

Summer School course 2016

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July 4-8 2-5 PM

## ***Preaching like a Christian: approaching the Psalms as Christian Scripture***

### **Introduction**

Is Jesus present in the psalms? If so, how? How do we read the psalms with reference to Jesus without slighting our Jewish sisters and brothers? And how do we preach them for the sake of the church's flourishing?

This course will presume a post-liberal and post-critical approach to the bible. That is, we appreciate and learn from historical criticism, and we read the bible in light of the whole of God's saving work in the incarnation and the church. The psalms have always come in for intensely focused and specifically Christian interpretation—such as in Athanasius' work as therapy for our affections, in Augustine's as the engine for the "wonderful exchange" of salvation in Christ. This course will examine the psalms in their fulsome and multiple Christian senses—literal, allegorical, tropological and anagogical, or more plainly, what's it say? What's it mean theologically? What should we do? And how ought we to hope? We will read some leading theologians' and church historians' take on critical retrieval of historical ways of reading the psalms, we will read some psalms ourselves, and if we get real brave we might even preach to one another from David's hymnal.

### **Competencies**

1-To become familiar with ancient and modern ways of interpreting the psalms, especially with regard to how they differ regarding the propriety of Christological exegesis of the psalter. We will focus especially on the last third of the psalter, and within those 50 especially on the psalms of ascent (120-134).

2-To get to know one's own voice as an interpreter within this tradition. This doesn't mean you will like everything you find in the tradition (whoever could?!). It will mean you will preach and teach in a way informed by it.

### **Work Required**

1. Please preread Wayman's notes on Psalms 101-150, concentrating especially on 120-135 (I realize these are located across several sections of the book). Read the introduction carefully and read the psalms aloud, meditating on them in light of the introductory superscription from Athanasius.
2. Read for each day of class and to engage with one another. There is no way around Socratic learning at the graduate level—challenging and being challenged, thinking on our feet, and being forged in charity.
3. A presentation or two on a psalm in the class (depending on how many students). You will choose one of the psalms in the last third of the psalter and study it from both ancient and

modern vantages and present your findings to the class. Choose a favourite (110, 118, 121, 130, 137 (sort of!), 147-150 or a lesser known one. This assignment is meant to be exegetical, only using a wider variety of sources than most modern exegesis. What do the words mean in light of the whole witness of the church's reading traditions? Resources are on reserve in the library.

4. Present your findings on the psalms as read in ways both ancient and new. If your taste runs to the academic, present a paper in class (1000-1500 words); if you are training for ministry preach us a sermon (due Friday).
5. For students (like ThM students) in need of further credit: please read Spurgeon, Alter, and Mays in addition to Augustine on several of the ascent psalms and write a paper interpreting those psalms with those interpreters' help for the sake of the church. August 30 2016 deadline.

### Required Texts

-Brian Daley, "Is Patristic Exegesis Still Usable? Reflections on Early Christian Interpretation of the Psalms," *Communio* 29 (Spring 2002): 185-216.

-David Steinmetz, "The Superiority of Precritical Exegesis," in *The Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, ed. Stephen Fowl (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997).

-Benjamin Wayman *Make the Words Your Own: An Early Christian Guide to the Psalms* (Paraclete, 2014).

- Rowan Williams "Augustine and the Psalms" in *Interpretation* (January 2004), 17-27.

<http://people.bu.edu/joeld/augustine-psalms.pdf>

### Course Schedule

Monday July 5 Course introduction, discussion of Wayman, selection of Psalms to present

Tuesday July 6 Read Steinmetz and Psalm 137. Someone especially keen can present on the psalm.

Wednesday July 7 Read Daley and Psalms 110 and 118, hopefully with presenters on each.

Thursday, July 8 Read Williams and Psalms 130 and 150, with presenters.

Friday, July 9 Preach sermons and present brief papers.

### Bibliography (not even beginning to be exhaustive—by all means add to it if you like)

#### *Primary Sources*

-Augustine *Expositions of the Psalms 99-120 (III/19)*. Trans. Maria Boulding, OSB (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 2003).

—. *Expositions of the Psalms 121-150 (III/20)*. Trans. Maria Boulding, OSB (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 2004).

-St. John Chrysostom *Commentary on the Psalms*, Vol. II trans. Robert Charles Hill (Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998).

-Quentin F. Wesselschmidt, ed. *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Old Testament VIII Psalms 51-150* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2007).

*Secondary sources on ancient Christian exegesis*

-Jason Byassee *Praise Seeking Understanding: Reading the Psalms with Augustine* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007).

-Michael Cameron *Christ Meets Me Everywhere: Augustine's Early Figurative Exegesis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

-Andrew Louth *Discerning the Mystery: An Essay on the Nature of Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980), especially chapter 5 on allegory.

-Gerard McLarney *St Augustine's Interpretation of the Psalms of Ascent* (Washington: Catholic University Press, 2014).

-Robert Wilken *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought: Seeking the Face of God* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2005).

*More recent engagements with the Psalms*

-Robert Alter *The Book of Psalms* (New York: Norton, 2007).

-Frank Lothar Hossfeld and Eric Zenger *Psalms 3 in Hermeneia*, trans. Linda Maloney (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011).

-Hans-Joachim Kraus *Psalms 60-150* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).

-James Limburg *Psalms in Westminster Bible Companion* (Louisville: Westminster, 2000).

-James Mays *Psalms in Interpretation* (Louisville: John Knox, 1994).

-C.H. Spurgeon *The Treasury of David*, abridged by David O. Fuller (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1976)