized can be moved to find their voices in these psalms, and any folk who are moved to become sensitized to the marginalized can hear such voices in these psalms.*

12. Psalm 82 is a communal lament that the Priests of Israel want us to pray *every Tuesday*.
  - a. Another Psalm of Asaph (later date)
  - b. Hebrew title: “*God Takes His Stand*”
  - c. A short Psalm with two stanzas; 4 verses each
  - d. A Psalm to remind us that God is a God of Justice

e. Reengaging in Justice

I. THE DIVINE JUDGE (Psalm 82:1-4)

*God has taken his place in the divine council;  
in the midst of the gods he holds judgment:  
“How long will you judge unjustly  
and show partiality to the wicked? Selah  
Give justice to the weak and the fatherless;  
maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute.  
Rescue the weak and the needy;  
deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”* (Ps. 82:1-4)

1. **Marvin E. Tate:** *Psalms: WBC; p. 334.*

*Psalm 82 opens abruptly, without an introduction, with an immediate focus on God having taken his stand in the midst of a council, or assembly, of divine beings while he pronounces judgment (v. 1). He is clearly in charge, presiding over the meeting.*

2. **Literally:** “God takes His stand in the congregation of God in the midst of the gods He passes judgment.”
3. **Note:** “the congregation of God” is His Church – Old Testament Israel and the New Testament church.
  - a. God’s jurisdiction is over all the universe. The Psalm reinforces that truth.
  - b. But the place where He “holds court” is His Church: in the midst of His people.
  - c. “congregation” is also translated “assembly”
  - d. **Joseph A. Alander:** “The word translated (assembly) is one commonly applied to the congregation of Israel, as an organized whole or body politic.” (*Psalms; p. 357*)
4. This should **not** surprise us. Even in Old Testament Israel, a trial was usually held in the vicinity of the alleged crimes.
  - a. Before a *jury of peers*
  - b. In the context of the crime
  - c. In the jurisdiction or locale of the event
5. No people, in all of human history, has been as unjustly treated, as slaughtered, as oppressed, as persecuted and martyred as the people of God – *the Church!*
  - a. Old Testament Israel
  - b. New Testament Church
  - c. *When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. They cried out with a loud voice, “O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our*

*blood on those who dwell on the earth?” Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been. (Revelation 6:9-11)*

6. **Derek Kidner:** *Psalms 73-150: TOTC*; p. 296.

*With its bold, dramatic form this judgment scene brings some clarity to a confused human situation. It takes us in a few words behind and beyond our present wrongs, to portray God’s unbounded jurisdiction, His delegation of power, His diagnosis of our condition and His drastic intentions.*

7. Whom is it that God judges? Answer: “*the gods*”

a. *God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment. (Psalm 82:1)*

b. *elohim* is used twice in this first verse

i. *el*: generic Hebrew word for “God”

ii. *elohim*: the plural: “gods”

iii. often used of the one true God: *elohim* as the superlative (i.e., God of gods)

iv. but also of false gods: idols of the pagans

8. The chief question is, *Who are these “gods” our God judges?*

a. *God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment. (Psalm 82:1)*

b. *I said, “You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you; nevertheless, like men you shall die, and fall like any prince.” (Psalm 82:6-7)*

c. “gods” who will “*die like men*”?

9. There are basically **five interpretations**

a. **First:** God is judging the false gods of the pagan peoples; i.e., demons who masquerade as “gods.” But demons cannot die like men.

b. **Second:** “gods” refers to angels. That works for verse one, but again, not for verses 6 and 7. Angels cannot die like men.

c. **Third:** the pagan kings around Israel who took the name of “god,” and promoted their own divinity. But they are hardly the “congregation”/church/assembly of the Lord.

d. **Fourth:** Israel: the children of God. Possible. But nowhere in the Old Testament are Israelites called “gods” or even “sons of God.”

e. **Five:** these are the rulers and judges of Israel who represent God by declaring and applying God’s Word. *This is the view of Jesus Christ.*

10. Turn to **John 10:31-36**, and see how Jesus interprets Psalm 82:6 and 7.

a. *I said, “You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you;*

*nevertheless, like men you shall die,  
and fall like any prince.” (Psalm 82:6-7)*

- b. *The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, “I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?” The Jews answered him, “It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God.” Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your Law, ‘I said, you are gods’? If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken—do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’? (John 10:31-36)*
  - c. Jesus is speaking to the *Rulers of Israel* (Sanhedrin) who were seeking to stone Him to death.
  - d. Read John 10:34-36 and follow Jesus’ argument
    - i. God gave the Old Testament to Israel and especially to judges and priests (kings) to apply to Israel.
    - ii. Because they received the Word of God and were supposed to do God’s just, holy and righteous work via the Word, God refers to them as “gods.”
    - iii. Thus, Jesus who is the eternal Word made flesh and who always keeps God’s Word should be able to refer to Himself as the “Son of God.”
    - iv. **D. A. Carson:** *Gospel of John: IVP; p. 397 (Wilcock; p. 42)*  
*The word “god” is legitimately used to refer to others than God himself. And since it is God, no less who here in Scripture is calling others ‘gods’, ‘on what Biblical basis should anyone object when Jesus says, I am God’s Son?’*
11. Jesus in John 10 is rebuking the unjust rulers of New Testament Israel just as God, His Father, did in Psalm 82 of the rulers of Old Testament Israel.
12. **James M. Boice:** *Psalms: Volume 2: Psalms 42-106; p. 675.*  
*One reason why the judges of Israel could be called is because “the word of God came” to them. That is, they were God’s spokesmen. When they acted justly and rendered just judgment it was as if God himself had acted, by acting through them. They did not do this, of course, which is what the remainder of the Psalm is about.*
13. **Michael Wilcock:** *The Message of Psalms 73-150: BST; p. 42.*  
*Since Jesus’ understanding of the Psalm is obviously of supreme interest, we should note two other phrases of his. First, he says the title ‘god’ is applied to those ‘to whom the word of God came’. Secondly, he says that if it was proper to use it of them, it is even more properly used of ‘the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world’.*
14. This is the *correct* view for 3 reasons:
- a. The Old Testament uses the word *elohim* (gods) for human rulers, masters, judges, ministers.

- b. These “gods” would “die like men.” Therefore, they are human.
- c. Most of all: Jesus sees the verse this way.

15. **J. J. Stewart Perowne: *Psalms: Volume 2; p. 102.***

*They had been placed in the loftiest position to which any man could aspire. They were sons of the Highest, called by His name, bearing His image, exercising His authority, charged to execute His will, and they ought to have been in their measure His living representatives, the very pattern and likeness of His righteousness and wisdom. But instead of righteousness they had loved unrighteousness. They had sown favour to the wicked who were powerful and wealthy. They had crushed the poor, the defenceless, the fatherless, whose only protection lay in the unsullied uprightness and incorruptibility of the judge, and whom God Himself had made their charge.*

16. The main point is this: *God expects His rulers, judges, magistrates, ministers, pastors, presidents and principals – all those in human authority – to use the Word of God uprightly, justly, compassionately and righteously, because their authority is delegated to them by God to act on His behalf.*

- a. They stand in God’s place with divine authority
- b. Hence, they are “gods” – little gods in position, in power, in principle
- c. Paul calls them “*ministers of God for good*”

*Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. (Romans 13:1-4)*

- d. “*...as servant (minister) of God for good...*”

17. When men (and women) in authority abuse that authority God will **inevitably** “judge the judge” for their misuse of their position and abuse of His Word.

18. God rebukes them – and He is **obviously** speaking to human judges:

- a. “*How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? Selah Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.*” (Psalm 82:2-4)
- b. Their wrongdoing: (v. 2)
- c. Their sacred duty: (vv. 3-4)
- d. Note: God is speaking in these 3 verses.

19. **Here is God's point:** Evil is not just something “*out there*”; some impersonal force, or some power in nature. It is not just something that happens.

- a. Evil is a *personal force of personal beings who do wrong to other persons and who will be personally held responsible!*
- b. **Someone (some group) is always held responsible for evil. Always!**
- c. Evil must be sought out and destroyed by God's people acting righteously.
- d. *Structural Evil:* a society built around injustice toward certain people (e.g., prejudice, discrimination, and the setback of those in poverty, blacks, aliens)
- e. *Systemic Evil:* sin built into the system that ends up hurting others (e.g., the greed of capitalism which caused the 2008 economic crisis and destroyed the jobs, homes and retirement funds of millions of people).
- f. Those most responsible are those who...
  - i. Are in positions of leadership and power
  - ii. Those who know better because they know God's Word
  - iii. Those who keep the unjust *status quo* because it benefits them at the expense of others less fortunate

20. **A. F. Kirkpatrick:** “*God speaks, arraigning the judges of injustice and partiality, and bidding them to perform their duties faithfully.*” (Psalms; p. 496)

21. The Psalmist now comments on them...

## II. THE DIVINE JUDGMENT (Psalm 82:5-8)

*They have neither knowledge nor understanding,  
they walk about in darkness;  
all the foundations of the earth are shaken.*

*I said, “You are gods,  
sons of the Most High, all of you;  
nevertheless, like men you shall die,  
and fall like any prince.”*

*Arise, O God, judge the earth;  
for you shall inherit all the nations!* (Psalm 82:5-8)

1. **The Root Problem:** They are *ignorant* of God's Word and thus they destroy the very foundations of society placed there by God...

*They have neither knowledge nor understanding,  
they walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken.* (Psalm 82:5)

- a. Ignorance: “*neither knowledge or understanding*”
- b. Inept performance: “*walk about in darkness*”

- c. Unstable society: “*all the foundations of the earth are shaken*”
- d. Images used elsewhere in scripture...
- i. *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge;  
because you have rejected knowledge,  
I reject you from being a priest to me.  
And since you have forgotten the law of your God,  
I also will forget your children.* (Hosea 4:6)
  - ii. *The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,  
on them has light shone.* (Isaiah 9:2)
  - iii. *In the LORD I take refuge;  
how can you say to my soul,  
“Flee like a bird to your mountain,  
for behold, the wicked bend the bow;  
they have fitted their arrow to the string  
to shoot in the dark at the upright in heart;  
if the foundations are destroyed,  
what can the righteous do?”* (Psalm 11:1-3)
2. **The Final Verdict:** God will judge the judges and destroy them if they do not repent and act righteously...
- a. *I said, “You are gods,  
sons of the Most High, all of you;  
nevertheless, like men you shall die,  
and fall like any prince.”* (Psalm 82:6-7)
  - b. Gist: “You have been favored with authority from God, but that does not place you above the law or beyond accountability. You will all eventually die and come before My judgment seat in heaven. I call you “gods,” but don’t forget: You are mere men!”
  - c. *Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done.* (Revelation 20:11-13)
  - d. **No one escapes judgment; not even the judges of the earth!**
3. **The last word:** God will judge where men have failed...
- a. *Arise, O God, judge the earth;  
for you shall inherit all the nations!* (Psalm 82:8)
  - b. “*Arise, O God...*” stand up from your throne and act!

- c. Pointing back to v. 1. “*God takes His stand...*”
  - i. Literally: “*God stands up...*”
  - ii. Standing to deliver a verdict
  - iii. Rising to render a judgment
- d. Jesus will *inherit* all nations and set all things right.
- e. **H. C. Leopold:** *Psalms*; p. 596.

*Seeing that God’s judgment will in this instance correct such grievous evils, and seeing furthermore that all of God’s judgments right wrongs, why should not a devout soul long for the consummation of God’s judgment upon the earth? It is known that this will be God’s last work on the last day. His saints have long waited for that day. They are here taught to pray for it.*

- 4. **Know this:** *Only the unjust fear the judgment of God. And only the wicked resent and resist Christ’s coming to set all things right!*
- 5. **Martin Luther** captured the ethos of this verse in one masterful paragraph (*Selected Psalms: Work, vol. 13; pp. 51-52*).

*The whole psalm, every prince should have painted on the wall of his chamber, on his bed, over his table, and on his garments. For here they find what lofty, princely, noble virtues their estate can practice, so that temporal government, next to the preaching office, is the highest service of God and the most useful office on earth. And this ought surely to strengthen a lord, and incite him to conduct his office with joy and to practice these virtues. For how could one praise this rank more highly than by saying that they are called, and are, gods? And the works and virtues of their rank are not only princely or royal, not only angelic, but divine virtues. On the other hand, they find how ungodly, unprincely, in fact, inhuman, and altogether devilish are the iniquities they commit, and how they are the most harmful people on earth if they depart from the virtues of their office and do the opposite. Then they can rightly be called, not gods, but devils; and this they certainly are, even though they sit in the office of gods and bear the empty name.*

**CONCLUSION:** So...what do you and I do with this Psalm every Tuesday?

- 1. Few of us are princes, magistrates or judges. But all of us are part of a society whose foundations rest upon justice, mercy and truth...

*He has told you, O man, what is good;  
and what does the LORD require of you  
but to do justice, and to love kindness,  
and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8)*

- 2. **First:** We should pray this Psalm for America every Tuesday morning – that the *foundations of our society* would be restored once again.
  - a. **David F. Wells** tells us what it is that holds our society together.

- i. *Tradition*: passed on primarily by godly families
    - ii. *Authority*: instilled in us primarily by church and school
    - iii. *Power*: rightly, justly, compassionately wielded by good government
  - b. *...if the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?*” (Psalm 11:3)
  - c. Answer: Turn to God in prayer. And what better prayers than the Psalms: *Prayerbook of the Bible...*
  - d. *The LORD is in his holy temple;  
the LORD's throne is in heaven;  
his eyes see, his eyelids test the children of man.  
The LORD tests the righteous,  
but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence.  
Let him rain coals on the wicked;  
fire and sulfur and a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup.  
For the LORD is righteous;  
he loves righteous deeds;  
the upright shall behold his face.* (Psalm 11:4-7)
3. **Second:** Those of us in authority must seriously reappraise *how* we use our authority...
- a. I speak here primarily of **five** people...
  - b. *Parents*: rearing your children in the fear and love of the Lord
  - c. *Pastors and elders*: governing the church by the Word of God
  - d. *Principals and teachers*: instructing children in a Biblical worldview
  - e. *Bosses and managers*: conducting business honestly and decently
  - f. *Magistrates and public servants*: using power to bless others and not to enrich yourselves
  - g. **Litmus Test:** *If you do not rise each day to your duties of leadership with a mind and heart to bless others, honor God, and deny yourself, then you are contributing to structural evil and systemic injustice. You are responsible for how you use the position God has given you.*
4. **Third:** As Christians, we of all men and women in the world, ought to be the last to blindly cling to and support the fallen world and its unjust status quo!
- a. Christians are looking for something new – a new nature, a new society, a new world.
  - b. We follow King Jesus who said, “*Behold, I am making all things new!*” (Revelation 20:5)
  - c. We, therefore, are always seeking something better: *A new way of life built around God, grace and goodness.*
  - d. *For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The*

*old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5:14-20)*

- e. I say this to all of you: *I don't care if you are a Republican or a Democrat, a Conservative or a Liberal, a Traditionalist or a Progressive. What should drive you as a Christian is God's call for something new, something holy, something good, and righteous, true and just... **The Kingdom of God!***
- f. Peter reminds us of this truth...

*For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? And*

*“If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?” (1 Peter 4:17-18)*

*But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (2 Peter 3:8-13)*

- 5. **Fourth:** Christians ought to be the first to take a stand for the “little guy”, the poor, the slave, the alien, the oppressed, the persecuted, and those suffering injustice.
  - a. *For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. (Deuteronomy 10:17-19)*
  - b. The poor, the homeless, the widow, the single mother, the girl pregnant and alone, the jobless, the prisoner, the handicapped, the special needs child, the immigrant, those who have experienced discrimination, and the lonely – these are the people God wants His Church to embrace!
  - c. *If we are only attracted to the educated, attractive, affluent and socially well-positioned, then...*
  - d. **We are contributing to structural evil and systemic injustice!**
  - e. Here is a Psalm that is a call to mercy and justice ministry!

*He has told you, O man, what is good;  
and what does the LORD require of you*

*but to do justice, and to love kindness,  
and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8)*

*But let justice roll down like waters,  
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. (Amos 5:24)*

6. **Fifthly and finally**, here is a Psalm to drive us again to Jesus Christ.

- a. Christ alone can lead you to compassion, revive the Church with righteousness, and transform the nation in justice.

*Will you not revive us again,  
that your people may rejoice in you?  
Show us your steadfast love, O LORD,  
and grant us your salvation.*

*Let me hear what God the LORD will speak,  
for he will speak peace to his people, to his saints;  
but let them not turn back to folly.*

*Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him, that glory may dwell in our land.*

*Steadfast love and faithfulness meet;  
righteousness and peace kiss each other.  
Faithfulness springs up from the ground,  
and righteousness looks down from the sky.  
Yes, the LORD will give what is good,  
and our land will yield its increase.  
Righteousness will go before him  
and make his footsteps a way. (Psalm 85:6-13)*

- a. Christ is the singer of this Psalm (**St. Augustine**)
- i. *God has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of the gods he holds judgment: I said, “You are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you; nevertheless, like men you shall die, and fall like any prince.” (Psalm 82:1, 6-7)*
  - ii. *Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your Law, ‘I said, you are gods’? If he called them gods to whom the word of God came—and Scripture cannot be broken— do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God’? (John 10:34-36)*
- b. Verse 8 is a call to *Jesus Christ* to come and set things right in our world, through regeneration of dead souls, renewal of worldly families, revival of self-serving churches, reformation of compromised Christianity, and the restoration of nations whose foundations are crumbling.
- c. **Andrew A. Bonar** captures the vision of this Psalm in his emphasis on looking to Christ...

*The saints are raising the loud cry of verse 8, inviting Messiah, the true God, the Son of the Most High, the Mighty One, the Judge and Ruler, to arise and take his inheritance, for he is the “heir of all things”; who will judge, or govern and rule, a mismanaged earth. We sing this song of Zion in his ears, urging him to come quickly; and we sing it to one another in joyful*

*hope, while the foundations of earth seem out of course, because here we find Messiah the true Judge of a misgoverned world.” (Spurgeon: Treasury of David; 2:417)*

7. Last week someone broke into my car, smashed the back passenger window, and stole my briefcase...
  - a. While I was at **Greg’s Restaurant** here in Matthews, between 7:30-8:30 a.m.
  - b. Looking, no doubt, for a laptop to steal and sell
  - c. I don’t own a laptop
  - d. What was in the bag? *My personal Bible; a Psalter that is out of print, a Book of Common Prayer I got in Oxford, England; my personal notebook & journal, a file of sermon notes, and my passport.*
  - e. I was enraged. I said to Jane, *“If I could find that man, I’d beat him till he begged the police to arrest him!”*
  - f. Jane smiled, and then said, *“Or...we can pray that he read your Bible, study your sermon notes, look over your prayer journal, pray out of the Book of Common Prayer, and be drawn to Christ by the Psalter. Better for him to repent and be saved now. For to fall into Jesus’ hands on judgment day would be worse than to fall into your hands today!”*
8. **Can you believe that? Where in the world would my wife get such an idea as that?**
9. Maybe she knows the heart of God, the Spirit of Christ, and the Word of God...
10. *If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. For he who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty. For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment. (James 2:8-13)*