

PM Psalm 117

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[0 : 0 0] Our first reading this evening is from Psalm 117. Psalm 117. It's obviously a very brief passage in Psalms tonight.

Psalm 117. Praise the Lord all nations. Extol Him all peoples. For great is His steadfast love towards us.

And the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever. Praise the Lord. And the reading from the New Testament is from Luke chapter 1. Verses 46 to 56.

Just as Psalm 117 was a psalm of praise. Now we will read from Mary's song of praise. The Magnificat.

So Mary here has gone to visit her cousin Elizabeth. And this is Mary's praise as they meet. Luke chapter 1 verses 46 to 56.

[1 : 1 4] And Mary said, My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.

For He has looked on the humble estate of His servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed. For He who is mighty has done great things for me.

And holy is His name. And His mercy is for those who fear Him. From generation to generation. He has shown strength with His arm.

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.

He has filled the hungry with good things. And the rich He has sent away empty. He has helped to serve in Israel. In remembrance of His mercy.

[2 : 1 7] As He spoke to our fathers. To Abraham. And to his offspring forever. And Mary remained with her about three months.

And returned to her home. Thanks be to God for the readings of His Holy Word. And His name be the glory and praise. Let's just bow our heads in prayer.

Father we thank you for the readings of your Holy Word. And now as we examine the psalm. May the words of my mouth.

And the thoughts and meditations of our hearts. Be acceptable in your sight. These things we ask through your Son. Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen. Well tonight we are looking at a psalm that is certainly not the longest of the psalms.

[3 : 1 9] But Surgeon remarks about this psalm as being very little in its letter. And exceedingly large in its spirit. So it is short.

It is to the point. But it certainly is a compact psalm with a strong message. It is indeed the shortest of the psalms.

And the shortest of all chapters in the whole of scripture. However its content and significance is anything but small. Paul himself making reference to it.

And his message to the Romans in chapter 15 verses 10 to 11. And when we examine the psalm. It is good to see that God does not always require long prayers.

Or fancy and elaborate hymns of praise. Instead God is concerned with intentions of our hearts. Rather than the words of our mouths.

[4 : 22] When we bring our prayers to God. It is sincerity with which we bring them. It is important. A sincere and abrupt psalm or prayer from an honest and open heart.

Jesus in Matthew 6 teaches his disciples to pray.

And he warned them not to be long winded in their prayers. As he said. When you pray. Do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do.

For they think that they will be heard for their many words. The psalm demonstrates that just as God through his Holy Spirit. Gave lengthy psalms such as Psalm 119.

A place in scripture. So this psalm also. Only two chapters earlier. Has a place in scripture. The psalm is an invitation also.

[5 : 31] For all people to turn to the Lord. And join with believers in praising God. We see in this short psalm. Four commands that are relevant to God's people then and now.

If we are a child of God. Through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. These four commands still apply to us today. And the four commands can be linked in pairs.

In verse 1 we see the command of worshipping God. And sharing the gospel. In verse 2. We see the command of depending on God's love.

And resting in God's assurance. The first part of the first prayer. The psalm opens and closes with the phrase.

Praise the Lord. Praising God should be the mark of every believer today. As it was in the early church. In Acts 2. We read how the new church in Jerusalem.

[6 : 39] Focused itself in worship. And praise for God. And in return. God continued to swell. The numbers of believers. On a daily basis.

In Acts 2. 46 and 7. Luke recorded. And day by day. Attending the temple together. And breaking bread in their homes. To receive their food with glad and generous hearts.

Praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day. Those who were being saved. We are to do the simple tasks.

Starting with praising God. And bringing glory to his name. God will do the hard work. Of calling people. To respond to his message.

In verse 1. We see that there are two separate words. Used in calling people. To praise his name. The first word. Even if like myself.

[7 : 40] You are not a great scholar of Hebrew. May be known to us. It is Hallel. Which gives us the word Hallelujah. Meaning praise the Lord. When we praise God.

We don't simply tell him of his greatness. He knows that already. But we continue to praise his greatness. Because it is our purpose. To praise and glorify God.

And to enjoy him forever. Some of us may remember. From the Westminster Shorter Catechism. Question 1. What is the chief end of man?

Man's chief end is to glorify God. And to enjoy him forever. And the second word of praise. Means to boast.

To extol our Lord. His holy name. As we praise him. We also extol his virtues. His character. To all he hears.

[8 : 41] This leads us on to the second of our obligations. Sharing the gospel. In the Old Testament. We learn of Israel.

Being God's chosen people. But it is not that they alone. Who should give praise to the Lord. But all nations. A theme that is raised in a number of psalms.

Such as Psalm 47 and 66. And of the nine psalms. That we have looked at together. It was mentioned. In not less than four of the four occasions.

God calls us. Now. Sorry. God's call as now. Is not to select few. But to all.

It's not just to Israel. Or to a few people here. It's to all nations. To all peoples. Yes. In the Old Testament. The Jewish people.

[9 : 39] Were God's chosen nation. To bring blessings to others. God called Abraham. To be the father of a nation. That would bring blessings.

To all the earth. In Genesis 12. Verses 1 to 3. We read. Now the Lord said to Abraham. Go from your country. And your kindred.

And your father's house. To the land that I will show you. And I will make of you. A great nation. And I will bless you. And make your name great. So that you will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you. And him who dishonors you. I will curse. And in you. All the families of the earth. Shall be blessed. So Abraham was to be a blessing.

To all nations. He and Israel. Were tasked. With showing God's nature. And message to the world. But they failed.

[10 : 38] Israel as a people. Failed time and time again. Israel was to be a separate nation. It was to be separate from the world. But it was not to be isolated.

Just like us today. As directed by Christ. We are to be in the world. But we are to be apart from the world. We are to carry Christ's message out to the world.

Not to close ourselves off in little enclaves and stone buildings. Israel failed. Israel failed. As they became guilty. Of imitating the nations around them.

Rather than witnessing the nations around them. Instead of shining God's truth and mercy to them. They took on the practices of the surrounding nations.

It is not being in the world. That causes us to sin. It is what is in our hearts. And our desires. That causes us to sin.

[11 : 44] We have highlighted in the past. The disobedience of the Israelites. In the wilderness. When God had just freed them from slavery. Under the Egyptians. But we also see that.

King Solomon. The supposed wisest of kings. With all his wisdom. Still rebelled against the teachings of God. We read in 1 Kings 11.45.

For when Solomon was old. His wives turned away his heart. After other gods. And his heart was not wholly true to our Lord his God.

As was the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth. The goddess. Of the Sidonians. And after Milcom.

The abomination of the Ammonites. Solomon sets aside. His devotion to God.

[12 : 45] To keep his wives happy. To keep fellow humans happy. God in Isaiah. Chapter 40.96.

Declares. That he has sent Isaiah. To bring back to him. The nation of Israel. And to also bring to him. The nations of the world. God says.

It is too light a thing. That you should be my servant. To raise up the tribes of Jacob. And to bring back the preserved of Israel. I will make you a light for the nations.

That my salvation may reach to the end of the earth. So God chose the Israelites. To give the world the knowledge. Of the one true God.

To give the knowledge of his scriptures. And his coming saviour. But they followed their own hearts. To meet their earthly desires. The failure.

[13 : 41] Does not detract. From the wonders of God. It only highlighted. The greatness of his character. It highlights his love for his creation.

And for humanity. That as man has continually failed to uphold his commands. And broken his covenants with God. He still sent his son.

Our Lord Jesus Christ. To die as a sacrifice for us. As we continue to rebel against him. He sent his son to save us.

From the penalty of our wrongdoings. Jesus himself declares in John 3.16-17. For God's love the world. That he gave his only son.

That whoever believes in him. Should not perish. But have eternal life. For God did not send his son into the world. To condemn the world. But in order that the world might be saved through him.

[14 : 38] God's message. Which he brings out in this psalm. Of all the nations praising him. Is given the ultimate reason. Here in the incarnation.

Of Jesus Christ as his son. What an amazing reason to praise him. God has created us in his image. And man was in communion with God.

Adam and Eve had a personal relationship with God. But man could not obey the simple laws. That God had given him. As man broke the rules.

That God had given. There was now a division between God and humanity. Due to man sinning against God. We had rebelled against him. And man now stood condemned for his sins.

The penalty for that condemnation. The penalty of sin. Was death and separation from God. But here God showed his love.

[15 : 42] And he promised. To bring forth one. Who would pay the penalty of our sin. He promised his son. As a substitute for us. That Jesus Christ.

Would take on. Our sin. And that he would suffer and die on the cross. For us. And that we would be raised from death. That all who believed in him.

May rise to a new life in him. We would be clothed in his righteousness. We would be covered. By the innocence of Christ. The one who took on our guilt.

And paid the penalty. For our sin. Now as we are redeemed in Christ. And can once more through him. Have a personal relationship with God. Because of God's love.

And God's grace towards us. This is the salvation we give God praise for. And it is the message we are commanded. To take to all the nations.

[16 : 44] Jesus continues the command. That believers are to take the message out. To the rest of the world. In Matthew 28. Verses 18 to 20. After his resurrection.

He says to the disciples. And Jesus came and said to them. All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.

Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son. And of the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold I am with you always to the end of the age.

The disciples were to take the gospel to the world. To the Jews and to the Gentiles. And today as believers in Jesus Christ. We are commanded to do the same.

To take the gospels to all nations. And at home we have to take that same gospel to all peoples. Not just to those that we think that are worthy.

[17 : 46] But to those on the edges of our society. For those who at times appear outcast and strangers to us. As we move on to verse 2 of the psalm.

We see the second pairing of his steadfast love. And the faithfulness of the Lord lasts forever. We are saved because of God's unfailing love for us.

On that alone we must depend. Not on our actions or our deeds. Without the bountiful expression of God's merciful love. We would still be in darkness.

And death. We would still be far from God. We can rest on that assurance of his eternal love. And security. Our security is in his faithfulness.

That endures forever. The word translated as faithful. Means to be firm. To be unshakable. And that is God.

[18 : 52] He anchors us firmly and deeply in his love. God's character is unchangeable. And so his promises to us are affirmed and unchanging.

Jesus addresses this very issue with his disciples in Luke 12. That we touched on this morning. On two occasions in this chapter. Jesus assures the disciples of God's control of world events.

And that he will provide. In verses 4 to 7. Jesus has instructed his followers not to fear earthly events. That God is in control.

And highlights how precious they are to God. In verse 6 and 7 he states. Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God.

Why even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not. You are of more value than many sparrows. So we must place our anxieties in God.

[20 : 02] And trust in his plan. Then later in the chapter. After the parable of the rich fool we looked at this morning. Jesus exhorts his disciples not to be anxious.

He urges his disciples not to worry about the earthly things of life. Such as where your food will come from. Or what they will wear. Or where they will sleep.

Again Jesus uses examples from nature. That surrounds them. He highlights how the raven is provided for. And yet it has no place to store its food.

He looks at the lily in the field. The beauty of its bloom. And says that if God closes it with such splendour. How much more will he ensure that we have all that we require in life.

If God calls us. He will provide for us. And if he sends us to do a task for him. He is faithful to equip us for it. As Paul writes to the Thessalonians.

[21 : 09] In 1 Thessalonians 5.24 He who calls you is faithful. He will surely do it. If God calls us to do something. He will give us what we require.

So why do we hesitate to obey him. And to trust in his faithfulness. We hesitate because of our nature. Our human nature is one of desiring to put ourselves first.

To put our goals before those of God. Our Heavenly Father. The first steps to establishing our trust in God. Is in recognising our abilities.

Fall short of what God desires of us. And our salvation can come through Christ alone. Let's pray.

Father we thank you for your readings this evening. We thank you that we don't have to be pious and have grand statements.

[22 : 20] To be heard by you. But our simple acts of praise. Ascend to you. And our simple acts of praise glorify your name.

Lord we give you thanks. That it is a true heart that is important to you. And we commit our hearts to you.

And in service to you. For those who have not yet. Come into a personal relationship with you. We ask that you pour out your grace upon them.

That your spirit will soften their hearts. And they may accept Christ as their Saviour. So they may too. Have the pleasure of glorifying your name.

And raising praise to you. These things we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. Amen.