REPEAT: Psalms -**The Road Less Traveled**

**150 songs - 400 yrs - 12+ authors shuffling through the best songs.**

**This week's shuffle is a short one. It reminds me of top 40 songs that are 3 to 3 ½ min long. This is a top 40 hit - short but powerful.**

**A SHORT PSALM WITH A HIGH STANDARD: Psalm 15, A song of David**

**The challenge to stand for God in the midst of corruption and sin.**

**The real road less traveled – a challenging road, it is the opposite of the world's culture – this song is 3000 years old.**

**Psalm 15:1 O LORD, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? (Who may dwell (abide) in your sacred tent, sanctuary, tabernacle)**

**2 He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart; 3 who does not slander with his tongue and does no evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his friend; 4 in whose eyes a vile person is despised, but who honors those who fear the LORD; who swears to his own hurt and does not change; 5 who does not put out his money at interest and does not take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved.**

**Let’s break this down. David asks a question and then answers it. An important question we must all ask.**

**The assumption of Psalm 15:**

**God exists, and you deeply want to know who he is.**

**Hebrews 11:6 Without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.**

**THE QUESTION of 15: Who can really know and dwell with the LORD?**

**Psalm 15:1 O LORD, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? (Who may dwell/abide in your sacred tent, sanctuary, tabernacle)**

**Refers to the presence of God in the tabernacle, either on the holy hill in Gibeon or the Ark on Mount Moriah. The Temple had not been built yet – it was a tent.**

**Who can sojourn = who can visit - suggests an outsider desiring to be with the LORD. Then he repeats the questions, saying, 'Who can dwell there? You visit, then make their home there.**

**God, you are holy, perfect, good, and all-powerful. Who can really hang with you? Who can be in your presence? Hard question!**

**\*\*\* To dwell in the house of God is to know His goodness, provision, joy, shelter, and safety – it was asylum from the world.**

**It is a literal and rhetorical question – the question:**

**Who can truly experience the daily presence of God in their life?**

**This Psalm is the answer and a call for a road less traveled.**

**This Psalm is not in any way the means by which we are made right with God, but it reflects the presence of God in our lives.**

**\*\* This verse is like the fruit of the Spirit.**

**\*\*\* Who can really know and dwell with God? Only those in Christ.**

**Jesus on the Sermon on the Mount says – Matthew 5:48 - Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. He is echoing Leviticus 19:2 - Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy. (Well, thanks… how do we do that? (Perfect here means = complete maturity - meaning to be set apart – different)**

**Paul writes - 1 Thess 4:7 - For God has not called us to impurity, but to holiness.**

**But yet at the same time – the Bible says none are righteous, none do what is right, none are good = not even one (Rom 3:10-12) \*\* That is, apart from Jesus.**

**Romans 3:22 This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. 25 God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood - to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness…**

**Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. (faith in the person & work of Jesus on the cross and resurrection) And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.**

**Jesus is telling us what to strive for (holiness), but at the same time telling us we can’t do it on our own, or without him.**

**I.E. – To get on a ride - you need to be this tall. A ruler to see how short we are to God (not how tall we are to others).**

**This Psalm is about pursuing godly character and righteousness, a quality often lacking today. In Christ, we are made Holy - now be holy.**

**Who can experience the presence of God in their daily life?**

**2 He who walks blamelessly…**

**1. The one who walks blamelessly and above accusation**

**Who is the one who can live and know in God’s daily presence?**

**Simply: You live above reproach – and above accusations before others. You reflect the LORD regardless of who you are with.**

**Dozens of verses on this. The NT uses phrases like:**

**Above accusation, above reproach, having a clear conscience, clean hands, be blameless, innocent, no fault found, to put no obstacles in anyone's way.**

**1 John 1:6 - If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.**

**Our conduct is a reflection of our intimacy with God.**

**Phil 2:14-15 Do all things without grumbling or disputing, 15 that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world…**

**Living free from accusations and above reproach in a world that celebrates personal autonomy and independence. You don’t use liberty/grace as an excuse for selfishness & sin.**

**I might be free and able to do it, but not if it makes Jesus look bad**

**Who can live in God’s presence? 2 (He who) …and does what is right…**

**2. The one who does the right thing even when people are not watching**

**Who is the one who can live in God’s presence? You are not a hypocrite – and you don’t live a double life. You are the same in private as in public. You strive to do the right thing at all times.**

**In the face of opposition and peer pressure, you do the right thing.**

**This is integrity and consistent character. (James 1:8 – a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways…)**

**It is hard to know and dwell in the presence of God if you’re a hypocrite. “I don’t sense his presence.” How’s your private life?**

**2 (He who) …and speaks truth in his heart…**

**3. The one who speaks (declares) the truth of God with conviction**

**Do you really believe it? There are no 'fake it till you make it' Christians**

**The so-called “former Christians.” They were trying to make it real, but in their heart, they never truly believed. Then, when chaos or disappointment came – they left.**

**When you truly believe it is God’s truth, you strive to live it. No matter what comes, you know and sense God's presence - even in suffering.**

**2 Tim 1:12 That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet this is no cause for shame, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day.**

**Your words and your life are consistent and with conviction.**

**Who can experience God’s presence? (He who) 3 who does not slander with his tongue… (KJV - one who does not backbite with his tongue) and does no evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his friend…**

**4. The one who seeks to bring life and encouragement to others**

**This is all about how we treat others, in both words and actions.**

**Are your words helpful or hurtful?**

**God is checking out and cares about how we use our words.**

**His people are known for their actions and words.**

**Most assume it's mostly good… Okay, what’s the next one?**

**Let’s take a closer look… God sets a pretty high bar here.**

**James 1:26 If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. (James spends a lot of time on this – control your mouth / control your life)**

**James 3:9 With it (the tongue) we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. 10 From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. 11 Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? 12 Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.**

**You can read your bible every day, sing worship songs – but if your mouth is out of control (gossip, slander, divisiveness, hatefulness), you’ll struggle to know and enjoy his presence.**

**\*\*\* Our words are encouraging, life-giving, and full of hope!**

**Does that mean we can never discuss anything unless we're talking about flowers and puppies?**

**\*\* There can be a time and place for negative and harsh words**

**Jesus was not always Mr. Rogers… his words did not drip honey and syrup – He called the religious vipers and poisonous snakes who eat widows for lunch, and sons of the devil. (John, 8, Mt 12) “Well, that’s not very Christ-like” – he often publicly said, harsh things to those who needed to hear it.**

**When a spiritual leader falls what are we to do? 1 Tim 5:19-20 - Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. (means if there is testimony of several people) 20 Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning. (doesn’t seem nice)**

**\*\* There are times to discuss serious and difficult matters**

**Gal. 2:11-14 - Paul confronted Peter in front of everyone about his hypocrisy.**

**There are many places where harsh words are needed – Example: 2 Timothy 4:14 Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done. 15 You too should be on your guard against him, because he strongly opposed our message. (A negative thing to say about someone else – to be read to the whole church – and passed around – Did Paul slander Alexander – no, it was needed.)**

**We are to speak the truth from the heart, with no slander on our tongue. There is a time and place for tough words, but we are not to be motivated by hate or resentment. After Matt 18:15-17 – process.**

**We are to speak the truth in Love, gentleness, patience, respect, and boldness for the purpose of hope and encouragement.**

**Next one, who can consistently know God’s presence? 4 (the one) whose eyes a vile person is despised, but who honors those who fear the LORD…**

**5. The one who listens to and follows the faithful of the LORD.**

**You don’t make excuses for those who claim to be Christians, and honor those who are striving to serve the Lord faithfully.**

**How can one expect to enjoy the presence of the Lord when one celebrates and praises what God despises?**

**Proverbs 8:13: The fear of the LORD is to hate evil.**

**Despise does not mean you show outward disrespect. It means you do not make the wicked your heroes or idolize those who dishonor God.**

**Are your heroes godly or godless?**

**In other words - Who are the authors you read, celebrities you follow, music artists you consume, and motivational speakers you like? What Christian preacher do you like? Who do you look up to and emulate?**

**Who shapes your values? The one who dwells in God’s presence is the one who looks up to the honorable and godly**

**Who can experience God’s presence? 4 (The one) …who swears to his own hurt and does not change… (NIV …who keeps an oath even when it hurts, and does not change their mind.)**

**6. The one who keeps his word even if it gets difficult.**

**Are you a person of your word? Do you keep your commitments?**

**Culture says – “Keep them as long as it’s fun and bail when it’s hard. Life is too short to be unhappy.”**

**People think they are loyal and committed but are always looking for *The Loopholes* (the fine print). Okay, what about the…**

**\*\* The small stuff? - What if it’s not a big deal…**

**An RSVP (30% won’t come), the obscure, “maybe, I’ll try…” Really? People are working and preparing for you. If you don’t have it in the small stuff, it's usually not there in the big stuff.**

**\*\* The inconvenient stuff? – Well, it’s not fun after all. I didn’t mean it**

**At work – sure I’ll do it, but don’t. A Volunteer – I’ll be there – but you’re not. Commitment to our kids, but I had a tough day.**

**\*\* The painful stuff? - But what if it’s hard? I didn’t know. I deserve a break. Bills – a marriage – friendship commitments – staying clean…**

**We like loopholes – But I’m glad Jesus did not find a loophole for the cross. He is faithful and true. God keeps his word, and we are too.**

**Matt 5 / James 5 – let your yes be yes – let your words be solid and true.**

**Get some spiritual fortitude and suck it up. God is our strength. Keeping commitments is a major character issue with the LORD.**

**Who can experience the LORD’s presence? - 5 (the one) who does not put out his money at interest (offers money with strings attached, taking advantage of people) and does not take a bribe against the innocent. (you don’t use people for personal benefit)**

**7. The one who looks out for the poor and helpless**

**This is a warning against exploiting the disadvantaged and innocent.**

**I can’t help but think of companies that prey on people’s misfortunes – like corporations, cheap labor, loan sharks, and abortion clinics. Making money off the trials, hardships, and misfortune of others.**

**The world tends to take advantage of the poor (through lotteries, price gouging, high rent, poor-paying jobs).**

**“It’s just business…” - God sees this differently.**

**God is consistently looking out for those who are struggling –**

**Lev 23:22 – God makes a law to keep the edges of your harvest for the poor.**

**Ex 22:25 – Don’t charge interest when you give money to the needy.**

**Every prophet in the OT dealt with three areas of sin: Idol worship, sexual sin, and not caring for the poor, innocent, and helpless.**

**God repeatedly says, “You want to hang out with me? Look out for those who are hurting and in need - and help them!**

**Reach out to them as Christ has done for us!**

**We were in need / Christ came – his word was true…**

**Romans 5:6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Since we have now been justified (declared right) by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him! 10 For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!**

**Back to the ruler – You must be this tall to ride… You may look at this and discover you don’t measure up.**

1. **Live above accusation**
2. **(Always) Do what is right (even when no one is watching)**
3. **Speak the truth with conviction**
4. **Be an encourager**
5. **Honor those who Fear the LORD**
6. **Keep your word**
7. **Help the hurting**

**Psalm 15:5 …He who does these things shall never be moved. (meaning you will have a life of stability – and will dwell with the Lord forever)**

**1 John 2:17 The world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.**

**If we want to ride with God – to dwell in his company, to experience his presence daily, we must do these things. But we quickly find that we are too short to ride… that's where Jesus comes in!**

**He does not lower the bar – he lifts us up so we can be like him through the power of the Holy Spirit in us. Through Jesus, we have the power to reach beyond our height.**