

A thousand years of Hebrew devotion are crammed into this anthology of poems we call the Psalms. Here we discover poetry of experience, reflecting all the subtle nuances of human emotion from despair to triumph. In these deeply personal manifestoes, the poets and singer-songwriters of the Old Testament rub shoulders with us and invite us to share their struggles and faith. In all of life's crazy vicissitudes, these ancient wordsmiths have forged poems to fit our experience. Whether we're lonely, depressed, rejected, wrestling with sin, groping in spiritual darkness, or trying to make sense of God and His government of the world, there is a Psalm composed for us. If we are struggling, as we all do, to express our longing and delight in God, there are words we can borrow that were forged long ago in love's fierce flame.

These poems are authentic, an antidote to the superficial, triumphal and formulaic theology of our time. We can strip away all our cunning and camouflage and be utterly truthful with God. In sorrow we can express our grief; in doubt we are allowed to articulate our uncertainties; in rejection and loneliness, we can express our pain; but through all the Psalms there is an unquenchable hope and faith in God. Nothing is too difficult for Him; no enemy too great that He cannot conquer; no sin too heinous that He cannot forgive. In their most sublime moments, the Psalmists break the bounds of space and time and predict the sufferings and glory of Messiah and the utopian splendours of His kingdom. Poetry becomes prophecy and they foretell a new age for the world:

He will rule from sea to sea  
and from the River to the ends of the earth.  
May his name endure forever;  
may it continue as long as the sun.

All nations will be blessed through him,  
and they will call him blessed.  
*Psalm 72 verses 8 and 17*  
(NIV)

These readings have been arranged to give us a language and liturgy for our devotion and prayer. We tell God our deepest truth, however terrifying that truth may be, and He still loves us. Here are ancient words with a contemporary resonance, God's prayer book for a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church.  
*Andrew Brandon*

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Contact: BOCF, Oakleigh Avenue, Edgware, Middx. HA8 5DT

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