

November 12, 2017
Sunday Morning Service
Series: Psalms
Community Baptist Church
643 S. Suber Road
Greer, SC 29650
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To Ponder . . .

Questions to ponder as we prepare to hear from Psalm 33.

1. Why don't we shout for joy while we worship?
2. List four characteristics of worship found in verses 1-3.
3. List three characteristics of music used in worship according to verse 3.
4. List three reasons why we should worship God according to verses 4-11.
5. Are you glad that God watches you all the time?

BEHOLD THE EYE OF THE LORD
Psalm 33

A thief broke into a house one night while the owners were gone. He was scanning the house with a flashlight when he heard a voice say, "Jesus is watching you." Frightened, he stopped for a minute wondering what or where the owner of the voice was. After a few moments of silence, the thief resumed his task of looking for valuables. Again, he heard the voice, "Jesus is watching you." Determined to find who was saying this, the man began to scan the room with his flashlight. Over in the corner he saw a cage with a bird in it. He walked over to the cage, shined his light on the bird and said, "You're not Jesus. You're just a parrot." The bird answered him. "I'm Polly. Jesus is the rottweiler."

I fear that is the common opinion or view of the Lord. To many people who actually believe there is a God, they see Him as an enforcer who is watching, daring someone to break a rule so that He can quickly strike them. That twisted view might be why a lot of people try to believe there is no God. A common theme echoed in surveys today is that a great sense of freedom comes when you decide to quit believing in God.

Well, actually, people who are at odds with God (and that is everyone by nature) ought to be afraid of God. They ought to see God as their eternal Judge. They ought to sense the guilt every day of breaking God's rules, rejecting God's authority, and choosing to be God's enemy. The collection of Psalms is full of references to people like that who, because they are opposed to God, are liable for God's judgment. An adversary of some kind who is against God and God's people is referenced in about 125 of the 150 psalms. In Psalm 33 the adversary is the nations, the people whose plans God frustrates.

And yet, the vast majority of God's people read the psalms regularly in order to find comfort and encouragement. In fact, surveys regularly indicate that the collection of psalms is the favorite part of the Bible for God's people, especially when we are troubled, distressed, discouraged and in general need of encouraging. The psalms reveal the heart of God's people as they come to Him in prayer. Often the psalms, like this thirty-third psalm, remind us that God is, God knows, God cares, and God is able.

We who love God are delighted that He sees us. We are not like Adam and Eve who tried to escape God's presence because of their sin. We love the fact that God observes all the activity of all people, all the time, all over the earth. More than that, we delight that we, His people, are the special focus of our loving Heavenly Father. True worship is to acknowledge God's omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, and bow before it with thoughts and words of praise and adoration. We rejoice to have God's eye upon us.

A Call to Worship (vv.1-11).

David has offered us an instructive picture of worship in this psalm. First, he pictured worship as a shout for joy. *Shout for joy in the LORD, O you righteous (v.1a)*! It is important to acknowledge that this is a command for the righteous person. We really should not expect unrighteous people to even think about rejoicing in God. But the righteous person ought to.

The righteous person is the one who is achieving the required standard. The required standard is the law of God. But we also know that no one has ever lived on that level perfectly except Jesus Christ, God the Son. For the Old Testament saints righteousness was a matter of direction of life. Did the person desire to please God? If he was righteous, yes. Did the person offer sacrifices for sin with an eye of faith expecting God to offer the complete sacrifice for sin in the future through the “Seed of the Woman”? That is what righteousness looked like.

We are greatly privileged in comparison. We obtain righteousness by grace through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. We work out that righteousness in real life by grace through faith in God’s Word.

Therefore, if we are striving through God’s grace to live according to the standard that pleases Him, we should be “shouting for joy.” This word describes what the Old Testament people would do when they rehearsed God’s acts of salvation for His people. They rejoiced when they remembered acts such as God’s deliverance of the people from Egypt. Or when God delivered a city from the enemy. That being true, then we who have been delivered from the guilt of sin should express joy for that. We who are experiencing victory over sin in life—even particular sins—should rejoice.

Of course, shouting is not altogether acceptable in our culture or our sub-culture, but we ought to experience overwhelming joy when we think about God’s acts of salvation in our behalf.

Second, worship looks like praise. *Praise befits the upright (v.1b)*. Praise is various expressions of thanksgiving and acknowledgment. Praise considers who God is and what God does. Praise is a response to knowledge of God’s person and works. The person who is ignorant of God’s Word is not able to offer accurate assessment of God’s work.

A primary trait of praise is thanksgiving. This response to God is a beautiful thing, an acceptable thing for the upright. The upright is the person who lives righteously (cf. the previous thoughts on righteousness). If we are living in conformity to God’s character, we ought to be known as people who are thankful to God. We ought to be known as people who assess God correctly and declare that assessment.

Third, worship is a matter of expressing thanksgiving. David told us to *Give thanks to the LORD with the lyre; make melody to him with the harp of ten strings (v.2)*! It is not only possible but commanded, that we use instruments to give thanks to God. In this we cannot forget that God is the object and recipient of the thanks. The object of our worship is not ourselves and the primary focus is not our feelings.

Worship should be an expression of thanksgiving and praise to God in which we first set our focus on God, contemplate all the astonishing truth we know about God, then pluck the string accordingly. Shouting, rejoicing, praise, and thanksgiving is not noise. These expressions of joy, praise, and thanks are made with melody. The word melody speaks of pleasant music that is fitting for God. Our view, our opinion of God will not only be expressed in the text of our songs but in the sound of our songs.

Fourth, worship of God will also involve music that we sing, play, and shout. *Sing to him a new song; play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts (v.3)*. Verbs like sing, play, shout are all outward expressions of what is within. Our praise music to God accomplishes exactly what Jesus taught when He said, “*The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks*” (Luke 6:45).

Notice the character of this music. It is new. The Hebrew word that is translated “new” in English speaks of something fresh. It comes from the root that means refreshed or renewed or repaired. This is not a command to write new music for every worship service.

Rather the idea is that music we use to praise and thank God should be new, or renewed, compared to music of our mundane world and life. It seems like that which is fitting for God would be

superior to that which is mundane, typical, and normal for mere sinning people.

At the very least, there ought to be a distinction between music about people and music that addresses and praises God.

I am satisfied to conclude for myself that Rock music is typically about alcohol abuse, drug abuse, sexual abuse, and relational abuse and sounds that way. Country/Western music is about losing your wife, your job, your truck, and your dog and sounds that way. Pop rock is about human relationships and feelings and sounds that way. Music about God ought to sound superior to all of those.

A second trait of this music is that it is played skillfully. If the music is directed to God, for God's glory, how can we be slipshod about it? In the Old Testament it is obvious that God gifted musicians to play at the temple to worship. Can we not assume that the spiritual gifts of the New Testament would also include musical ability? Skilled musicians must use their "talents" to worship God in the assembly if they are indeed redeemed people equipped to serve God by serving others.

There is no room for mediocrity in our praise and worship to God. I wonder sometimes what it would be like to be cast into a dilemma in this matter. As Pat and I visit other assemblies while we are on vacation, we experience a broad array of kinds of worship. I ponder what it would be like not to have the choice of good worship music done well. Would I rather experience bad music done well or good music done poorly? We should never be satisfied to do God-honoring music poorly.

Notice again that trait of *loud shouts*. Again the words describe extreme thankfulness welling up in the soul and bursting forth. We do have to temper this for our culture and setting. We do not grieve with loud weeping and wailing like the ancients did. Neither do we praise with loud shouts.

So why bother to worship God? It seems like a large number of people go to various kinds of churches all over this nation and never begin to do such a thing. We have good and compelling reasons to worship (vv.4-11).

We should worship because of God's character (vv.4-5). *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 (vv.4-5). Here we are reminded that God is upright.

The word "upright" is the same Hebrew word that showed up in verse one to describe people who praise God. This means that the Word of the Lord, the Bible, is as straight as an arrow. God's Word establishes the path, the boundaries of life's road. Only that is the right and straight path.

This is the truth Solomon taught regarding the wisdom of God's Word. *Does not wisdom call? Does not understanding raise her voice? . . . To you, O men, I call, and my cry is to the children of man . . . All the words of my mouth are righteous; there is nothing twisted or crooked in them . . . They are all straight to him who understands, and right to those who find knowledge (Proverbs 8:1,4,8,9).* We must praise and assess God accurately because His Word is the standard of straightness, what is right and acceptable.

God's character (the reason for our worship) also reveals that He is faithful. *And all his work is done in faithfulness (v.4b).* Everything that God ever does is in conformity with, fidelity to His Word. When God pours out His blessing, it will be true to His Word.

When God judges sin, allows natural disasters, casts the final sentence to the lake of fire, it is in conformity to His Word. When God saves a person from the penalty and dismisses his or her guilt forever, it is in faithfulness to covenants and promises. Praise and thank God because He is faithful.

God's character is that He loves righteousness. *He loves righteousness and justice (v.5a).* God is perfect righteousness. Therefore, He loves righteousness and justice. He determines what is right and just. He delights to see it practiced among His people.

And God is steadfast love. Indeed *the earth is full of the steadfast love of the LORD (v.5b).* The earth overflows with evidence that God keeps His Word. Steadfast love is unchanging, unmitigated love that is rooted in God's covenants. God's love cannot waver because it is firmly fixed in what He has already promised. That is why no one can possibly pluck the redeemed saint from God's hand.

Praise and thank God because He is changeless.

Worship God not only because of His righteous character, but because He is Creator (vv.6-9). God spoke and all things came into being. *By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host (v.6). For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm (v.9).*

Many professing Christians spend much time trying to figure out ways to marry the infidel's denial of God's creation with the clear statements of God's Word. Righteous people accept God's Word by faith even though it is spectacular. We cannot begin to explain how God spoke all things into existence with a word. But we believe it enough to die for it, right? Bow before this God, praise and thank Him in worship.

In that process of creating all things, it is obvious that God does the unexplainable. *He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap; he puts the deeps in storehouses (v.7).* At creation God ordered a separation between the waters above the earth and the waters on the earth. He made the seas and determines where they will be heaped up. Go to the seashore and marvel that the millions of square miles and trillions of cubic feet of ocean always stop at the same place. Go back next year and marvel that the same ocean still stops at the same place. God controls that.

God even put water in storehouses. This is probably a reference to water that God placed within the earth. This would be the depths that God broke up at the worldwide flood. And yet, still these waters are kept in storehouses. For example, a man builds a house out in the country. There is no city water available. What will he do? He will bore down through the earth. Sometimes he needs to bore two hundred feet or more. Eventually he finds water. He sinks a pump into that abyss and draws water to meet the needs of his family for fifty years. Is he thankful for the fact that God puts the deeps in storehouses? Let the well run dry and see how he feels.

The only right response to such an amazing God is awe! *Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him (v.8)!* The person who trusts God's Word will stand in awe of God. That ought to be the foundation of our worship. Sadly, the common response is denial of God, His work and His Word.

We worship God because of His character. We worship God because of His creative acts. We also worship God because of His counsel (vv.10-11). God nullifies the wisdom of human counselors. *The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples (v.10).* But at the same time, God's counsel is never nullified. *The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations (v.11).* That God watches you and me.

Worship in Light of God's Observation (vv.12-22).

A culture is wise to trust in God (vv.12-17). Some cultures are chosen and blessed. *Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage (v.12)!* Obviously, this statement applied to the nation of Israel. David was well aware that Israel was God's special nation. He formed them from Abraham's lineage exactly as He promised He would. He delivered them from the slavery of Egypt, established them in the Promised Land and blessed them. The people took God's blessing for granted and rejected Him.

In a similar way, the Church is the people of God. We are not a nation in the sense that we compete with other nations of this world.

The real Church, the Body of Christ, does not have an embassy like the heretical, false church of Rome. We who are part of the Body of Christ are very much God's chosen people. God has chosen us individually to be His people. We are all brought into this "people group" the same way (by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ). We are the heritage of God, the recipients of His inheritance because we are joint heirs with Christ. We are blessed in more ways than we can imagine.

True also is the fact that we cannot deny that God raised up the culture of what we call America for His own purposes. There is abundant evidence of God's call and supernatural establishment of this culture. God did use this culture in the past to accomplish much for the Kingdom of God. God clearly did bless us in the past. But America is not Israel and America is not the Church.

Some cultures God blesses in a special way. But God creates and observes all cultures. *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 (vv.13-15).*

No one escapes the eye of God. That reality is impossible to explain in human terms. It is also a truth easy to forget and it is a truth popular to deny. No one escapes responsibility to their Creator who sits on His throne and watches each of the creatures He created.

He who fashioned our eternal soul, the seat of our intellect, will, and emotions, holds us accountable to Himself.

It is human nature to reject God our Creator and turn for security to the passing things that are so visible. Military strength is no savior. *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 (vv.16-17).* For a time it would appear that we can have “peace through strength.” But if the very fiber of a culture is corrupt, the implements of might and protection will be turned against the very people they are supposed to protect. Military armament cannot protect because those items are controlled by sinful humans.

Rather, we are privileged to rest in the knowledge that God watches His people (vv.18-22). The LORD’s eye is on those who fear Him. *Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love, (v.18).* He watches carefully those who depend on Him. How unexplainable but how wonderful that my Creator’s eye is fixed on me. The idea here is God’s eye is on us for good and not for evil. If we have awesome respect for God, we should delight that He is watching us. If our hope is fixed on, resting on, God’s steadfast, unchanging love, we should rejoice that He watches us.

He watches us in order to deliver our soul from death. *That he may deliver their soul from death and keep them alive in famine (v.19).* Notice that God does not deliver the body from death. Our bodies are going to die in some way some day. But our loving God preserves our eternal soul and delivers us to Himself. Notice that

God does not deliver us FROM the famine. He preserves us IN the famine.

God’s people do endure testings and difficult times. But all the time God’s eye is on us and He is watching as He tempers us and conforms us to the image of His son.

The sensible response to such a wonderful God is for us to rest in Him. We rest, knowing who and what our LORD is. *Our soul waits for the LORD; he is our help and our shield (v.20).* He is the LORD, the ever-existing, self-existing, loving heavenly father. He is our help in times of need. He is our shield in times of danger.

We are glad while we trust. *For our heart is glad in him, because we trust in his holy name (v.21).* It is only sensible for people who God loves, cares for, and protects to be glad about Him. If we really trust in God’s holy character, we should be glad in Him all the time. Therefore, we pray and hope. *Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us, even as we hope in you (v.22).* We deeply desire for God to show His unchanging, unwavering love to us. True hope in God is daily dependance on God.

If the only time we talk to God, pray, and hope is when we are in trouble, we need to question our relationship with Him. We should delight that God watches us and pays attention to how we are responding to His work in our lives. That delight will translate into worship. Personal worship as we spend time with God reading His Word, praying, and meditating on His truths. Family worship as we gather our families around the Bible and pray.

Corporate worship as we meet together and praise God for His glory. Is it possible that the reason much corporate worship in the visible church is weak, shallow, fluffy, or downright heretical is because the people in the church never worship God during the week? If we really know and care that God’s eye is on us all the time, we will worship Him in a way that honors Him.