

The Ramblings of a Psalmist
Bob Stillerman
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Psalm 16

There's a psalmist. And she lives in a harried world. Like you and me, she's been known to hit her snooze bar once or twice on weekday mornings. And she considers it a victory when she can shower, dress in matching clothes, and get out the door before seven o'clock with more coffee in her travel mug than on her jacket. And that of course assumes she's remembered to hit the auto-brew button the night before.

On her drive into work, she notices that all the radio programming seems to morph from one hour to the next, one day to the next. It seems the last two weeks have been a stream-of-consciousness that mentions opinion polls, and hair-coloring products, and the chance to invest in some-kind of Budget Blinds franchise. The same pieces are all there, just re-arranged by who says them.

All this busy-ness, it's a fog. And she's in the thick of it.

But every so often, as human beings tend to do, and especially writers of psalms, she has this desire to find deeper meaning. And after a few too many revolutions on the hamster wheel, she finds herself asking the question: "What gives me comfort?"

There's a status meeting in her future – too many tasks to count, too many deadlines to meet. She envisions a tidy spreadsheet, and in the status column, all the boxes read *COMPLETE*. How nice!!!

She thinks of Amazon.com. Yeah, that Amazon. She sees a review of all her orders. Shipped on time. Thanks, Prime! And each of those products, I mean every single one of them, is rated with five-stars. Some are even an Amazon Choice. Hooray for me! I'm prepared, and a good shopper to boot!

She imagines a lawn with not one leaf on it, and not one blade of grass out of place. Floors swept and mopped, rugs vacuumed, couch cushions fluffed, beds made, toilets clean, refrigerator stocked, meals planned, Tupperware, the good kind that matches, and all in one place; bills paid; laundry actually laundered, folded and put-away, not all wrinkled in the dryer, or hanging on closet hooks. All these tedious errands completed, mean more time – more time to rest, more time to watch what you want on Netflix, more time to talk about, and dream about what you'll do with all that extra time.

And she wants validation, too. It makes her feel good. It brings her comfort. She wants to know she's made the right choices. She wants to know that she's spent her time and her resources wisely. She wants to know that the work she's done for her employer has been done well; she wants to know that the choices she's made about her finances, and her healthcare, and her retirement, and her life insurance, and the kind of car she drives, have been the right ones – the ones that were best for the welfare of her family.

Our writer is also a thorough thinker. And because she thinks about what brings her comfort, she also thinks about what doesn't. And because she's a psalmist, she can't help but be honest and sincere, even when she doesn't always like the words or thoughts that follow.

It's the week before Thanksgiving. And she loves her family. And she loves a big meal. And she knows she needs a rest. And she knows that she will find rest in Thanksgiving. But this four-day weekend is gonna ruin her plans of finally carving out her slice of comfort. The status report's gonna have too many boxes still marked *In Progress*; the leaves and the laundry are gonna pile up; and the coming season's gonna blow up her budget. And there won't be any time to dream about all that free time.

And suddenly, our psalmist is struck by a profound thought: all these others gods I choose – time, convenience, material security, financial independence, validation from social media likes and follows, or five star consumer reviews – they are multiplying my sorrows. And these other gods, that is these things that consume me, they are distracting me from the presence of my God.

God gives me security. God made trees that offer shelter and shade. And in the autumn, beautiful orange, red, and yellow leaves that delight my senses. Those status reports I long for, the ones I love to mark up with my highlighter, are made by cutting down those trees.

God gives me affirmation. Just by being me. Just by being born. God has said, "You are my child, and you are worthy!!!" And God really doesn't care if there are Cheerios in my couch cushions, or if the comforter I bought online only has a three-star review, or if I paid full-price instead of braving all that Black Friday traffic. Because God's affirmation is not seasonal, nor conditional, nor artificial. It's ever-present.

God gives me a new sense of time. I've been programmed to believe that work, or progress, or anything of merit must happen during business hours, or by official deadlines, or at the very least be postmarked. Otherwise the world's gonna move on without me. The truth is, the only roadblocks to God's availability are the ones I put up for myself. It's not that God's ever absent from me. It's that too often my schedule prevents me from being present to God.

And our psalmist keeps thinking and expressing. When I sing *Halle, Halle, Halle*, and shake my tambourine, my joy for God, and in God, always rises above my despair about the little gods. When I share in God's peace with my neighbors, it's not transactional like a "Thank-you-ma'am" at the grocery store. When I shout my joys, or whisper my sorrows, or join in a community of vocal petitions, I've never felt an absent or distracted God. And when I stand in the presence of my neighbors, my larger family, I see God's amazing creation, filled with beautiful, unique creatures, and I know I'm part of something bigger, something more important than what these temporary gods proclaim.

And I know with certainty, God shows me the path of life, and in God's presence, I know the fullness of joy.

A horn honks. Our Psalmist was doing some excellent reflecting. So much so that she's been sitting at a traffic-light-turned-green for more than thirty seconds now. The horn brings her back to the present. And there are little gods awaiting her: status sheets, and chores, and decisions to make. And like all of us, she'll have to wade back in to this sea of busy-ness.

But she's got a new resolve. "I needed this moment," she says. "I needed to stop, and give thanks for what matters. I needed to do more than think it. I needed to speak it. And you know what, Thanksgiving dinner's gonna be a psalm. But it's not gonna be my only psalm. I have carved out time to be present to the little gods, and if I can be present to them, I can certainly be present to God."

And she imagines a thousand little Thanksgivings made present in morning commutes, or impromptu gatherings, or a Sunday service, or a quiet walk, or even listening to a symphony in her headphones as she finally vacuums her neglected rugs.

And she sees a wide, warm, path. It's full of life. And it's full of God's joy. And because she's a Type-A, she even imagines a tidy little spreadsheet. The first line reads: "Psalmist; Status: God's got me."

Sardis Baptist Church, in this season of Thanksgiving, may each of you be a psalmist. May you be willing to explore what gives you comfort and security, and may you find an expression of the God that fills you with the fullness of joy.

Amen.