

# God is good, He is worthy of praise

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, we humbly bow in your presence. May your word be our rule, your spirit our teacher, and your great glory our supreme concern.

! Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. We've just sang together. Remember, what truth can calm the troubled soul? God is good. God is good all the time. And all the time, God is good.

We've been looking at some Psalms from Book 3 in the Psalter, and I've spoken about Book 3 in the Psalter as that saggy bit in the middle.

The bit where you're tempted to give up on God and Jesus and discipleship. These Psalms hold before us the challenges there are in life to God's goodness.

We cannot ignore them. We cannot pretend that they aren't there. And yet, the saggy bit in the middle is fixed at either end.

[ 1 : 23 ] However dark it gets, it's not completely dark. However steep the ascent is before us, it will come to a level place where we can draw breath.

Like a small candle shining in the midst of the darkness, giving light all around. So this Psalm, Psalm 76, is a gift of grace.

A word from God, which sings in every part of God's own goodness. God's abode has been established in Salem, his dwelling place in Zion.

Mount Zion is the temple mount, the heart, the focal point of Jerusalem. Zion is not a favoured mount because of the qualities of the people who live there.

Zion is not the highest of hills. There are higher hills all around Jerusalem. And yet, simply because he chose it, God has made Zion the place where he dwells.

[ 2 : 44 ] This is God's address on earth. God's home is there. The pilgrims who journeyed annually to Jerusalem did not go to see the strong walls, the great palaces, to walk in the narrow streets.

The pilgrim journey is a journey to God's home. A journey to God's good presence. You've probably noticed, we are physical beings.

We live in a physical world, which can be measured. A world where place is really important. In such a world, our God, who we know is not limited by distance or place, has chosen and set apart one place as a blessing for his people.

One place in all creation to teach us that our God is a God of every place. One mount out of all the mounts to illustrate for us that our God is God over all.

God uses this place, Mount Zion, to teach us all of his great desire. He wants to live together with you.

[ 4 : 22 ] God longs to have you in his presence. To live with him. And that's what Mount Zion and the temple is all about.

It's about the good promise of our good God that we are welcome at home with him. And what reward will heaven bring?

Everlasting life with him. Heaven is the word we use to designate God's presence. Heaven is a description of God's kingly reign.

Everlasting life is being in his presence. Jesus, our saviour, has opened the way for us to come into the good presence of our always good God.

Jesus has come to be God with us. Emmanuel, not only for Christmas, but for every day.

[ 5 : 38 ] In Jesus, this psalm, Psalm 76, becomes our song of hope and confidence. Christ is our hope. Christ will bring us into the good presence of our good God.

Our psalm begins with a declaration that God is known. In Judah, God is known. His name is great in Israel. The verb in verse 1, known, is what they call a reflexive verb.

It is God making himself known. But rather than three words, you can do it all in the one word in Hebrew. God making himself known.

Learn again. Only God can make God known. If God had not chosen to reveal himself to us, we would not know him.

We cannot work out God by ourselves. We might, at our best, have a sense that there is something or someone more, some higher power.

[ 6 : 58 ] But we are scrabbling in the dark if we imagine that we, at our own efforts, can get to know the one true God, the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He needs to go first. He needs to make himself known to us. And that is what he has done.

In Judah, God is known. His name is great in Israel. His abode established in Salem. His dwelling place in Zion. There he broke the flashing arrows, the shield, the sword, the weapons of war.

Isn't it good? When he makes himself known, our God did not send us an instruction manual. Have you looked at the instruction manual for your washing machine recently?

And many people didn't even look at it when they bought it because you only need one setting. I don't know why they put all those dials on washing machines. You only ever use one. God did not make himself known to us by sending us an instruction manual.

[ 8 : 14 ] God did not sit down and write a personal statement. Declaring something about himself that we might know him. God came and has been at work among us and we get to know him by what he does.

By how he lives among us. By his actions and deeds. God displays his nature and makes known his purpose to us.

When God comes among us, he makes a home. And the only purpose God has in doing that is so he is somewhere to invite us in.

To be with him. God doesn't need a home. God doesn't need a mountain for himself. But he wants a place where he can live together with us.

God has acted for our best good. God has overcome all human wickedness and all human wickedness which would use weapons of war and destruction against others.

[ 9 : 29 ] At a time when we were powerless, God acted to bless us. God makes his wondrous deeds known. And we get to know him by what he does.

The most common style of writing in the Bible is stories. God makes himself known by telling us stories about who he is and what he has done.

God graciously created all things and said it is very good. God called Abraham, elected him for service that through humans and our service, we might share in God's mission and be a blessing to others.

When we were dead in our sins, strangers to God and far away from him, God came himself in the Lord Jesus Christ. The grace and goodness of God are supremely made known in our great Redeemer's blood.

These stories are not made up stories. These are in every way true stories of the true God who loves you.

[ 10 : 43 ] The cross is the true story of who God is, what he has done for you and me. This is how we know God. We look at the cross.

The record of God's acts on our behalf reveal his goodness to us. God makes himself known.

Not a stranger we read about in history books, but our Father who loves us and would live with us. God is known and you are called to know him.

You are called to live with him and to experience his goodness. The central part of the Psalm, verses 4 to 9, records for us something of the wonderful deeds of God.

But let's go right to the end of this section, verses 8 and 9. From the heavens you uttered judgment. The earth feared and was still when God arose to establish judgment to save the humbled of the earth.

[ 11 : 52 ] That word, humble, could be afflicted or poor or meek. The senses of someone without property, wretched, cowering in captivity.

Someone it would be easy for us to overlook. It wouldn't matter if you ignored them because they can't make a fuss about it and no one else cares about them.

Yes, our God is glorious and majestic. He is powerful and able to overcome the violent and the oppressors. But God does not defeat his enemies in order to display his power but to save the

humble.

The goal is not in this the display of God's glory but the salvation of the powerless. God establishes judgment for the benefit of the needy.

The strong and the wealthy don't need judgment and often they don't want justice because they are too busy grabbing all they can and giving nothing back.

[ 13 : 04 ] It is the weak the vulnerable the wretched who need justice and God acts for them. It is clear to us is it not that the weak cannot save themselves.

Human justice is often bought and paid for but not by the poor. the great work of God in this psalm is to establish just justice for the humble.

As the people of God the disciples of Jesus living in the presence of God we are co-opted as co-workers with God in the cause of justice.

In our choices we reject the ways of greed and selfishness. Ensuring that the poor have food and homes and medical care turns out to be more precious to us than self provision.

In our actions we take the side of the weak. We speak justice to injustice. We will not be silent. We will cry out against all wickedness which impoverishes the lives of others.

[ 14 : 22 ] We pray for justice. we campaign for justice. We hunger and thirst for justice. Because this is how God has made himself known to us this is how we must live with him.

If we would follow Jesus this is the way he would lead us. Our part in God's great story is to be a blessing to the wretched and the needy.

To serve God's mission of establishing justice. God is good all the time and all the time God's goodness is displayed in establishing justice.

God's plan in establishing justice is that we work together with him in this great mission. Living together with God is not about us enjoying the comforts of Zion.

It's not about us lounging in God's armchairs watching his 80 inch plasma TV. Living with God in God's presence following Jesus is always about service.

[ 15 : 32 ] It is always about mission. We are the agents of God who live in his presence as we work for justice.

The end of our psalm is the praise of God. The journey through all the psalms 1 to 150 is from obedience to praise. And this psalm ends with praise.

Because God has made himself known he is praised. It's like seeing a brilliant sunset or a tremendous flash of lightning. An exclamation is drawn from us.

Wow! When we see God at work we can't hold back our praise. Surely the wrath of man shall praise you.

The remnant of wrath you will put on like a belt. But here in verse 10, it isn't only the people who know God and love him who praise him. This is how powerful God is.

[ 16 : 32 ] Even his enemies will praise him. Our God is so present, so good amongst us, that one day every knee will bow and every tongue will declare his praise through Jesus Christ our Savior.

Savior. Because God has made himself known to us, do we not respond to him at times with vows of service? Make your vows to the Lord your God and perform them.

Let all around him bring gifts to him who is to be feared. These vows, which we the people of God have encouraged to make to him, are the actions which we are to perform.

We will serve in God's mission. We will inform ourselves of campaigns for justice with which we can join. Perhaps the International Justice Mission, justice for victims of human trafficking.

Perhaps Tear Fund, justice for the poorest peoples in the poorest places of the world. Perhaps the Edinburgh City Mission, justice for refugees and homeless people among us.

[ 17 : 45 ] Have you ever vowed to praise God? Are you fulfilling that vow by serving God's passion for justice?

This is the gift you are called to bring to your God. God is good all the time and all the time God is good. The goodness of God is seen in his work for us.

in the full salvation which God our Father has provided for us in Jesus our Saviour and through his work in us declares to all creation.

In all the ways God provides for us and cares for us the goodness of God is seen and known among us. The goodness of God is made known as he welcomes us into his presence.

And here's how we know that we are living together with God. He saves us out in service. He empowers us by his spirit that we might carry his grace into all creation.

[ 18 : 58 ] God is good all the time and all the time God is good and we get to praise him. Let's pray together.

God our Father we are amazed at the extent of your goodness your patience with us your great hunger and longing that we should be your people and live together with you.

Transform our lives. Make us a people of praise. Make us a people of service. people who are agents of justice.

Be glorified among us we pray in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. holy