

The true worshipper

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Date: 16 July 2023

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[0 : 00] Our reading today is from Psalm 15. While you turned to that, I was thinking about this this week and I thought this was written around 3,000 years ago under the inspiration of God.

It's not the shortest psalm, it's only short. Psalm 117 is the shortest. This is a close one. Psalm 15, a psalm of David.

Lord, who may dwell in your sacred tent? Who may live on your holy mountain? The one whose walk is blameless, who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from the heart.

Whose tongue utters no slander, who does no wrong to a neighbour and casts no slurs on others.

Who despises a vile person but honours those who fear the Lord.

Who keeps an oath, even when it hurts. And does not change their mind. Who lends money to the poor without interest.

[1 : 11] Who does not accept the bribe of the innocent. Whoever does these things will not be shaken. Amen. Yeah, my name's Dave.

I'm one of the pastors here. If I haven't met you before, a warm welcome to you. Why don't we pray as we come to God's word. Father, I praise you that you're a God who wants us to know that we can come to you.

That we can dwell in your presence. But Lord, I pray that it wouldn't be based on a false confidence but on true and solid ground.

So I pray that you'd speak to each one of us through your word right now. Give us listening ears so that we know that we can rejoice in your presence.

praising you for saving our soul. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, what's the primary characteristic of a close walk with God?

[2 : 24] Who is someone who's intimate, close with God, walking through their life? I think some people will be wanting to put their confidence of acceptance with God based on some sense of religious feeling.

So those moments of peace and joy and awe, often when we're in prayer or praise. Some, I think, will rely on kind of supernatural things like gifts of speaking in tongues or receiving dreams.

Surely I'm close to God if I've got these supernatural experiences. I think some will look at their record of sacrifices, what I've done for God in the church and in evangelism, for social justice.

Look at my giftedness. Look at the successes God has blessed my efforts for him with. Maybe some will look at their position and role in the church community.

Surely I'm walking closely with God by virtue of being a pastor, right? Some will measure their closeness to God by their superior Bible knowledge compared to others.

[3 : 50] If you can articulate doctrine really clearly and persuasively, surely that person's close, walking close to God, right?

And of course, some of us will not claim to be close at all. We live in a constant fear that God isn't pleased with us.

I think Psalm 15 cuts right through all those things, all those sense of confidence and even lack of confidence. It gives us a surprising portrait portrait of who the Lord accepts and is pleased with.

So that opening question, O Lord, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell? Who shall live on your holy hill?

These two lines, they're two pictures, but they're asking the same question. The Lord's tent pictures, you've already learnt this through the children's talk, thank you, Jen.

[5 : 05] I feel like I can relax now because you've said it all, I'm just going to add some detail now. The tabernacle, it pictures the tabernacle. You read the book of Exodus and isn't it riveting, God's miracles, redeeming his people from Egypt?

And then he gives the law and then do you stop reading Exodus? You get into all this detail about what? The tabernacle. What's the goal of salvation?

God dwelling with his people. He wants to live with his people. And at the end of Exodus, you've got this beautiful paragraph of God dwelling in the tabernacle and they're journeying through the wilderness.

When the cloud lifts, they go out. When it settles, they settle. They're being led. They're in the presence of God, knowing they're God's people. The goal of salvation was for the Lord to live among his people.

And so this idea of sojourning is the idea of being a temporary resident. You're a foreigner travelling through this world like Israel were travelling through, journeying to the promised land, being led by God, knowing you belong to God, enjoying friendship, fellowship with God.

[6 : 33] And the Lord's holy hill pictures Jerusalem, the place from which he would rule his people through his chosen king.

So dwelling on his holy hill is you don't belong to the nations of the world that don't know the Lord. You belong to his king.

You belong to his people. You can live with God. There is no greater joy than to live in God's presence.

Psalm 27 verse 4 captures this poetically, obviously, as a psalm. One thing have I asked of the Lord. One thing.

What would that one thing be? That will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life. To gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple.

[7 : 37] It is the greatest thing in life. This question only makes sense if being right with God and enjoying his presence is the best thing. It's what we're made for.

So if the psalms are the heart cries of God's people, this psalm catches, I think, one of the most fundamental, the most fundamental heart cry we all wonder.

Am I acceptable to you, God? Do you embrace me as your own? Are we at peace?

Can I enjoy you? Are you pleased with me? To even ask this question, you're on the path of wisdom.

We saw last week in Psalm 14, the fool says in his heart, there is no God. Now you may not say that with your lips, but practically we can do that.

[8 : 37] You won't even be caring about this question. But if you are caring about this question, you're on the path to wisdom. The Lord wants people to come in.

He wants us to come in to his presence. Like a child thrives knowing the security in the family and their father's pleasure in them.

So what's the answer? Who does the Lord accept? Who does he embrace as his own? It's not just anyone and everyone. This psalm ought to have the same effect on us today as I think it would have back then in David's day.

To pause and ask, am I acceptable and at peace with you, God? Now broadly speaking, verse 2 answers the question.

It's the person who lives blamelessly, who does what is right and speaks truth in his heart. So that's a broad answer.

[9 : 45] That's the principle answer. And then verses 3 to 5, we get into some specifics. But just sticking with the principle first, I think that phrase, speaks truth in his heart, is key.

So it either speaks truth in his heart or speaks truth from the heart. Either way, it's saying there's truth in the heart. It could be picking up Psalm 1.

If you remember Psalm 1, blessed is the man who's meditating on God's word, God's law, day and night. That word meditating, meditating is murmuring.

You're not murmuring your own thoughts like a crazy person. You're murmuring God's thoughts just day and night. There's truth in your mind and heart. That's the blessed person.

Now if commentators write that this psalm starts a new subunit, so Psalm 15, it's like this grouping of psalms with Psalm 24 because Psalm 24 asks the same question.

[10 : 50] Who can dwell in your holy hill? Now if that's the case, in the middle of this subunit is Psalm 19. That's the person who looks at creation and goes, and it's just shouting truth.

God is, his glory is declared in the heavens and meditating on the law of God. The law of God is pure and sweeter than honey.

It is sure it can be relied upon. So truth in the heart. There's integrity.

The truth in the heart overflows into true living, right living. So who is acceptable to the Lord? Who can be confident of belonging to him and enjoying fellowship with him? It's the righteous person of integrity. The truth of God in the heart overflowing into how we live.

[11:57] So what does righteous living look like? How can you see what's in the heart? what's the characteristic that comes out? What does truth produce? And this is where the psalm gets surprising, doesn't it?

This question of vertical relationship with God suddenly turns horizontal. It's all about how we treat people. I think it's uncomfortable because if we focus on how we treat people then it challenges any other false kind of religious adherence, all those things I opened the sermon with, it challenges those things.

The primary mark of spirituality is to share the character of God. love for God will overflow into a holy love for people.

It's inseparable. It's to share the family likeness, sharing our Father's holy love. We worship him, we want to be like him.

The righteous person will have holy brotherly love. I'm interested too by why these examples of love.

[13:28] There's lots of things that could have been said in this Psalm about what it means to love one another. There's so many things and obviously we need the rest of the Bible to add to this but I just wonder if these things are chosen because these ones are socially respectable sins.

I'm going to use Jerry Bridges book title. Most people in society these things aren't a big deal I don't think. They're tolerated even celebrated but if you love the Lord's character if you know his character all of a sudden these things really matter.

So let's go through them. Verse three it's the person who does not slander with his tongue and does no evil to his neighbour nor takes up a reproach against his friend.

So doing no harm to others to their reputation even that last phrase even when they deserve it. So taking up a reproach it's to rebuke it's when they deserve it.

I think why that's a problem is it's taking up it's almost like I don't know you won't let it go. You have to get vengeance.

[15:00] I think this is describing the woman over coffee after the service finishes who just senses that the conversation about someone else is not building up that person it's not productive at all and so they turn the conversation to another subject matter or even go hey we shouldn't be saying this or they just walk away.

I think it's describing that kind of person. It's the man who's criticised who then doesn't just launch a verbal attack with the flaws of the person accusing them.

Doesn't try and defend themselves like that. It's the employee who doesn't join in the workplace complaining about their boss or kids at school not joining in in that insults of that teacher that everyone insults.

It's the Christian who doesn't get tunnel vision when a brother or sister wrongs them, unable to let the injustice go but who is determined to show the same grace that they've received.

It's not as simple as just being polite and never saying a negative word. You read Jesus, he's the picture of perfect character and wow, he went to town on some people but it was for love's sake.

[16:34] God's God's words, his words give grace to those who hear even if those words are a rebuke, will care about their words and the effect on other people.

verse 4, in whose eyes a vile person is despised but who honours those who fear the Lord.

I think we trip over this one, don't we? It's in our so-called tolerant and inclusive day and age where everyone is cancelling each other on social media.

I'm not convinced it's that tolerant. I think we can get past this doesn't seem right when we consider a few things.

One is we're all evaluating people. Everyone is. It's actually good to distinguish good from evil. Everyone's doing that.

[17:42] It's being part of God's image to do that. Everyone is going, I'm going to embrace this because I think it's good. I'm rejecting that because it's not good.

I'm going to give you a challenge. Think of a person you don't like. I'm not encouraging you to dwell on this for too long. I'm guessing as well it won't be too hard to think of someone.

Take a moment and think about why you don't like them. What's the criteria you're using? Isn't it so often about do I think this person will advantage me?

Will I profit from accepting this person? Or if it doesn't advantage me I might reject them. Either socially if they seem popular I'll link up with them.

They're not popular I'll avoid them. Isn't it so much self centred that we evaluate people by? But this is saying you don't decide if someone's vile or not.

[18 : 51] It's not saying that. It's saying because it can also mean a rejected person is despised. So in other words it's someone who evaluates people as God sees them.

Does God reject them? Does God embrace them? And so too likewise. You do likewise. It's not your criteria it's his criteria.

And part of God's holy love is that he hates evil. Imagine if God loved evil. What a terrifying thought. Our problem with this is we don't hate evil enough. I just thought of all the comedians we can sometimes listen to and they're just disparaging Jesus.

How can we respect this person while they do that? But we also need to be careful about who is it that God rejects and embrace and accepts.

[20 : 07] We've got to be really careful about this because Jesus was a friend of tax collectors and sinners and he reserved his harshest rejection for the religious.

So we also have to be careful about how we measure those who fear the Lord or not.

That is holy love. Our aim in despising is that we want that person to repent so that they're at peace with God. Our aim at despising is we don't want that others to be continually damaged by what that person is doing or let astray.

Our aim in honouring those who fear the Lord is we want them not to boast in themselves, we want them to keep fearing the Lord and encourage others to do likewise. So holy love looks like accepting or rejecting people not based on your evaluation but God's evaluation, his criteria.

people. Then we've got who swears to his own hurt and does not change. Their yes is yes, their no is no, whatever the personal cost.

[21 : 30] Now it's easy to keep promises when it's convenient, isn't it? It's easy, everyone does that. If it's convenient, sure, I'll keep my word. But what about if it costs you to keep your word?

I think this is picturing the wife of an inconsiderate, self-centered, harsh and critical husband who feels desperately lonely but keeps seeking his eternal good, forbearing and faithfully keeping her vows.

That won't feel all too nice, but that person needs to know. God is pleased. It's the employee who does quality work, even if their superiors are pressuring them to cut corners and not keep whatever promises the work made to make money or save time.

It's a person who loses sleep, loses money, loses opportunities, loses approval of people because they made a prior commitment. I think it's much easier to go with what you feel like doing in the moment.

It's much harder to work out all these commitments, which ones do I need to keep to honour the Lord? Why is this the case?

[23 : 00] Because a family likeness, love for the God who is faithful to his word, will mean a holy love for people. I will care about my word. Verse 5a, who does not put out his money at interest and does not take up a bribe against the innocent.

This person isn't ruled by thinking, what can I gain out of this? They're ruled by compassion. How can I help this person in need?

Now, Old Testament law, Exodus 22, 25, it emphasises to the Israelite, do not charge interest to a poor Israelite.

Israelite. It specifies the poor Israelite. And there was different standards for how you do business among Israelites and with foreigners.

So I'll let you do some research in that. But I think the main point here is it's not to take advantage of someone who is in need. Someone who needs help, oh great, I can make a profit.

[24 : 15] You're not even thinking that way. It's how can I use what I've got for your sake? Well, at the moment it's the landlord who doesn't charge excessive rent simply because the market allows them to.

It's the building report, I read ABC article, it's the building report experts who don't hide the defects in a building report. simply to get more business from the real estate agents.

It's not accepting that kind of bribe. I think this one applies. I think it's the Christian GP who now might have to risk their job and their reputation not to prescribe the abortion pill. people. It's not taking that security at the cost of the innocent. It's the person who lends what they own without the desire to get favours in return.

They're ruled by compassion, not by what they can gain. It's the person who defends the person wrongly accused. It's hard to speak up when that happens, isn't it?

[25 : 39] It's really hard because you might be the one who's attacked then. I think all these things are rather normal, aren't they?

I don't know if you agree with me. I think they're pretty common. It's just normal, even respectable, even respectable among Christians sometimes. But they all destroy community.

The Lord accepts and is pleased with those who share his family likeness, who have a holy love because they worship a God of holy love.

The Lord accepts the one who would rather live at peace with the Lord knowing they are his rather than be at home in this sinful world. So the one who does these things will never be moved.

What a promise. The problem is obvious, isn't it? If we don't do these things, we've got to admit that we're not listening to his rule.

[26 : 59] We've got to admit more than that. We don't actually love his character as we ought. his acceptance and pleasure in us isn't prized as we ought to prize it.

How can I dwell with peace and confidence with God and his holy hill if I don't do these things?

Well, this is where the Psalms help us as well.

we need a righteous king. On our own, we can't stand, but we need a righteous king who can represent us, who can fight for us.

As Psalm 24 asks this same question again, who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? That Psalm ends by picturing these gates, these ancient doors, and it's the gates to God's city are shut.

Sinners cannot come in. But that Psalm ends going, but there is a king. When he walks up to those doors, they will open. There is a king of glory who opens the way into paradise.

[28 : 22] It's Psalm 2. God has set up his righteous king on his holy hill. people. We need to take refuge in him. So we can't stand on our own.

The Psalms point us to a king, a righteous king. Obviously David failed at that. Who is the king of glory? It's the Lord Jesus Christ.

And look at the one he accepts. He accepts the one who confesses their lack of love for people. He accepts the one with a broken and contrite heart.

He will not despise a broken and contrite heart. But he will reject as vile those who trust in their own righteousness.

In the Lord Jesus you will never be moved. through him we have permanent access to God's throne of grace with confidence.

[29 : 32] Even taking that idea of tent, he is set up he is the tent now as the children that Jen brought out. We are in him. We are united to him.

He is even in us by his spirit. He's set up his home in his people. And then he empowers us to have this family likeness to love.

In him, he and us we can walk and rest in the presence of God even as we are foreigners in this self-centered world. So please hear me correctly.

Let me be clear. Doing good things do not save us. You cannot add to your full access and acceptance to God what Jesus has done.

You can't add to it. But while we're saved by faith alone, faith is never alone. His grace not only saves, it transforms.

[30 : 39] forms. One Peter talks about Christians understanding who we are.

We are elect exiles. We are sojourners. We don't belong in this world anymore because we've been chosen out of the world. We don't belong.

We're foreigners here. And then having been born again, Peter says to us in 1.22, having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth.

What's coming next? What was that salvation for? Having been purified so that you're acceptable to God. What's that for? For a sincere, brotherly love.

Love one another earnestly from a pure heart since you have been born again. The primary measure of a close walk with God, of spiritual maturity, of love for God, belonging to his household,

it is not religious feelings.

[31 : 53] It's not what you sacrifice to God. It's not doing great things for God. It's not your knowledge, Bible knowledge. God's love. The primary measure of a close walk with God is holy, brotherly love.

I was reading 1 Corinthians 13 this week. You can have tongues of angels, but if you don't have love, you're just a clanging dong.

You've got to have love. You can have insights into the most profound spiritual realities of everything, and if you don't have love, I am nothing. What a state.

You can give your body to the flames, you can sacrifice all, but if you don't have love, it's to no point. Wow. The measure of a close walk with God is holy, brotherly love, because that reflects the holy love of our Father, the family likeness.

love, so you can be confident you're walking closely with God when the truth of Christ overflows into brotherly love.

[33 : 09] Beware of false confidences, but this psalm encourages us. We are to know we will never be moved.

I find that a great encouragement because to do these things, to love in this way, it could move you. It could cost your reputation, it could cost money, your business, it could cost your job, it could cost friends and family.

You might feel incredibly moved, but the promise here is you need to know that loving like this, you're reflecting the Father. You will not be moved from his acceptance and embrace of you.

Our Father wants us to know we will never be moved from him, to know we belong to the Lord's household, and so expressing that in brotherly love.

[34 : 16] Why don't we pray? Let's pray. thank you Lord that while we're still sinners, Christ died for us.

Thank you that in our righteous king we have peace with God. God, thank you that we have access into this grace in which we stand, having been filled with your love by your spirit.

Lord, we give all the praise to you for making us fully part of your people, fully acceptable to you because of the Lord Jesus.

and I pray that out of that, out of our thankfulness, that we would want to be like you, that we would set our hope fully on the grace that we're going to receive when you return, that we are looking forward to the home of righteousness while we are living in exile and journeying as sojourners in this life.

Lord, help us set our hope on that home of righteousness when we'll see you face to face so that we can express that and give honour to you by the way that we love one another. In Jesus' name I pray.

[35 : 46] Amen.