

## Read the Whole Bible with Pastor

### **Monday (January 1) – Psalm 79, 80**

Psalm 79 is a prayer for the destruction of our enemies. Psalms such as this are often uncomfortable for modern readers of Scripture because they seem un-Christian in asking the Lord to destroy someone. But here stands a clear prayer for destruction: “Pour out Your wrath on the nations that do not know You” (Psalm 79:6a). Notice that this psalm provides nuance for this prayer—the prayer for destruction is not unqualified. The people for whom the psalmist prays destruction have defiled God’s temple (v. 1) and His people (v. 2). At the same time, the psalmist does not forget his own sins, but prays for atonement (vv. 8-9). Psalm 79, and indeed the other prayers for destruction of enemies in the Scriptures, are not license for Christians to pray for vengeance against just anyone whom we dislike. They are an example of allowing God’s will to be our standard for judgment. Those who make themselves enemies of the Lord are enemies of His people as well. It is not wrong to treat those who oppose the Lord as enemies—in fact, this is precisely what the Christian must do. Psalm 80, however, is an important balance to this, especially the first two verses (a text historically associated with the Advent season). Salvation comes from God alone, not from actions we take.

### **Tuesday (January 2) – Psalm 81, 82, 83**

Psalms 81 and 82 deal with sin in differing ways. Psalm 81 is a call to repentance. Just as the people of Israel needed to be reminded of their sin and need for repentance, so too do we. We have the many blessings of the Lord, which we celebrate with feasts and festivals throughout the year. But our sin ever remains. Therefore, we must be careful to allow no foreign god/idol to establish a foothold in our hearts (Psalm 81:9). Rather, we must turn to the Lord for all good things (Psalm 81:10) for He will punish all who arrogantly ignore His law and trust in themselves (Psalm 82:7, 2).

Psalm 83 returns to the theme of calling for judgment against enemies, appealing to the Lord’s history of doing so. Note, though, verse 16, which asks for the Lord to bring shame upon them “That they may seek Your name, O LORD.” Repentance and faith is the goal.

### **Wednesday (January 3) – Psalm 84, 85, 86**

Today’s psalms focus on mercy and blessing. Psalms 85 and 86 are both prayers for mercy. Psalm 85 appeals to the Lord’s history of granting mercy to His people, asking that He would do so again. Psalm 86 appeals for mercy based on personal trust in the Lord. Psalm 84, however, reveals to us where such mercy is found: “How lovely is Your tabernacle, O LORD of hosts!” (Psalm 84:1). The Lord certainly grants mercy and grace to His people through many and various means. However, there is only one place where God’s people can be assured to find mercy and grace without fail—that place is in the Lord’s house. Through Word and Sacrament, the Lord faithfully grants mercy to those who plea for mercy, as we do in the *Kyrie*. Our souls ought to long, even faint, for the Lord’s blessed gifts in these ways (Psalm 84:2).

## **Thursday (January 4) – Psalm 87, 88**

While Psalm 84 expresses the love we ought to have for the Lord's house, Psalm 87 reminds us of the love that our God has for His house (v. 2). The Lord loves to meet His people in His house to grant mercy!

Palm 88 is a desperate plea for help. The extreme distress expressed in verses 6–9 might come across as melodramatic to some. However, this feeling of distress is one that many can relate to. There are times in life when it feels as if life could not possibly get any worse. But in that place of deep despondency, this psalm teaches us to look to Jesus: “But to You I have cried out, O LORD” (Psalm 88:13). Salvation from every evil is found in Him alone.

## **Friday (January 5) – Psalm 89**

Psalm 89 is a long prayer with two distinct parts. The first 37 verses offer a song of praise for the mercies of the Lord. Beginning in verse 38, however, the tone shifts dramatically, even expressing doubt and struggle in verses 46–51. This dramatic shift in emotion is as characteristic of the psalms as it is characteristic of our own lives. One moment we find ourselves praising the greatness of the Lord, and the next moment we find ourselves in utter misery. Such is the human experience. Our emotions are fickle, tossed to and fro by the wind and whims of circumstance. This is why we must “sing of the mercies of the LORD forever” (Psalm 89:1)—because constant reminder of the objective truth of God's love for us in Jesus is the only remedy for our condition.

## **Saturday (January 6) – Psalm 90, 91, 92**

Psalm 90 is a prayer for wisdom, asking that the Lord would help us to see our frailties compared to His ongoing provision. It is only through this heart of wisdom—fearing the Lord above all things—that the works of our hands will be established for good in this life.

Our dwelling place in the shelter of the Lord's protection is a key theme in Psalms 91 and 92. Psalm 91 is historically associated with the First Sunday in Lent and our Lord's temptation in the wilderness by Satan (Matthew 4:1–11). This is because the devil misleadingly cites verses 11 and 12 as justification to put the Lord to the test. But God's protection of us as our refuge and fortress is not license for us to live in sin and flirt with danger, nor is it reason for undue confidence in ourselves. Christ has overcome Satan for us, both in the wilderness and on the cross. It is only in looking to Him that we will be saved from the old evil foe.

## **Sunday (January 7) – Psalm 93, 94, 95**

Psalm 94 shares themes with many recent psalms, especially the Lord's vengeance and punishment. This psalm reminds us that man's thoughts are futile (v. 11), but the Lord has all wisdom.

Psalms 93 and 95 are songs of praise to the Lord. Psalm 95 is especially known among Lutherans for its use in the Matins service. It is a beautiful Psalm with which to begin the day so that praise, rather than hardness of heart, shapes and characterizes our days and lives.