

Praise Befits The Upright

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[0:00] Please take your Bibles and let's open them up this morning to the book of Psalms and we have made our way to Psalm chapter 33 this morning. Now we're continuing our summer series through the book of Psalms and we are again in Psalm 33 this morning. And so when you found that let's stand in honor of the reading of God's word if you're able physically to stand, stand together.

Shout for joy in the Lord, O you righteous. Praise befits the upright. Give thanks to the Lord with a lyre. Make melody to Him with a 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 and by the breath of His mouth all their host. 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.

[1:24] The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing. 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.

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. For He is our help and our shield. For our heart is glad in Him because we trust in His holy name. Let Your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us.

[2:32] Even as we hope in You. The grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of the Lord endures forever. Would you pray with me one more time as we prepare to hear the preaching of God's word?

Father, there are so many reasons here in this psalm that ought to compel our hearts to give You praise. And so we pray, Lord, would You take those reasons and put them into our ears and through our minds and into our hearts.

And then out through our mouths. And out into our steps and our hands and our feet as we go out of this place. Living for Your glory and singing Your praises. We pray that You would do that for Your honor and Your name's sake.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated. Amen. Amen. I have to confess to you that every now and then a strange phenomenon happens in my life.

And I hear that it gets even worse with age, which is bad news for me. But a strange phenomenon happens where I will go to a store. I will park the car.

[3:40] I will get out. I will walk right in. And then I will go to get what I need. And I will realize I have no idea why I am there. I know that in general.

I'm at a grocery store, so probably I need to buy groceries, right? That much is clear. But exactly what I need, exactly why I've come, sometimes I've got to confess that part is a little bit fuzzy.

And if I didn't have my wife to remind me or even sometimes my boys to remind me or even just my smartphone to remind me, I confess to you that I would be helpless.

It's a strange phenomenon, isn't it? But I think that it's not just me, right? In fact, I think that's fairly common. In fact, I would be willing to bet that at this very moment in grocery stores all across the world, there are people wondering why they are where they are.

But, you know, it's interesting. I would also be willing to bet that that same phenomenon is also happening in churches all across the world at this very moment.

[4:46] It may be happening right here, right now. It may be happening to you right now. And for whatever reason, maybe you're so busy with the events of your week, maybe distracted by what seems like more pressing matters in your mind or preoccupied with other things, that you have forgotten why you are here in the first place.

So you should know that you're not alone. This is very common. And this is one of the many reasons why I'm so thankful for the book of Psalms. You know, the book of Psalms. It functions, it often acts as a reminder for forgetful people like us.

And it gives voice and expression to what we ought to feel and what we ought to say if we really remembered who God is and what God has done.

Psalms 33 this morning, the psalmist, likely King David, he calls all of God's people to give praise to our great God.

But he knows how forgetful we are, and so he gives us four reminders. This will be our outline this morning, if you're taking note. Four reasons why God is worthy of our praise.

[5:56] Reason number one, first, he says, Praise this great God because he is the forgiver of sinners. We praise God because he forgives sins.

We see this in verses 1 through 3. The psalmist commands God's people, Shout for joy in the Lord, O you righteous. Praise befits the upright. Now, I want to see who's been paying attention because if you are really on top of it, you might have noticed that that sounds very familiar to where we left off last week.

If you look at the end of Psalm 32, right? Psalm 32 was this glorious psalm all about the great blessing of having your sins forgiven. You remember it started, Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, against whom the Lord does not count his iniquity. And the response of the forgiven, the proper response of the forgiven, you see it there at the end of Psalm 32, verse 11. It says, Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, O righteous.

Shout for joy, O you upright in heart. And then we keep reading, and now Psalm 33 begins, Shout for joy in the Lord, O you righteous. Praise befits the upright.

[7:14] Now, I think that we would be right to see that these two psalms, they flow together. Psalm 33 is a continuation of Psalm 32. We ought to read it that way.

So the psalmist says, Have you been forgiven of your sin? Have you been counted righteous in the sight of God, justified by His grace? Has God been so gracious to you as to not count your sins against you, and to remove your sin from you as far as the east is from the west?

If He has declared you righteous, what response could we give a God like this? Psalm 33 says, Praise! Shout for joy if you've been forgiven of your sins.

Praise befits the upright. Give thanks to this great God. Praise Him for forgiving you of your sins.

And He tells us, you know, one way that we can express this praise is in song.

He says in verse 2, Give thanks to the Lord with the lyre. That's an instrument. Make melody to Him with the harp of ten strings. Sing to Him a new song.

[8:24] Play skillfully on the strings with loud shouts. Forgiven people sing. And we do this every Sunday, don't we?

And we come in, we gather together, we have songs prepared and planned out for you to sing. We come in and we sing these songs to the Lord. But have you ever wondered why we do this? You know, this is one place, out of anything that we do, where it's pretty easy to just go on autopilot and you just sing the words and your heart really isn't engaged.

It's easy to do that. There's a quote from a medieval writer who said that some in the church are bodily in the choir, but mentally in the market.

Right? I've been there. It's easy to do. That's not how it ought to be. Church, we sing because we are both commanded and compelled to sing.

We are both commanded and compelled to sing. We should know that the righteous are commanded, clearly in Scripture, to sing praises to the one who has made them righteous.

[9:33] Why do we sing when we gather together? It's because God has commanded us to sing. We don't come up with this on our own. We worship God according to how God wants to be worshipped.

And He wants to be worshipped through singing. The Apostle Paul says in Colossians 3, verse 16, it's a command. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom.

How, Paul? How are we to teach and admonish one another? Singing songs and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Now, the book of Psalms itself is a song book. This is the song book of Israel. And if we ever wonder whether we ought to sing or even what sort of songs we ought to sing, well, we have a pretty good starting point right here, don't we?

God's people would sing these songs together in the temple and at times of worship and as they journeyed to and from. These songs are God-centered, robust in their theology.

[10:41] I mean, we spend about 40 minutes unpacking these psalms every week. These are songs that teach truth about God and His works in the world. They teach us about God and His faithfulness to His people.

These are songs that express emotion but where emotion rightly follows the truth. These are songs that ultimately point us to Christ. These are songs that God desires us to sing.

We sing because God commands us to sing. But it's much more than that, isn't it? We also sing because we are compelled to sing.

Church, when you stop and consider the glorious good news of the gospel that God forgives sinners, and not just sinners out there, but sinners like me.

God forgives my sin. That God has made me righteous in His sight. That God has declared me to be upright and holy. Me with all of my baggage and all of my sin.

[11:46] That God has removed my sin from me. The only proper response is to sing His praises. This is the response of the heart made new.

Martin Luther, in fact, he said, only a new man can sing a new song. A man of grace, a spiritual and an inner man before God. If God has made you new, forgiven you of your sins, the church, sing His praises.

He says, praises. That's reason number one. Not only this, he gives a second reason here in verses 4 through 9. The psalmist says, second, praise Him because this great God is the creator of all the world.

Praise Him because He is the creator of all the world. We see this in verses 4 through 9. You know, the early church fathers talked about two books of revelation.

Meaning two books that reveal who God is. They said that God's word reveals who God is and God's world reveals who God is.

[12:54] The psalmist here, he opens up both of these books for us. And he starts here with God's word in verses 4 and 5. And this is the better book, isn't it?

This is the only divinely inspired supernatural revelation of who God is and what God's done. This is where God speaks without fault and without error and tells us in words that can be opened up and read to a child who He is.

I mean, it's just an astounding blessing that we have this book in our language. The psalmist opens up this book and he reads it and he says, praise God.

Why? For the word of the Lord is upright. Verse 4. The law of the Lord is perfect, Psalm 19 tells us. Reviving the soul.

What other book does that? The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.

[13:57] The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever. The rules of the Lord are true and righteous, all together. What other book can you say this about? There is no other book in the world like this book.

There's no other greater source of wisdom. There's nothing so pure and desirable as the word of God. I mean, how embarrassing is it that so often we treat this book with such indifference and that we would rather draw our attention to a television show or a game or social media or a segment on the news.

When anytime we want, what a privilege it is. Anytime we want, we can open up this book and read and hear the voice of God. Declare who He is and what He's like and what He has planned for us in His world.

This is a great blessing. It's the greatest treasure that you own, church. The psalmist reads this book and declares the Lord is good.

But church, we should know not everyone owns this book. Not everyone has access to this book and even many who own a physical copy of it don't truly grasp what it says about God because these things are spiritually discerned and to rightly understand this book you must have the illuminating help of the Holy Spirit otherwise it is worthless to you.

[15 : 28] But the psalmist gets it here. He reads this word and he sees just look at what God has done. Look how He's shepherded His people. Look how He's made promises to them and kept every single one.

All His work is done in faithfulness he says. He says this word is upright because this God is upright. He reads it and he sees God is righteous and He loves righteousness.

God is just and He loves justice. You simply can't know those attributes of God apart from this book. Creation will not teach you this.

You need this book empowered by God's Spirit in order to truly understand the full revelation of who God is. But again not everyone has this book so what do they have?

They have the second book. The book of creation. And with a Spirit inspired lens the psalmist is able to look around him and see that all the earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord.

[16 : 39] Now this second book the book of creation I do want to be clear. This book is not enough to save anyone. This book of creation does not reveal God as Savior.

This is why we go to the ends of the earth and proclaim the good news of the gospel. Creation does not reveal God's grace towards sinners in Christ. Creation does not reveal how our sins can be forgiven.

But it does reveal the undeniable fact that there is a God and that this God is worthy of our praise. And this book is opened up to everyone everywhere every single day.

It is universal and it is undeniable. St. Augustine says some people in order to discover God read books but there is a great book the very appearance of created things.

Look above you. Look below you. Note it. Read it. God whom you want to discover never wrote that book with ink. Instead he set before your eyes the things that he had made.

[17 : 53] Can you ask for a louder voice than that? Why heaven and earth shout to you God has made me. The psalmist says look above you.

By the word of the Lord the heavens were made and by the breath of his mouth all their host. Now this is far above my pay grade but I am told by people much smarter than me that the observable universe is something like 93 billion light years in diameter.

I don't even know what that means. That is beyond my comprehension. It is so large and massive and seemingly endless and that is just the observable universe.

astronomers estimate that the observable universe contains 2 trillion galaxies and 200 billion trillion stars. That is like monopoly money.

Of course it is all a guess. Who knows what all is there. No one has explored all of that space. No one can. It is far too much but we are told God made all of it.

[19 : 04] And simply by the word of his power. He simply spoke and made it all. The very word of his mouth brought everything into existence. And so now when we look up and we see the stars and we look up and we see the heavens they speak to us.

Psalms 19 says the heavens declare the glory of God. The skies above proclaim his handiwork. Day after day after day pours out speech.

Night after night after night pours out knowledge and guess what? Everyone hears it. Or if you prefer the psalmist says look below you.

Go down as far down and as deep as you can into the deepest ocean. Again by Google research it tells me that explorers have only seen less than .0001% of the ocean sea floor.

That is like nothing. Do you realize how small that is? They say that is approximately the size of Rhode Island. Scientists estimate that we have only seen maybe a third of the animal species that live in the ocean.

[20:17] Every single year they discover about 2,000 more new animal species. It is just astounding to think about how little we know about this world. The psalmist says yeah God made that.

in fact the Lord simply gathers up the waters of the sea as a heap. Have you ever tried to hold water in your hands? He gathers them as a heap and he puts the deep into the storehouses.

Here is the point church. You could spend a lifetime trying to explore every corner all the nook and cranny all the glories of the heavens and the earth and not even scratch the surface but if that's true how much more so the God who made it?

You could spend an eternity exploring the glory of this creator God and we will if we are in Christ. Again the right response to a God like this is praise.

In fact he tells us in verse 8 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.

[21:31] He commanded and it stood firm. Praise him because he forgives. Praise him because he has created all things. Third praise him because he rules over all things.

We praise him. Third reason because he is the sovereign ruler of all things. The incredible truth is that God did not just create his world and then sit back and let it go as it wanted to go.

This is what the deists thought. The 18th century they compared him to a great watchmaker who creates this watch and then lets it tick on its own. The Bible says no, no, no, no, no.

This great praiseworthy God who created all things, he now very actively, constantly upholds all things and rules over all things and in fact controls all things according to his providence.

How do we know? Look there to verse 10. He says, for one thing, his plans always prevail. That's what it means practically to be sovereign.

[22:43] His plans always prevail. You always get your way every single time. Now, we have to learn the hard way that that's not us. We have to learn the hard way that we are not God.

Some of us are still learning this lesson. God gets his way every single time. Look there to verse 10. He says, the Lord brings the counsel of the nations to nothing.

He frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the Lord stands forever. The plans of his heart to all generations. His plans never fail.

God always gets his way. When all the nations, all the earth gathers together to build the tower of Babel and rebel against the Lord, what happens?

He says, God looks down on their big old tower and he scatters them to the ends of the earth. He frustrates the plans of the peoples. When Joseph's brothers want to sell him off for dead, sell him into slavery, they plan his destruction, what does he say in Genesis 50?

[23:49] You meant that for evil, but God meant it for good. When the Jews and the Romans together send Jesus to the cross and the devil himself plans to destroy the Son of God, what happens?

God's eternal sovereign plan of redemption prevails. This is what it means to be sovereign. God always gets his way. He's totally in control.

not only this, the psalmist also shows us he's sovereign over the choosing of his people from among the nations. Look at verse 12.

Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord. Who's he talking about? The people whom he has chosen as his heritage. The psalmist just marvels at this.

This big, glorious, sovereign, creator God who is powerful enough just to speak and create all things, who actively upholds all things, who rules over all things.

[24:51] This great God, out of his own volition, has chosen to bless a particular people out of all the nations of the earth and to make them his chosen heritage.

What a blessing. I just marvel at this. This is an expression of God's sovereignty. God did not choose Lot. He chose Abraham.

Why? I don't know. Do you? Tell me after church, please. God did not make his promises to Esau. He made his promises to Jacob.

Why? I don't know. He didn't make the Philistines his chosen people. He made Israel his chosen people. The psalmist reflects on this and he's overwhelmed with a sense of why me?

What a blessing to be counted amongst God's chosen people. What a blessing that God would choose me, all of his sovereign grace.

[25:53] Moses says in Deuteronomy chapter 7, the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

Why me? And this is God's sovereign grace. He is free to choose. But even so, the psalmist says, even so, this great God still sees all that happens in all the nations.

Yes, his eye is especially on those who fear him. We see that in verse 18. But even so, this sovereign God sees all that happens in all the world.

I can't even fathom this. I went to see my grandmother this week and we had all five kids there. And my sister was there trying to tell me something.

I have no idea what she was trying to tell me because my attention was on trying to keep my five kids from breaking grandmother's house. I can't focus on everything at once as much as I try, but not so with God.

[27:05] His eye is especially on His own people, but even so, verse 13, says, the Lord looks down from heaven, He sees all the children of man.

From where He sits enthroned, He looks out on some, no, all the inhabitants of the earth. He who fashions the hearts of them all and observes all their deeds.

Do you hear that repetition of all, all, all, all, all? This great God is not caught off guard or surprised by anything that happens in His creation.

This sovereign God is never responding or reacting. He's never behind the eight ball like you and I are often behind the eight ball. He is sovereign and omniscient.

He sees all. What's the right response to a God like this? The psalmist gives us one simple response here in verse 16.

[28:10] He says, trust Him. Trust Him. This powerful, sovereign, almighty God is worthy of all of our trust.

Look there to verse 16. He says, the king is not saved by his great army and a warrior is not delivered by his great strength. The war horse is a false hope for salvation.

By its great might it cannot rescue. When we get a side of this great God who rules and reigns over all things, why would we ever place our trust anywhere else?

David knew this firsthand, didn't he? Do you remember his battle with Goliath? This Philistine giant, this experienced warrior, a grown man, more grown than most grown men, in full armor, matched up against this little shepherd boy with a few stones and a slingshot?

A betting man would never put his money on David in a million years. It is humanly impossible.

Goliath ought to win a hundred times out of a hundred, right?

[29:22] But do you remember what David said as he marched into battle to face Goliath? Do you remember what he said? This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand and I will strike you down and cut off your head.

Why? That all this assembly may know that the Lord saves not with sword or spear, for the battle is the Lord's and he will give you into our hand.

Do you trust God like that? How easy is it to put our trust in any number of other things in our own strength in our own intellect in our own ability to scheme our way out of whatever problem we're facing this week in our 401k in our money in our retirement plan?

The psalmist says if this God is who he says he is he's worthy of all your trust all your trust you trust him like that behold verse 18 he says 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 the psalmist says praise this God because he rules over all but not only this fourth and finally ultimately church fourth we praise him because this great God is our God in Christ and what I want you to understand here as we bring this to a close is that whatever reason the psalmist had to praise God and he had many reasons church we have it amplified and enlarged and enhanced in Jesus Christ as great and as loud and as joyful and as exuberant as his praise was our praise ought to be even greater why because we have even greater clarity on who God is and what he's done it's like as we take this psalm and filter it through Christ the camera lens gets focused and the image gets enhanced and we get to see with greater clarity who this God is on his side of the cross the psalmist knew the forgiveness of his sins but we know how all this works don't we he knew that a sinner could be counted righteous in the sight of God but we know this is only possible because of the finished work of Christ received by faith church this is why we're here we gather this morning and every Sunday morning on the Lord's day resurrection Sunday to sing and to rejoice and to

worship because our

[32:27] God has worked salvation in Christ for us our Savior has come and purchased our forgiveness he's died in our place he's risen to new life and by faith in Christ by faith in Christ we are counted righteous in the sight of God this is why we're here church that's why we gather for worship the psalmist read God's books he knew God's word he lived in God's world just like we do he knew that God spoke and created all things he knew Genesis 1:1 in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth but church we know the name of that life giving word we know with even greater clarity in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God he was in the beginning with God all things were made!

through him anything made that was made and we know praise God the word became flesh and dwelt among us we look to Jesus and we see the greatest revelation of the person of God he is the image of the invisible God Colossians tells us the psalmist knew that this great God who created all things also rules over all things he upholds the universe but here on our side of the cross us Christ Jesus is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature and he Jesus upholds the universe by the word of his power the psalmist reflected on what a blessing it was to be part of his chosen people he knew that God had sovereignly chosen Israel out of all the nations of the world to be his people but church we know on this side of the God's chosen people are those who are in

Christ it's the church gathered in from every tribe and every tongue and every nation it's believers from America and Afghanistan from Israel and from Iraq from South Carolina and South Sudan and we know that this blessed nation is not any earthly nation it's not Israel as a nation it's not Vietnam as a nation it's not America as a nation it is the church and all who belong to him who are called out of these places to be in covenant with our God by his grace in Christ the church is the treasured possession of God blood bought sinners like you and me the church is the blessed nation whose God is the Lord and what an incredible blessing it is to be chosen by God Peter says in 2 Peter 2 verse 9 to the church you are a chosen race a royal priesthood you are a holy nation you are a people for his own possession why that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness and into his marvelous light do you ever just read that and say why me it is all of God's grace you know the right response to a God like this it's praise it's praise friend do you know why you're here this morning do you remember why you've come we're about to stand and sing songs of praise in response in just a minute I hope that you will sing and sing loudly but do you know why have you been made new it may be that as you hear this this morning you're realizing you have never really understood why this God is worthy of your praise maybe you realize you've never even had your sins forgiven and if that's you then friend the invitation is simply come to him in faith and ask that he would open up your eyes to show you how worthy he is and for you church the psalmist gives us our response here in a prayer in verses 20 through 22 we'll pray it together as we close father our soul waits for you oh

God God you are our help and our shield and father our heart is glad in you because we trust in your holy name so we ask God would your steadfast love be upon us oh Lord even as we hope in you father we praise you because you are so worthy of our praise God we praise you because you have forgiven us of our sins in Christ we praise you that by Christ and through Christ and for Christ you created all things and in the power of Christ you uphold all things by the word of his power we thank you that one day King Jesus the world as the sovereign king over all the earth and we praise you most of all that by your grace we belong to that kingdom that we are your chosen people in him we praise you for this in Jesus name amen