

Psalm 131 Bible Study

This lesson is meant to accompany the song "Psalm 131" as written by musician, Hebrew scholar, and Pittsburgh Theological Seminary graduate Jeremy Fisher. To get the most out of this lesson, you will need to play the song during your class. The audio file is currently available, at no charge, from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary at www.pts.edu/Lenten_Resource_Kit_2016.



COMPLIMENTS OF THE
MILLER SUMMER YOUTH INSTITUTE AT
PITTSBURGH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

PSALM 131 MUSICAL BIBLE STUDY

TEACHER'S BACKGROUND ON LENT

"The English name is derived from the Anglo-Saxon Lencten, spring."

"We can trace up to very early times the existence of a preparatory fast to Easter, for it is mentioned definitely by Irenaeus and Tertullian. While, however, the fast seems to have been one universally kept, there seems to have been very great latitude as to the duration of the fast."

- Dictionary of Christian Antiquities

"This period of course grew out of the time of the Master's temptation in the wilderness Gregory the Great brought uniformity by enacting that Lent should consist of the forty-six days preceding Easter, Sundays being excepted from fasting."

- Memoirs of the Lutheran Liturgical Association

The Psalms are often used during lent because they cover such a wide range of emotions and experiences. This lesson will look closely at one psalm in particular from three different translations.

A handout is included in this study. It will be helpful for participants to have the three translations in front of them for this lesson. Simply print page 4 and cut as needed!

If you use this study, we would love to hear your feedback! You can reach us at SYI@pts.edu.

LESSON PLAN

OPENING

Open with prayer.

INTRODUCTION

We are in the liturgical season of Lent. Often considered a time for repentance and preparation, the season of Lent has deep roots in Christian practice. While the season of Advent leads us to Christmas, Lent leads us to Easter.

Certain Psalms are particularly appropriate for this season because of their prayerful and preparatory tone. Today, we will read a Psalm in two translations, and listen to a third that has been set to music.

Translation 1:

Our first translation of this psalm is from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, which was first published in the mid-1900s, which puts it pretty close to our own context.

[Leader may now read Ps 131 from the RSV.]

A Song of Ascents. Of David.

- 1 O Lord, my heart is not lifted up,
my eyes are not raised too high;
I do not occupy myself with things
too great and too marvellous for me.
- 2 But I have calmed and quieted my soul,
like a weaned child with its mother;
my soul is like the weaned child that is with me.
- 3 O Israel, hope in the Lord
from this time on and for evermore.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Having read this psalm, what words stick out to you?
- What images come to mind?
- What would it take for you to be able to pray this psalm as a prayer?

Translation 2:

Our second translation of this psalm is from the King James Version, which was first published in the early 1600s, which is much farther removed from us than the RSV. Listen for the differences and similarities in this version.

[Leader may now read Ps 131 from the KJV]

- 1 Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty:
neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things
too high for me.
- 2 Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child
that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a
weaned child.
- 3 Let Israel hope in the Lord from henceforth and for
ever.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What differences do you hear between these two translations?
- Which version is more poetic? Which version is more clear? Which do you prefer?
- Having read both versions, if you were to set this to music, what style of music would you use? What instruments would you use?

Third and Final Translation:

This final translation was done by musician, Hebrew scholar, and Pittsburgh Theological Seminary graduate Jeremy Fisher. Drawing on his experience as a jazz performer, he set the psalm to music for use in a variety of worship services. This translation was done for a specific purpose in the early 2000s. (Hear more: <http://jeremyfisherjr.com/trio/>)

We will listen to this version twice. First, close your eyes and just listen.

[Play Psalm 131 – translated and performed by Jeremy Fisher]

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How is this similar to the way you would set this psalm to music? How is it different?
- Did this version surprise you in any way?

Now, listen again with the translation in front of you. Take notes on what you think or feel about Jeremy's version.

[Play Jeremy Fisher's Liturgical translation again.]

1 Oh Lord, my heart is not lifted up, and my eyes are not raised too high.
I do not occupy myself with things too great or marvelous for me,

2 But I have calmed and quieted my being.
Like a small child, calm and quiet in loving parent's arms,
Like a small child is my inner being.

3 Oh Israel, hope in the Lord now and always

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How is this version consistent with the feel of this psalm? How is it inconsistent?
- What changes when you hear this psalm set to music? Do you have the same reaction to it?

CLOSING QUESTIONS

- Having looked at three versions, which do you enjoy the most? Why?
- Which was most thought provoking? Why?
- What fights against calm or quiet in your life?
- What steps could you take to calm or quiet your soul?

HOMEWORK

This week, set aside time at least once (for bonus points once a day) to calm and quiet your soul.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, as we celebrate Lent, guide our preparations for Easter. Calm and quiet our souls, and focus us on you. In Jesus name, Amen.

MILLER SUMMER YOUTH INSTITUTE AT PITTSBURGH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Since 1997, the Miller Summer Youth Institute at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary has drawn rising high school seniors from Washington, DC, to San Francisco, Calif., Canby, Minn., to Trujillo Alto, Puerto Rico, and everywhere in between. These scholars come from small parishes and big steeples, big cities and small towns, US territories and Indian Nations and represent all walks of life and theological perspectives. They come to Pittsburgh Theological Seminary to ask deep questions about life and faith, to think critically about these issues, and to explore ministry from the pulpit and the pews.

The Miller Summer Youth Institute celebrates its 20th year in 2016! Join the Miller SYI and the Seminary's Continuing Education Office June 5-11, 2016, for **Being Church**. We love the Church. But we know that the 20th-century church is not meeting the needs of the 21st-century world. Over the course of the week, we invite you to join together in community to consider what it means to be Church. Speakers include **Eric H. F. Law**, **Nadia Bolz-Weber**, and **Rachel Held Evans**. There will be the opportunity to earn two professional certificates. This event is not just for pastors, it is for everyone to come together to engage in critical thinking, ask big questions, and discover what God is up to in the church.

The goal of SYI is that all who come in contact with the program have the opportunity to discover more fully who God is calling them to be and what God is calling them to do. With that goal in mind we enter this week full of expectation that we will hear God's call anew to do God's work in the church and world.

Additionally, SYI is venturing into new territory. Beginning in the fall of 2016 we are starting our SYI satellite programs, otherwise known as **SYI on the Road**. Through this program, we seek to take the outstanding theological and vocational training that is offered during the traditional SYI and share it with church youth groups in the Pittsburgh area and around the country. We have a number of different tracks and options for church youth groups. We can come to churches during youth group for several weeks, plan a retreat for your youth group over a weekend, or work with youth directors to bring our programming to you!

Also, beginning in June 2017, we will offer **college credit for SYI** for the first time. Know young people who may be interested in SYI? Tell them about the program!

Learn more:
www.pts.edu/SYI
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412-924-1443



PSALM 131 MUSICAL BIBLE STUDY

REVISED STANDARD VERSION

1 O Lord, my heart is not lifted up,
my eyes are not raised too high;
I do not occupy myself with things
too great and too marvellous for me.

2 But I have calmed and quieted my soul,
like a weaned child with its mother;
my soul is like the weaned child that is with me.

3 O Israel, hope in the Lord
from this time on and for evermore.

KING JAMES VERSION

1 Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty:
neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things
too high for me.

2 Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child
that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a
weaned child.

3 Let Israel hope in the Lord from henceforth and for
ever.

LITURGICAL TRANSLATION BY JEREMY FISHER

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PITTSBURGH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

In whatever you do, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary can help you live your faith in life. We're all called to serve Christ. PTS can prepare you to serve as a pastor, counselor, church planter, educator, chaplain, community leader, or in other roles. Not interested in a ministry-degree program? Explore your vocation through the Seminary's certificate and non-degree programs and glorify God in whatever you do.

ABOUT THE SEMINARY

Founded in 1794, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary is a graduate theological school of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Rooted in the Reformed tradition, the Seminary is committed to the formation of women and men for theologically reflective ministry and to scholarship in service to the global Church of Jesus Christ.

DEGREE PROGRAMS

- Master of Divinity
- Master of Divinity with joint degrees in law (Duchesne University), social work (University of Pittsburgh), and public policy (Carnegie Mellon University)
- Master of Divinity with emphasis in church planting
- Master of Divinity, Master of Arts, or Master of Arts in Theology and Ministry with a graduate certificate in urban ministry
- Master of Arts
- Master of Arts in Theology and Ministry
- Master of Arts in Theological Studies
- Master of Sacred Theology
- Doctor of Ministry with seven focus areas: Urban Change, Missional Leadership, Parish, Reformed, Eastern Christian, Science and Theology, and Reformed Christian Spirituality

CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

- Graduate Certificate in Urban Ministry
- Certificate in Spiritual Formation

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

Church Planting Initiative Forms and supports Christian leaders in creating new Christian communities

Continuing Education Provides the theologically interested public with opportunities to explore faith and vocation through free lectures, special events, and professional development

Kelso Museum of Near Eastern Archaeology Offers free tours and open hours to view displays from the more than 7,000-artifact collection, as well as several lectures by world experts annually

Metro-Urban Institute Combines the theory and practice of collaborative community ministry in a program of urban theological education

Miller Summer Youth Institute Encourages high-school scholars to think theologically and explore ministry as a vocation

World Mission Initiative Develops mission vision, nurtures missionary vocations, and cultivates missional congregations through cross-cultural experiences

The Zeitah Excavations Explores biblical history through the archaeological field project at Tel Zayit, Israel, which has yielded the oldest (10th century BCE) reliably dated inscription of the linear Hebrew alphabet

RESOURCES

Barbour Library More than 300,000 volumes, several online databases, and 800 periodical subscriptions, making it the largest stand-alone theological library east of the Mississippi www.pts.edu/barbour-library

Faculty and Program Directors Available to preach and teach on a variety of topics www.pts.edu/experts

Mission Consultations Available to help congregations plan a mission trip or become more missionally engaged—personally or through downloadable resources www.pts.edu/wmi

Lectures and Events Open to the public on topics of faith www.pts.edu/calendar

Videos Recorded lectures by distinguished guests www.youtube.com/pghseminary

Miller Summer Youth Institute Satellite Programs

Committed to resourcing churches in youth ministry, including bringing the resources of PTS to your youth group www.pts.edu/syi

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