

Readings for the week of Feb. 15/26:

Exodus 24:12-18

Psalm 99

2 Peter 1:16-21

Matthew 17:1-9

As I read the readings listed above, Psalm 99:9 especially stood out to me. It says, *“Extol the LORD our God, and worship at his holy mountain, for the LORD our God is holy.”*

As I reflected on that verse, I thought about the times in my journey with Jesus when praising Him was more difficult than others. He has never been unfaithful to me, but admittedly, there have been times when I have become more focused on my circumstances, instead of Him and His goodness. Those have been the times when praising God has been more of a sacrifice than others, as is spoken of in Hebrews 13:15.

In those spiritually “dry” times, I have learned to turn to the Psalms for help. God is always worthy of my praises, and even in those times, I desire to do that with all of my heart. As I read the Psalms, and then turn them into prayers, my focus is lifted off of whatever it is that has been my focus. My spirit is lifted and after a few minutes, the praises come naturally.

Let’s take Psalm 99:1-3 as an example of what I mean. That passage says *“The LORD is king; let the peoples tremble! He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake! The LORD is great in Zion; he is exalted over all the peoples. Let them praise your great and awesome name. Holy is he!”*

Those verses inspire me to pray, “Thank You, Father God! You are Sovereign, and King over my entire life, and everything in heaven and earth. You are the only One who deserves my awe and reverence. All that I am, and all that I have is because of You. Your name is great and You deserve to be praised greatly. I acknowledge that You are a holy God. Please help me to keep my eyes on You, instead of being distracted by the affairs of this world. May I desire to become more like Jesus with each passing day.”

The next time that your focus turns more toward the difficult things you are facing, may I suggest that you do as Isaiah 61:3 says “by putting on a garment of praise, instead of a spirit of despair.”