

Let us pray. O God may the words of my mouth, and the mediations of all our hearts be acceptable unto you, O Lord, our rock and redeemer.¹ Amen.

A prayer of Moses, the man of God.

This morning, we find ourselves in a unique place within the book of Psalms, it is a transitional moment, a pivot in the poetry—a luminous and liminal leap into the lyrics of an ancient and beloved prophet, poet, and vocalist.

How do we know? Well, the superscription—the title or header—just above the psalm is our first clue.

It reads: *A prayer of Moses, the man of God.*

It is, quite literally, one of a kind—the only psalm within the entire book of Psalms that is directly attributed to Moses.

However, to fully appreciate the unique biblical terrain we have just entered, we need a quick refresher on the overall structure of the Psalter. The book of Psalms is divided into five books—smaller collections of psalms that then produce the entirety of the Psalter.

The structure goes like this: Book I contains Psalms 1-41, Book II contains Psalms 42-72, Book III contains Psalms 73-89, Book IV contains Psalms 90-106, and finally, Book V contains Psalms 107-150.

So, in a sense, the Psalter is a kind of “collection of collections”² —offering us, as we have already experienced so beautifully throughout the summer, a profound depth of poetic expression and experience.

And so, in immersing ourselves this morning in Psalm 90, we have the distinct and exciting opportunity to move from one collection of psalms—Book III—to another collection of psalms—Book IV.

And in this transitional moment, it seems as though Psalm 90 is aiming at responding to the questions posed by the psalmist in Psalm 89, questions that are left unanswered, questions that sound like this:

*How long, O Lord? Will you hide yourself forever? How long will your wrath burn like fire?*³

*Lord, where is your steadfast love of old, which by your faithfulness you swore to David?*⁴

What is the response from Psalm 90? To take a pilgrimage—to take a pilgrimage with one of the original pilgrims—Moses, the man of God.

In just seventeen short verses, the poet takes us on a pilgrimage through the totality of the human experience and the ways in which God—Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer—the “one who is and who was and who is to come”⁵ is present from generation to generation, from everlasting to everlasting.

The Lord, Psalm 90 reminds us, is our ultimate and only dwelling place, our first and final refuge. This is the direction where our poetic pilgrimage points. And there really is no one better to lead us. Pilgrim, poet, vocalist, and prophet, Moses knows a thing or two about pilgrimage.

He knows about the tension and trepidation of leaving that which feels familiar and safe and comfortable.

He knows about the undeniable divine claim and call to wade into the waters of the unknown.

He knows about wandering, worrying, and wondering in the wilderness for what seems like a lifetime.

He knows about seemingly endless ascensions and descensions up and down the mountains of life.

He knows about the anxieties and fears and the anger of a people feeling lost, forgotten, and forsaken.

He knows about the temptations to form and fashion idols—to worship that which is shiny and slick.

He knows about the aching joints, the sore muscles, the broken hearts, the hungry stomachs, the parched lips, and the weary souls.

Moses knows about the need for prophetic proclamation, for prayerful resistance, for poetic and artistic exclamation, and for bold intercession, even when that means direct confrontation with the Lord.

And so, much like many beloved and faithful pilgrims of ages past, we plunge into this collective and communal pilgrimage both “rejoicing and trembling,”⁶ aware that if we are going to approach that which is holy, that which is sacred, we do so, as Phil Cousineau writes, “evok[ing] [both] emotion and commotion.”⁷

Just a few short weeks ago, I, alongside 15 other pilgrims, were on such a pilgrimage—the Footsteps of Faith pilgrimage—“a transformative journey to a sacred center”⁸ for high school seniors that includes stops in Corinth, Athens, Patmos, Ephesus, and Rome as we follow in the footsteps of the Paul, Peter, John, and the early church.

In just 11 short days, we were, much like our poetic pilgrimage today, taken through the near totality of the human experience, while also becoming awake to the ways in which God—Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer—the “one who is and who was and who is to come”⁹ is present from generation to generation, from everlasting to everlasting.

Every year, this Footsteps pilgrimage lands us at the intersection our human finitude and fragility alongside God’s everlasting grace, goodness, and mercy. Every year, at this “crossroads moment” of shifting from a youth to an emerging adult “this [becomes] the journey we cannot not take.”¹⁰

One of the greatest gifts of having the opportunity to be a part of the leadership team for Footsteps of Faith is getting to see and experience the ways in which each cohort develops its own unique personality and how this group personality comes alive during our various travels.

Every year, every cohort of Footsteps pilgrims is wildly different. Much like the Psalms, they become a kind of unique collection of pilgrims within a fuller collection of 25 years’ worth of Footsteps pilgrims.

This year, much to my introverted pleasure, this was a quiet and reserved group of pilgrims—thoughtful and pensive, internal processors who did much of their thinking and feeling underneath the surface as we gathered weekly for study and fellowship.

And so, as we prepared for our sojourn together, I made the faulty assumption that this year’s pilgrimage would be, well, quiet. Much to my failure, what I did not anticipate was the *boldness, bravery, resiliency*, and the deep *delight* of these pilgrims.

It happened almost immediately—they their said their goodbyes to the adults in their lives and the rumblings of raucous and rugged pilgrims began!

Though, I should not have been surprised.

Because this group of faithful pilgrims, much like our poetic and prophetic guide this morning, have already seen and experienced an abundance of life.

They, like the psalmist, know about the frailty and fragility of our human existence and finitude. And they, like the psalmist, have the boldness, the bravery, and resiliency to poetically sing of such realities.

They’ve seen death firsthand, dear and beloved loved ones returning to the dust.

They’ve seen relationships and friendships wither away like grass.

They’ve experienced rejection and isolation, they know the overwhelm of wrath, intimately aware of how all-consuming anger can become.

They’ve known exile and exclusion.

They’ve known division and separation.

They’ve known the devastating and crippling realities of an unanticipated diagnosis.

They know of tremendous toil and trouble.

They’re well acquainted with the immense and overpowering iniquities of our world and the secret sins we continue to perpetuate in hiding.

Each of these Footsteps pilgrims have the kind of “wise heart” that the psalmist sings of this morning, the kind of wise heart that often does not show up until our years come to an end.

And because of this intimate, real-life experience with the very bowels of life, they carry with them a kind of intestinal fortitude that we experience in the climactic verse of this morning’s psalm.

It arrives at verse 13. Turn, O Lord! How long? Have compassion on your servants!

It is no longer a question as it once was in Psalm 89. Our poetic prophet is no longer asking God a question, patiently waiting for a response.

It is now a demand. Turn, O Lord! Turn. Repent, O Lord!

Of course, Moses is no stranger to this kind of bold and brave and resilient intercession and interaction. Here we are reminded of Moses’ prophetic proclamation to God in Exodus 32. Moses, interceding on behalf of the people “implored the Lord his God and said...Turn from your fierce wrath; change your mind and do not bring disaster on your people.”¹¹

Then, just two verses later, the Lord turns, “And the Lord changed [the Lord’s] mind about the disaster that [the Lord] planned to bring on [the Lord’s] people.”¹²

Turn, O Lord!

This psalm most often shows up at funerals. Its eloquent and poetic exploration of human frailty and finitude combined with the sure and certain affirmation of God’s everlasting presence makes it a soothing balm for those in the thick of loss and grief.

But, today, I want to make the case that this is also a psalm of empowerment—a psalm of solidarity, uniquely crafted to “equip [this next generation of] saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.”¹³

Surely this is why there is such a bold charge in the letter to the Ephesians to sing psalms filled with the Spirit—the prayerful and poetic resistance of the psalms cannot be ignored or denied.

I must admit, conflict averse introvert that I am, I find these verses and these interactions to be arresting and alarming, wildly discomforting and, frankly, exhausting.

But it is exactly what we need to experience. It is exactly what our congregations, our communities, and our nation needs to encounter and be confronted with.

It was and is exactly what I needed on our recent Footsteps pilgrimage.

Bold, brave, and resilient pilgrims unimpressed with the status quo and unwilling to concede, wielding a kind of “quiet persistence”¹⁴ that simply cannot be ignored or denied, a certain “[subversive and] risky imagination.”¹⁵

Turn. Repent.

An emerging generation of poets and prophets, pilgrims and pioneers, psalmists crying out in the wilderness, preparing the way of the Lord.

And like manna in the wilderness, their bold, brave, and resilient witness, as the psalmist this morning proclaims, will delightfully “satisfy us in the morning...so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days” as we dwell in the steadfast love of the Lord prayerfully resisting and playfully singing from everlasting to everlasting.¹⁶

And for anyone who might be unsure or uneasy, here is what it will sound like—coming directly from the voices and experiences of our most recent Footsteps pilgrims:

“What impacted me most from Footsteps was getting the chance to see the roots of our faith and how certain places have united Christians for centuries despite denominations because they bring us closer to our faith. Beyond faith, the trip brought me closer to so many people whom I wouldn’t have known if it wasn’t for our church and I’m so grateful that I got to form relationships with them and share those amazing experiences.”

“One moment that stayed with me was when we visited Patmos and the cave where St. John received the Revelation. I remember placing my hand in the carving where St. John would lift himself up, and I could feel the presence of God, and I left feeling a deep sense of peace. I am grateful to have had that experience as it reminded me how God is still present in our lives and at work. It especially felt different from the week-to-week schedule that I get accustomed to during the school year, because every day I was learning, encountering, and experiencing something new that I hadn’t before. I am very thankful to have gone and for the leaders and other students who made it such a memorable and meaningful time.”

“This trip was so, so special to me. The opportunity to grow my relationship with religion was something I needed and I’m so grateful for the group of people that were beside me in the experience. I got to grow closer to every person in the group individually and create beautiful memories alongside wonderful people I probably wouldn’t have known otherwise. Everyone’s persistent positivity and love with open hearts is something I will never forget and I’m beyond grateful for this group and this experience.”

Bold. Brave. And delightfully resilient—turning us towards grace and gratitude from everlasting to everlasting.

Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever!¹⁷ Amen.

¹ Psalm 19:14.

² Stephen Breck Reid and W.H. Bellinger, Jr., “The Psalms” in *The Westminster Study Bible*, 738.

³ Psalm 89:46.

⁴ Psalm 89:49.

⁵ Revelation 1:8.

⁶ John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, 27.

⁷ Phil Cousineau, *The Art of Pilgrimage: The Seeker’s Guide to Making Travel Sacred*, xxxiii.

⁸ Ibid., xxix.

⁹ Revelation 1:8.

¹⁰ Cousineau, *The Art of Pilgrimage*, 9.

¹¹ Exodus 32:11-12.

¹² Exodus 32:14.

¹³ Ephesians 4:12.

¹⁴ Susan Cain, *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can’t Stop Talking*, 197.

¹⁵ Walter Brueggemann, *Hope Within History*, 91, 107.

¹⁶ For more on the interplay between prayer and play while embarking on a pilgrimage, see *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* by Victor Turner and Edith Turner.

¹⁷ Revelation 7:12.



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DEEP CALLS TO DEEP: SUMMER IN THE PSALMS

Dwelling Place
Psalm 90

July 5, 2026

Rev. Thomas P. Markey
Associate Pastor of Youth and Families



A Welcoming Community of Faith Where Jesus Christ Transforms Lives