

Sing for joy

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[0:00] Shall we pray before I speak? Heavenly Father, we come to the end of the day and perhaps some of us are tired. Lord, we pray for attentiveness. Lord, I pray that you'd help me by your spirit explain this psalm.

Lord, you know my weakness and pray that you would be my strength. I pray that this would be an encouraging psalm for us as we walk into a next week.

We pray in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Well, I've entitled this short talk, A Camping Trip to Remember, Psalm 81.

I'm sure some of you have been on camping trips. I've been on quite a lot of camping trips of recent. They're quite inexpensive holidays. And actually, I've been with the Pearsons and we've had some lovely times.

And I think this psalm is based on the Feast of Tabernacles, as we'll be looking at, which is rather like a camping trip.

[1:09] As you can see from the picture, there's a booth there. I think this is a modern day version of the Festival of Booths. And you see on the top, you've got some foliage, some branches they put out and like an awning or tent.

So we'll be looking at that. The people of Israel would be remembering their past. And that's what we can look at this evening.

If there's anything you don't quite understand, please chip in, by the way. So my first point is an ordinance of praise.

You notice that in Psalm 81, it's an ordinance. We don't really use that word, do we? He uses three words that are quite similar, synonymous.

In verse four, he uses decree, ordinance and statute. They're very similar.

[2:16] But an ordinance is an authoritative decision from the Lord. The Lord has said this must happen and the Israelites must obey this ceremony.

So an ordinance of praise. So this psalm could have been sang at the Festival of Trumpets to the Festival of Tabernacles, which would be the Harvest Festival.

Nowadays, us Brightonians don't really celebrate Harvest Festival. Actually, it'll be interesting to hear from Phil the last time that we actually did celebrate a Harvest Festival.

I can't recall it in Calvary memory, but this would be a festival at the end of the harvest time.

Because if you look at verse three, it says, sound the ram's horn or the trumpets at the new moon. So this would have been on the 1st of September.

[3:23] I gather. At the Feast of Trumpets, which was another ordinance. There were there were seven ordinances, seven festivals for the people of Israel, and three of them were in September.

So when the new moon came, that would be the Festival of Trumpets. And then you see in verse three, when the moon is full.

So that would have been in mid-September. So that would have been the Festival of Tabernacles or the Festival of Booths. And in between that, you would have the Atonement, the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, the Jewish people say.

And that would be a rather somber festival where they would be denying themselves, being quite introspective, thinking about their sin. And this would be the day when the high priest, the only day he goes into the Holy of Holies and scatters blood on the altar to atone for the sins of the people.

So I think this is the context, though it could be the Passover, commentators say, but it's more likely to be the Festival of Tabernacles.

[4:42] In this sort of time. And it's rather upbeat. The rest of the psalm is quite a bit of a warning. But the first few verses are upbeat. We see that we sing for joy, begin the music, strike the tambourine, play the melodious harp and lyre.

And Christopher is going to read for us Deuteronomy 16 verses 13 to 15. So if you'd like to turn to that, you can. Celebrate the Festival of Tabernacles.

Seven days after you have gathered the produce of your fresh ink floor and your wine press. Be joyful at your festival, you and your sons and daughters, your male and female servants and the Levites, the foreigners, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns.

For seven days, celebrate the festival to the Lord your God at the place the Lord will choose. For the Lord your God will bless you in all your harvest and in all the work of your hands and your joy will be complete.

Thank you, Christopher. So, yeah, despite the the the sums of lament, actually, the psalmist Asaph is actually saying, praise the Lord, be joyful, you Israelites for what the Lord has done.

[6:25] Now, of course, this is post Exodus, isn't it? This is for the people that have gone into the promised land and they are to do this as an ordinance. So this is a joyful festival, brothers and sisters.

Yeah. So tabernacles, living in tents, as I said, making booze, temporary accommodation, the end of the harvest holiday.

I think tabernacle does mean to live temporarily somewhere. And it's, as I said, similar to camping trips. And it's a bit like Marmite, isn't it?

Camping. You either love it or hate it. I remember Chris Fry. Katie can correct me, but I think Chris Fry detested camping.

I think he liked his home comforts. Whereas Katie, our dear sister, she loves camping. And if she can get away for the weekend in Sussex, she will. And I think we've got to think like this.

[7:29] This is what the Israelites would be doing. We're going away for seven days. They're like a holiday. Perhaps you're looking forward to a holiday this year. Camping outside.

So it was a time of plenty. There'll be food. There'll be remembering what the Lord had done for them. We'll be thinking about that a little later.

And for us, brothers and sisters, we have a greater tabernacle. I liked Phil's quote this morning. He said about the people who tabernacled during the Exodus, the 40 years of wandering in a tent.

That covenant doesn't make us different people. I like that, Phil. That covenant didn't make us different. The tent, sorry. You go into the tent and it didn't make us different people.

They were still sinful. And that covenant wasn't as good as the one we've got. And we can praise the Lord, can't we, this evening that we have a greater tabernacle.

[8:42] And that he tabernacled with us. John 1, 14 is a famous verse. I'll read that. The word became flesh.

This is Christ. This is Christ. And made his dwelling. That word is tabernacled. He tabernacled among us. We have seen his glory.

The glory of the one and only son who came from the father full of grace and truth. Amen. We have a greater tabernacle this evening.

So we've got a greater song to sing, brothers and sisters. We also should be joyful in our hearts this evening. We've got a lot to give thankful for. We've been thinking about.

So we should be praising the Lord for this great salvation that we have. And we should thank the Lord for the gift of singing, the gift of music out loud or in our hearts.

[9:47] Steve said last week that he's not a very good singer. Some of us perhaps aren't. Or we can shout it out. Yesterday, I was driving through Hollingbury in my car, praising the Lord's modern worship song.

And it's great, isn't it? In these summer days, we can do that. And we've got the gift of music. And that's fantastic, isn't it?

That God's given us that. So an ordinance of praise. My second point is a mighty save. So looking at the next verses, we see this mighty redemption from Egypt.

Verse five. God went out against Egypt. And it's interesting. This verb went out because it's the same used in Genesis when Pharaoh sent Joseph out over Egypt. And he went out. Remember, he was the second in command. He was like the Lord of Egypt. But here, the psalmist is pointing to an even better redemption.

[11:07] He more supreme. The Lord went out against Egypt. Remember how the Egyptians subjugated the Israelites into forced labor.

An even better save. Even better Lord. And it was the end of slavery, wasn't it? Verse six. I removed their burden from their shoulders. Their hands were set free from the basket. Remember, they were loading bricks in baskets.

They were a horrible time under the Egyptians. But the Lord ended that. He brought them out of slavery. They called and he rescued in verse six.

Verse seven. Sorry. Mightily. He's outstretched arm. And I put here, it's ironic because the people, if they were celebrating this in booze, would be having luxurious food or luxurious foods and drink and wine, perhaps, probably.

[12:26] And yet they were remembering people who had to sojourn, live for 40 years in these tents. Can you imagine camping for 40 years?

You know, camping is not fantastic. You know, you don't get a great good first night's sleep, especially. But for 40 years, ironically, this wasn't a great thing.

And the Israelites knew that, didn't they? Because of their disobedience. And they knew that. But God was with them, their presence. And he did provide for them, the manor and the quail, etc.

He was there. He tabernacled with them. And it led to the Red Sea, didn't it? In verse seven. I answered you out of a thundercloud. So they came out of Egypt.

And he was there with them. And he took them through the Red Sea towards Sinai. And it said, I tested you at the waters of Meribah.

[13:34] Interestingly, because in Genesis, I think it says, you tested me. But here, God says, I tested you.

So he was sovereign in that. And for us, we have a better redemption. The cross, we have been brought out of slavery to sin.

So what a mighty save for us. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

Romans 6, 18. So it was a mighty save for the people of God. And it's been a mighty save for us as well, as Jesus has brought about our redemption on the cross.

So lastly, thirdly, listen and heed a response. The rest of the psalm. So here we see the law at Mount Sinai. The covenants.

[14:35] We've been thinking about that this morning, haven't we? The covenants that God cut at Sinai. And in verses 8 to 10, we actually see the first two commandments, don't we?

Verse 9. You shall have no foreign God among you. You shall not worship any God other than me. So this is the Lord speaking to Israel.

And the people would have been remembering this covenant that God gave them. And it says, hear me, my people. Listen to me.

God is a good God to his people. And he feeds his people. He gives them food and his word. It says in verse 10, open wide your mouth and I will fill it.

What a lovely verse. Not only will he fill them materially, but he feeds them with his word, his covenants of kindness.

[15:42] But what happens? Well, they didn't follow the covenant, did they? As we know. And it says in verse 11, they were foolish.

But my people would not listen to me. Israel would not submit to me. So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own devices. And that gave them over.

It's repeated, isn't it? In Romans. You want to flick over to Romans. Well, we see it today as well. That famous chapter on the wrath of God.

He uses this verb in verse 24. Therefore, God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts, the sexual impurity.

And it says in 26, because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. And also in 28.

[17:01] Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God. So God gave them over to a depraved mind so that they do what ought not to be done.

And we can see that, don't we? Not only for the Israelites, but also for us in our society, even our own selves. He can give us over if we go against him.

And sadly, that's what happens in Jewish history. He gave them over. But his mercy still shines. Going back to the psalm in verse 13. If my people would only listen to me, if Israel would only follow my ways. So he's saying to the people now, look, there is still mercy.

If you do listen to me, if you follow my ways, I will be there. He's a merciful God. And the consequences of obedience is, as we see from the psalm, that their enemies are defeated in verse 14.

[18:12] He would turn his hand against their foes. And there's material satisfaction. Verse 16.

You will be fed with the finest of wheat. With honey from the rock, I would satisfy you. So God gives us abundance.

I put here creme de la creme. Honey. Interestingly, the Lord gave water, didn't he, out of the rock during the wanderings. And here he talks about honey.

Sweeter than water. I put here Tesco's finest. The finest of wheat. Not your cheap stuff, but the best.

And that's what God does. When we obey him, he gives us the best. And if only the Jews did that the first time around, they would have been no wondering.

[19:10] They would have had all this. Straight away, I presume. They wouldn't have had to wander for 40 years if they hadn't complained.

The Lord would have brought them into the promised land quicker. And they would have been able to feast on his wonderful provision. But they did sin. And there were consequences to that. They went after foreign gods.

So lastly, for us to take away this evening. Let's remember we have a greater covenant. Remember this morning, what Phil reminded us about.

Jesus is the guarantee of a better covenant. Through his blood. We're in a better position. We've got a better song to sing this evening.

Let's be listening to God, Jesus, his words. Let's listen. That's important. And let's be obeying him, obeying his word.

[20:09] Then comes blessing. Let's be a joyful people. Not complainers. It's so easy to complain about things. And perhaps especially now during lockdown.

But as a people, we've got a lot to give thanks for and be joyful. Like the psalmist says, like this ordinance says, sing for joy. Play music on the harp, etc.

Let's be using the gift of music to praise him in the car or in your heart. I really appreciated the music this morning, actually. I know we've got differing opinions. And, you know, I like this song. I don't like that song. But we've got to bear with each other. And really, it's in our heart, isn't it? It's, yeah. Let's use that gift to praise him.

And thank the Lord that he satisfies us with his words. That it's like good bread. Jesus is the bread of life. And we thank, yeah, we can thank the Lord for that.

[21:08] So let's praise him now, shall we? Let's pray.