

## Discussion Notes

July 26, 2014

Psalm 49 – Rikk Watts

Why this Psalm?

- The only Psalm Jesus quotes in the book of Mark!
- This Psalm speaks to God's people who are under pressure and in need of encouragement.

What is it?

- A wisdom Psalm. The other "bookend" to Psalm 1 – in the first section of the book of Psalms.
- It speaks of who God is, who we are and how we should live.
- It's main thrust (it has but one) – do not fear when oppressed by the Godless and powerful.

Notice:

- It takes seriously our problems.
- It is not directed against the wealthy – the Bible never condemns the wealthy just because they are well off. We see God using and blessing wealthy people in many places in the biblical story.
- It is often those who don't have all the "stuff" and want it who are in danger of being deceived.
- The hardship God's people experience in the world is par for the course when one goes against the grain of culture – live out of a different narrative.

Why not fear?

7-9

- Wealth is ultimately useless. God is the only one who has and gives life and we will never have enough to pay for it. Don't, therefore, get caught up in it!
- Regarding the "dwelling" language – This speaks to the reality that this life is like a staying overnight in a temporary place. The Psalmist is likening our earthly lives to one night in a motel.
- All people are like sheep that need a shepherd. God's people have a good shepherd. People who trust in their wealth are like sheep loaded up on their way to slaughter – unaware of their folly.

13-14

- The first indication that the grave might not be everyone's ultimate end!
- Some sheep's shepherd is death – but it doesn't have to be that way. There is a better shepherd!

16-20

- Do not be afraid!

- The strong language and imagery is designed to shake us out of our wrong perspective.
- Consider this Psalm against the backdrop of Psalm 23.
- 15 – but God will ransom my soul!
- Consider Mark 8. 7-9 along with this Psalm.

Consider the wisdom focus of the Psalm:

- Psalm 1 and 49 are book ends.
- Resist the pressure to conform.
- Do not fear – we have a sure and certain hope!

### **Discussion Questions:**

- What did you learn from this teaching?
- How do you personally connect with this Psalm?
- What are some ways God's people might feel pressure to conform or fear in or current culture and time?
- How do we keep a "hope focus" in the midst of our age?