

Blessed To Be His

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[0:00] Hear the word of the Lord. Shout for joy in the Lord, O you righteous! Praise befits the upright. Give thanks to the Lord with the lyre.

Make melody to him with the harp of ten strings. Sing to him a new song. Play skillfully on the strings with loud shouts. For the word of the Lord is upright, and all his work is done in faithfulness. He loves righteousness and justice. The earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord. By the word of the Lord the heavens were made.

By the breath of his mouth all their hosts. He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap. He puts the deeps in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord.

Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spoke, and it came to be. He commanded, and it stood firm. The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing.

[1:10] He frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the Lord stands forever. The plans of his heart to all generations. Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.

The people whom he has chosen as his heritage. The Lord looks down from heaven. He sees all the children of man. From where he sits enthroned, he looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth. He who fashions the hearts of them all and observes all their deeds. The king is not saved by his great army. A warrior is not delivered by his great strength.

The war horse is a false hope for salvation. And by its great might it cannot rescue. But behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him.

On those who hope in his steadfast love. That he may deliver their soul from death. And keep them alive in famine. Our soul waits for the Lord.

[2:23] He is our help and our shield. For our heart is glad in him. Because we trust in his holy name. So let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us.

Even as we hope in you. Amen. What should the general spirit of the gathered church be like?

Sunday by Sunday as we gather for worship in this place or any other place. What is it that should prevail in the spirit of that gathering and of what we do there?

Lord willing, here in just a couple of weeks we'll have a number of guests with us. Who either do not know the Lord or maybe have been disenfranchised for one reason or another.

From Christianity and from the church. And as they come and as they observe our worship. What is it that should stand out? What should they leave here saying about the people who call themselves Lakeside Bible Church?

[3:26] What should they leave here saying about our view of the Lord. And our view of our circumstances in light of who he is. And how is that communicated in the way that we worship the Lord together.

Now I hope that they leave with something of an experience of this psalm. Witnessing what it is to do what the psalmist calls us to do here in Psalm 33.

Which is to lift our voices together in exuberant praise to God. This psalm is tightly linked to Psalm 32 just before it which we studied last Sunday.

It's so tightly linked grammatically and in its language that there are a few ancient Hebrew manuscripts that actually merge the two psalms together as if they're one psalm.

So that we understand that as we read them together that the blessing of being forgiven. The blessing of the forgiven one in Psalm 32 immediately leads to the corporate worship that we read about in Psalm 33.

[4:36] As all the forgiven ones sing with joy to the Lord. The one who has surrounded them with his steadfast love.

And of course the heart of the song is verse 12. Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord. Whose God is Yahweh. The people whom he has chosen as his heritage. To be his people. The psalm then as a whole it's calling for all of these people. All of this heritage of the Lord. It's calling them to joyful worship.

And it does it by not only saying commanding to worship. But explaining why we should. Reminding us of the blessing that it is to belong to him.

But there's another note necessary at this point. And that is that the context of Psalm 33 is not all rainbows and roses.

[5 : 40] Various places. Various places. In the psalm we find a people in distress. A people in particular need. At one place even saying that they are in need.

Waiting on deliverance even of their soul from death. And from famine. In the psalm we find a people in distress. In the psalm we find a people in distress. These blessed people who are to sing for joy to the Lord.

Are in a place of waiting. Hoping. Trusting. That he will be faithful. And that he will do all that he has promised to do.

Which tells us that this song of joyful worship. That we're commanded to give a shout of. Here. It actually transcends the circumstances of our lives. Its truths are relevant in seasons of plenty. And in seasons of famine.

[6 : 45] The blessed state of God's people remains true. When life is easy. And when it's hard. And herein lies the true purpose of the psalm. It's equipping us.

It's equipping us on how to joyfully. Authentically. Genuinely worship the Lord. Not only when things are good. But maybe especially.

When things are hard. And all of that is rooted. In the primary fact of the psalm. And that is. We belong to him.

We are his people. We are his people. As we sang at the opening song. We are the sheep of his pasture. He feeds us.

He has made us his own. And that's what I hope will be the spirit of our gathered worship as God's people. Sunday by Sunday. Week by week. Whatever it is we bring together.

[7 : 42] And many of us. And we've already heard. Are bringing heavy burdens to this place today. That despite those burdens. We might recognize the wonderful truth. That together we are God's people.

And there is a reason for joyful worship. Let's just walk through the psalm together. First we find a call to exuberant praise. A call to exuberant praise.

Look at the first three verses. Shout for joy in the Lord. Oh you righteous. Praise befits the upright. It is fitting for them. Give thanks to the Lord.

With the lyre. Make melody to him. With the harp of ten strings. Sing to him a new song. Not necessarily newly written or constructed.

But give voice to this new experience of grace. A fresh example of worship for the Lord's goodness. Play it skillfully on the strings.

[8 : 40] With loud shouts. Now there is certainly a time for us. To be still before the Lord. As we have seen in these psalms. There is a time for us to lament our sufferings.

There is a time for us to confess our sins. But when we get to Psalm 33. We recognize that at least at this moment. This is not one of those times. Here the song calls for all of God's people.

To lift a joyful shout to the Lord. Like an army who has just become victorious in the battle. It calls for a triumphant shout of victory.

Together. In unison. To God. As most of you are probably aware. The FIFA World Cup is taking place this summer. Which my understanding is that it's always a popular thing.

But maybe it's getting even more attention this time around. Because it's being hosted in North America. The United States. Giving host to many of the matches that are taking place.

[9 : 43] I've been a sports fan my whole life. And I've attended a lot of sporting events across a lot of different sports. But there's one thing that I've realized is somewhat unique about soccer fans.

They are passionate about their teams. Passionate about their sports. Like many sports fans may be. But that shows itself especially in the way that they sing.

They don't just cheer on their teams. They don't just rejoice when something happens with fist raise and a shout for joy.

They sing their shouts. They sing their joy. They sing their cheering on as their team goes into the game. And as they are certainly victorious.

They fill thousands and thousands and thousands of people filling an arena or a stadium. With songs of excitement and of praise and of love for their team.

[10 : 41] And is what has just happened. And this is very much what I believe the church is called to do in its gathered worship. When we come to psalms like this. Yes, we need songs of contemplation.

Yes, we need songs of lament. Yes, we need songs of confession. But we especially need the songs of joy. The shouts of victory. The shouts of deliverance.

The catalyst for this shout of joy is undoubtedly the forgiveness that's received in Psalm 32. And we can discern that because of who it is that the psalm calls to make this shout.

Notice. Shout for joy in the Lord. Lord, all you righteous ones. Praise befits the upright.

It's the community of the righteous. Which here is not the sinless. It is not those who are truly righteous in the sense of moral uprightness in every way.

[11 : 47] No, it is the community of the righteous in the sense of they are forgiven. It is those who are righteous by faith. Those who fear the Lord.

Those who trust in his holy name. This kind of exuberant praise is fitting for them because they are the redeemed. They are the chosen of God.

Because all of their sins have been forgiven. And God now views them as righteous. That's the catalyst.

They can shout because they are forgiven. Victory has been won for them. And it has been applied to them. But then notice the nature of the praise.

It's to be made in the form of skillfully played music, we're told. An emphasis on what we would call congregational singing.

[12 : 46] It's to be skillfully played because God is worthy of the best that we can offer. It's to highlight the congregation's voice because all of God's people are to sing their thanksgiving to God.

So then we understand that crucial to the gathered worship of the church is joyful praise in the form of congregational singing. Our voices, expressions, reflecting the command to shout for joy, which means singing loudly to the Lord and to one another.

Demonstrating with face and hands that we are truly joyful in this song. But then what is the cause of all this commotion? God himself is the cause of our song.

He is the object of our praise. He alone is the focus of our worship. Notice what it says. Shout for joy in the Lord.

Give thanks to the Lord. This song of praise, it's all about the Lord. It's what he has done to make us his own.

[14 : 04] And we are to lift voices together in order that we might give joyful praise to him. Says Spurgeon, joy is the soul of praise. To rejoice in temporal comforts is dangerous.

To rejoice in self is foolish. But to rejoice in God is heavenly. If you aren't engaged in exuberant praise when we gather for worship, something's wrong.

It's joyful worship. It's fitting for all who belong to God. It's the most appropriate response to receiving his forgiveness in Christ.

But the song, it doesn't just command our exuberant praise. It gives us reasons for it. It anchors it somewhere. And the reasons given for this praise might come as something of a surprise to you. The psalmist doesn't focus on how God has affected our circumstances, at least not yet. He grounds this shout for joy in God's character, in God's nature.

[15 : 18] It doesn't mean that praise for God's action is exempted. Of course, that's a part of the Thanksgiving that's here. And we'll get to that eventually. But it is just to say that the upright, in verse 1, understand that God is worthy of worship fundamentally because of who he is.

All that he does is flowing out of his nature. All that he does is flowing out of his character. So this song of praise, at least in the beginning, it zeroes in on the character of God.

And it highlights two aspects of that character. First is God's goodness. God's goodness. Look at verses 4 and 5.

For the word of the Lord is upright. All his work is done in faithfulness. He loves righteousness and justice.

The earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord. He's good. What do we mean that he's good?

[16 : 30] We don't mean that everything he takes us through and everything he allows in our lives is good in the thing itself. But that he is good and that he always does what's right.

That even in those places of hardship, he's faithful. God's goodness is seen here in his divine perfections. Because his word is upright, we understand that he will never lie to you.

He will never mislead you. And then we see in verse 4 that all of his work, this work that's done in faithfulness, is flowing out of the uprightness of his word.

Since his word is upright, his work then is faithful. Meaning that he accomplishes all that he says. He fulfills all of his promises to his people.

He leaves nothing behind. He leaves no one behind. His word is true. And his work is faithful. Then we're told that in his character and in his nature, he loves righteousness and justice.

[17 : 49] He always does what's right. He always rewards the obedient. He always judges every wrong.

And then the crowning attribute of his goodness is seen in verse 5. It's his covenantal love. It's his covenantal love.

It's his covenantal love. Which fills the whole earth. Steadfast love. The earth is full of it. The psalmist says.

Meaning there's no place on earth where you can go. There's no circumstance that you'll be called to endure. There's no place where God's covenantal love for his people and his faithfulness toward his people is not present and active.

There's no place in your life where his word will not be upright. Where his work will not ultimately show itself faithful.

[18 : 52] Where you will not in time see that he loves righteousness and he is perfectly just in the way that he deals with sin and with sinners.

Why should we worship the Lord with exuberant praise? The psalmist says first because he's good. He's good in a way that will never be good.

He's good in a way that's almost impossible for us to even fully comprehend. And in whatever way we can comprehend it we at least know that his word is right.

His work is faithful. That he loves righteousness and justice. And that his covenantal love for his people is everywhere. And we can see it everywhere.

But he goes on. He highlights not only God's goodness. Then we get to verses 6 and 9 and he highlights God's power. Particularly his creative power.

[19 : 51] Verse 6. By the word of the Lord the heavens were made. By the breath of his mouth. All their hosts.

Christians through the centuries have looked at this verse and understood this to be a shadow of what is unveiled in the mystery of God in the new covenant. The new testament. Many Christians through the centuries have believed that when the apostle John in John chapter 1 writes that great opening statement about the word of God.

In the beginning was the word. And the word was with God. And the word was God. All things were made by him. And there was not anything made that was not made by him.

Christians have understood this to be a reflection of that. That perhaps even John was reflecting on a psalm like this one and other passages like this one when he uses the logos of God.

In the beginning was the word. Because it is by the word of the Lord that the heavens are made. But it's not only the sun. We see in the second part.

[21 : 05] It is by the breath of his mouth. All their hosts. Many have connected this to the work of the spirit. Even in the act of creation in the beginning. And then the act of recreation and regeneration.

That the creative power of God is seen in the triune God. And the triune God alone. What is it that Paul says in those opening passages to the Colossians?

He, Jesus, is the image of the invisible God. The firstborn of all creation. By him all things were created. Through him and for him. They're all held together.

The psalmist goes on. In verse 7. He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap. He puts the deeps in storehouses. Let all the earth therefore fear the Lord. Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.

For he spoke and it came to be. He commanded and it stood firm. Special emphasis being given here. First in verse 6.

[22:11] To the glory of the heavens. By the word of the Lord the heavens were made. By the breath of his mouth all their hosts. That's the sun. The moon. The stars. The great expanse of outer space.

By the word of his mouth. He spoke and it came to be. Verse 7. Then emphasizes another piece of creation. It's the depths of the oceans.

God in his power speaks. And in his spoken word. The waters are gathered together. And then they're held in their place. So that they don't venture away too far.

Verse 8. We find the focus moves to the earth and to the land. And all the inhabitants of the land. By the word of his mouth he speaks it all.

And when God speaks. His command endures. And that's what we find being highlighted here. Therefore all creatures.

[23:07] Not only the redeemed. Are called to stand in awe of him. For he is the almighty God. Reasons for exuberant worship begin.

Not with our circumstances. Or any effect that God may have on them. It begins simply with who he is. His goodness. And in his power.

Then we get to the heart of the psalm. The part of the psalm of which everything else in the song is kind of revolving around. Verses 10 to 12.

The blessing of God's people. Here is this great God. All powerful and all good. Here are those he's chosen. And their blessing of being his own.

The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing. He frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the Lord though stands forever. The plans of his heart to all generations.

[24:06] Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord. The people whom he has chosen as his heritage. Here humanity is divided into two categories.

Sorted out. First in verse 10 there's the nations and the peoples. Notice the plural use of those nouns. Nations. Peoples. Representing those who are outside of God's covenantal love.

Those who exist outside of the covenant. If you remember back a couple of years ago when we were in Psalm 2. Remember the nations there are raging against God and against his king.

Plotting to rid themselves of his rule and to become gods unto themselves. That is all of our nature before God's mercy comes into play.

But their plotting is in vain we find. God mocks their foolish pride. He laughs at them. He holds them in derision. And then he commissions his messianic king to come in and to destroy them in a great judgment.

[25:18] And then we get to Psalm 33:10. It's these same nations. These same peoples. Those who are rebellious against God. Those who are outside of his covenant love.

And we're reminded here that God frustrates the rebels' plans. Perhaps the psalmist had his devotions that week at the beginning and working through the book of Genesis.

He highlights God in creation. Perhaps here he's reflecting on God frustrating the plans of the nations at Babel. And here he says God frustrates their plans.

He brings their counsel to nothing. But then another category is given in verses 11 and 12. The first category people are sorted into the nations and peoples plural.

But then there's something different here. Verses 11 and 12 we see the plural become a singular. There is a nation. There is a people.

[26:20] And we're told they're blessed. Collectively. As a people. They're blessed. Which has become a significant word for us in the Psalms, hasn't it?

Together they are blessed just as the righteous one is blessed in Psalm 1. They are blessed just as the forgiven one is blessed in Psalm 32.

They are the people with whom God has made his saving covenant. And on whom he has set his steadfast love. They are the people who are surrounded by the steadfast love of the Lord.

And while the counsel of the nations comes to nothing, we're told that God's plans cannot possibly be thwarted. And what are those plans? They're plans for salvation and forgiveness and redemption and life eternal for his people.

These plans, we understand, ultimately fulfilled in the person and in the work of Jesus Christ.

Blessed. And perhaps you've heard this verse quoted in verse 12.

[27:41] Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord. Perhaps you've heard this quoted and applied nationally as if this was given to the U.S. of A. I love my country. I'm excited along with you

to celebrate its 250th birthday this week.

I hate that it's on a Saturday because it's on a midweek day. We get the day off and we can tell England, have fun at work today. This verse is not for any nation.

This verse is not for the United States. God has not entered into a saving covenant with the United States. It's not what this is. It's much better than that.

It's much broader than that. In the old covenant context, this applied to the faithful within the nation of Israel. In the new covenant, it applies to the true Israel, the church of Jesus Christ.

That's us. The church is God's blessed people. And that should greatly affect the way you view it.

[28:56] It should affect the way that you worship Sunday by Sunday. It should affect the way that you love it, even in all of its flaws and its imperfections. And even when you're hurt and even when you're struggling with others who belong to it, it should affect this.

Together, we are his people. Together, we belong to him. We should love it. We should be faithful to it.

Because God himself loves it and is faithful to it. Notice also that the blessing of God's people here is not stated as a reward for choosing the Lord to be the official God of the state.

There are some people, Christians right now, that need this correction. They are not blessed because they got together as a physical people, an ethnic people, and said, we will make Yahweh our God.

No, that's not why they're blessed here. Why are they blessed? They're blessed because the Lord has chosen them to be his people.

[30:08] Because he has redeemed them from their sin, because he has made them his own heritage and his own covenantal, saving, gracious love.

This happiness and joy is not a reward for doing what you're supposed to do. It is a gift that comes from God and from God alone.

A gracious, gracious gift. That's why Peter can write in 1 Peter 2 that you are a chosen race. He's writing to churches.

You are a chosen race. You are a royal priesthood. You are a holy nation. You are a people for God's own possession. And he goes on and he says, once you were not a people, but now you're God's people.

And how did they become God's people? Peter goes on to say, once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. What is the blessing of being his?

[31:22] It is that he has poured out his mercy on us in the forgiveness of our sins. God's unthwartable plan was to save a people through forgiving their sins and adopting them as his own children.

And he did that by sending his own son to atone for their sins on the cross. This is the blessing of being his people. It's the very heart of all of our praise.

It's why we can shout for joy in the Lord at all times. We belong to him. He has made us his own.

And then we continue on and we start to see that's the heart of the psalm.

And now the psalmist begins to bring us back around full circle. Notice next in verses 13 to 19, we see the outworking of this blessing.

If we are the blessed of God, if we are blessed to be his, how does that then show itself? And he tells us here in 13 to 19. The Lord looks down from heaven.

[32:27] He sees all the children of men. From where he sits enthroned, he looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth. He who fashions the hearts of them all and observes all their deeds.

Whereas, king is not saved by his great army. A warrior is not delivered by his great strength. The war horse is a false hope for salvation. And by its great might, it cannot rescue.

But behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him. On those who hope in his steadfast love.

That he may deliver their soul from death and keep them alive in famine.

Whereas verse 12 says we are blessed to be God's people. Verses 13 to 19 describe how God works to bless us as his people.

And in essence, the essence of all of it is that God's character that we saw earlier in the psalm. His divine perfections and power.

[33:32] He works them out for his glory and for our good. As the song we often sing says, his glory indeed is our good.

And that is on full display here. His goodness and his power is here applied to his people. And we get from this section that the context of God's people is God's people under immediate threat. The plotting nations are seeking to harm and destroy the church. But the song reminds us that almighty God who made everything by the word of his power, by the word of his mouth, exercises that same power against the enemies of his own people.

Isn't that what he's on about here? The Lord makes it all and the Lord sees it all. He looks down from his sovereign throne.

He not only observes, he knows the hearts and the actions of every creature that he's created. Which means he demands from each of those creatures the righteousness that he loves.

[34 : 48] And for those who do not live in righteousness and are not righteous by faith, he will love giving justice to them. It's his power and his goodness applied.

There's no need for God's people to fear a great army. There's no need for them to fear a strong warrior. There's no need for them to be in fear of a tremendous weapon.

None of those things can succeed apart from God's hand. And he fights for his people. Whatever it is you may be going through today, perhaps what you feel constantly is the anxiety of what may come.

This psalm is a reminder that God is for us. He is with us. He sees where you are.

He knows what you're dealing with. He knows of the hearts of those who are against you. And in time, he will deliver his people in every way.

[35 : 53] And we know that because he's delivered his people in the ultimate way. God's eye is on those who fear him, we're told.

On those who hope in his steadfast love. So for those who will recognize early in the psalm that the steadfast love fills the earth, and for those who will not hope in themselves or in anything else that they may come up with, but will hope in the steadfast love of the Lord that fills the earth, God's eye is on you.

His eye is on you. We're back in the toddler stage. I didn't think we'd be there, but we are. And I'm reminded at the hypervigilance that is required for parents with toddlers.

And you want to give them a little space to run. You want to give them a little space to play. And you want to let them learn and grow and do all the things. But you always have an eye.

And it is an eye to shield, an eye to protect, and an eye to love, and an eye to help. Is that not what the psalmist reminds us of here?

[37 : 11] It's not just the eye of a parent who is on us. It's the eye of Almighty God who watches us so that He might love us, help us, and ultimately deliver us.

And of course we know that because of what He's done for us in Christ. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, He delivers His people from sin and death.

Jesus Himself even says, the gates of hell itself, a reference, I think, in that context to death itself. Death itself cannot prevail against God's church, against God's people.

And we're reminded that even in the hardest of moments, in the hardest of trials, He will indeed be faithful. This is why we're blessed. Because all of His power and His goodness are set for our good. That He might be glorified in us. And then the psalmist brings us full circle all the way back to the beginning. Except notice what changes.

[38 : 29] Verses 20 to 22, we find a corporate confession of trust in the Lord. Look at it. Our soul waits for the Lord.

He is our help and our shield for our heart is glad in Him because we trust in His holy name. So let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us even as we hope in You.

Do you notice the change in tense here? Our soul waits. This is the collective voice of God's people now.

They aren't being instructed. Now they're speaking. Our soul waits for the Lord. He is our help. He is our shield.

Our heart is glad in Him. That's amazing. Plural pronoun, singular noun. Our collective heart.

[39 : 29] There is a wonderful, unified, united heart in God's people focused on the gospel of Jesus Christ, empowered by the Spirit of God.

Together we can say, our heart is glad in Him because we trust Him and then we turn in our prayer to Him and say, so let your steadfast love, O Lord, be poured out on us as we are hoping in You and in You alone.

What began as a call for exuberant praise ends here with the congregation together expressing their trust in the Lord.

I hope that's the shape that our service takes Sunday by Sunday. That it takes the shape of the psalm. That it begins with a burst of exuberant praise for who God is.

And that it continues there as we begin to understand more fully our own sin and confess our sin and humbly stand before Him as we're then picked up by the gospel of Jesus Christ and then at the conclusion of the service we then all confess our trust in Him and receive the blessing of the benediction.

[40 : 47] Is that not what the psalm is doing? It's shaping us. Shaping the gospel. And we express all of this together Sunday by Sunday no matter what comes our way that we might shout for joy in the Lord.

Because truly we are blessed to be His. Let's pray together.