

Hear us Cry
Psalm 80
Cornerstone, Westford, April 21, 2018
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Let's Pray:

- Picture of toy.



Illustration of the sorting objects toy:

This toy is a lot like our church.

There are many pieces and no instructions.

Children figure all this out by the age of two but most never figure out the church.

In this set, none of the pieces are missing.

Today we are going to ask some difficult questions:

Do you come to church?

Or, are you the church?

When you speak about Cornerstone, do you say, "They do this?"

Or, do you say, "We do this?"

Many people go through their lives going to church but not being the church.
Many people don't realize that throughout history God dealt with people more as groups than as individuals.

This psalm is an example of a group of God's people crying out to God in song.
Crying out to God as one people.
Crying out to God expecting God to save them all.

These people understood that value of being a church.
These people understood the benefits of everyone coming before God as one.
These people understood the results of a people having had fallen into sin.

Today in this time of independence, most of us don't see the connection between how the church does and how we do as individuals.
We have lost that understanding.

Today most don't even understand that one person in a family can bring blessings or the lack of blessings to their whole family.

Most of us tend to think as individuals, not as families or churches or communities.
And so we miss out on many of the blessings that God has for us.
And, we also reap many of the troubles that plague weak church, weak families, weak communities and weak nations.

This psalm teaches us to think like a church.
Like a group of people who are connected as one body.

- Verses 1-3: Hear us, Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock. You who sit enthroned between the cherubim, shine forth before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh. Awaken your might; come and save us. Restore us, O God; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved.

Notice that it doesn't say, "Hear **Me** oh God."

- Verses 4-7: How long, Lord God Almighty, will your anger smolder against the prayers of your people? You have fed them with the bread of tears; you have made them drink tears by the bowlful. You have made us an object of derision to our neighbors, and our enemies mock us. Restore us, God Almighty; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved.

As these people sang this song, they bowed before God as a community.
As one people; as a church.
Asking God to save them all.

You may be thinking that God deals with us as individually and that is true.
Each of us stands before God and must come to Him by faith.
But, God also deals with us as a church.

Let's look at the next section.

- Verses 8-11: You transplanted a vine from Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it. You cleared the ground for it, and it took root and filled the land. The mountains were covered with its shade, the mighty cedars with its branches. Its branches reached as far as the Sea, its shoots as far as the River.

God prepared a place for His people.

God blessed them as a unit, as a nation, as a people.

God's desire for His people was that they would be blessed more than any people on the earth.

God love them.

And God loves us, His people, His church.

But soon they began to look at their blessings and they began to forget God.

They, like many of us rejoiced more about being blessed than about being connected to God.

They wanted all of the stuff that God was giving them more than they wanted God.

This is the problem of praying as individuals.

We can become obsessed with ourselves and not with God.

We can begin to long for what God can provide for us,

Rather than longing to see God.

We begin to lose sight of what is really important.

We become focused on ourselves at the cost of our families, our church and our community.

- Verses 12-13: Why have you broken down its walls so that all who pass by pick its grapes? Boars from the forest ravage it, and insects from the fields feed on it.

These people who were once so blessed by God now realize that the blessings have dried up.

Things have gone from good to bad but they are so caught up in themselves that they don't know why.

So they cry out to God, "why?"

We too can have our minds become clouded.

We too can come to God and receive all of His mercy and grace

But then begin to focus on His blessings and not on Him.

We can focus on the gifts and not the giver.

- Verses 14-15: Return to us, God Almighty! Look down from heaven and see! Watch over this vine, the root your right hand has planted, the son you have raised up for yourself.

The people cry, "Return to Us!"

"We are your children, we are your people, we are your church!"

- Verse 16: Your vine is cut down; it is burned with fire; at your rebuke your people perish.

These people know that they are in trouble.

Once again, as a body of God's people they cry out to Him.

They cry out to God.

- Verses 17-19: Let your hand rest on the man at your right hand, the son of man you have raised up for yourself. Then we will not turn away from you; revive us, and we will call on your name. Restore us, Lord God Almighty; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved.

Let your hand rest upon us oh God.

Make your face to shine upon us that we might be saved.

- *Picture of Toy.*



The question for us today is:

Do you come to church or are you the church?

Do you long for the blessings of God or for God Himself.

Think hard about this.

The greatest blessing is not the gift but the giver.

Do you long to see God at work in this place?

Do you long for the people around you to see God?

Do you care about your family, your church, your community?

Look once again at this toy.

Have you figured out how God's church works?

Are you really part of God's church?

To become part of the church each one of us must come to the cross.

The cross is the entry way to the church.

The church is a body of people who believe that Jesus died on the cross for their sins.

And that they are saved by grace through faith.

The church is a body of people who rely on Jesus for their salvation and eternal life.

You can't be a true part of the church without coming to the cross.

In the toy on the screen, there are six holes to put the pieces in but in the church there is only one hole; only one way to enter and that is by the shed blood of Jesus.

That is how the church works!

If you have never entered into the church tonight is the time to come.

All that is needed is to come to the cross of Jesus and ask God to forgive you of your past sin.

And like these people in the psalm, call on God to save you.

As God's people let's pray to Him together!

Pray with me.

- Our God and our savior, tonight we cry out to you. We pray that you would forgive us of our past sins and teach us to be your people, your church. We thank you for your Son Jesus who died for us that we might become your children. Come and save us Lord, fill us with your Holy Spirit and make your face shine upon us. Help us to love as you love; to see as you see. Give us a love for each member of your family here at this church, as well as a love for our families and our communities. Give us a pure love that is not self seeking; let your rest fall upon us. And God, help us to desire you above all else; may we rejoice in you and you alone. Save us oh God. Amen