

# God's Proclamation of His Name

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Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[ 0 : 00 ] So, we're going to be in our service this evening singing, firstly in Psalm 30, Psalm number 30, that's in the Scottish Psalter version, that's page 239, verses 1 to 5.

Lord, I will thee extol, for thou hast lifted me on high, and over me thou to rejoice made not mine enemy. O thou who art the Lord my God, I in distress to thee with loud cries lifted up my voice, and thou hast healed me.

O Lord, my soul thou hast brought up and rescued from the grave, that I to pit should not go down, alive thou didst me save. So on singing to the end of verse 5, Psalm 30, Lord, I will thee extol.

O Lord, I will thee extol, for thou hast lifted me on high, and over me thou to rejoice with I in this place to thee.

When thou Christ lifted up my voice, and thou hast healed me.

[ 1 : 57 ] O Lord, my soul thou hast brought up, and rescued from the grave.

And I to live should not go down, a life that didst me save.

For he that I with holy want, sing praise unto the Lord.

And give unto infants, when ye this holiness record.

For what a moment last is rough, like in this paper lies.

[ 3 : 29 ] Weeping may fall, a night and dew, and more does your God arise.

Let's now all join together in prayer, as we call upon the Lord in prayer. Our gracious and almighty God, we thank you once again for the many ways in which we have known your blessing through this day already.

And we thank you, Lord, that we come together once again, by your grace and by your enabling, the desire in our hearts to lift up our voices in praise, lift up your holy name in adoration, and to realize, and to realize, Lord, that your holiness, even as we have been singing in these words, is not meant to deter our coming for an audience with you, but also only to direct our thoughts, so that we realize, Lord, who we come into the presence of.

We thank you tonight, Lord, for all the promises that meet us as we come together to worship you.

We thank you for the way that so many have already been fulfilled in the history of your people.

For as we read in your words, so many promises that you made to your people Israel long ago came to be fulfilled as the years went by, and you came to manifest yourself to them as a faithful God, a God who kept covenant with his people, a God who brought to fruition the things that you had promised to bring to them.

[ 5 : 19 ] And we thank you, Lord, that that is the same for ourselves, that you have especially come in these days of the New Testament age to fulfill your promise that a Savior would come, Emmanuel, God with us, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We bless you, Lord, tonight for all that has already been fulfilled in him. You have provided for us an atonement for our sins. You have brought your presence in such a unique way into the midst of your people.

You have come to pour out your Spirit on that great day of Pentecost, as was long promised down through the ages. And you have come, O Lord, to bring the gospel into the world, a world that lay in darkness, a world that needed the light of the gospel of your truth.

We thank you that that light has reached ourselves, that it has come to our shores and come into our hearts. O Lord, we pray tonight for that renewed sense of privilege in your presence, and for that renewed sense of your presence with us.

We thank you, Lord, that we can anticipate this, and that your promise to be with your people will also remain fulfilled and present as you come to bless them and as you come to live in their midst.

[ 6 : 45 ] Lord, bless us, we pray tonight, as a congregation of your people. Bless those who join us online as well, from different parts of the world it may be. Grant that we may all have a sense of a unity of mind and purpose as we come to worship you.

And enable us, Lord, to receive your word once again, that word that is engrafted in the souls of your people. Help us to receive it believingly and gladly.

Enable us to welcome yourself as we welcome your word. And enable us to be like the Thessalonians of old, who had a reputation reaching far and wide beyond their own location, that they had embraced the Lord and his gospel, that they were a people who lived to the praise of God. We ask that this may be true increasingly of ourselves. We thank you for your goodness to us, for the ways in which your goodness is manifested to us. And we thank you for that goodness day by day that we receive in the various gifts that you give us, even in what we regard as ordinary gifts of your providence.

Yet, Lord, we know that none of them is ordinary, for we deserve none of them. And you have in your grace and kindness come to bless us in our lives.

[ 8 : 06 ] We thank you tonight for the gospel, and we thank you for all that it contains by way of good news for us sinners. We thank you for the way in which you have, Lord, blessed that gospel abundantly down through the years, even in this congregation.

We do pray that you would continue to bless that gospel among us, and help us to hold it forth in the way in which we live in the world. Enable us, Lord, to commend it to our fellow human beings around us.

We ask tonight for those who never come to attend the gospel. And Lord, in our community there are so many of them, that we pray that you would bless to them the fact that the gospel is available. Help them to think of the great loss that is theirs when they don't avail themselves of this good news of Jesus. And Lord, we ask that your spirit will be abroad in our communities, as you have been in years and times gone by, to bring to people a sense of their need, a sense of their sinfulness, a sense of their need of coming to the Lord to receive his forgiveness, and a sense of their need of a savior.

O Lord, our God, we pray that in our day too, you would do great things. Manifest the power of your name. Show us the glory of your being in the salvation of sinners.

[ 9 : 31 ] And establish your church, we pray. And establish your people and help them to be settled in the way of holiness. Give them the strength they require against temptations that abound in this world.

We pray for ourselves, O Lord, as a congregation in that regard. O help us never to be deflected from following you, from walking in the footsteps of faith.

Help us never to be deflected from whatever duty we owe to you. And grant, O Lord, that day by day we may make it our purpose to live as the people of God, as people who are known to be the Lord's covenant children.

We ask that you would grant to us, O Lord, as we seek to move ahead from times of confinement and restriction. You label us, we pray, to avail ourselves of all the opportunities that open up for us, so that we may serve you in our communities as a congregation.

Bless us in all our activities, we pray. Bless your gospel to our youngest through to the oldest. We ask, O God, that you would impress upon us time after time how suitable and how relevant your gospel is for our needs at every stage of life.

[ 10 : 49 ] We pray for those who are seeking after you but haven't yet come to close in with you and to give themselves wholly to you. Lord, we pray that your Holy Spirit will produce that faith in their hearts that will enable them to cleave to you.

We pray for any Lord who tonight may be concerned over their relationship with you, concerned over their sins, concerned over eternity, concerned over their state of mind or heart.

Gracious Lord, we ask that you would, through the gospel, bring peace to them, bring about to them, O Lord, that union with Christ which alone is able to give us a sure foundation.

And we ask that you would graciously bless the gospel tonight to any who are of such a mind.

Blessed to your people as well, O Lord, as we pray for the unsaved, so we pray for the saved alike.

We ask that you would grant us progress and sanctification in hope and an expectation of that eternal life, which will be fully revealed at the coming of the Lord.

[ 11 : 58 ] Lord, we ask that you would continue to establish us in the ways of holiness, in the ways of seeking to bring praise and honor and glory to your glorious name.

Remember those tonight, Lord, who have struggles. We pray for those who have struggles in their faith, struggles in their view of themselves or of God or of the gospel, who have struggles, Lord, in different ways otherwise than their lives.

Those who are struggling with temptations, those who are struggling with various addictions, those who find the going difficult and difficult to maintain progress in these matters.

We pray for those who are struggling with mental health issues. We commend them to you all, O Lord, also, and give thanks that you are the God of the mind as well as of the body, that you are able even there to do wondrous things.

And we do commend such to you tonight, O Lord, and ask that you would bless them. Bless to the bereaved, the distressed, those who are anxious over loved ones, those who are unwell and may be approaching eternity.

[ 13 : 08 ] Lord, prepare them for that, we pray. Grant to those receiving treatment, those who have undergone surgery, those who are living in care homes or spending time in hospital, those who are being cared for at home.

O Lord, we commend them to you and ask that you would bless the brokenhearted, the lonely, those who feel isolated, those, Lord, who would love to have more of human company and yet from day to day go without seeing many people.

O remember them and give them your own presence, so that they may know that you are with them and that they need not fear when the Lord is on their side. We ask your blessing to be with the new ministry now opening up amongst us.

We give thanks, O Lord, for Reverend Calum Mordo, and we pray that you would bless him and his family and that this time, O Lord, grant as they settle among us as a congregation, that they will know your good hand upon them and that you would use them and use his ministry in the gospel in a mighty way, Lord, in our midst.

And we ask that as we seek to serve the Lord here, that he may know that the Lord is with him and confirm to him the rightness of his move to come to accept our call.

[ 14 : 29 ] And gracious Lord, grant to be his peace from day to day. Remember our nation.

Remember our community. Grant, Lord, we pray that you would deliver us from the thralldom of darkness and of sin and bring us into the broad, upright ways of righteousness and peace and prosperity in the gospel.

Lord, we pray against all those who seek to stand forcibly against the gospel and against the ways of the Lord, against the sanctity of human life, against the Lord's day and its proclamation and its keeping, and every other way, O Lord, in which we find your ways so much cast aside and despised in our land.

Be pleased, Lord, to listen to those who cry to you and seek for days of reviving and refreshing, which we know, O Lord, from your Spirit are alone adequate to change us from the ways of sin. Receive our thanks, cleanse us from our sin. And we ask it all in Jesus' name for his sake. Amen. Let's now sing once again to God's praise in Psalm 31.

Psalm 31, and we're singing in the Sing Psalms version this time from Psalm 31 at verse 19. Verse 19, your goodness, Lord, is very great. Prepared for those who fear your name, you show your goodness openly to all who your protection claim.

[ 16 : 02 ] Your presence hides and shelters them from those who plot to take their life. And in your tent you keep them safe from evil tongues that stir up strife.

Verses 19 to the end of the Psalm. Your goodness, Lord, is very great. Your goodness, Lord, is very great. Your goodness, Lord, is very great.

Prepared for those who fear your name, Your sure ■ your goodness open to me, To all who your protection claim.

Your presence hides and shelters then, From those who long to take their life And in your tent you keep them safe From evil towns that still have strife The Lord be praised because he showed The wonder of his love to me When in the city I was trapped

Surrounded by the enemy In my life my gosh he said That I was hidden from your eyes But when I called to you for help In grace you listen to my eyes Oh, the Lord on you they sing The faithful will forget my God

[ 19 : 00 ] But he will give the proud Their due His strong day high Hope is the Lord Let's now turn to read God's Word And we find that tonight in Exodus The book of Exodus chapter 33 And from verse 12 Reading through to verse 9 of chapter 34 So Exodus 33 and at verse 12 Moses said to the Lord See you say to me bring up this people But you have not let me know Whom you will send with me Yet you have said I know you by name And you have also found favor in my sight

Now therefore if I have found favor in your sight Please show me now your ways That I may know you in order to find favor in your sight Consider too that this nation is your people And he said My presence will go with you And I will give you rest And he said to him If your presence will not go with me Do not bring us up from here For how shall it be known That I have found favor in your sight I and your people Is it not in your going with us So that we are distinct I and your people From every other people on the face of the earth And the Lord said to Moses This very thing that you have spoken I will do For you have found favor in my sight And I know you by name Moses said Please show me your glory And he said I will make all my goodness pass before you And will proclaim before you my name

The Lord And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious And I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy But he said You cannot see my face For man shall not see me and live And the Lord said Behold there is a place by me Where you shall stand on the rock And while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock And I will cover you with my hand Until I have passed by Then I will take away my hand And you shall see my back But my face shall not be seen The Lord said to Moses Cut for yourself two tablets of stone Like the first And I will write on the tablets The words that were on the first tablets Which you broke Be ready by the morning And come up in the mountain In the morning to Mount Sinai And present yourself there to me On the top of the mountain No one shall come up with you Let no one be seen throughout all the mountain Let no flocks or herds

Graze opposite that mountain So Moses cut two tablets of stone Like the first And he rose early in the morning And went up on Mount Sinai As the Lord had commanded him And took in his hand Two tablets of stone The Lord descended in the cloud And stood with him there And proclaimed the name of the Lord The Lord passed before him And proclaimed the Lord The Lord a God merciful and gracious Slow to anger And abounding in steadfast love And faithfulness Keeping steadfast love for thousands Forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin But who will by no means clear the guilty Visiting the iniquity of the fathers On the children And the children's children To the third and the fourth generation Moses quickly bowed his head Towards the earth and worshipped And he said If now I have found favor in your sight O Lord please Let the Lord go in the midst of us For it is a stiff-necked people

And pardon our iniquity and our sin And take us for your inheritance Amen and may the Lord once again Follow with this blessing A reading of his word Let's now sing again this time In Psalm 103 Psalm 103 And that's in the Scottish Psalter Singing verses 8 to 13 The Lord our God is merciful And he is gracious Long suffering and slow to wrath In mercy plenteous He will not chide continually Nor keep his anger still With us he dealt not as we sinned Nor did requite our ill For as the heaven and its height The earth surmounted far So great to those that do him fear His tender mercies are Through to verse 13 From verse 8 The Lord our God is merciful And he is gracious [ 24 : 17 ] Long suffering and slow to wrath In mercy plenteous He will not chide continually Lord keep his anger still With us he dealt not as we sinned Nor did we quite a ill Oh, past the heaven in its height He is a mountain of fire

So great to those that do him fear His tender mercies are But as far as he sits distant From the west so far have he From the sling of the king In the sling of the king In his land In his land All the rain in which he He is For shmita as the father And to his children dear

Thy pity shows the Lord To such as worshipping in fear Let's turn together again to the book of Exodus and chapter 34 looking at verses 1 to 9 34 verses 1 to 9 but particularly the words you find from verse 5 onwards The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there and proclaimed the name of the Lord The Lord passed before him and proclaimed the Lord the Lord a God merciful and gracious slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness keeping steadfast love for thousands forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin but who will by no means clear the guilty visiting the iniquity of the fathers from the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation so on

Now we have a few verses to note first of all before we look in more detail at this part of the passage and you first of all notice the request of Moses back in chapter 33 and at verse 18 Here is Moses looking for the Lord's assurance that he would go with them on the journey that they have begun into the wilderness onto the promised land and here is Moses in verse 18 there saying Moses said Please show me your glory What an amazing and wonderful request that was how was the Lord going to answer such a request and desire on the part of Moses well the next verse tells us the Lord said to Moses he said I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name the Lord and then he mentions the graciousness of the Lord so this is how God answered the request of Moses

Moses is saying Lord please show me your glory and God replied to that in terms of his goodness and that's a remarkable thing that the glory of the Lord is not something that you can hardly see or approach that does not mean that God is not glorious and that God's the glorious God we should not think of coming into his presence in any other way but appreciating and respecting that holiness and that glory that belongs to him but the glory of the Lord as Moses requested it is now going to be seen by Moses in terms of the goodness of God and that's a reminder to ourselves every time you see the goodness of God in whatever way displayed in your own life or in the world that is God manifesting his glory because the goodness of God as we'll see is actually set out and proclaimed by God in such a way that makes

[ 29 : 46 ] Moses come to appreciate these great aspects of God's goodness mercy grace slow to anger abounding in steadfast love keeping steadfast love forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin there is the Lord's goodness there is the Lord's glory displayed in his goodness the goodness of the Lord the God of grace the God of salvation the God whose concern it is that sinners should come to him and be welcomed by him and then you see the response also sorry the response of Moses following that in verse 12 of chapter 33 you have a reference there to the name as it's mentioned where he says here I know you by name Moses said see you say to me bring up this people but you have not let me know whom you will send yet you have said I know you by name and if you trace that out you'll find the name repeated verse 17 the Lord said this very thing that you have spoken

I will do for you have found favor in my sight and I know you by name and then verse 19 you find that same word used I will make my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name and then verse 5 of chapter 34 where you find the same reference to the name the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there and proclaimed the name of the Lord now why is that significant?

well because the name indicates the character of God those things that are true of God that he's pleased to divulge to us and you see the correspondence between God saying I know you by name as he said to Moses and now he's making his name known to Moses to pass on to the people in other words God is not just saying I know what your name is Moses I know your name is Moses he's saying a lot more than that when God says to him I know you by name he's saying I know your character I know every single thing about your character I know the kind of person you are I know the very nature of your being and of your works and so when God is saying this about himself that he's going to make his name known that's exactly what he's saying when he proclaims his name as we'll see in a minute he's really saying this is who I am this is what I am like this is the God you worship this is why you worship me you know me by name

I make my name known to you it doesn't matter what names we have sometimes they may be significant in terms of being named after somebody very often that's the case named after an ancestor or somebody significant in the way in which our parents gave us names but very seldom do you find our name conveying anything to do with our character because very often we don't know what kind of character we're going to be anyway when we are actually come to be named by our parents but that's not the case of course with God the name that God carries and the way he knows our name is a way of God highlighting for us I know exactly what makes you what makes you tick what really exists in your heart I know your mind I know everything you actually have to say and to do I know your very character and that's why God is saying he's going to proclaim his name to him and now if you come forward to chapter 34 and verse 6 the Lord passed by before him and proclaimed the name of the Lord proclaimed the Lord the Lord God in other words

God is proclaiming meaning God is revealing to him what his name is what his name contains what his character is about what he's like and this is as we said it's in terms of God's goodness so if you

like the goodness of God the unfolding of the name of God the inner meaning of the name of God is actually unpacked for Moses and for ourselves in these verses 6 to 7 of chapter 34 as the Lord then gets into the detail of who he is and what he's like and all of these aspects of God's character and the name of God are important to ourselves this evening we want to look at two things in a very short compass we look at verses 1 to 4 Moses' preparation to meet with God but then from verse 5 verses 5 to 7 God's revelation in his meeting with Moses so Moses' preparation to meet with God and God's revelation in his meeting with Moses look at the way

[ 34 : 56 ] God first of all tells Moses to prepare himself cut for yourself two tablets of stone remember the first ones had been broken when Moses came down the mountain and saw the idolatry of the people he broke the first two tablets of stone on which the Ten Commandments were written some people think that was an act of great anger that was a rash act on Moses' part it's much more likely to have been an act of indignation at what the people had done and that it was a symbolic act when he broke these two tablets of stone on which the Commandments were written he was demonstrating the presence of the people the gravity of their sin what their sin amounted to they had broken the law of God they had smashed the law of God just as Moses smashed the tablets on which it was written and here is God saying I'm going to write these anew for you I will write the words that were on the first but notice saying verse 2 be ready by the morning be ready the meeting with God requires preparation it requires

Moses to prepare himself not just to prepare these two tablets for God to write on but to prepare himself be ready get yourself ready get yourself into shape get yourself into order and that actually requires a deliberate preparation on Moses' part now it's like that for ourselves too one of the outcomes of having a sense of the greatness of God in the midst of his people having a sense of what the name of God is about knowing God for ourselves as the great and majestic God that he is the God who is marked by grace and slow to anger and all these things we'll look at in a moment but as God is marked by these as he impresses these on our hearts every time we come together to meet with God every time we come even personally individually to have our business with God in prayer and in worship we have these words come to mind be ready for this prepare for this you're coming to meet with God you're coming to actually have an audience with God you're coming to hear the voice of God you're coming to experience the presence of God through the spirit of God and God is saying to us every time we come be ready for that now he's given us this wonderful day this Lord's day every Lord's day that passes although of course it's through at some extent in every day and every time we come but the Lord's day especially let's look upon the Lord's day increasingly a day that's so badly so badly neglected by our society and nevertheless here we are as God's people and we're here tonight and God has required of us to be ready to ready our minds to ready our hearts to prepare to receive his word to prepare to give to him the praise and the worship that we owe to him friends think every time you come to a Sunday morning to a Lord's day morning think of it in this way and I must think of it in that way too be ready be ready to meet with God prepare your heart and mind as far as possible come

I know that many of us have things to do even on a Lord's day morning especially with young families and so on and it's difficult to have time to really just think properly of what we're going to be doing in gathering together in church and in worship but it's great to train our children in this way as well and that's one of the wonderful things about seeing the children at our services morning or evening or both that we're really getting them into the way of training them to think this is actually coming to meet with God we're coming to be ready to meet with God we have to prepare to meet with God we have to just sit and think what it is we're going to do when we come to church that it's an audience with God that we're coming to meet with him so he's saying to Moses be ready he has to consecrate himself to prepare himself for this important meeting that he's going to have with God but let's look more fully at

God's revelation in his meeting with Moses you see in verse five there there are three actions on the part of God that are themselves significant it's very easy to maybe skip over them in reading but they are important theologically the Lord descended in the cloud the Lord stood with him there the Lord proclaimed the name of the Lord three verbs three words of action on the part of God the first is the Lord descended what does that mean why is that emphasized well of course because it just places again in Moses' mind that God is above him that he is beneath God that God is there that he is in his greatness arranging all of this but it's especially to just bring to Moses' mind again the Lord has the initiative it's the Lord who's prepared this it's the Lord who dictates this it's the Lord who

sets the terms of this God is saying by descending like this he's showing

[ 40 : 33 ] Moses just what it's about that he God has charge of the situation he's made the arrangement he's taken the initiative and so he's come down in the pillar in the cloud and secondly he stood with him there that's a remarkable thing in itself there is God mentioned there as having come down and now he is saying the Lord actually stood with him there it's anticipatory I suppose in some way of what you find in the case of Jesus and the Lord's God's Son the Lord Jesus Christ who came and in some cases in the Gospels we find him referred to us standing in a certain position when he comes to meet with some take for example like Zacchaeus in Luke chapter 19 where you find that Zacchaeus having gone ahead and made his way up into the sycamore tree to see

Jesus passing by Jesus came to the spot and he stood he stood and looked up to Zacchaeus now that's a deliberate reference on the part of Luke to what he saw happening Jesus stopped Jesus stood the same with Bartimaeus crying out Jesus son of David have mercy on me Jesus stood and he asked commanded the disciples to call Zacchaeus to come to him when God stands he does so waiting for our response that's why Moses here meets with God standing before him when God comes down when God comes by his spirit into such an occasion even as this tonight this is how you and I are to think of it the God who has taken the initiative to come and actually be here by his spirit and he is standing he is waiting here for your response and for mine to his presence to his call to his word he's not inactive he's actually in a posture of waiting standing to see what you and I are going to make of it and then thirdly he proclaimed he spoke there is how we ourselves too must think of God he proclaims himself what he's like what the word Lord means what his name is about so there's the Lord's actions but then we move on to the Lord's words because there's not much at all about what Moses saw but there's a lot about what Moses heard and Moses heard this declaration this proclamation by God himself of what he was like and we'll go through these words very briefly each of them deserves a much wider treatment than we can give it tonight but we see them very frequently in our studies of scripture anyway the first one is merciful the Lord the Lord a God merciful the name of the

Lord what the Lord is like this is the first word the Lord uses the God who is merciful and the word that's used there is a very human word if you like all the words of course are human words but I mean human in the sense of being applied in a very emotional loving caring way this word you can find it for example in Hosea that wonderful passage in Hosea chapter 11 which speaks among other things of the Lord bringing Israel as a child and coming to teach Israel to walk he's talking spiritually of course then he goes on verse 8 how can I give you up O Ephraim how can I hand you over O Israel he's talking to the same people the people of Israel they are just embroiled in idolatry they've gone the way of the Canaanites they've turned their backs on the Lord they're worshipping these idols and

God is saying how can I give you up how can I hand you how can I give you what you deserve in other words how can I make you like Adma how can I treat you like Zeboam these were two cities along with Sodom that God destroyed in the destruction of the cities of the plain at the time that Sodom was destroyed and he says how can I make you like this my heart recoils within me my compassion grows warm and tender that's used here of God in terms of a mother's love for her child or take another example of that word in Isaiah chapter 49 verse 15 here is what God is saying to his people then can a woman forget her nursing child that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb even these may forget yet I will not forget you behold I have engraved you on the woman forget her nursing child that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb and in the

[ 46 : 05 ] Hebrew text of the Old Testament the word compassion is very very close in its spelling to the word womb where a child is conceived and develops prior to birth in other words what God is saying is this is what I am like in my being merciful I am actually like a mother whose care for an unborn child is of such a quality sadly we're not in a world that appreciates that these days are we but what God is saying is can a woman forget her child of her womb well they may forget but I will not forget you in other words the Lord's mercy is the Lord's wonderful cradling loving of his children looking after them compassionately looking after them so lovingly as a woman looks after her unborn and newly born child that's the mercy of

God you know some people will tell us I don't know how you can believe in that God that's described in the Old Testament that God that just seems to be so severe so wrathful so full of anger

and indignation that God who commands certain things that really just are quite unacceptable there's no sense of compassion there's no sense of love or tenderness with that God I can't believe in that God well this is that God this holy God who is abundant in mercy whose mercy in human terms can be described no better than the love of a woman for the child of her womb this is our God this is who's looking after you this is the quality of his mercy of his care of course God in terms of mercy as Psalm 130 reminds us it's not something that God owes to us if you were to mark iniquity which God could who could stand but there is forgiveness there's mercy with you so that you may be feared the Lord God merciful and then he says gracious the favor of God the undeserved favor of God you see if we deserved any favor from God then God would owe something to us if we were able to work ourselves up into some sort of merit case then God would actually be obliged to show us mercy and grace but of course grace is only meaningful when you realize that we are undeserving of it grace is favor to the undeserving that's what grace is really all about and then slow to anger reluctant to intervene and judgment even when it's deserved we again remember to go back to to

Hosea chapter 11 how can I make you like admin's a bone how can I hand you over my heart recoils within me my compassion grows warm and tender I will not execute my burning anger I will not again destroy Ephraim for I am God and not a man the holy one in your midst I will not come in wrath in other words God is saying to Israel in these days of Hosea if I were a human being I would not let you off with us if I was a human being I would destroy you I would wipe you out I would get rid of you but I am God and not man and therefore I will have compassion slow to anger how many days have you and I been thankful that God is slow to anger that God does not rise up instantly when we sin against him when we are conscious that we have sinned against him that he doesn't rise up immediately to destroy us which is really ultimately what we deserve for our sin he is slow to anger it's not like us human beings so often just lose it in a moment that doesn't mean that God has no anger in his being in his attributes we'll see it in a minute that he has but he is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness well steadfast love is God's covenant love and kindness and it's translated as you know elsewhere in the older versions as loving kindness and loving kindness is a good way of translating I think because it reminds us that God in his love for his people is a God who acts in love towards them he doesn't just love them in the sense of having good thoughts about them and that passes off into our own love as well and what our love should be it's not love just mentally it's not just love in the thoughts of your mind saying to someone I love you you have to actually demonstrate that and your love is demonstrated when you give something of yourself especially evidence of that the greatest action of

[ 52 : 03 ] God's covenant loving kindness is Calvary is the giving of his son the giving of Christ to the death of the cross in his love for his people abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness both of these are covenant words steadfast love and faithfulness in other words the Lord keeps faithfully to his promises keeps faithfully to his covenant he's never ever diverted from his loving purpose for his people we heard this morning of how in the psalm sometimes you find the psalmist coming to express to God a sense of being left or of being abandoned a sense of perhaps that the world is really better off than he is or it seems like that to him until as we heard this morning from psalm 73 especially as psalm 37 to the

Lord redirected the thoughts of the psalmist to realize that actually everything he needed he had with God and every time he thought that he was not being remembered by God nevertheless I am still with you you never leave me you never forget me you never stop providing for me that's the God we worship tonight that's one of the reasons for our thankfulness that God is faithful and then moving on because the time is passing he then says forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin now there are passages in the Bible we've come across some already Psalm 51 is one of them Psalm 32 another one dealing with forgiveness confession of sin forgiveness and here in this passage you have the three great Old Testament words for sin there they are translated there iniquity transgression and sin and it's worth a moment just reflecting on what these words mean transgression iniquity sin iniquity meaning essentially outward twistedness it's a word in Hebrew that means being all twisted up and you know that's what we're like when God comes to show us what our heart is like and we come to confess our sin to God part of what we're conscious of one of the things we're confessing to him is our twistedness that is this is what we are as sinners our heart isn't straight it's all twisted up it needs to be straightened out and this is what

God in forgiveness does forgiving iniquity and then transgression and the word transgression means rebellion essentially that's what it is our sin is rebellion against God every every single time you or I knowing God's word knowing God's will knowing God's command fail to actually do that and deliberately do not do what we're required to do that's transgression that's casting the law of God aside that's breaking the bounds that God sets for us it's willful defiance of God and you see that's why sin is such a serious issue it's not something you can treat casually it's not something that doesn't really matter very much it's a confession of this inner twistedness of this deliberate defiance and rebellion against God and thirdly he uses the word sin itself forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin and that's the Old

Testament word for falling short missing the mark not meeting the standard of God that he requires of us this is why it's important as only as you really get into the workings of sin and come to appreciate what the Bible says about sin that you then really begin to appreciate the wonder of forgiveness that this is what God forgives this is the kind of person that God comes to be compassionate to this is the kind of person all that's in here in myself that God actually comes to say of us I will be merciful to you I will forgive your iniquity I will actually deal with your twistedness I will handle your rebellion I will not condemn you for it because my concern is to save you to forgive you to wash you to make you clean you see if we were going to follow a certain form of teaching that would try and make ourselves righteous in the presence of God and earn good marks from God in order then to be accepted that's what we saw our study in Philippians some time ago

Philippians 3 Paul's confession there what he used to be the righteousness of the law is what he sought to achieve by his own efforts by what he was doing or what he was not doing piling up as he sought a whole column of merit of deservedness that God would certainly account him then righteous until Jesus met him and destroyed every sense of his own sufficiency and his own self-righteousness instead he says I now thank God I count that sort of thing as rubbish so that I may when Christ be found in him not having a righteousness of my own which is of the law but the righteousness that is of God by faith the righteousness of Jesus that is what God deals with and this is how God deals with it he deals with sin with iniquity with sin and transgression and iniquity and he provides for us righteousness he sweeps all of these off our record when we come to Christ but then he says not not who will by no means clear the guilty visiting the iniquity of the father and the children's children to the third and fourth generation the fact that God has said all is about himself about his loving kindness his steadfast love his graciousness that emphasis on love has not ruled out the wrath of God and it's a great mistake to think that that's the case

[ 59 : 13 ] God's wrath has not gone away although God has dealt with it himself in the person of Jesus who took that wrath to himself on the cross of Calvary so what God is saying here is that he will by no means clear the guilty the person who goes on in sin the person insists on their own way the person who thinks that some or other things will work out all right even if they don't change their way of life God's not going to clear them there's no clearing of the guilty except by way of forgiveness through Jesus Christ and this is not God being vindictive this is just sin being sin visiting the iniquity of the father from the children and the children's children to the third and fourth generation you see in those days very often there'd be three or four generations in one house that's why the householder if he rebelled against

God well the effects of that would be known amongst his children they would come to experience something of God's wrath of God's displeasure but it's not God being vindictive that's just the way sin spreads when it's held on to and Moses response let me just finish with this Moses response is so significant Moses bowed his head towards the earth and worshipped and he said if now I have found favor in your sight Lord please let the Lord go with us in the midst of us for it is a stiff-necked people and pardon our iniquity and our sin and take us for your inheritance well in the Old Testament an inheritance was something held inviolably you could not actually take the inheritance of somebody who had been given that inheritance without doing violence to the whole process of something being passed on and what

Moses is saying here is take us for your inheritance take us as a people and make us your inheritance make us your inviolable property and of course you remember how the New Testament puts that in the way in which Peter wrote in his first letter 1 Peter chapter 2 and verses 9 to 10 you are a chosen race he said to those he wrote to you are a chosen race a royal priesthood a holy nation a people for his own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light this is not your prayer this evening and in an ongoing

way that as a people as a congregation a people with a new ministry beginning in our midst an appreciative people a worshipping people a God honoring people as we seek to be you yourself individually can say this too surely

Lord take us as your inheritance take us as your people possess us in such a way that we will never be lost that we will always be under your loving care and may God bless these thoughts honest word to us we're going to conclude tonight from Psalm 17 there's a mistake in the print in your bulletin sheet and that's my fault because I passed on the wrong Psalm reference to Lizzie before she made up the bulletin so if I can turn your mind to Psalm 17 in the Sing Psalms version page 18 of the Psalm books and we'll sing from the middle of verse 4 from every evil path by your word I'm preserved my feet have held to all your ways from them I have not swerved I call on you O God for you will answer me

O turn your ear towards my prayer and hear my earnest plea we'll sing on to the end of verse marked 8 from every evil path the I have not swerved.

[ 64 : 24 ] I call on you, O God, for you will answer me.

O turn you in towards my prayer, and in my earnest plea.

This way you set us love, and sing with you my time.

All those who free are held to you when foes against the sky.

And shadow of your wings hide thee in times of strife, and as we love the Lord your light, preserve and hard my life.

[ 66 : 10 ] After the benediction, I'll go to the door here to my right. Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you now and evermore.

Amen. Amen.