

It is God who lifts up and brings down

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Preacher: Jerome Peirson

[0:00] Welcome to our Sunday evening service at Calvary Evangelical Church Brighton.! My name's Jerome and I'm a member here at the Church.! We are firstly a Christian church. We love to proclaim the great and timeless message of hope and redemption through our Lord Jesus Christ.

But more specifically, we are an independent, Reformed Baptist church based here in Brighton, Sussex. If this is your first time you have come across our online services or sermons, it's great that you're viewing this.

And I hope that you will be spiritually helped, that you'll be encouraged, that you'll be challenged and you'll be built up. We put much emphasis on simple word ministry here at Calvary.

And you can listen to our sermons on our Calvary Church YouTube channel. Our pastor, Philip Wells, is going through a series in Hebrews in the mornings. Now, it's our usual practice to preach systematically through a Bible book.

And we're currently doing a little series in the Psalms and we will be looking this evening at Psalm 75. We previously went through the entire Gospel of Matthew and those messages are available either on YouTube or on our website if you'd like to listen to them.

[1:21] This evening, we'll pray, we'll sing hymns and we'll hear a sermon preached from God's word. But before we look at tonight's psalm, let's still our minds and hearts and focus on the Lord in prayer.

Let's pray. Father in heaven, we bring our praises and our thanks to you as the one who is near to us, the one who we can call upon in truth.

And we thank you, Lord, that you are gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

You uphold us, Lord, when we're falling and you raise us up when we're bowed down. We so need you, Lord, at this time, this time of difficulty, where many of us are depleted, struggling and wearied. Oh, Lord, please draw near to us and draw us to you with your cords of love. May your praises be on our lips, even in difficult times, oh, Lord.

[2:43] May we ascribe greatness to you, our God and our King. May you make known to us the path of life so that we may say that in your presence there is fullness of joy.

At your right hand there are pleasures forevermore. Lord, we so thank you for your perfect righteousness and justice for your providential care over each and every one of our lives.

For you care for your weak and needy sheep. Lord, forgive us our many sins, sins in word, sins in thought, sins in deed.

Help us to live lives that are pleasing to you. Showing love, compassion, patience and kindness to church family.

Those outside of the church and, Lord, even our enemies. We pray for those suffering due to the coronavirus. We think particularly of those brothers and sisters and family who have lost loved ones or who have family members who are feeling very unwell at the moment due to the virus.

[4:04] And, Lord, we just lift up our prayers for those who are fearful. Those who are anxious. Those who are fretting. Those who are lonely.

Our elderly. And those who are financially struggling at this time. Oh, Lord, we pray you would restore this nation. Please stay the further destruction of this virus, Lord.

Please, in your wrath, remember mercy. We pray for our leaders, locally and nationally. May they lead with wisdom, prudence, justice and care.

[14:49] Those of us who have children know that it doesn't take long or any training or guidance before our children say those words. It's not fair.

It's as if they have an innate sense of justice and fairness that we know has been put in them by their creator. And although that is marred by their sinful desires, it's still there.

and then as us as believers that think of God often I wonder how often you think of God in terms of his justice his equity and his judgment God is the only one who is truly fair now we're probably more prone and I know I am to think of attributes such as his goodness his mercy and his loving kindness but it's often within times of trial for the people of God times of enemy attack and persecution that the church needs a sense of God's justice and righteous judgment Psalm 75 is a psalm of thanksgiving and praise the psalm celebrates the fact that God judges all the earth with equity and will in his own time put down the wicked and exalt the righteous we're not certain of the historic context of this psalm I consulted several commentaries and writers and some suggest this was written about the Assyrian invasion of northern Israel through

Sennacherib some suggested this was about military incursions during Rehoboam's reign others suggest it's potentially Absalom's rebellion it's more of an in-house rebellion when he rebelled against his father David I mean the fact is we just don't know for certain however the principle here is always applicable for God's people it's clearly set at a time when the moral order is unstable close to collapsing and God's people are facing threat and persecution but before we delve into the into the psalm just a few words in terms of structure as is the case with many psalms it appears that there are different voices kind of going on within this psalm it's there's a kind of dialogue within the structure now there are differing opinions about exactly who's saying what at what particular time but I'm going to take a view and you may differ which is absolutely fine because it doesn't alter the overall message of the psalm now I'd like to look at tonight's psalm under four headings firstly people give thanks for God's nearness secondly God declares he will judge with thirdly God is sovereign in executing his just judgment and fourthly people respond with praise so the first point people give thanks for God's nearness verse one we give thanks for your name is near we recount your wondrous deeds you see here straight away we the first voice we read is the voice of the gathered people of God

Asaph when he writes this psalm is representing God's people the covenant people of God the church there's a there's a celebratory note to this psalm some have called it a hymn this is a call for the gathered people of God to give thanks and give praises now some versions say praises I think the NIV says praises the general meaning is the same it's one of thanksgiving we see the corporate thanksgiving of the congregation of God's nearness during a time of trial well you may be thinking well hold on it doesn't say that it doesn't say God is near it says his name is near name represents all God has revealed himself to be his attributes his perfections his being now for us names don't necessarily carry the same significance as they did in bible times a name nowadays is more is more or less a means to identify someone or classify something but names had incredible importance in bible times it tells you who someone is and in this case it tells you about God in his reputation and his covenant promises to his people

[20:00] Joel Beeky surveys the biblical data concerning God's name and he identifies the name of the Lord as his glory the name of the Lord is the object of prayer and worship his name encapsulates what people learn about him from his gracious works God's name is his very nature his name defends his people his name saves them his name is holy and is his very presence to judge and to deliver William Plummer says to know God's name is to have his excellence revealed in our hearts by his spirit so we apprehend his nature and have a spiritual discernment of his beauty and glory now it's interesting that God the word for God used here is the word Elohim this name describes God as the one who is full of majesty full of power full of strength the one who is to be feared

Gihardus Vos says that the name Elohim signifies the plenitude of power and majesty that there is in God thanksgiving is born out of awareness that this great majestic awesome God is near and he is always there as the perfect and just judge to vindicate his people this is the basis for their thanksgiving and it should be the basis for our thanksgiving his wondrous works declare that he is near the acts of God evidence his presence among his people theologians speak of the imminence

of God meaning the closeness of God and this is why the God of the Bible is so great pagan philosophies other religions they devise a God who is all imminence a God where he's so close or gods that are so close that they're almost merged into their creation and they become part of the creation there's no distinction or other religions devise a God that is so imminent that God is so distanced there's no communion there's no communication just all transcendence whereas the God of the Bible the one true God is both imminent and close while maintaining maintaining distinction and transcendence and he has revealed himself to us through his word the way we know of God's presence is primarily through his word as they would have done we have his trustworthy written and infallible word to guide us in trials now the psalmist goes on to say that we recount your wondrous deeds can you see here the importance of recounting telling or declaring again the wondrous deeds of God what are these wondrous deeds?

well most likely these were the mighty acts of God when he redeemed his people in time in history we think of the plagues in the time of Exodus taking Israel through the Red Sea you think of the crossing of the Jordan River under Joshua's leadership you think of the walls of Jericho coming down you think of all the defeated enemies in the times of the judges and under Gideon and God's providential hand sustaining and keeping and protecting and fighting for his people now they may also be recounting a recent great deliverance now when we gather we declare and we recount God's marvellous and wonderful deeds through his word preached through the sacraments through our testimonies as God's people and through prayer each of these is shaped by the word of God as I was preparing this particularly during these times where we're not gathering it just made me realise the importance of being the gathered people of God coming together and giving thanks for his blessing in our lives and how we miss we miss being together and worshipping as a corporate body this is good and this is this is a substitute but it's not the real thing it's not the same thanksgiving is such an integral part of who we are and what we do now we can do that without gathering but there's something so important about when we do gather and we long we just long for that day that God's people can come back together and give our thanks but even in these trying times of Covid and much upheaval are we giving thanks to God for his name is near his name is near to us because we are his covenant people we're his church my second point is

God declares he will judge with equity now the voice in this section is God speaking Asaph is here representing or God is speaking through Asaph and God declares at the set time that I appoint I will judge with equity in verse 2 it is in his time God will judge the wicked at the time that he appoints it's not our prerogative to set the time or to seek vengeance God determines all that happens and he has set a time for people's uprising and downfall he works all things according to his perfect timing and he always honours his appointed time now we often want to set the agenda we want to advise God on the best time but if you think about the whole kind of the whole panorama of redemptive history and think of Christ's coming

Christ's first coming was determined by God that was hidden in the secret council of his will the time of his second coming is appointed by God and it's not for us to pry into God knows the set time of all these things now even Christ in his humanity he didn't know the appointed time of his second coming he didn't know the day or the hour this means we can rest we can rest in the knowledge that God God will he will honour his appointed time it helps us to persevere with patience and focus on our responsibility knowing God in his own time will raise us up it helps us in those times that Mark spoke of last week where he was preaching about in Psalm 74 that cry of how long oh God how long and how often is that our cry why are you taking so long but we also learn here that [28:04] God shows incredible kindness and patience to a world that largely hates him and rejects him you think about it his patience is so vast it's so immeasurable!

He is set a time his patience is ultimately to accomplish his plan to save sinners and he's not in a rush his kindness leads to repentance I recall those years that I was utterly lost I was lost in my sin and the years were just slowly going by and I'm so so grateful God didn't act according to the kind of time scale that I'm prone to want with people his timing was perfect it was right it's God's time and even during this most distressing time of national crisis we see God's mercy and we see his patience and common grace he's upholding the fabric of society and that takes us to our next point God goes on to declare that

I will judge with equity God will uphold his people and the moral order by judging the wicked in his own time throughout history with perfect justice uprightness and equity this word equity is a key

word for this psalm equity it speaks of God being perfectly just speaks of his fairness and in some versions I think the old King James has uprightness God is able to judge with perfect equity because he is justice there's no greater justice beyond God and when we think of God and when we think of his attributes it's important that we don't think of him as just a bit of mercy and a bit of love and a bit of wrath and a bit of righteousness and a bit of holiness and they're all kind of mixed in and then the finished product is God no God is all his attributes in their infinite fullness he cannot be divided into parts one author describes

God as incomparably just superlatively just and eminently just so equity is an expression of who God is in his perfect justice Joel Beeky again says that the word group used for equity or uprightness carries the literal idea of being straight straight as opposed to being crooked or distorted it's like a road that takes you directly and easily to your destination I remember holidays in France where you used to drive on those really long straight Roman roads well we live in an unsettled and turbulent world as they did and it's during times like this that we look around and we may be easily shaken and we may question God's equity and justice we have anti-Christian regimes and world views in parts of the world there's persecution there's agendas and powers that are militated against the church and it's likely to get worse yet in all the upheaval all the moral declension and tumult

God goes on to say it is I who keeps steady the pillars in verse three we see here God's providential care Plummer says that the earth and all its inhabitants all depend on God nothing has stability but as God gives it though the whole world were leagued against God and his church yet his will they should melt away so we see here through God's common grace he's upholding and sustaining the created order now that includes rulers that includes governments that includes political systems even if they're not what we want them to be he's holding them all together in verses four to five he says do not boast do not lift up your horn on high or speak with haughty neck here God is warning the arrogant the fools the proud those who exalt themselves and he's warning them to not lift up their horn not to boast anything they have is from

[33:00] God Luke 1 51 and 52 you think of Mary's song which some of you may have meditated upon this Christmas just gone there are real similarities and parallels to Psalm 75 she gives this wonderful praise where she says he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate and you think of those well known words from our Lord himself in Matthew 23 12 whoever exalts himself will be humbled and whoever humbles himself will be exalted now you may be wondering what does this word horn mean what does it the word horn is used a lot in the bible it's ordinarily symbolic of power and strength now in this context the horn symbolises how the boastful attempt to establish superiority through proud rebellion through defiance through self-reliance and self-elevation you know bring to mind psalm 2 that Mark preached on a few weeks back this is a public assertion of defiance and you may think what's the relevance now who are the boastful now we haven't got military incursion seeking to attack us well think think of the media think of cultural shapers think of the public domain think of politicians and educators that brazenly want to eliminate

Christianity from any area of public life think back to psalm 73 when Steve preached a couple of weeks ago asaph was envious of the arrogant the boastful however it is God who sets them on slippery places and determine their destruction while being the strength and portion of that of asaph of the psalmist well my third point is God is sovereign in executing his judgment you look at verses 6 to 8 now the voice I'm taking the view that the voice speaking now in this dialogue is Asaph the psalmist as he reflects on what has been said what's previously been said and declared by God here he gives a reason for humility and in these verses we see how God is the one who lifts up and God is the one who puts down this is a display of the ultimate authority and sovereignty of God over the enemies of his people verse 6 says for not from the east or from the west and not from the wilderness comes lifting up people of the world of the wilderness are symbols of human ingenuity human resources human sources of exaltation and success so he's saying it's not from your human sources of success that lifting up comes worldly kings and rulers attribute success to themselves

however God uses them as his instruments to fulfill his purposes in his time you think of the great powers in redemptive history such as

Assyria Babylon King Cyrus all were used as instruments of judgment by God he rose them up and he brought them down for his own purposes you may be thinking of that great book Daniel Daniel 2 21 where Daniel says that he God changes times and seasons he removes kings and he sets up kings now I hope you're seeing God working this way in our days and not just seeing random chance events now I'm not making any political statements here but recently we've seen one president's term come to an end and another president being inaugurated now regardless of your political views one came to quite a sad end and another is basking in the adulation and the praise in his inauguration it's not random it's not a mistake it's all in

God's plan there's the obvious application that the psalmist is warning those previously mentioned the proud ones the boastful ones to know that their exaltation and their success did not come from their human initiatives or their human ingenuity but ultimately came from God their self-confidence and their arrogance will come to nothing but their own destruction in the end but I think there's an application that's closer to home and for us as individual Christians and a church that we need to heed there's no point in us looking to human ingenuity political and worldly solutions through kings and rulers and governments to bring about our success we shouldn't look to the world for our help but to our God we need to be careful not to place our trust in human sources of exaltation and success and to crave worldly power and position we shouldn't as

[38:51] Christians be craving honour and positions of influence and acceptance with the world rather than relying on God's providential care now I don't mean we shouldn't seek for advancement in our careers I don't mean that there aren't positive and good things we can look to from government and culture and things outside of the realm of the church I'm not saying that but it's particularly tempting during times of persecution during times of trial when we're out of favour with the world around us which we are it's tempting to do that and to capitulate God may for a time choose to keep his people in a lowly and humble condition for our strengthening and for our spiritual upbuilding to rely on him now it's obvious but it's worth repetition because we always need reminding that God is the one who advances he's the one that demotes people according to his sovereign purposes

God controls history and all human institutions and human affairs now this is a comfort and encouragement to us as we know that those who are antagonistic towards the church towards us individually for our faith or seeking our downfall they may enjoy a time of promotion and they may enjoy the world's favour but they're only able to because it is God who has lifted them up now do we truly believe this and do we live like we believe this you think of other Old Testament saints they knew this well Hannah in her prayer in 1 Samuel 6 to 8 the Lord kills and brings to life the Lord brings down to Sheol and raises up the Lord makes poor and makes rich he brings low and exalts he raises the poor from the dust he lifts the needy from the ash heaps to make them sit with princes and inherit and inherit a seat of honour for the pillars of the earth for the

Lord and on them he has set the world sounds familiar doesn't it very similar to this psalm in verse 7 the psalmist states that it is God who executes judgment by putting down one and lifting up another I think here we see God judging throughout history raising up and bringing down however there will be a great culmination and final definitive judgment in verse 8 there is a cup in the hand of the Lord with foaming wine it's well mixed and he pours from it and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs there is there is a day of reckoning when God will dispense his wrath on the wicked judgment will finally be dispensed in its fullness in God's time there will be a day now here the emphasis is on judgment of the wicked and the emphasis is on God's wrath we struggle with this doctrine we struggle with God's judgment for various reasons certainly the sinful heart doesn't want that bright holy light of God's searching judgment unregenerate man doesn't want that as fallen human beings we struggle with the idea of authority and accountability and we want as much autonomy and freedom as we can well judgment and authority go hand in hand the one who has ultimate authority has the prerogative to judge but I think often people question

God's fairness and his justice his equity if God is infinite majesty and we are accountable to him judgment is necessary for him to be who he is in his justice and righteousness now we on a human

level we recognize the need for human judges to judicate in earthly matters we hold judges in high esteem and rightly so but we must remember they are sinners they're very educated and well trained sinners with minds and capacities impacted by sin and the fall has impacted their ability to make decisions but they still make decisions that are life altering they often have evidence and information that can be partial and as human beings we entrust them to judge and we need them to what about the all seeing all knowing awesome sovereign god who is infinite in his wisdom and holiness and who we are accountable to god's prerogative to judge is who he is as our sovereign he would not be god if he did not exercise his judgment this cup full of wine is a symbol of judgment and wrath you can find other passages throughout the bible describing the cup of god's judgment i'm not going to turn to them now you can look them up in your own time psalm 11 6 isaiah 51 17 jeremiah 25 15 and revelation 14 9 the foaming wine denotes the full fury and the wrath of god spurgeon really gets to the real meaning and depth of this he says the full cup must be quaffed the wicked cannot refuse the terrible draft for god himself pours it out for them and into them these are frightening texts and difficult texts but they're in the bible but if we look closely and if we're seeing through the lens of the new covenant we can see gospel in this god has mercifully made a way now i hope your mind is going somewhere in the new testament it's likely to be going to a garden and to our saviour to gethsemane in christ's prayer my father if it be possible let this cup pass from me nevertheless not as i will but as you will christ took the cup of god's wrath against sinners in perfect submission and he drained it so that we would never have to taste it we see here christ's perfect obedience to his father and substitution for his people this is a stupendous demonstration of god's love in that his son absorbed the wrath of god that our sins deserved we now taste from the cup of blessing of god's grace and mercy so here we see justice and mercy perfectly meet without an understanding of god's justice justice and his equity god's grace and his mercy lack meaning my final point is the people respond with praise now it appears that in verse 9 and 10 verses 9 and 10 the voice changes again and i'm taking a view that here we have the gathered people of god responding to all that has been said now you may differ and you may think actually this is just a continuation of the psalmist there is some question about whether it is god speaking in verse 10 i tend to think it is some suggest it could be israel corporately verse 9 states but i will declare it forever i will sing praises to the god of jacob what a fitting response to all that they have heard they bring praises and adoration they're exalting the covenant god of jacob these praises include both declaration and singing and singing in gathered worship is a form of declaration of the truths and wonders of what god has done in our salvation the members of the congregation they devote themselves they pledge themselves to a life of faith and commitment to worship and serving the living god they do this rather than self seeking rather than looking for advancement and promotion the words in verse 10 all the horns of the wicked i will cut off but the horns of the righteous shall be lifted up repeats this wonderful reversal this reversal that god will perform by cutting off the horns of the wicked and lifting up the horns of the righteous we see throughout the psalm the two people groups that speak steve spoke of way back in psalm one don't we the wicked and the righteous people of god are we exalting in the fact that we have seen this wonderful reversal in our lives and the lives of those around us through the grace and mercy of god through jesus christ god has not only lifted up the horns of the righteous but has lifted a horn of salvation in jesus christ as zechariah prophesied in luke let us sing with passion and joy about this equity this justice of god and his mercy through our redemption as his righteous people let's pray our father in heaven i thank you so much for your word that speaks so profoundly and deeply and truly and i pray that you would apply this word to our hearts and that we would be changed by this word and strengthened knowing that the living god has been speaking to us bless us all as we go into our weeks lord god and may you go before us and surround us with your love and with your equity and your justice and your greatness these things we pray in jesus name amen our last song this evening is how great is our god the slender of the king the king in majesty.

[50:11] Let all the earth rejoice. Let all the earth rejoice. He wraps his self in light. The darkness tries to hide and trembles at his voice.

And trembles at his voice. How great is our God. Sing with me how great is our God.

Let all the sea how great how great is our God. And age to age he stands.

And time is in his hands. Beginning and the end. Beginning and the end. The God kept three in one. Father, Spirit, Son, the Lion and the Lamb, the Lion and the Lamb. How great is our God.

[51:24] is our God. Sing with me how great is our God. And all will see how great, how great is our God.

name above all names. name above all names. worthy of a praise.

my heart will sing how great is our God. name above all names.

name above all names. worthy of a praise. my heart will sing how great is our God. how great is our God.

How great is our God How great is our God How great, how great is our God Well, as we come to a close this evening, I'd like to just end by reading a portion from the book of Revelation.

[52:47] It's Revelation, verse 1, 5b. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priest to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever.

Amen.