**Some General Information on the Psalms**

--the book is also an anthology – the author is unknown, but the editor/compiler gave/attributed many to David

--the 5 books of Psalms imitates the 5 books of Torah: 1. Psalms 1-41; 2. Psalms 42-72; 3. Psalms 73-89; 4. Psalms 90-106; 5. Psalms 107-150

--psalms are hymns, acts of praise suitable for any occasion; they are poems relying on sound and meaning of words; on rhyme, repetition, images, fixed word-pairs, and other elements of figurative language—especially metaphors and similes

--at the end of each section is a blessing or doxology of Adonai, “Blessed be God forever and ever

--the psalms were presented in a lively fashion with dancers, singers, instruments

--they are centered in the life of Israel, the life of the community

--among the various types are the following

A. Enthronement hymns: celebrating the God’s kingship

B. Songs of Zion: expressing devotion for the Holy City

C. Laments: either individuals seeking deliverance from illness or false accusation

OR a nation asking for help in time of distress

D. Songs of Trust: individuals expressing confidence in God’s readiness to help

E. Thanksgiving: individuals expressing gratitude for deliverance

F. Sacred History: the nation recounts the story of God’s dealings with it

G. Royal Psalms: to be used for coronation or royal weddings and such occasions

H. Wisdom Psalms – meditations on the life and ways of God

I. Liturgies: often mixed types, composed for some special cultic or historical

occasions: e.g. ceremony for renewing the covenant (regularly occurring)

-- Psalms 42-49, 84, 85, 87, and 88 are often attributed to the “Korahites” (priestly family); Psalms 50, 73-83 are attributed to Asaph, (one of Korah’s sons); Psalm 88 to Heman (another of Korah’s sons); Psalms 93-99 share the theme of divine kingship; Psalms 120-134 are called “A song of ascents” (perhaps sung by pilgrims on the way to Jerusalem or into the Temple precincts; some scholars identify Psalms 43-83 as “Elohistic” since there is a preference for the name of *Elohim* = God rather than *Yahweh* = the Lord

--Genres:

1. Hymns – a call to worship, the invitatory phrase is often repeated in the final verse; the body of the poem is introduced with “For…” the reason for giving praise – what God has done; approximately 28 psalms fit this category
2. Individual petition – begin with a cry to the Lord (Help, O Lord); followed with a complaint – description of the difficulty; there is often a statement of trust, spoken despite the suffering, that includes hyperbole; the worshiper prays for rescue and sometimes for the defeat of an enemy; sometimes there is a confession of guilt; often the psalmist feels persecuted for an unknown reason; the 3 “actors” of such psalms are the psalmist, the persecutors (the wicked), and God; (approximately forty psalms)
3. Community petitions – about eighteen psalms – complaints about the Lord abandoning the nation to their enemies; the psalmist praises the Lord—remembering what God has done in the past, to urge God’s future salvation
4. Individual thanksgiving – about twelve psalms; these psalms presume that God has answered and the psalmist gives thanks

The psalms’ power lies not only in being sacred scripture, but also in their reflecting human feelings before God and expressing them directly, concretely, and skillfully. (notes taken from the *New Oxford Annotated Bible*, NRSV)