

Why we need to worship God

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[0 : 0 0] As we consider God's Word together, the intention, of course, is that the sermons throughout the course of a year would build foundations upon a foundation, and then upon that foundation, other sermons would add to it so that there becomes a structure, there becomes something for the Christian to trust in, to be encouraged by, to find strength in, all, of course, leading to God.

Last year, I did a couple of three on the Psalms. I'm used to perhaps them not being remembered, but they provide a necessary structure if they were remembered, and then other things don't fall down once they have.

What does that mean? Well, last year I took one of the Psalms and made it very clear that you have God's attention. I want you to know that you have God's attention, and it's God's attention that you want more than anything else, or you ought to desire more than anything else.

You also have God's Word. You have many other things from God. Now, over the course of my time here, I've tried to make myself available to anyone, but it seems as though this seems to be failing somewhat or somehow.

I'm not sure how. So I spent time lingering around after the service. I can't help it if the same people approach me each week. Perhaps I'm going to have to tell them not to, so that there's time for other people to approach me.

[1 : 5 5] Then I tried standing out on the door, and then someone said that I'm not sitting down speaking to anyone. It seems as though I can't win. Again, I've once, last year, preached four sermons on why the church should participate in communion every week, and then said at the end of those four sermons that we won't do it unless someone decides that we do it.

And we're not doing it. I don't want to make my point, but what I'm trying to address is that you need to understand that if you want to speak to me, one of the gifts that God does not give his church, especially the pastor, is the gift of telepathy.

Listen, I may look smart, but I can't figure everything out. If you want to come and speak to me, come and speak to me. And so I want this to be an opportunity this morning, after Psalm 24, that if you want to talk to me about the things relating to faith and practice, that could be anything relating to faith and practice, not just Psalm 24, anything concerning your Christian life, then let's talk about it.

We could even meet. I understand that my time is not as free as it used to be, because I'm doing two-thirds of what the youth worker used to do, because he's no longer here, so I'm now doing two-thirds of what he did in terms of preparation.

Daniel's teaching the lesson in crew, but I'm the one who studies and prepares for it, and then hands it off to Daniel in order to teach. Then I do what?

[3 : 2 4] So I recognize that I'm not around as much as I used to be, but at the same time, that doesn't mean that I'm not around at all. So if you want to meet with me, then just say so, and we can meet, we can pray, we can talk about matters of life and practice and that.

If you want to talk about other things, I may not be very good at too many other things, but I can sit down and drink tea, hopefully, with the best of them.

Biscuits are always preferred as well, but here we go. So I'm just saying, look, if we're going to begin a new year and you want pastoral input, then come and speak to me.

It's really not, it doesn't need to be any more complicated than that. I want to begin, then, this first sermon of this first year with drawing our attention to why we need to worship God, and that it's not about us.

It's not about you, it's not about me. It really is about God. And I think Psalm 24, if you'd like to turn there, will draw our attention to why it is the case.

[4 : 42] So Psalm 24, now hear God's word.

The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein. For he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.

Who shall ascend to the hill of the Lord and who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully, he will receive blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob, Selah. Lift up your heads, O gates, and be lifted up, O ancient doors.

And the king of glory may come in. Who is the king of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty. The Lord, mighty in battle.

[5 : 53] Lift up your heads, O gates, and lift them up, O ancient doors, that the king of glory may come in. Who is the king of glory? The Lord of hosts.

He is the king of glory. Selah. Well, may God bless the reading of his word.

In fact, if, can I say this just before we sing? If you do read the Psalms at home, sort of like, say, on a regular basis, and you come across that word, Selah, and you think, what does it mean?

It's asking you to pause before you continue. So as you come to that Selah, you're meant to pause, you're meant to reflect on what has just been sung in the Psalm, and then as you pause, like a break between a verse and a chorus, and then you go into the next verse, so to speak.

That's what the Psalms are doing there. That's that pause. So it ends, you can see with a pause. Who is the king of glory? At the Lord.

[7 : 05] Well, please, if you have God's word there in front of you, we're at Psalm 24. Psalm 24 leads us into the reality that what we have come to do this morning is to worship God.

By the time we get through Psalm 24, you will have determined in your own heart and mind, hopefully, whether or not you actually have worshipped God.

The definition of a club is something that people go to on a regular basis who have the same things in common. That sounds an awful lot like the modern day church, but the church is a body of Christ that are called to worship God, not once in a while on a Sunday morning, but to set up the rest of their week from a Sunday.

What this means is that when God created the world and he created the week and created man on the sixth day and then on the first day after that, the seventh day, the Sabbath day, the day in which man would rest, God was teaching him that the rest of the week was to be shaped by the first day of the week and not that the rest of the week shapes the last day of the week if Sunday is your last day.

What has happened over the course of the years in the church is exactly that, that the rest of the week begins to shape the Sunday, but it was never intended to be that way.

[8 : 40] God never created the world for it to operate in that fashion. The world is to be shaped by what comes out of a Sunday. What we do in here will change the world, God says in Hebrews.

What we do in here, how we pray to God and how God answers our prayers, will change the world out there. How you set yourself up today will shape the rest of the week.

Today is the shaping tool that will determine what Monday will look like. So I want you to realize that as you come here today, there may be many reasons why you have, but the reason that God has for you coming is that you may worship him.

The worship of God in our lives is the very thing that God is after. And more importantly, worship is exactly the thing that will shape your life. Nothing else will shape your life other than what you worship.

The question is, of course, is whether or not it is God that you are worshiping. Because we are shaped by worship, what we worship determines the shape of our life.

[9 : 49] Let me say that again. What we worship determines the shape of our life. Psalm 24 is calling us to ascend to the hill so that we may worship the Lord.

Now, one of the reasons for knowing Scripture well, all of Scripture well, is so that we don't put our hand up before the teacher is finished speaking. I can remember receiving instructions from a secondary school PE teacher, and I thought I was clever in asking a question.

But he simply reminded me, wait until I have finished speaking, and then if you still have a question, you can ask it. So I waited until he finished speaking, and then realized I no longer had a question, because he had finished speaking.

And sometimes Christians ask questions without finished reading God's Word. Well, wait until God is finished speaking, and then put your hand up and ask the question, if at that point you still have a question.

So one of the reasons we read all of Scripture, and we listen to God right up to the point until he stops speaking, is so that we don't ask questions prematurely, and then wonder why God doesn't seem to be asking them.

[10 : 59] We've asked a question midway through, and we've stopped waiting for an answer, but God's still speaking. We're not listening, because we've asked the question, and we're waiting for an answer.

At least listen to God's Word, and ask your questions at the end, if you have any. So the reason for reading the whole of God's Word is for God to remind you He has answered those questions, but too often we don't think He has because we ask them before He has finished speaking.

Now some might say that this year, above all in the whole of human history, is the best year for vision. That was my little humorous joke in this 2020 year.

Well, if this is how slow it's going to be this morning, we're going to have a hard job getting through these 10 verses. The reason for telling a simple, humorous joke like that, that I've chuckled to myself often in thought of telling it to you, but thought it would be much funnier when I did, is this, that God's Word has actually been around for a long time.

God's Word has been around for a very long time. And therefore, you would think the church knows it by now. You would think that we would know it really well by now.

[12 : 23] But what seems to have happened is great men and women of the past who have put pen to paper and written down their thoughts concerning the Word of God, their books are not read. So we have to relearn all for ourselves, but we don't seem to do it at the speed or the depth that they did back then.

And that could be nothing more because other things in this world now get in our way where back then they didn't have the distractions that we have now. It's not that they were better Christians, but perhaps they were less distracted Christians.

We have a wealth, especially in this country of Scotland, of the best theologians in the world. And yet, how many of us take time to read them? The point for saying this is that God's Word has been around for a long time and that there is no new vision other than the vision that God's Word is spoken about for all that time.

What we need is a vision of the Word itself. We need to see what God has actually said and don't put our hand up before he's finished speaking. We need to read him thoroughly.

The question that faces us here in Psalm 24 is what type of person can actually approach God, perhaps even this morning. And are you the type of person who can actually come before God this morning?

[13 : 44] Or are you presuming just too much? Are you a bit presumptuous in your approach before God this morning? Are you a person who's in the right place to receive the presence of the Lord?

Or are you here missing out on the presence of the Lord? Well, God says that those who worship him according to his Word and no other way will receive blessing.

Will receive the blessing of his presence in their lives. And no one's quite sure what that'll look like in our lives as individuals because none of us are quite sure what we all need.

But God knows what we need. The point of Psalm 24 is to see everything from God's point of view and not from your point of view. And the reason for that is because then you'll be able to understand why God thinks allow some things to flourish and some things to come to their natural end.

From our point of view we think things should be different. But from God's point of view he surely must know more than us. So here's the summary through Psalm 24.

[14 : 51] Verses 1 and 2 speak of something that we're familiar of that the earth is the Lord and the fullness thereof. God has created everything in its time and everything for its purpose and reason.

and therefore everything that I have God has in some way throughout the generations given it to me by giving me the world by putting me in the world and by the things that come out of the world into my life.

But what verse 1 and 2 is speaking of is existence not purpose. This is existence not purpose. Purpose is when we begin to ascend to the hill of the Lord and worship him.

What you have out there and the many blessings that God gives you is existence. But what you have here in ascending to the hill of the Lord is your purpose.

And your purpose is to worship God. As Jesus says in John 3 John 4 with the woman at the well that we are to worship him in spirit and in truth.

[15 : 55] In verses 3 to 6 we are told that what type of worship God is looking for and what type of person you need to be in order to worship him. But the difficulty here for David as it is for us is that we have to do this in a sinful world.

And so in a sinful world where our lives contain sin who is the person who can actually ascend to the hill of the Lord? Not me. And not you either.

And who is the person who can actually stand in his holy place? Yes. It's not you. And it's not me either. So we're faced with two questions of what the Lord requires of his people that they would ascend to the hill and worship him and then we recognize very, very quickly I'm not that person.

I don't have clean hands and a pure heart. How am I supposed to get up and worship God if I'm not the very person who is even allowed to worship God? How can I be the person that God wants me to be if I'm not the person that God wants me to be?

My heart is full with idolatry and something must be done about it. Your heart cannot afford to become a competing ground in which God must compete for his own attention in your life.

[17 : 11] Now, either he has all of it or he moves out. He doesn't, he doesn't, he's not there because God does not compete with idolatry, that they're incompatible together.

So the person who worships God properly is the person who receives the blessing from the Lord. The one who worships God therefore must be like God himself. The one who can actually ascend to the hill of the Lord, the one who can actually stand in the holy place of God, is the one who is actually like God himself.

This is the only person who can ascend to the hill of the Lord and it sounds less and less likely that this looks like me or you. So heaven looks down upon earth wondering who's going to worship God and it cannot find anyone.

It's looking and looking but no person can be found until verse 8. Who is the king of glory? Now lift up your heads, O gates, and lift them up, O ancient of doors.

Now you have reason not to be cast down but to be lifted up. That the king of glory, verse 9, may come in. And who is this king of glory, verse 10? Well he is the Lord of hosts.

[18 : 25] He is the king of glory. He's the one who can ascend to the hill of the Lord. He's the one who can stand in the holy presence of God and be blessed by him.

We are called to reflect upon this. We are called to reflect upon the holiness of God's place of worship. We are called to reflect upon the type of person that can approach God.

The only type of person who can approach God. And the type of worship that God wants to receive once he has approached God. God then determines the conditions of all things.

The worship, the holiness, who can actually ascend. So how is it that people like you and I this morning are able to approach God? How is it that we can actually come into his presence and know his blessing upon us?

And so the question that we are faced with, if I'm to be this type of person in order to worship God, how can I be this type of person in order to worship God? If I am called by God to ascend to this mountain, this hill, and stand in his holy place, how can I if I'm not like God?

[19 : 38] How can I give what God requires out of my life if I do not have it in my life to give it to him? Well the psalm is indicating a couple of things that you know off by heart hopefully, that no person can ever save themselves.

But then no person has to because the king of glory comes. This psalm is not without hope but it wants to set the hope in the utterness of the despair that is felt in the reality that none of us can actually ascend to the hill.

We have the king of glory who comes precisely because we need the king of glory to come. The unholy person cannot worship God and cannot approach God.

The unholy person cannot draw near to him and therefore the unholy person cannot be blessed by him. Without the holiness of God you cannot see him.

Or to put it simply no holiness no heaven. No holiness no heaven. It really is as simple as that. So the question for the Christian the one who's been given this holiness the one who's been given this righteousness the one who's been given this salvation by the king of glory now means that we ask the question of how do we cultivate that faithfulness in our own heart that we can receive enter into God's presence and receive his blessing.

[21 : 07] We are the person who can today ascend to the hill. We are the person who can stand in his holy place but we are only that person because of what the king of glory has done for us.

We are the only person we can only be that person that God can bless because he has already blessed us with the king of glory. The king of glory is the one who stood in our place taking upon our sin and so that we might receive this righteousness and salvation verse 5.

Our God is the God of salvation. Our God is the God of righteousness of holiness of goodness of mercy and while Jesus Christ is not mentioned here explicitly he's clearly mentioned here in everything that's said.

God requires something from you and he gives you Jesus in order so that you can give him worship. Now you begin to understand your purpose. Now you begin to understand the reason why God gave you his son.

Now you begin to understand the value placed upon the death of Christ on the cross. What is the value of a sinless life? Jesus' death. What is the value of a person worshipping God?

[22 : 24] What price tag can you put on that? The death of Christ. What is the value of being able to ascend to the hill of the Lord? The death of Christ. What is the value of you being able to stand in God's holy place?

The death of Christ. Jesus isn't mentioned but he's mentioned everywhere. Because heaven looks down and cannot find a person but then spots the king of glory. And who is that king of glory?

Well he is the Lord of hosts. He is Christ Jesus who comes to seek and to save the lost. And it is by virtue of your relationship with him that it's only possible because of him that you're able to enter into God's presence this morning and be blessed with God's presence.

There's no other way. There is no other way to receive any kind of blessing from God other than through the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words this psalm causes us to reflect on why God gave you his son.

He gave you his son so that you could worship him, so that you could ascend to the hill, so that you could stand in his holy place. Jesus gives us the holiness we need to approach God.

[23 : 38] Jesus gives us the holiness we need to approach God. But this doesn't mean that we're there not to pursue holiness. If Jesus has given us everything then I can just sit back and just be taken along.

No, that's not what it means. The holiness that God gives us comes with obedience, it comes with blessing, it comes with many of the things that God wants to see in our life. Because God knows that your outward life is simply a reflection of your inward life.

Your outward sacrifice is simply a reflection of Christ in your life. The commitment that you make to God this morning or any other day is simply a reflection of your heart.

There is no way that you can hide your heart before God. He sees it inwardly and he sees it outwardly because the outward life according to this psalm is a direct correlation to the inward life.

Your clean hands is a reflection of your pure heart and a dirty heart will come out in dirty hands. And here when it speaks of clean hands it's not of course speaking of clean hands in that sense but of clean actions that your actions are reflective of the condition of your heart.

[24 : 56] The outward life is completely dependent on the inward life. And so many of you are sat here recognizing that your Christian life is not what it could be.

Not because Christ hasn't done everything for you but because you don't cultivate the faithfulness that God has given you. You don't cultivate the holiness that God has given you.

You don't cultivate the blessings that God has given you. It says that God's grace is sufficient but sometimes we're quite willing to argue with God of whether or not it is sufficient. God has given us the grace to make the effort and that effort comes with the grace to make the effort in the first place.

In other words what you're being called to do is not serve the church better but to worship God more. And the reason you're being called to this this day, we're all being called to it in the same way, is so that the rest of the week can be shaped by it.

What happens today is to determine the rest of the week, is to shape the rest of the week. The rest of the week should be shaped by what happens in churches this day.

[26 : 07] It only, our prayer is that that would happen. So what does it mean then to receive the blessing of God? As you come to God you receive a blessing.

Well the person must understand that if they are to worship God, they're to worship God according to his word. In other words God makes everything fit together and it will not fit together in any other way.

The word of God is what tells us how things fit together. It is the standard. It's what teaches us what is acceptable from what is unacceptable.

And you'll notice that as a pastor I'm not putting any demands on you as a people other than what the word of God is telling us all to do in terms of worship God properly.

This isn't a style council where we can then say this is how you need to worship God this morning. God is telling us how to worship him this morning. Now the king of glory is the one who sets his approach properly.

[27 : 08] He is the one who we look to to understand how we are to worship God. God is and because we have been converted because we have been saved we have been brought into God's righteousness by the king of glory through his life death and resurrection.

We have that immediate blessing that immediate blessing of relationship with God that immediate blessing of righteousness and holiness and the idea that we can never ever be separated from God.

You cannot improve your Christian life or God's blessing upon you by adding up the amount of prayers. I once met a minister who said, well I've not had much time to prepare for my sermon this week, I'm really going to have to pray.

And I thought well if it came down to that we're all in trouble. If it came down to just the amount of time we had to prepare, then we're all in trouble.

What we need is more prayer. What we need is to take heart of the apostles who split their day 50-50. Half of it was spent in declaring the word of God to the people of God and the other half was spent in prayer.

[28 : 23] What else did they do? No, their lives were pretty boring or exciting depending on how you look at their ministry. Giving over completely to what God expects to be done.

Only the king of glory can approach God and only those who belong to the king of glory through his life, death and resurrection can approach God. This means that only a Christian can approach God.

It is the Christian's prayer that God hears. It is the Christian who receives the blessing from the Lord. It's not anyone else. It's only that person by virtue of belonging to the king of glory.

Jesus is the one who brings us into the blessing of God. God. But that doesn't mean that we are not to be mindful of our actions, what we do with our hands, or our heart, what we desire.

This is why the person who can ascend to the hill of the Lord is the one in verse 4, the person who has clean hands and a pure heart. And the reason for this is because God controls the conditions of all things.

[29 : 31] things. And this is something that I really want you to think about a lot. The condition of all things. When we use that illustration of putting up our hand before the teacher is finished speaking, and then realizing that we don't have a question because if we only listen to the teacher finish speaking, we would recognize he's answered everything that we could possibly want to know.

God does the same in his word. That if we only finish listening to him speaking, there our hands would go up far less than what they do. It's not that we wouldn't have questions, but we would recognize that far more of our questions have actually been answered simply by spending time listening to God.

And the reason for this is because God controls the conditions of all things. God created us as worshippers in the beginning, and God recreated us as worshippers after the fall in the Lord Jesus Christ.

God has to determine the condition of all things because of the purpose for which you are made. He has to control the conditions of everything in order to bring everything together.

And this kind of sovereign power of God is not something to be frightened of, but something to actually rejoice in. That every moment of my life, even when I'm sat in the house, that the dust might that falls through the air is the very one that God has positioned.

[31 : 00] That not one is there by accident, but it's there exactly in the will and plan of God. We belong to a God who has hands-on experience with us.

So as we live our life before God, and we live our life in these patterns, the sensitive Christian has been able to recognize that God causes some things to flourish in our lives and some things to come to an end.

And we can't understand why sometimes. We don't understand why God allows some things to flourish and other things to come to an end. But the sensitive Christians knows that God is doing it.

The one who's sensitive to the work of God in their life begins to realize, as we will see in Hosea this evening, a very important book for all Christians, is that God determines the conditions of our life so that we would know the heart of God better.

And this is what is happening here in this psalm. The Christian can flourish and the Christian can fall on hard times. And God is the cause of both of them.

[32 : 09] God has to determine the cause of all things. And the sensitive believer knows that God is doing it. The sensitive believer is aware that God is doing it because he's aware that it cannot be anything else.

There's nothing more important or more powerful than God. God is not battling against someone else for control over the world. No, he has total control over his whole world.

And this is why this psalm is far-reaching. It addresses all the issues that are not spoken of directly but are spoken of throughout. It raises the issue of sin because we don't have clean hands or a pure heart.

It raises therefore the condition of our unholiness God. We cannot approach God. If we want to approach God we can only approach it if it's made possible for us.

God provides for us in such a way that we are able to respond to God in the ways that God wants. And he does that by giving us the king of glory. God controls the conditions of all things.

[33 : 15] He's the one who brings order out of chaos. I am where I am for no other reason than God is determined in time past that this is where I would be. I might rail against that and say why but saying why doesn't change it.

So I can either live cultivating faithfulness to a God who has that type of power or I can try and rally against it by doing my own thing.

Now what are you going to do with a God who can control everything? How can you go up against someone like that and possibly win? Well you can't.

So here's the exhortation as we close. Not every person can approach God. The question is whether or not you are a person who can approach God.

And the only person who can approach God is the person whose life has been brought to God by God, by the Lord Jesus Christ. There is nothing we can do to merit salvation and there is nothing that we can do to merit blessing.

[34 : 19] everything that we have is from God. Everything fits together because it comes from the God who controls all things. But we should not think at this point that our faithfulness doesn't matter, that our praying life doesn't matter, that our worship of God doesn't matter, that our sacrifice of other things in order to put God first doesn't matter.

They all matter. Because what God gives you is the grace of blessing in terms of the obedience to do that. We are called to then obey God in such a way that we bring God's favor upon ourselves.

This isn't earning it, this isn't meriting it, this is simply cultivating the very thing that God has given us. This means the person who does worship God with clean hands and a pure heart, who is mindful of repenting of their sin like we have done this morning.

And you're saying, hang on a minute, you didn't do that like you normally do. No, I did it before I came to church. church. church. church. church. church. So when I say like we have done this morning, I'm reflecting more on the fact of whether or not you have done this morning before you came to church.

So we recognize that when we finish reading God's word, we are motivated to do things that we wouldn't naturally want to do on our own. God causes God causes God causes us to do these things when we spend time with him.

[35 : 41] So there is a strong place here to recognize that as you cultivate faithfulness in your own life, you will encourage God's favor upon your life. There's no doubt about that. And that's not a merit salvation, that is simply the reality of God's blessing.

That those who worship God in the way that God wants to be worshipped according to his word, will incur, bring upon themselves, God's blessing, verse 5.

There's a strong place here to recognize that while you are saved by grace through faith alone, that grace is not alone.

It comes with obedience, it comes with faithfulness, it comes with a motivation to cultivate a proper form of worship in your life. It comes with blessings in order that you may receive more blessings.

God wants to bless you, but he's decided to bless you in a particularly orderly way. And the way that he decides to do that is by giving you obedience, is by giving you faithfulness, is by giving you righteousness and salvation, things that you then cultivate through worship.

[36 : 50] Not that you're earning anything, but you're simply living out the blessings that God has given you. Why? Because God has to determine the condition of all things. He has to do that because we could never do it on our own.

So when we seek to answer the question, what does God's goodness look like in my life? It might be tempting simply to look to the material possessions that you have. God's goodness looks like me not being unwell.

God's goodness looks like me getting out of hospital early. God's goodness looks like me being able to have enough food on the table. God's goodness looks like me being able to have clothes to wear, somewhere to live, shelter.

That's what God's goodness looks like. And that's certainly true that that is what God's goodness looks like. But what God's goodness looks like here in the life of the believer is that they're able to worship God.

The goodness of God in the life of the believer is seen in that he, she, is able to approach God. That's the goodness of God. God is good to you, because you're able to worship him in spirit and in truth, because you belong to Christ Jesus.

[38 : 05] That's God's goodness. So here's the final thought as we close. It seems to me that the best way to start a new year, though we're a few days into it, granted, is by recognizing that what comes out of our life in the outward actions directly correlates to what is in our life to begin with.

To begin with. The outward is a reflection of the inward, and the inward life will produce the outward life that God wants to see. It follows then that if we cultivate the things that God has given us, the blessings that God has given us, that we will receive the promised favor of God, verse 5.

And we recognize that as we worship God according to his word, he will bless us. He will bless us. Now this again, if I can just add, laid on thick, is not a merit theology.

It is simply recognizing that God pours out his blessing on those who approach him properly. The outward life is completely dependent on the inward life.

And so I'll finish with this. You may have many questions that you want to ask God, but I will encourage you this morning not to put your hand up and ask him before he's finished speaking.

[39 : 21] speaking. It's tempting just like a young child asking a teacher to put their hand up with the several questions that they have before the teacher is finished speaking. But God speaks to us in the way that he does, in the order that he does, so that we may understand the things that we need for here and now.

God will take care of tomorrow, tomorrow, and he'll take care of today for you today. Amen.