

Creator & King

Psalm 33

Psalm 33 picks up where Psalm 32 left off: “Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, you righteous; and shout for joy, all you upright and heart!” David describes wonderful work of God as creator and king, ruling this world and fulfilling the hope and promises which He delivered. Here we set our joy on the foundation of knowing God. He never changes, so we wait for Him.

Summary of the Text

This psalm is a catalogue of praise. It begins exhorting the congregation to rejoice and praise with harp, strings, new songs, and shouts of joy (vv. 1-3). We then encounter reasons to worship Him. His word and work are right and have filled the earth (vv. 4-5). He made the heavens, gathered the seas, spoke a sure word and it was done (vv. 6-9). He confounds the schemes of the nations by His wise counsel and blesses the nation whose God is the Lord (vv. 10-12). The Lord knows every individual on the earth and He rules omnipotently, delivering those who fear Him (vv. 13-19). Because God is like this, we can be patient, waiting on our hope and shield; let His mercy be upon us as we do (vv. 20-22).

Fitting Praise

The upright ought to rejoice in Yahweh because it is fitting and beautiful (v. 1). We are *homo adorans*, worshiping creatures, so we should worship the creator and not creation. The unwise believe they are at mercy their emotions, so this makes no sense. How is possible to rejoice when you don't feel like it? The answer is to do it anyway, and eventually you will feel like it. People who will not discipline their emotions really are controlled by them, but as George MacDonald said, “Obedience is the opener of eyes.” Faithfulness is doing the right thing when you don't feel like doing it, which over time will bring emotion and action and into alignment. Just as the necessity to read Scripture drove Christians to create schools and invent universities, so the need to praise the Lord means we must learn instruments, sing new songs, and grow in our ability to sing and play skillfully (vv. 2-3). David the warrior poet leads the people of God—men included—to sing well and loudly.

Word & Work

David compares and describes the word and work of God. His word is right and His work is truth (v. 4). Normally His words are acclaimed as true and His actions as right, but there's no distance between them. The Son is the Word of God: “God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds” (Heb. 1:1-2). The Father created through the Word, through the Son, and the Spirit carries out the Word: “And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters” (Gen. 1:2). This is why we are to be logo-centric, focused on the word of God. The presence of sin, as David just confessed and taught about (Ps. 32), doesn't change God's love for righteousness and justice nor prevent His goodness from filling the earth (v. 5). Marveling at this puts sin in perspective and causes great rejoicing. Look up and see the galaxies (or at least ours, the Milky Way with hundreds of billions of stars), or down nearly seven miles to the bottom of the Mariana Trench, fear the Lord and stand in awe; He merely spoke and it was done (vv. 8-9).

Lord of Nations

It's common and tempting to enjoy and honor God in the beauty of creation, but then consider the sordid affairs of men and despair. David doesn't. Just as God appointed creation, so He brings the counsel of the nations to nothing (v. 10). Just as the formless and void earth posed no problem to God's creative plans, so He

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makes the rebellious plans of the peoples to no effect. Does He miss a beat or lose control of a generation? No, His counsel stands forever, the plans of His heart to all generations (v. 11). God overcomes the plans of those who oppose Him, and He blesses the nation whose God is the Lord, the chosen of His inheritance (v. 12). Every nation has a god, an ultimate standard and object of worship. If a nation defines itself apart from a named deity, and says democracy is the only standard, then *demos*, the will of the people is honored above all. When the people decide that a part of the population is less valuable than another (unborn, Jewish, black, white, Christian, Asian, Muslim, etc.), then “thus saith Democracy.” But the nation whose God is the Lord is blessed. David doesn’t simply say “Israel is blessed.” Though a chosen nation, Israel was a to be a priestly nation that interceded for and led the other nations to the Lord (Ex. 19:5-6). We know Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah (Jon. 3:10), and all the nations are told to “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way” (Ps. 2:12). All the nations are Christian nations in the sense that they answer to Christ the King of kings and Lord of lords. But in Psalm 2 the Father invites the Son to “Ask of Me, and I will give you the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession” (v. 8). Did Jesus do that? Did He pick a couple? In the great commission, He told the apostles to disciple *all* the nations (Matt. 28:18-20). This is why every Christian in every nation prays for his people to know and honor the Lord.

The God Who Knows

God interacts with nations as nations, but not to the exclusion of individuals whose hearts He fashioned one by one (vv. 13-15). The Lord knows particularly, which is why everyone will give an account to Him. He knows and we know that He knows. He knows that many deny that He knows, and this changes exactly nothing. The existence and providence of God makes men culpable for rejecting Him. Instead of looking to God for mercy and security, men trust in horses and chariots, armies and weaponry. Our armed forces and capabilities are deteriorating because of pride and rebellion, and so many look for regime change to restore military and economic might. But David says no king is saved by his great army or mighty man (*gibor*) by great strength (v. 16). When Israel faces Midian with 32,000 soldiers, the Lord tells Gideon, “You have too many soldiers with you for me to drop Midian into their hands, because Israel would become arrogant and say, ‘It was my own abilities that delivered me’” (Jdgs. 7:2). He whittles it down to 300 men (the less than 1%!) and defeats the Midianites. Unbelief looks at the odds. Faith looks to God. Unbelief thinks it’s too hard. Faith wonders if it’s hard enough. Will I glorify God after He blesses me or will I be tempted to think I did it on my own?

Praise & Patience

David and the Lord’s people wait for Him to deliver. He prepares now to look back on this time of waiting and to rejoice in God, His help and shield (vv. 20-21). Faith and presumption can look and even sometimes sound identical. The difference lies in the object of trust. Everything in this Psalm is true, but God still needs act today. How you hope makes all the difference. “Let Your mercy, O Lord, be upon us, just as we hope in You” (v. 22). We wait patiently only while praising Him, our Creator and King.