

## Praying the Psalms: Week 4

### Psalms of Pilgrimage

#### From Chris Lavender's talk:

I lift up my eyes to the mountains –  
where does my help come from?  
My help comes from the Lord,  
the maker of heaven and earth.  
He will not let your foot slip; he who  
watches over you will not slumber.  
The Lord watches over you;  
the Lord is your shade at your right hand;  
The sun will not harm you by day,  
nor the moon by night. [Psalm 121]



These words can help carry us through the struggles of life, not least in these times that we currently experience where all the fixed points we rely on have been taken from us. Our direction of travel seems so uncertain.

I am transported back to the Camino and the moments of struggle for many on the same path – things they had endured or experienced in life now laid bare on a winding track through the dirt. And yet moments of joy, from the encouragement of other pilgrims, the fellowship on the road, a meal and a bed and kindness at the end of a long day. But most of all, something that was very much imprinted on my mind that came after about three weeks – the climb up to the high point called the Cruz de Ferro, the cross of iron. A simple cross on a mountain top with a pile of stones at its foot where pilgrim after pilgrim, over countless years, have laid a stone – many will have said these words as they did so;

“Lord, may this stone, a symbol of my efforts on the pilgrimage that I lay at the foot of the cross, weigh the balance in favour of my good deeds some day when the deeds of my life are judged. Let it be so.”

Words that say much about that march to a new kind of peace where burdens are laid down and we are re-born into the dwelling place of the Lord.

For me the journey, the pilgrimage to this glorious destination, this march to a new kind of peace has underneath it a sense of longing – each step that is taken is filled with that longing. A longing that helps me step out of myself and into the dwelling place of the Lord. A longing that those people centuries ago must have felt as they sung their songs, as they walked – in the words of Psalm 130:

I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope.

I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning,  
more than watchmen wait for the morning.”

### For reflection and prayer:

#### **Pilgrims set out each day with a single purpose**

The one choice that guides each day's activity is the choice to walk the path towards the place of pilgrimage. Pray for the gift of this simplicity and clarity of purpose in the ordering of your life.

*Blessed are those whose strength is in you,  
whose hearts are set on pilgrimage. Ps 84.5*



#### **Pilgrims travel light**

In your prayer ask for discernment about what to hold on to and what to let go of at this point of your life pilgrimage. Remember, the more you hold on to, the slower your progress will be. What has the disruptive experience of this last year shown you about what matters more and what matters less?

#### **Pilgrims share the road**

Although each person travels alone, there are moments when the road is shared with others, conversation flows, and food is eaten together. Who have been significant companions along your road? How have they helped you into deeper understanding of who you are in God and the purpose of your life? Who is important for you today? Thank God for these companions and what they have brought you.

Read Luke 24.13-35. How do you sense Jesus present for you as journey through this time of uncertainty? When have been the moments of breaking of bread when your eyes opened to fresh understanding?

#### **Pilgrims are adventurers**

Pilgrims are forever stepping from what they know into unknown lands. Listen to the invitation of the Holy Spirit within your own spirit. What is stirring within you? What step into adventure are you invited to take?

#### **Pilgrim songs**

Many of us have found walking more important to our mental, physical and spiritual wellbeing than ever in this past year. Walking goes naturally with singing. The pilgrim psalms



have their origin in songs sung in travels towards Jerusalem. As you walk [or cycle] dare to sing your pilgrim prayer. It might be a hymn, or a simple chorus, or even your own melody and words that come unbidden as you travel. If you feel reticent about singling aloud, sing in your mind – and when no-one else is around, sing aloud to the birds and the trees!

**Some pilgrim psalms to pray with: 84, 121, 122, 126, 130, 131, 133, 134**