

Praise and Thanks

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 23 November 2017

Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0 : 0 0] And looking for a short time at verses 4 and 5, Psalm number 30, and we'll read verses 4 and 5. Sing praises to the Lord, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name.

For his anger is but for a moment, and his favour is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning. And noting especially there the emphasis on praise and thanksgiving, especially in verse 4.

But you can see a very important connection between the two verses. The connection is made by that word for at the beginning of verse 5. In other words, he's calling upon the people of the Lord to give praise and thanks to the holy name of God.

And then he gives really as the reason for that, focusing on verse 5. For his anger is but for a moment, and his favour is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.

So there are two things really, we can say, arise from these two verses. There is first of all a call to praise the Lord and give him thanks. A call to praise him and to give him thanks.

[1 : 1 9] And we'll see that those two elements of praise on the one hand and thanks on the other are really inseparably tied together here and also throughout the Bible.

The second thing is in verse 5 there, the contrasts that constrain our praise and thanks. There are contrasts there on God's side of the relationship with his people, where on the one hand there is his anger is mentioned, and then the contrast with that his favour, which is for a lifetime.

And then there is a second contrast on our side of the relationship, corresponding to that where weeping, first of all, is said to tarry or to remain for a night, in contrast to the joy which comes with the morning.

So firstly, a call to praise the Lord and to give him thanks. Now it is important that we look at these calls to praise and to thank the Lord in the context in which they are placed.

The context here is obviously at the dedication of the temple, according to the title of the psalm. But the context that I particularly want to mention is a context in which the Lord alone is thought of as worthy of praise and of worship and of being thankful too.

[2 : 4 4] Now that runs, as you know, right throughout the scriptures. In fact, as we remember some time back, looked at the first chapter of the book of Genesis, you'll find that even there, there is that polemic, which is a word really for the witness of God's people against alternatives to God and to the worship of God.

We find that deliberate description of the creation in the first chapter of the book of Genesis, right there at the beginning of the Bible, as something that mentions the Lord actually creating these elements of the creation of the universe, the earth, the stars, the moon, the sun, and all of these things are made by the Lord.

And when Moses was led by the Lord to write these words, these words were given by the Lord, the first five books of the Bible as Moses wrote them, he wrote them in the context of facing idolatry and being surrounded by paganism.

And this polemic and this witness against paganism is really built into the very substance of God's revelation to his covenant people.

So that right from the beginning, there is a reminder to them at the very outset of what they find in the scriptures, that God, the God they worship is alone to be worshipped, and that he alone is worthy to be worshipped and to be given praise.

[4 : 13] And that's something that is very easy to lose sight of in the present day situation that you and I are placed in. Because it's not new, but it's increasingly the case that we live in what's called a multi-faith society, where different kinds of beliefs and faith are given equal emphasis and indeed equal status.

But very often, of course, that really leads to our Christian faith, the Christian religion, being actually relegated to a lesser place than some of the other beliefs or philosophies that people follow, whether it's religious or secularist.

And we have to actually bear in mind that every type of ascription of praise to any being, whether it be to angels, whether it be to venerated human beings who are long since dead, any type of worship or of praise that is given is really a denigration of God.

It is idolatry. It is something that we have to see in the terms in which the Bible itself sets it out for us. Sing praises to the Lord, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name.

There is no other being that is worthy of worship. There is no other being to whom we should give praise and thanks but the Lord, this God, this creator, this covenant over Lord of his people.

[5 : 50] And, of course, you'll find that frequently in the Psalms themselves, just as one example out of many. Psalm 96, we sing it so very often, and, of course, our familiarity with it is something that perhaps itself is a danger to us.

Our familiarity can sometimes just make us miss the very points that the Psalm is actually demonstrating for us. So in Psalm 96, in the first, well, five verses there, you've got, Oh, sing to the Lord a new song.

Sing to the Lord all the earth. You see, he's calling upon every single human being, all the earth, all the creation, to sing to this God. Sing to the Lord, bless his name.

Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the people. For great is the Lord, and greatly to be feared.

He is to be feared above all gods, with a small g. For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols. But the Lord made the heavens, splendor and majesty are before him.

[6 : 56] Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. I'm not going to spend any further time on that, but just to remind ourselves, myself included, how important it is to realize that every deviation from the worship of God and every deviation in terms of worshipping other beings or other objects are, in fact, taking away from what belongs to the Lord.

And indeed, it denigrates Jesus as well, through whom alone we offer our praise and our thanks to the God who is our creator and our saviour.

So that's the first thing. It is to God alone that he says, sing praises to the Lord. But then he says, sing praises. It doesn't just say, give God the praise.

This is a song, of course, that was sung in the temple, this psalm composed probably especially for this purpose of dedication of the temple. So you'd expect that this was something that was very much given to the worship of God at this particular time and would then follow on into the gatherings of the people afterwards.

But at that occasion, as there would be much singing, so here we have a call to praise the Lord with singing. In other words, congregational praise, individual praise, is good and it's possible, but mostly in the Bible we're called to be together for praise, for congregational praise.

- [8 : 29] And notice how he's putting it, sing praises to the Lord, O you his saints. Sing praises. Well, you may be saying, that's all very well for those who've got a voice.
- But I don't have a singing voice. So surely that's not calling on me to praise the Lord. Well, yes, it is. Even if you think your voice is not really up to much, that's not important.
- Really, in this sense that God is calling upon us to join together in the singing of praise. It used to be the case, and I think I'm right in saying, thankfully, it's no longer as much the case, at least, that those who hadn't begun to follow the Lord or hadn't come to make a profession of their faith in the Lord, when it came to worship in public, they didn't sing.
- I remember it was a practice way back in my younger days in the church and back, that if you went in the morning to the church and back, most of those who were not converted would sit upstairs, and it wasn't the practice to sing if you were there upstairs.
- Now, I think that's no longer the case, thankfully, but it seemed at that time to be a practice. It had become a habit, something that was actually seen to be, wrongly seen to be fitting.
- [9 : 50] It doesn't say to you here, sing praises to the Lord once you profess your faith in Him, once you've taken communion, once you've been ten years down the line of following Him.
- It says, sing to the Lord, O you who sing. Sing praises. It doesn't say, sing all of you who have a good singing voice. It just says, sing you who sing.
- And there's nothing more encouraging, there's nothing indeed more vibrant than to have a congregation set on singing.
- Singing the praises of the Lord. So please, tonight, if you're saying of yourself, but I'm not really given to singing and I don't have much of a voice, and therefore I think I might even spoil the singing if my voice comes out.
- It doesn't say, sing loudly so that you turn everybody else out. But it does say, sing. It does say, join together your voice with the voice of all the others who come to sing praise to God.
- [10 : 54] And it's not singing praise to one another. It's not entertainment. We're not there to actually satisfy one another's sense of what is, in fact, emotional singing, although that may be a part of the singing, that it is emotional.
- We trust it is. But our main concern is really not to sing to each other or for one another's notice. Our singing is to the Lord.
- Sing to the Lord. Sing praises to the Lord. O you, his saints. All our worship is addressed to God.
- Not horizontally, but vertically. Our praise, our thanks, ascends to God. And so there's God alone is worthy of praise.
- And we are to praise the Lord with singing. And then, as it's congregational praise, O you, his saints, to that is joined giving of thanks.
- [11 : 58] And give thanks to his holy name. Now, obviously, the first part of the verse there flows very gently but very meaningfully into the second part.
- So it's not sing praises to the Lord in a compartment by its own and then giving thanks to the Lord afterwards or some other time in a compartment by itself.
- It's really saying, sing praises to the Lord, O you, your saints, and give thanks. Do it together because you cannot and must not detach the singing of praise to God from the giving of thanks to God.

Yes, I know you can give thanks to the Lord without singing when you're not at times singing. You can give thanks to God verbally by expressing your thanks to him as we seek to do in prayer.

You can do that congregationally. You can do that individually, of course, as well. But you cannot sing praise to God without thanksgiving. That's the important point that's made.

[12 : 57] Sing praises to the Lord and give thanks. It's giving thanks through singing as well as along with singing. And when we sing the praises of the Lord, we should ask ourselves, am I singing thankfully?

Am I expressing my thanks to God through my participation in the singing of his praise? And you see, those who don't tend to sing or use their voices to sing praise when the congregation is praising really are giving the impression that they're stepping back from the giving of thanks.

It's so important that the singing of the praise really is so conjoined to the expression of thanksgiving that the two are actually so wonderfully woven together. Sing to the Lord and give thanks.

Give thanks through your singing. Express your thankfulness through the singing of his praise. What better way to express our thankfulness to God as a congregation or for yourself or myself as individual for the causes we have to give thanks individually?

What better way to do that than congregationally to sing his praise and express our thanks through his praise? Now, of course, that leads on to something we're not going to go into.

[14 : 17] But it is important that the quality of the singing. And again, this is really not to do with the quality of voice of each individual in the congregation. But the quality of singing in terms of following the tune that's set as far as possible and following the presenter as far as possible in the pace and so on in the pitch.

The quality of praise is so important because as it's joined with thanksgiving, what we're really saying to God is, it's really the best, Lord, that I can manage in contributing to the praise of this congregation because I want my thanks to be as full as it can possibly be.

The beauty of thanks through the beauty of congregational praise. And we're faced with that here and it's such a great privilege for us to be able to join together on a thanksgiving service, a thanksgiving day, and to be able to come before the Lord singing his praise and through it giving our thanks to the Lord.

If there is one thing missing, very obviously missing, largely missing at least from our society today, isn't it this?

Thanksgiving to God. Thanksgiving to God. It's one of the great omissions in our human experiences and in our human society today.

[15 : 54] If you looked out over the town of Stornoway tonight, how many people are totally unconcerned to give God thanks. How many people realize the food they take from Tesco or the Cope or whatever is actually in the highest sense provided by God.

If God were to lift his little finger and cause a stemming of the flow of food towards our shops and our homes, it would demonstrate for us that it is in him we live and move and have our being.

How many families out there tonight say grace before they eat? How many individuals give thanks to God for the bread they have in their homes?

Thankfulness. Thankfulness is one of the primary things that mark a Christian life. Because without thanksgiving, you really question, does that person really know the Lord?

Does that person appreciate who God is and what God has done for them? Sing praises to the Lord and give thanks. We are so good in our society at saying, give me.

[17 : 07] So good at our society in saying, this is my right. And I'm going to insist upon my right. My individual right are the rights of the group that I belong to.

And I'm going to make sure that the rights of that group trump all the other rights that exist in this society. But so little of the giving of thanks.

Of God's right to be praised and thanked. So your life and my life individually are examples of praise and thanksgiving.

Of singing of praise and thanksgiving. And our congregational life is a life expressive of thanks and of praise to God.

And of singing his praises by way of thanksgiving. You know, even when there are sad times in our lives, as there are undoubtedly, it doesn't mean that we stop giving thanks.

[18 : 14] It doesn't mean that we stop singing praise. Look at the number of psalms that are really very, very sad almost from beginning to end because they're to do with a psalmist's personal complaint about himself, about his situation, about his sin, whatever else it is.

Or maybe it's a psalm that has to do with Israel as a people and how they've come to be under the dominance of their enemies at certain times and how sad they are. The Psalm 137, for example, there we were by the waters of Babylon, they say.

We hung up our harps. How can we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land? We're so sad we can't bring ourselves to sing the Lord's song. But you see, the wonderful thing is that these words are put in the form of a psalm and a song.

A psalm to be sung. You have your sad times, but you can sing out your sad times to God. Where else do you find such a thing?

That even the saddest episodes of our human and believing experience can actually be found in the psalms in such a way that we're able to express that with singing and with thanksgiving to God.

[19 : 29] However difficult life may become at times, however severe blows there may be, and I know I'm using language that's liable to be mistaken by people when I'm not in any way saying that these things are to be treated lightly, far from it.

What I'm saying is, however deep our wounds may at times be, the fact is that God has already anticipated them, especially in the psalms that he's given us to sing.

And we can come in such a way as to give our thanks wherever we are at whatever depth, if we search. Though sometimes it's very difficult to find it, but certainly if we search and wait upon the Lord, we will find reason for thanksgiving, reason for praising him, even from the depths.

Lord, from the depths to thee I cried. A psalm which begins with a reference to the depths. Lord, if you were to mark iniquity, who should stand?

Who could stand? See, he's moving out of it. But with you there is forgiveness that you may be feared. I wait for the Lord. My soul doth wait. More than they that watch for the light of the morning.

[20 : 50] And so it finishes that triumphant note of praise that God will redeem Israel. Redemption abounds to his people.

He has discovered the reason for thanksgiving by just dwelling upon his situation and bringing it to God and expressing it to him. So it's a call to praise the Lord God alone and praise with singing congregationally and singing praise and giving thanks.

But there is also, the call to praise also includes thanks to the holy name of God. Give thanks to his holy name. Now literally, and it's reflected in the older versions, I think, the word memorial or remembrance is here.

And it's very like the words that you find in Exodus chapter 3 and verse 15. And if I read that to you, it says as follows.

Well, we can read there from verse 13. Then Moses, this is Moses meeting with God or God meeting with Moses before he's sent back to the people to describe the God that he met.

[21 : 59] If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, the God of your fathers has sent me to you, this is Moses saying, and they ask me, what is his name? What shall I say to them? God said to Moses, I am who I am.

And he said, say this to the people of Israel, I am has sent me to you. God also said to Moses, say to the people of Israel, the Lord, the God of our fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob has sent me to you.

This is my name forever. And thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations. This is my memorial, literally it says, forever.

In other words, it's not so much a matter of us remembering the name of God, and of course, the name of God is the way he has revealed himself in different ways and given names to himself.

There is that, of course. We come to remember the Lord when we're coming to give thanks to him and reflecting on how we're to give thanks. But what this is really saying is also, and perhaps this is the main thing that's mentioned, give thanks to the memorial of his holy name.

[23 : 11] It's really saying, where God has set up a memorial to himself, it's against that or in relation to that that we give thanks. And the memorial he has set up to himself, going back to Exodus 3.15, is not just giving himself a name, but giving himself a name as the covenant redeeming God.

In other words, God's salvation and God's redemption of his people is his lasting memorial and he has tied his name to it. And we are to give him thanks as we remember what God has done.

We are to actually come and give thanks at the memorial that God has established to himself. Just as we gather once a year at the war memorials throughout the country to express our appreciation to God for sacrifices made in protecting our freedom as a country and we reflect upon those who gave their lives.

So we come to God's redemption in Christ. That's his lasting memorial. That's what he's tied his name as the Lord to. And you notice throughout this psalm the word Lord appears in little capitals.

That is the word where the old used to be Jehovah more modern translations of Yahweh but it's the covenant name of God. The name he's given to himself.

[24 : 37] I am that I am. The covenant keeping faithful God. So he's saying sing praises to the Lord to I am and give thanks to this memorial that God has set for himself.

So a call to praise the Lord and just very briefly in conclusion really the contrast there that constrain our praise.

For his anger is but for a moment and his favor is for a lifetime. There's a contrast on God's side of his relationship to us or to his people. The anger of God in contrast to the favor of God.

And it's not saying well now that we know that God is favorable toward us we don't need to really think of his anger as something that's really real anymore.

That's really not the kind of that's not the kind of emphasis in the verse at all. The anger of God is very real. It's not an imaginary thing.

[25 : 44] It's not something mentioned in the Bible just to scare us. in order to scare us to come to place our confidence in God as a merciful and gracious God.

The anger of God is a very real hostility and powerful burning against sin against what is antagonistic to him.

The anger of the Lord is to be reckoned with. Jesus himself although many people nowadays would not really associate Jesus with this kind of emphasis but you remember in John's gospel that this is how he put it where anybody who does not yet come has not yet come to the Lord and placed their faith in the Lord the anger of God remains upon them.

The wrath of God remains upon that person. But of course what he's saying here is that in terms of the Lord's people in terms of those who have come to be delivered by God and this is the wonderful thing about Jesus Christ and the memorial to God and his own redemption in Christ what has happened at the cross?

What has happened in the death of Christ? What is that about? Is that God being turned into a God of love whereas previously he was a God of anger and a God of wrath? No it's nothing like that. God hasn't disposed of his anger completely as an attribute of his being just because Jesus has died.

[27 : 16] What Jesus died to do was to turn that anger away from his people to propitiate that wrath of God or God and his wrath.

And that's the wonderful emphasis that it is God in love his love who has come to deal with his own anger so that it is no longer directed against his people.

And that's really behind this wonderful emphasis that his anger is but for a moment and his favor is for a lifetime. When he says his anger is but for a moment it's not as we said earlier in any way to lessen the emphasis on his anger as if it's something that doesn't really have any moment or any importance or any weight to it the emphasis on really the short-lived anger of God as against his favor.

It's difficult really in a sense to explain it but like everything else about God's being his attributes are perfect and part of his eternal being his anger as much as his power and mercy and so on but what it's saying is that I know we can misuse human language it's so difficult to describe God in these particular aspects of his being but it's really pretty much saying to us God is as it were towards his people in a hurry to turn from his anger into his favor.

His anger is short-lived he doesn't want to keep it directed to them and even when it's exercised in comparison to his favor which is for a lifetime which is drawn out and lasting his anger is but for a moment God is in no hurry to turn from his favor but you could say humanly speaking he is in a hurry to turn from his anger that's why he is giving thanks and calling upon the people to give thanks and that's why we gather among many other things to give thanks because we know who this God is through what he has revealed of himself and what he's done for us we know who this God is because this is the emphasis he gives to himself in the gospel yes he's saying I am a God who has anger as one of my attributes and it's a divine anger it's a burning anger it's an anger that will be displayed eternally in the case of the lost but he's really saying in a sense

[30 : 08] I'm longing to turn from it to my people in favor to bestow my favor upon them and to show that that's my big emphasis on love and compassion and forgiveness and not on condemnation and that's why we gather tonight to give him thanks because this is who he is and this is why he's precious to us that he has not marked our sin against us because there is forgiveness with him and then there's a contrast on our side of the relationship too weeping may tarry for the night but joy comes with the morning and again it's a similar emphasis that while weeping may indeed be in existence and be very deep in our experience from time to time yet it's just for the night whereas joy comes with the morning and the implication that is that joy is thrown out into the day and into all the daylight means in contrast with the darkness and with the uncertainty of the night as morning follows night time in the natural world so joy follows weeping in the experience of

God's people that doesn't mean that the night of weeping does not feel long I mentioned something like this on the Sabbath evening I think in relation to Peter's study in first Peter but it doesn't mean that the night of weeping does not feel long to us it's something that may be very deep and protracted and painful and very very hard to bear but what it is saying is in contrast to what awaits God's people when the night is done the night is very short the night of suffering is very short and what it's really saying in a sense is weeping has come to be an overnight lodger weeping has come for an overnight stay because he's comparing the night of this present life with the joy and the daylight of our eternal bliss that's what we anticipate in what Peter called the living hope to which

God's people have been born again weeping has come to stay for a night he's an overnight lodger but he's only there for a night and when the night is over joy comes with the morning when the night is over when the night is finished when as the book of revelation reminds us there is no night in the eternity in the heaven of God's people there shall be no night there everything associated with the night is behind them and there is nothing else before them but the joy of eternal morning when you see a glorious morning when you see the sunshine and the brightness of a glorious morning doesn't that remind us even in nature itself the relief that morning brings after the darkness of the night so here is a call to praise the

Lord sing praise to the Lord all ye his saints and give him thanks for why well his anger is but for a moment his favor is everlasting and though weeping may come to lodge for a night joy comes in the morning let's pray gracious Lord and our Father in heaven we give thanks for the way your word opens up to us the many prospects that belong to your people in faith and in hope we thank you Lord tonight for the way that you emphasize for us this present life in relation to all that is to come for your people we bless you especially that your anger has been turned away from your people that your favor is upon them that they indeed are beautified in your favor upon them so as to be like yourself so bless us we pray as we come to close our service of giving you thanks and may we continue to give you thanks throughout our days for Jesus sake amen well our final psalm of praise is psalm 106 psalm 106 and on page 140 we'll sing the verses 1 to 5 praise the

Lord extol his goodness for his love endures always who can tell his mighty actions or in full declare his praise blessed are those whose way is right acting justly in his sight when you show your people favor then oh Lord remember me help me when you come to save them let me know prosperity joyful with your chosen race joining them in giving praise these two stanzas of psalm 106 on page 140 let's stand to sing praise the Lord exult his goodness for his love endures always who can tell his mighty actions all in full declare his praise lest bless our

[36 : 27] Lord whose sway is right acting justly in his sight when you show your people favor then oh Lord remember me help me when you come to save them let me know prosperity joyful with your chosen race joining them in giving praise if you just allow me to get to the back door please after the benediction 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 ever more amen