

Jurassic Prayer

Psalm 1

In the 90's blockbuster movie, Jurassic Park, chaos reigns supreme when a greedy and disgruntled employee shuts down the power grid that supplies electricity to the fences that keep T-Rex, the main attraction at bay.

The software engineer also cuts the power in order to bypass the alarm system that prohibits access to valuable dinosaur embryos. After collecting his prizes, he attempts to make his escape just as a large hurricane hits the island.

Velociraptors, a dangerous and intelligent species of dinosaur - at least according to evolutionary biologists - immediately detect the change in their environment and systematically begin testing the high-voltage fences that imprison them. They're hoping to gain their own freedom and dine on a few tasty morsels.

And so the suspense and horror of carnivorous dinosaurs freely roaming among fear-crazed people begins, much to the delight of movie - goers.

Like the dinosaurs in Jurassic Park, we too sometimes search for places and opportunities to escape the boundaries set up by God and the responsibilities that go along with it. And like the movie, the outcome of these events can be nothing but gory.

People running amuck, attempting to escape the boundaries of God's law; resolving to live life on our own terms rather than God's only proves to turn out messy.

Recall the account of Adam and Eve. They had everything going for them. They had access to the Tree of Life in the middle of the garden.

They had the most awesome privilege of communing and fellowshiping with their creator face to face in the cool of the evening. Adam had a sense of purpose and meaning in life as God had given him the task of naming the animals and working the garden.

Of course Adam and Eve had each other as complementary companions and had been given the wonderful command to be fruitful and multiply.

They only had one other command to follow: Don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God even informed them of the reason: If you eat of it, you will surely die.

But that's exactly what they did. They decided that all the privilege, honor and dignity that were theirs, given to them as gifts from their creator were worth the risk in disobeying God.

I guess they decided something was missing in their lives and they didn't want to miss out. Maybe they no longer wanted to live under the protective umbrella and jurisdiction of the One who had given them life. Perhaps they questioned God's love for them, and felt God was denying them something that they desperately wanted.

Why are we so much like Adam and Eve?
Why are we so eager to cast off that which is meant for our preservation and benefit?

Obviously, we could list a number of reasons:

First, we're Adam and Eve's descendants.

Paul reminds us of this fact in Romans 5:12 stating, *"Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned."*

And as the old saying goes, the acorn doesn't fall from the oak tree.

Perhaps it's a case of the grass is greener on the other side syndrome or as some would call it, discontentment.

Maybe it's a simple case of boredom, laziness, selfishness or unfulfillment. We can put whatever label we want on it, but ultimately it comes back to the root cause which is most accurately described as rebellion.

Rebellion isn't a word we like to use that much. Even parents have a hard time calling their teenagers rebels. They may say they are going through a rebellious stage but labeling them rebellious seems a bit drastic. We like to soften the blow of reality. But whatever word we choose to use, the important point is that God's authority over our lives is a legitimate one, and we ought not rebel.

Recall the words of God through the prophet Jeremiah:
"For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future."

And God said this centuries after the Fall of mankind!
Remarkable! We rebelled against Him, and instead of doing away with us, He still wants to bless us with a hope and a future!

But amazingly, we still decide that we want more than what God's put on the bargaining table. Then again, maybe we don't want more. Maybe we just want all the same stuff just on our own terms.

In other words, we don't want somebody else defining what is good for us, what our future should look like, or what will or will not harm us.

Perhaps it's a case of thinking we know better than God. After all, the scripture says that Adam and Eve tasted the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and their eyes were open.

But as you and I both know, there is a big difference between knowing the value between two different things and choosing the right one.

If it were only a matter of knowing, there'd probably be a lot less chaos in our world.

The problem isn't that we don't know; it's that we do know the right way to go, but left to our own devices, we find ourselves powerless to carry it out.

Recall Paul's impassioned plea in Romans 7 as he describes how two opposing laws are at work in him. He writes: *"In my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?"*

Can you feel Paul's sense of desperation?

Can you relate with Paul's internal angst and his great desire for resolution to this epic battle between life and death, good and evil?

I know I feel it and frankly, if you don't, I'd go to urgent care right now and have them check your pulse.

If you don't feel this tension, this internal strife between the powers of light and those of darkness that are constantly waging war for our souls, then as your pastor, I'm deeply concerned for you especially when it comes to your standing before a holy and righteous God on that Great and terrible day of judgment.

Because the truth is that a broken and incapacitated conscience is a sign of unbelief, more specifically unbelief in the saving power of God's One and Only Son, Jesus Christ.

Paul warns us in Titus 1:15: *“To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their **minds** and **consciences** are corrupted. They claim to know God, but **by their actions they deny him**. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.”*

Quite a scathing description of and accusation against the unbeliever if I do say so myself. But it's nonetheless true.

It reminds me of the time in my life when as a young believer I came across Romans 3: 10-12 where the Apostle Paul quotes from Psalm 14 writing ...

“There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together, become worthless; there is no one who has done good, not even one.”

Wow, what a revelation and blow to my ego this was! To hear my so-called proud past being described in such stark, bitter and empty terms – well, that hurt.

Really God? All my human efforts to do and be good in the past were for nothing when it comes to my salvation?

Really God? I never sought you out on my own accord?

Oh the depths of my own ignorance!

How much I still needed to learn about God's amazing grace and forgiveness for me and His incomparable patience with me. As Paul writes in Ephesians 2:10: *“For it is by grace you have been saved through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works so that no one can boast.”*

Thank you God for the undeniable truth of your word that can set one's soul free by simply acknowledging its reality.

A while back I happened to listen to a debate. The topic of the debate was: "Would the world be a better place without religion?"

Both teams did their best to make their points and of course I enjoyed sitting there in my easy chair cheering the proponents of religion while heckling those who held to their anti-religious view.

But the thought occurred to me later that maybe they were asking the wrong question.

Instead of asking, "Would the world be a better place without religion" they should have been asking the question, "Would the world be a better place without faith in God."

There's huge difference between these two questions.

By posing the first question the atheist and the secular humanist have already revealed their hand. They think that because they don't believe in a transcendent being such as God then they are somehow intellectually above or immune to the so-called entrapments of religion, when in fact the very opposite is the case.

Their belief in no God is their religion.

No, the better question would have been, "Would the world be a better place without faith in God?"

But the atheist and the secular humanist don't want to go there because then they might have to look reality in the eye and somehow come to terms with their own existence and consciousness. They would be forced to ask the soul-searching questions such as "Who am I?", "What's my origin?", and "What's my destiny?"

These are very scary questions indeed especially to an atheist and secular humanist who has yet to humble themselves before the Creator of the Universe.

As the Apostle Paul writes with such convicting words in Romans 1:20-22:

*“Since the creation of the world, God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have clearly been seen, being understood from what has been made, **so that men are without excuse.** For although they knew God they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts became darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools...”*

All this brings me to Psalm 1.

The first psalm of a collection of 150 psalms recorded and edited to be a book of prayer and praise for the people of God – for a people who knew and know beyond a shadow of a doubt that there is a God - and more than that – that there is a God who is awesome, powerful and benevolent beyond our imagination And who is the gravitational center of life itself. And who deserves all our praise, worship, loyalty and devotion.

Psalm 1 is the first of two bookends for the whole collection of the Psalms and is proclaiming to the entire world that God and his word are living and worthy of our undivided devotion.

As a matter of fact to follow God – to serve, love and obey God and his word is life itself!

Psalm 1 exhorts its readers to make a choice:

Read God’s word – more than that – live God’s word. Let God’s word invade every part of us so that His word will flow out of us.

And like a tree that grows invisibly before our eyes, give God's word time to do its work of nourishing, growing, guiding, strengthening, and producing fruit!

We are a plant and God's word is the growing medium. Let our roots dig deep into the soil so we can draw in the water, minerals, and nutrients that are so vital for a thriving life!

Do you think maybe Paul had Psalm 1 in mind when he prayed for the Ephesians in chapter 3 writing, *"And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power with all the saints to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ."*?

How can we see, experience and overflow with God's love when we fail to be immersed in God's word?

For God's word is His revelation to us concerning his continual care and love for us – His revelation that can work miracles of transformation in our lives if we humbly submit to it.

But we're given a choice:

Tap in to God's word and tap into eternal life itself. Be the producer of spiritual fruit that can be of immeasurable benefit to you and those around you and bring glory to God, or ...

Get too big for your britches and say to yourself that you're smarter than God. I'll walk another way contrary to God's way because quite frankly I don't even believe God exists – and as far as the Bible is concerned, it is a bunch of myths, legends, and fairy tales which has no serious relevance for today.

Whichever way you choose, remember this: Our choices have consequences.

Delight in God's word, study God's word, live God's word, meet and fall in love with Jesus in God's word and gain purpose and meaning in life that surpasses all understanding.

Or reject God's word and live a life on earth that is shallow and without substance – like chaff that is blown away by the lightest wind.

Preaching the Gospel is not about making people feel good on the inside about themselves. It's about calling people to repentance. Preaching the gospel is telling people that without faith in Christ in their lives, they will not be able to withstand the judgment of holy God. Do you really want to be in the unbelieving camp when Christ returns? Do you really want to take the chance that your life without Christ has been good enough to escape judgment?

Even in Psalm 1 we read about the good news. *"The Lord watches over the way of the righteous."* The Apostle Paul tells us that *"righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe."*

Be a tree planted by streams of water whose leaf never withers.

Don't be the chaff that the wind blows away and is gone forever.

I titled my message Jurassic Prayer, but upon further reflection, Psalm 1 isn't really a prayer at all. What it really is, is a call to prayer, more than this, a primal call to a prayerful life, an ancient call reminding us that a spiritual, fruitful, and meaningful life grows like a tree slowly, imperceptibly, invisibly, nourished constantly by fertile soil and life-giving water of God's word.

It is the source of our spiritual life, and the ancients, aka the dinosaurs, wrote it so we would never forget.