

Psalm 82 - Sermon delivered by Michael Palmer on 2019.07.14
The cry of revolution - the cry of reform - the chant of an uprising or an awakening - are somehow held within Psalm 82.

At first the words may not seem so political but let them rattle around in your brain ... like an echo in a cave and the effect will eventually multiply and deepen to be quite revolutionary I hope we might see so as our reflection develops.....

Of course - The revolution cry from Psalm 82 can not simply be equated with the cry of other revolutionary uprisings - like the cry of the yellow vests - "Here we are! Here we are! What if Macron doesn't like it? Here we are!" les paroles, les paroles, les paroles' which more or less translates as 'everything is just talk'Nor even to be simply equated to that earlier French revolution - Liberty - Equality - Fraternity they share something with Psalm 82 but the Psalm has a twist

How do we read the Psalms? - *Songs and prayers and laments - lamenting the silence of God*BUT Psalm 82 ... is mostly a Psalm of God talking Yes, a prayer comes at the end but the concluding prayer is a response to a God who is speaking

What is God saying? The setting is a court and God is pronouncing judgement on the gods!

Remember this is a near east setting - Israel may have been monotheistic - believing in one God but the surround nations were worshipping many gods much of the scriptures pronounce these many gods as nothing but useless stone or wood but here 'the gods' are condemned for their failure to act!!

Read verses 2-4

Their failure has resulted in chaos darkness ... verse 5

And God pronounces judgement - dethronement and death awaits the lesser 'gods'

Of course, it may be easy to see this Psalm as just a window into the supernatural world - a curtain pulled back to reveal the greater reality - that God is about the business of righting the wrongs this surely is a comfort when injustice confronts usBUT

....there was an interpretation of Psalm 82 at the time of Jesus - which saw 'the gods' in the Psalm as being a reference to the Israelites, perhaps more specifically, the leaders in Israel..... recall for a moment Jn 10:30-36 - *read*

If Jesus allows the reference of 'gods' in Psalm 82 to refer not just to lesser gods in the supernatural world but also to human agents then the Psalm would challenge **Authentic Authority - whether human or supernatural to care for the poor and needy!**

SO we might be encouraged in Psalm 82 to cry out to our human authorities Lord how long!! - well might we sing the wonderful words of John Bell's 'Inspired by love and anger'Verse 1

Inspired by love and anger, disturbed by need and pain,

Informed of God's own bias we ask him once again:

'How long must some folk suffer? How long can few folk mind?

How long dare vain self interest turn prayer and pity blind?'

or the second half of verse 4

'When will the wronged be righted? When will the kingdom come?

When will the world be generous to all instead of some?'

If we allow Psalm 82 to refer to all Authority - Human or supernatural - then we and our institutions have been found wanting!

Royal commissions into banking and nursing homes and Institutions have revealed systematic abuses the powerful being protected and the vulnerable being forgotten!

NAIDOC this year is a cry VOICE - TREATY - TRUTH

The TRUTH component is about exposing past and current injustices - for example ... Twofold Bay massacre of 1806 - 11 deaths from sealers perhaps self defence but that self-defence cannot be an excuse for many other massacres - See especially the 1838 Myall Creek massacre where 7 settlers were condemned to death by a jury for the unprovoked massacre of an entire settlement - their motive was 'opportunity'!

Psalm 82 condemns partiality - And this seems to linger - see this example from the Social Assessment with Indigenous Aboriginal Communities in the Eden CRA Region - A report undertaken for the NSW CRA/RFA Steering Committee May 1998

5. EMPLOYMENT

In the past, some Indigenous Aboriginal people have found employment predominantly in seasonal work as well as in fishing and forestry. Forest industry employment was held cutting sleepers, poles, collecting firewood as well as working in the sawmills as benchmen and general hands. As the timber industry contracted in the Eden region, many Indigenous Aboriginal people lost employment as a result of increasing mechanisation of the industry and the subsequent workforce downsizing. **Indigenous Aboriginal people were the first to lose their jobs** in the timber industry and, as economic growth has declined in other sectors (seasonal work and fishing), they were again the first to lose out at a time when no government assistance was available. **In contrast, the non- Indigenous community now being displaced from the timber industry is receiving compensation in the form of financial assistance and retraining through FISAP.**

Authentic Authority as per Psalm 82 - would stand with and in support of the vulnerableand dispense justice and opportunity equally

It was American writer and novelist Pearl Buck (1892-1973) that wrote: "Our society must make it right and possible for old people not to fear the young or be deserted by them, for the test of a civilisation is the way that it cares for its helpless members."

She was the daughter of a missionary, she spent a large part of her life in China. When she returned to America she became a passionate advocate for mixed-race adoption, minority groups, and women's rights. Her life narrative was surely informed by the like of Psalm 82 - for she seems to grasp that this care of the vulnerable - is not one feature from among many that the 'gods' were judged upon - **NO, it is the sole reason! This is mandatory for Authentic Authority - necessary for authorities, whether gods and human, to comply.**

Are you disappointed in our 'lesser gods' - supernatural or human? If so be disappointed but do not despair - the Psalm is a Psalm of encouragementFor it peels back the curtain of the heavens and reveals that God walks in judgement - the gods are NOW sentenced - we live in the NOT YET of the execution of that judgement BUT we can be confident **the wrong will be righted!**

Psalm 82 is a Psalm of RevolutionBUT not like the French revolution of now or yesteryear - not just deliverance for '**us**' **poor** - Ps. 82 - is a cry for us and others - relief for all the poor/marginalised.

If we would stand with the oppressed poor we must first listen to them lest even our steps to help/save be paternal. This might be a problem to watch in a process to a Referendum on the constitution concerning Indigenous Australians which by-passes TREATY. Any Constitution will be paternal if it proceeds Treaty - for in any vote in a referendum the first nation folk will be well outnumbered by newer Australians. Hence 'their future in majority white hands'! NAIDOC 2019 bids us Listen to the **Voice** - then **Treaty** as **Truth** is exposed ... and only then, with TREATY, can a dialogue proceed about how our 'two peoples' can be grafted as joint custodians of Australia.....
Psalm 82 - is a cry for an authentic authority - one which will bring relief for the poor. Let it be our prayer and also let it be reflected in our every action - for it is central and the priority if not the sole criteria of anyone who might have the opportunity to affect the wellbeing of another anyone who would be a good neighbour!