

Is your worship properly aligned?

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[0 : 00] Amen. Now, let's turn together in our Bibles to Psalm 33. Again, if you have a Bible, it'd be really helpful to have that open as we spend time together in Psalm 33. Again, the words will be up on the screen for us. So again, let's hear God's Word.

Sing joyfully to the Lord, you righteous. It is fitting for the upright to praise Him. Praise the Lord with the harp. Make music to Him on the ten-stringed lyre. Sing to Him a new song.

Play skillfully and shout for joy. For the word of the Lord is right and true. He is faithful in all He does. The Lord loves righteousness and justice. The earth is full of His unfailing love. By the word of the Lord, the heavens were made, their starry host by the breath of His mouth. He gathers the waters of the sea into jars. He puts the deep into storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord.

Let all the people of the world revere Him. For He spoke and it came to be. He commanded and it stood firm. The Lord foils the plans of the nations. He thwarts the purposes of the peoples. But the plans of the Lord stand firm forever. The purposes of His heart through all generations. Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people He chose for His inheritance. From heaven the Lord looks down and sees all mankind. From His dwelling place He watches all who live on earth. He who forms the hearts of all, who considers everything they do. No king is saved by the size of His army.

No warrior escapes by His great strength. A horse is a vain hope for deliverance. Despite all its strength, it cannot save. But the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear Him, on those whose hope is in His unfailing love, to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine. We wait in hope for the Lord.

[2 : 09] He is our help and our shield. In Him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in His holy name. May your unfailing love be with us, Lord, even as we put our hope in You. Amen. So we're going to continue looking at some Psalms over the summer, and this time we're in Psalm 33. And our question for the morning is this one, is your worship, is my worship properly directed? Now, we're all here in Edinburgh, and whether we've been here for a long time or a short time, we know there are many great reasons for coming to this wonderful city that many of us call home. But we probably know, if we've been here for any length of time, that driving is not one of those reasons. Between the complicated road systems, but especially the number of potholes and speed bumps you find, it generally seems like it's bad news for cars, and especially bad news for tyres. I imagine that our car, or our car in the past, is not alone in that problem of having wheels that were misaligned, hitting one too many potholes, and all of a sudden you find your car starts drifting or pulling. It can be dangerous. And what we need to do when we discover that is to go to the garage, get it on the machine, and get them all tracked up, balanced, and aligned properly. Hold that in your thought as we think about the theme of worship.

As people, we were made for worship. Now let's just think for a moment, what is worship? This worship that we talk about and that we want to express. We can use four words beginning with the letter H, perhaps, to help us.

Worship is where we direct our honour. Who or what is it that gets most honour in our life? We can think about our hearts. What do we truly love and cherish? We can think about the word hope.

What is it that we place our hope in for the present and for our future? And we can think about the word help. When trouble comes, who or what do we look to to give us help and salvation?

Now, God's design for us from creation is that we would worship Him through Jesus. That's the proper direction for our worship. But the problem in every human heart, because of sin, is that we will tend to drift from that to worship other things, to worship other people even, rather than the Lord God.

[5 : 18] We will still be worshipping. It's just our worship will not be properly lined up. And again, the Bible would say that's danger for us. So, the purpose of Psalm 33, which is this pure hymn of praise, is for us today a call to direct or to redirect our praise and our worship to where it truly belongs.

So, let's get into our text. And we'll notice, first of all, in the first three verses, there is this call to worship God. Three truths that we can see. First of all, worshipping God is appropriate.

Sing joyfully to the Lord, you righteous. It is fitting for the upright to praise Him. Worship is fitting. So, Psalm 33 is going to argue the case for that, and we'll see it on the basis of who God is and what God does. Because God is our Creator King, and because He is our Savior, then it's appropriate to worship Him. Even in our introduction, we discover God is called the Lord. Lord in capitals, reminding us, we're speaking about the personal covenant name of God, the God who speaks, the God who saves, the God who is committed to His people, the God who desires to dwell with His people.

Because He is the Lord, He deserves our worship. And notice at the middle of verse 3, sing to Him a new song. It's a reminder that the people of God, we have a new song to sing. We have new mercies from God every morning. We have the acts of salvation that God does in His Word that climax in the sending of Jesus to be our Savior. That's our new song to sing. So, worshipping God is appropriate.

It's also important to recognize that worshipping God is commanded. One of the things this Psalm, and so many of the Psalms, and indeed so much of the Bible emphasizes, is that distinction between God as creator and us as creatures, that should lead us towards humility and to worship. This Psalm emphasizes that God is King, therefore we should be subject to Him. He should have our loyalty. And so, we need to understand that worship is commanded, and if we refuse to worship, then the Bible is saying, well, both we are then in rebellion against our maker and our king. We're standing under His judgment, but also we will miss out on our true identity. We are most ourselves when we are in a right relationship with God, and we are worshipping Him. So, to not worship is to be less than ourselves, less than what God made us to be.

[8 : 12] So, worshipping God is a command, but it's also, and it's so important for us to recognize this, especially as God's people, worshipping God is an invitation. Notice this is addressed to, verse 1, the righteous and the upright, those who have that right standing with God by God's grace. And for us, worship is a duty. Yes, it is. It's always a duty, but it's also a joy.

When we know God's love and grace extended to us in the sending of Jesus, that's a cause for the deepest joy. It's not a hardship to worship this God. As we discover that in light of the gospel, love and loyalty, then, is the right response.

So, right from the beginning, the psalm is reminding us that the direction of our worship, it matters. And we can say more than that, church matters. God has appointed this one day where we can worship together, and that worship serves to retune our hearts and our lives. We're called to sing joyfully, and that's a corporate, that's a together thing. And of course, we know that the inability to sing has been one of the huge losses to our church life. So, it's a wonderful opportunity as of next week to begin to sing again. Because as we sing, not only are we worshiping God, we're also reminding one another of great truths and encouraging one another, pointing each other towards our God and our Savior. So, there's the call to worship. But then most of the psalm, from verse 4 to 19, the psalmist lays out the reasons to worship God. Notice our verse 4 begins with the word for. In other words, he's not just going to state and assume that we are to worship

God. Rather, Psalm 33 wants to demonstrate to us, wants to persuade us with reasons why God is worthy, reasons why God deserves our praise. And this is important because we know in our lives that there is this battle constantly going on for our hearts and our minds. There are temptations that come to us from many sources to, for example, honor a certain person, a certain organization over the one true God.

There is that temptation to give our heart, to live for a sports team or a company and a responsibility or a person and a family more than we give our hearts to Jesus, our Savior. We can so easily be tempted to fix our hope in our money or technology or our skill rather than our God. And when trouble comes, we can look to ourselves and our own resources for help rather than running to God, our rock, our refuge, Jesus, our Savior. So, the challenge to consider, and the psalmist wants us to think and he wants to show and demonstrate, is why worship and fear God? Why trust Jesus for those things that our hearts want most of us to be? So, it's an invitation to compare and to contrast, as it were, to place God on the scales against all rivals. And to think about our own lives and to ask ourselves, when it comes down to who or what gets my worship, we need to think about that, but also who deserves that worship? Where should it really be directed? So, there are three reasons our psalmist gives why he believes, why the Bible teaches that

[12:18] God deserves praise and worship. And the first one is about God's Word. So, verses 4 to 9 is all about God's Word. Two aspects. We can look at verse 4 and 5, we see the character of God's Word, and then verse 6 9, the creative power of God's Word. So, let's begin. Verse 4 and 5, we read, For the word of the Lord is right and true. He is faithful in all he does. The Lord loves righteousness and justice. The earth is full of his unfailing love. Notice the integrity of God's Word.

The psalmist is saying there is no disconnect between God's character, God's actions, and God's words. We will never find our God being guilty of hypocrisy. We will never find Jesus saying one thing and doing something else. But we can contrast that, can't we, with the headlines that we read all too often, of politicians and business leaders and even church leaders caught in hypocrisy and corruption.

The Bible teaches God and His Word are perfect and they can be trusted. These values are good.

These are things that we admire, right, true, righteousness, justice, unfailing love, and God is dedicated to these values. He is enthusiastic about these values. Indeed, we love them because we are made in His image. We love justice because we are made in the image of a God of justice. We value truth because our God is truth. So, God's Word is marked by integrity. But also, as we look at these descriptors, we see that these are all covenant words. That's really significant for us to see because here is an announcement that this is a God who is committed to His people, committed to rescuing a people for Himself in order to bless, to show His goodness to a people, to be with and for His people, having dealt with sin, having dealt with shame, having released from slavery. The best evidence for us that God's Word can be trusted is Jesus Himself, isn't it? Jesus, the Word who was with God, the Word who, the one who is

God, the Word who became flesh and made His dwelling among us, and we have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only, full of grace and truth. We are called to trust Jesus, the Word of God, the Word who is God.

[15 : 19] So, God's Word reflects God's character, but it also reveals His creative power. That's what we see in verses 6 to 9. Let me read verse 6. By the word of the Lord, the heavens were made, their starry host, by the breath of His mouth. And then verse 9, for He spoke and it came to be, He commanded, and it stood firm. Two ideas to think about that are emphasized here. One, God's control. This is God who speaks the universe into existence, and God's Word doesn't just create, it also gives stability to the world.

And that stands against chaos that's represented in the waters. Verse 7, He gathers the waters of the sea into jars. He puts the deep into storehouses. For Old Testament Israel, water, often a source of fear, an image of chaotic forces. But our God, what does the psalm say? Our God holds them back.

It's as easy for God to control the waters as it would be for us to pour water into a jug. That's striking. We've seen evidence of, haven't we, the chaotic force of water.

Some of us were in Edinburgh two Sundays ago, when that mad rain came down all of a sudden. And we were down south, but we were seeing the news images of roads that became rivers. And then we've seen the devastation in Germany, Belgium, Holland, and still continuing. The waters as powerful and sometimes chaotic. With the best of modern intelligence, we cannot control some things. We cannot predict the weather. But our psalm says God stands above. And God typically holds them back so that we can enjoy this world, so that we can know and enjoy our Creator.

Look at verse 8 for the response that that should bring. Verse 8, Let all the earth fear the Lord. Let all the people of the world revere Him. All people, regardless of wherever we are, regardless of culture, should fear and revere. Now, let me again give a plug to Michael Reeve's excellent book, Rejoice and Tremble, all about what does the fear of God mean and not mean in the Bible. In essence, when it talks about people should fear the Lord, there's that sense of being overwhelmed at God's goodness, at God's power, yes, but also His love. It's that right sense of awe and wonder when we see the God who is, and we see His love and His goodness.

[18 : 34] Now, some thoughts on God's Word before we move on. We have, of course, been having a wonderful week of weather. So, let's think about creation for a moment. Over the summer holidays, we may have unique opportunities to enjoy the sun in the sky. We may even have the chance to go camping and enjoy the night sky and sleep under the stars. Or we may go to the coast and enjoy the big blue and the depths.

Well, when we do that, let's not stop simply enjoying the gift. Let's look to praise the giver.

Let's think, too, about the Bible. The Bible, which is the Word of God. Why do we read the Bible? That we read it so that we can see and know our Creator and our Savior, that to read with the help of the Spirit, that's how we are encouraged and led to worship. So, again, over the summer, let's not take a break from Bible reading, but rather let's use it to increase our worship and our joy in our God.

And let me encourage us towards trust. We live in the age of suspicion. We live in the day of fake news.

We live in the post-truth world. But here is good news of a Word that we can trust, character that we can trust in God and His Word, and especially Jesus as God's final Word.

[20 : 18] His Word to us of salvation. Let's consider Him. Especially if you're not a Christian, we encourage you to consider Jesus. Examine His life and His claims, that you might believe in Jesus, the Word of God. So, that's the first reason for praise, God's words. But secondly, a second reason to praise God is God's plans. So, this is in verses 10 to 12, and in a sense, it's God's plans as opposed to the plans of the nations. So, verses 10 and 11 read, the Lord foils the plans of the nations. He thwarts the purposes of the peoples. But the plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of His heart through all generations. Sticking with the summer holiday theme, the great summer holiday picture of plans that are foiled, it surely must be those sandcastles that we spend hours constructing on the beach. Think about those sandcastles on the beach.

It doesn't matter how many towers and turrets, it doesn't matter how many shells and feathers, no matter how impressive, even though it's the biggest sandcastle in the world, like the one they built in Denmark, the tide always, always wins. The theme of verses 10 to 12 is that, on the one hand, the plans of the nations and of peoples collapse. There is an irony implied in this. We've just read that nature obeys its creator, but the nations typically don't. Read the storyline of the Bible, look at the storyline of human history, what do we see? We see people by and large standing in opposition to God and His plans. And we see it really clearly, for example, in the life of Pharaoh, who refused to let the Israelite slaves go, who deliberately resisted God's will. We see it really clearly in Pilate, Herod, and the religious leaders getting together to try and destroy God's son and God's king. And the outcome for them and the outcome for anyone who stands in opposition to God is that the tide of God's judgment will sweep in. All our rebellion, then, is like castles in the sand.

It's a reminder that no matter how impressive a life, a life without God always ends in defeat, always ends with judgment. But by contrast, verse 11, the plans of the Lord stand firm forever.

It's a reminder that our creator is not some absentee landlord, makes the world and is distant and disconnected. Rather, we have a powerful and loving king working out his plans for the good of his people and for the sake of his glory. Verse 11 talks about the purposes of his heart. What are the purposes of God's heart? What's the plan of God? What's the mission of God? What do we see in the Bible?

We see him acting to foil evil opposition so that he might save his people, that his people might live with him, live for his glory, to enjoy him and to draw others to know that love and the God who is love for themselves. That's the point of verse 12. God's plans are for the good of his chosen people.

[24 : 01] So verse 12 says, blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people he chose for his inheritance. Now, in the Old Testament, that was Israel, the people of God. In the New Testament, that's the church. God makes his plans for the good of his church. And nothing can separate us from God's love, as we're reminded in Romans 8. So Psalm 33, again, is an invitation. It's an invitation to be on the Lord's side. An invitation to turn from sin and to trust in Jesus, to have Jesus for us, not against us.

God's plans stand. Where's the clearest place, again, that we see that? We can see it most clearly in the cross of the Lord Jesus. There we have the plans of the nations, all the opposition, those evil forces, that conspiracy of evil. But God foiled that plan. It was part of God's eternal plan to show his holy justice against sin by Jesus, his perfect son, taking that sin, taking the punishment for his people.

And the cross demonstrates God's great saving love as Jesus willingly became that substitute we needed, that once-for-all sacrifice for sins that we needed, so that by faith in Jesus, you and I might be saved, we might know blessing, we might be adopted into the people of God, the family of God.

Jesus taught that a life built on anything other than him and his words are as fragile as those sandcastles on the beach.

There is that serious warning that that life will be swept away by the tide of God's judgment. But to be built on Jesus is to have a life built on solid rock, to have that solid hope of eternal life.

[26 : 07] Our third reason that the psalm gives for praising God is about God's eyes in verses 13 to 19.

I guess most of us probably saw in the news recently of Richard Branson's latest venture, taking that Virgin Galactic space flight, getting all excited about the chance of a lifetime to see 90 kilometers above the earth. Maybe you heard his radio transmission, getting all excited about what he could see, the Gulf of Mexico, the Gulf of Mexico, and the States, and he could pick out mountains.

And then his desire that for just 180,000 pounds, we could enjoy such a view ourselves. An amazing view, though, wouldn't it be to see the world like that, to have the panorama?

But our Bible reminds us that there's nothing compared to God's view, the God's eye view of the world. It isn't just wide-angle panorama.

Jesus, God does see everything, but it's also a view that sees the hearts, the minds, the lives of everyone. So we're told, verses 13 to 15, that God sees everything perfectly.

[27 : 30] Listen to how many times the word all or everything is used in these verses. From heaven the Lord looks down and sees all mankind. From his dwelling place he watches all who live on earth.

He who forms the hearts of all, who considers everything they do. What's the point? Whereas our perspectives on anything are always partial and limited and should bring with that a level of humility, God sees and knows it all.

And he knows it perfectly. Again, in the age of uncertainty that we find ourselves in, we're invited to trust this God of perfect, absolute wisdom.

But not only does God see everything, there is a particular emphasis. That God sees and saves. What's the point of verse 16 and 17 when it says, No king is saved by the size of his army.

A horse is a vain hope for deliverance despite all its great strength. It cannot save. The point is that when trouble comes, so what's the trouble here in Psalm 33?

[28 : 40] It's the trouble of a foreign invasion. When trouble comes, we need to find the right source of help and salvation. And Psalm 33 is saying, The right source of salvation in that moment is absolutely not an army.

It's not your great military strength. It's not your proud warhorses. The right source of help and salvation in trouble is always and only God. Now, of course, our trouble looks different to their trouble, doesn't it?

What does our trouble look like? Well, we can go wide angle. We can think about global trouble. It looks like, still looks like dealing with the pandemic, doesn't it? And we're reminded of those environmental concerns that we face globally.

What's trouble nationally? Well, that might look like difficulties with a political system. It might look like a financial collapse. And what about personally, when it hits home harder?

Maybe trouble for us is financial. It could be to do with our health. It could be trouble to do with our work or our lack of work.

[29 : 49] It may be problems in our family. It could be any number of those things and many, many more. And the question is, where do we turn in those moments? Where is the right source of help for us in those moments?

And what Psalm 33 wants to do for us is he wants to point us out and up, away from ourself and to our Creator God, who is also our loving Savior.

He is the only one with no limits. And so, it is wise to express humble dependence before this God, especially as we see this character.

Look at verse 18 and 19. It says, But the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear Him, on those whose hope is in His unfailing love, to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine.

How is God pictured? How are God's eyes pictured here? Doesn't this sound a lot like a loving, protective Father? God, our Father in heaven, who sees His children, those who fear Him, those who hope in Him, and who promises what?

[31 : 01] He promises to deliver from death and to give life. That's the ultimate hope that we find in God's Word, in the Bible. A God who can deliver from death and to give life.

And often we might think, well, that sounds too good to be true. But the proof of that stands in the Son of God and His resurrection. Jesus, who died and three days later, rose again.

And we have that promise that everyone whose faith is in Jesus, that we too die to sin and we rise to new life, that we have a death-proof hope in Jesus.

Don't we need that as people? Don't we need that kind of hope? Don't we need that right, verse 1. Don't we need that right, verse 1. So those are just three reasons why Psalm 33 gives us to praise God.

And does it for the purpose of giving us that spiritual tune-up. Hopefully leading us to ask the question, is my worship going in the right direction? Typically, am I heading in the right way? Am I properly aligned? Is God the one who receives my honor? Does he have my heart? Do I hope in him?

[32 : 14] Do I look for help to him? In light of God's glory that we've seen here, as we see it in Jesus, the Son, is our life, is our worship on track according to God's Word. Just as we close, let's use these last three verses, wonderful verses talking about the nature of worship, let's use them as diagnostic questions. You know, you have your problem with your car, you drive it up to the garage, and nowadays they put it on the computer system and they do their diagnostic checks. Well, let's use this as a way to diagnose our own hearts and our worship.

Verse 20 says, we wait in hope for the Lord. He is our help and our shield. Today, do you, do I wait with hope on Jesus? Am I trusting in his Word? Am I trusting in his work on the cross? Am I looking forward to his return? Verse 21, in him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name.

Do I find my deepest joy in Jesus? Am I trusting in his perfect goodness?

Verse 22, may your unfailing love be with us, Lord, even as we put our hope in you.

Am I receiving, resting in Jesus and his love? Well, may God help each one of us to respond so that our worship would be properly lined up.

[34 : 12] Can we stand together in order to give thanks to God for his Word? Let's stand together. Lord, in light of what we have just read, we want to give you thanks for your Word, that it reveals your character, your goodness, your love, your justice, your truth.

And we praise you as our great Creator for that control that you have, sustaining this universe that you have made. Lord, we thank you that because you are ultimate, that your plans always succeed.

And we thank you that the purposes of your heart are towards the salvation of your people, that you, before you even made the world, planned to send Jesus, your Son, to be our Savior.

We thank you for your eyes that see everything perfectly. You see each one of our hearts. We thank you for your hearts. We thank you for your hearts. We thank you that you see in order that you might save. Lord, for those of us who are trusting in you, may we live lives marked by genuine worship, joyful worship, because of these truths.

Lord, for those here today, for those listening in who are not yet Christians, may you enable them to see why you are the proper place that our worship should go to. Help repentance and faith to come in people's hearts and lives, so they too might have the joy of worshiping, following, knowing Jesus. We pray in his name. Amen.

[35 : 56] Please have a seat, and again, we will sing in our hearts, folks at home, sing with your mouths, the hymn, Christ, our hope in life and death.

What is our hope in life and death? Christ alone, Christ alone.

What is our hope in life and death? Christ alone, Christ alone. What is our hope in life and death? Christ alone, Christ alone.

What is our only confidence? That our souls to him belong. Who holds our days within his hand? What comes apart from his command?

And what will keep us to the end? The love of Christ in which we stand?

[37 : 06] Christ alone, Christ alone, Christ alone, Christ alone, Christ alone, Christ alone, our hope springs eternal. Oh, sing hallelujah, now and ever we confess Christ our hope in life and death.

What truth can come, the troubled soul? God is good. God is good.

Where is his grace and goodness known? In our great Redeemer's blood. Our hope springs eternal. Oh, sing hallelujah, our hope springs eternal.

Oh, sing hallelujah, now and ever we confess Christ our hope in life and death.

Unto the grave, what shall we say? Christ, he lives, Christ, he lives. And what we want will heaven bring, everlasting life within.

[39 : 03] There we will rise to meet the Lord, and sin and death will be destroyed. And we will feast with endless joy, when Christ is ours forevermore.

Oh, sing hallelujah, our hope springs eternal. Oh, sing hallelujah, now and ever we confess Christ our hope in life and death.

Now and ever we confess Christ our hope in life and death. Now we stand together to receive the benediction that comes from Numbers chapter 6.

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[40 : 38] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen.