

# **Christ's Advent in the Psalms**

## **He Heals the Brokenhearted**

*Psalm 147:1-20*

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## He Heals the Brokenhearted

### Scripture

During this Season of Advent, we have been looking at “Christ’s Advent in the Psalms.”

Today I want to conclude our study by looking at Psalm 147. One commentator notes that “the Book of Psalms began with ‘Blessed is the man’ (1:1) and it ends with a sustained, five-fold equivalent of ‘Blessed be the Lord’ (Psalms 146-150). In these psalms there is no reference to personal need, no petition, little that could be called historical allusion; all is focused on God; all is praise.”<sup>1</sup> That is true of Psalm 147, in which the Psalmist gives us several reasons for praising the Lord.

Let us read Psalm 147:1:

**<sup>1</sup>Praise the Lord!**

**For it is good to sing praises to our God;  
for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting.**

**<sup>2</sup>The Lord builds up Jerusalem;  
he gathers the outcasts of Israel.**

**<sup>3</sup>He heals the brokenhearted  
and binds up their wounds.**

**<sup>4</sup>He determines the number of the stars;  
he gives to all of them their names.**

**<sup>5</sup>Great is our Lord, and abundant in power;  
his understanding is beyond measure.**

**<sup>6</sup>The Lord lifts up the humble;  
he casts the wicked to the ground.**

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<sup>1</sup> J. A. Motyer, “The Psalms,” in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 580.

<sup>7</sup> Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving;  
make melody to our God on the lyre!

<sup>8</sup> He covers the heavens with clouds;  
he prepares rain for the earth;  
he makes grass grow on the hills.

<sup>9</sup> He gives to the beasts their food,  
and to the young ravens that cry.

<sup>10</sup> His delight is not in the strength of the horse,  
nor his pleasure in the legs of a man,

<sup>11</sup> but the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him,  
in those who hope in his steadfast love.

<sup>12</sup> Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem!  
Praise your God, O Zion!

<sup>13</sup> For he strengthens the bars of your gates;  
he blesses your children within you.

<sup>14</sup> He makes peace in your borders;  
he fills you with the finest of the wheat.

<sup>15</sup> He sends out his command to the earth;  
his word runs swiftly.

<sup>16</sup> He gives snow like wool;  
he scatters frost like ashes.

<sup>17</sup> He hurls down his crystals of ice like crumbs;  
who can stand before his cold?

<sup>18</sup> He sends out his word, and melts them;  
he makes his wind blow and the waters flow.

<sup>19</sup> He declares his word to Jacob,  
his statutes and rules to Israel.

<sup>20</sup> He has not dealt thus with any other nation;  
they do not know his rules.

**Praise the Lord!** (Psalm 147:1-20)

## Introduction

In his commentary on Psalm 147, Dr. James Montgomery

Boice writes:

In the last chapter, I mentioned an excellent study of what it means to worship God called *Reaching Out without Dumbing Down* by Marva J. Dawn. One of the points it makes is that much of what we call worship today is not worship at all but rather a glorification of ourselves. This is particularly true of what we often call “praise” songs. Dawn gives this example:

I will celebrate, sing unto the Lord.  
I will sing to God a new song. (repeat)  
I will praise God, I will sing to God a new song. (repeat)  
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah.  
I will sing to God a new song. (repeat)  
I will celebrate, sing unto the Lord.  
I will sing to God a new song. (repeat) (Repeat all)

I have never heard that particular song, but it is a fair example of what we hear in many so-called worship services. The chorus seems to be praising God – it claims to be praising him – but it does not. As Dawn points out, “The verbs say *I will*, but in this song I don’t, because though God is mentioned as the recipient of my praise and singing, the song never says a single thing about or to God.”

What is the song about, then? If we look at it carefully, the answer is clear. With all the repeats, “I” is the subject twenty-eight times. Not God, but “I” myself. And not even myself along with other members of the covenant community, just “I.” “With that kind of focus,” says Dawn, “we might suppose that all the hallelujahs are praising how good I am... at celebrating and singing.” This is narcissism, a self-absorption characteristic of our contemporary secular culture. So if we are self-absorbed in worship, as we seem to be, it only means that we are worldly in our worship, and not spiritual, as we suppose. We are focused on ourselves.

The praise songs of the Psalter do not fall into this trap, which is one reason why they are such good models for our worship and why they should be used in Christian worship more often than they are. Psalms 146–50 in particular develop aspects of what it means to praise God....

Psalm 147 uses the pronoun “he,” which refers to God, fourteen times and “Lord” eight times. In other words, the psalm is about God, not ourselves. “I” does not occur once, and “our” is used just twice. Isn’t this how the worship of *God* should be done?<sup>2</sup>

When Nehemiah finished rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, the gates, and resettling the people, he called for a great celebration. Psalm 147 was likely written for that occasion (*cf.* vv. 2, 12-14; Nehemiah 12:27-43). Psalm 147 has three sections and each section begins with a command for God’s people to praise him (in verses 1, 7, and 12).

## Lesson

Psalm 147:1-20 teaches us why we should praise the Lord. Let’s use the following outline:

1. He Cares for Us (147:1-6)
2. He Delights in Us (147:7-11)
3. He Rules over Us (147:12-20)

### I. He Cares for Us (147:1-3)

First, praise the Lord because he cares for us.

Psalm 147 begins with these words, **“Praise the LORD!”** (147:1a). It also closes with the same words, **“Praise**

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<sup>2</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *Psalms 107–150: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 1264–1265.

**the LORD!”** (147:20b). This is a translation of the Hebrew word “Hallelujah!” Thus, Psalm 147 is a song praising the greatness and goodness of the Lord.

The Psalmist continues in verse 1b, **“For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting.”** The Psalmist calls on the people of God to sing their praises to God. He says that **it is pleasant** and that **a song of praise is fitting**. God wants his people to sing his praises. He has given one entire book of canonical Scripture as a songbook for his people to sing his praises. God’s people in ancient times always had singers and musicians to lead the people of God in praise to their Almighty God.

The Psalmist writes in verses 2-4, **“The LORD builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the outcasts of Israel. He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names.”** In ancient days, the Lord gave David victory over the Jebusites so that he conquered the city that was known as Jerusalem (*cf.* 2 Samuel 5). Over time, the Lord built up Jerusalem. The ark of the covenant, which represented the visible presence of God with his people, was brought to Jerusalem. A temple was eventually built in Jerusalem to house the ark. The Lord gathered the outcasts and brokenhearted and he cared for them. The Lord can do this because he is Almighty.

This is a wonderful illustration of what the Lord does for us spiritually. All sinners are outcasts from God, from holiness, from heaven, and even from hope itself. But the Lord gathers sinners from all around the world and heals us. He washes us with the blood of Jesus. He gives us a new life and a new hope and a new name and a new destiny. Once we were alienated from God but now we are reconciled to him. Once we had no hope but now we have the joy of the Lord. Once we were lost

but now we are found. And the Lord can do this because he is Almighty. That is our God!

The Psalmist writes in verses 5-6, **“Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure. The LORD lifts up the humble; he casts the wicked to the ground.”** The Psalmist assures his readers that the Lord is all-powerful. He is not a local deity that has been fashioned according to the imagination of the minds of men. No, he is Almighty. Moreover, he alone has power to raise up the one who is truly humble, and he alone has power to debase the one who is opposed to himself. The Lord cares for us.

## II. He Delights in Us (147:7-11)

Second, praise the Lord because he delights in us.

The Psalmist writes in verse 7, **“Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; make melody to our God on the lyre!”** God is always good to his people. He is always gracious. He is always merciful. He is always kind. Therefore, God’s people are exhorted to respond with singing. The entire lives of God’s people are a response to God’s love. Moreover, God’s people are urged to use instruments to accompany their singing. Instruments such as the lyre assist people in the use of their voices.

At Christmas, we are reminded that this is the time of the year when gifts are given and received. Children who are old enough to anticipate the tradition of gifts at Christmas anxiously wait for what they hope they will receive on Christmas Day. Parents love to give gifts to their children. And children love to receive them. However, children often need to be taught to give thanks for the gifts they have received. In their excitement at receiving their gifts children forget to give thanks. And so, faithful parents gently teach their children to

give thanks for what they have received. How much more have the children of God received from our gracious Heavenly Father? How much more should we burst into songs of thanksgiving for all that our God gives to us? Let us be reminded of what Charles Spurgeon once wrote, “Jehovah is ever engaged in giving, let us respond with thanksgiving.”<sup>3</sup>

Verses 8-9 say, **“He covers the heavens with clouds; he prepares rain for the earth; he makes grass grow on the hills. He gives to the beasts their food, and to the young ravens that cry.”** The Psalmist notes that the Lord should be praised because of how he gives provisions to the animals and birds. He creates the clouds that produce the rain, which in turn makes grass grow for the animals and birds to eat. The Lord does this because he cares for his creation.

Verses 10-11 continue, **“His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the legs of a man, but the LORD takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love.”** The nations in ancient times prided themselves in their military might. **“Horse”** and **“legs”** suggest cavalry and infantry. However, the Psalmist says that the Lord does not look for mighty military power but rather he delights in those who revere him and hope in him.

### III. He Rules over Us (147:12-20)

And third, praise the Lord because he rules over us.

The Psalmist writes in verse 12, **“Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem! Praise your God, O Zion!”** The Psalmist exhorts the people of God to praise their God. Why should they do so? Because praise is the greatest of all duties. Because God’s

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<sup>3</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David: Psalms 120-150*, vol. 6 (London; Edinburgh; New York: Marshall Brothers, n.d.), 416.



people are prone to forget to praise their Creator and Redeemer. Because God's people are much more likely to advance petitions than praise to the throne of grace. Whatever the reason, God's people are urged to offer praise to their God.

Having just exhorted the people of God to praise the Lord, the Psalmist states why the Lord is to be praised in verses 13-18, **“For he strengthens the bars of your gates; he blesses your children within you. He makes peace in your borders; he fills you with the finest of the wheat. He sends out his command to the earth; his word runs swiftly. He gives snow like wool; he scatters frost like ashes. He hurls down his crystals of ice like crumbs; who can stand before his cold? He sends out his word, and melts them; he makes his wind blow and the waters flow.”** The Lord is in sovereign control of all things. He superintends all that happens in the world. Therefore, his people can have great confidence in him as he rules over them.

The Psalmist concludes Psalm 147 with these words, **“He declares his word to Jacob, his statutes and rules to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any other nation; they do not know his rules. Praise the LORD!”** This is a remarkable statement. God's people can praise the Lord because he rules over them. No other nation can claim that. They don't know God and they don't know his rules. Therefore, they stumble around in darkness. They do not know right from wrong. They do not know truth from error. But God's people do! And what a blessing it is to have a loving Heavenly Father who shows his people what to do in order to please him.

Christians are truly blessed people. We have a Father in heaven who loves us. He cares for us. He delights in us. And he rules over us. We don't obey his rules to earn his favor. We obey his rules because we already have his favor. Our great joy

and delight is to please our Father. We are so grateful to him for ruling over us by his Word. We never have to guess what pleases him. We never have to wonder if we are doing the right thing (or the wrong thing). The Lord has told us and we obey him with great thankfulness.

## Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed Psalm 147:1-20, let us be prepared for the Second Advent of Jesus.

In the 1880s, if you wanted a good life with a good job, you moved to Johnstown, PA. The Pennsylvania Main Line Canal came through town, so that brought jobs. So did the Pennsylvania Railroad. And the Cambria Iron Works. Families were moving in from Wales. From Germany. Not to mention there are beautiful mountains, covered with forest, all around town. And right through the town runs the Conemaugh River.

In fact, the area is so beautiful, the country's richest people – Andrew Carnegie and Andrew Mellon – would come out from Pittsburgh to hunt and fish at a private club up above town, where an old earth dam had been modified to make a fishing lake for them and many other rich and famous people.

On May 30, 1889, a huge rainstorm came through and dropped six to ten inches of rain. Despite that weather, the next day the town lined up along Main Street for the Memorial Day parade. The Methodist pastor, H. L. Chapman, said, "The morning was delightful, the city was in its gayest mood, with flags, banners, and flowers everywhere.... The streets were more crowded than we had ever seen before."

And then the old dam miles above town collapsed, releasing almost four billion gallons of water. When that wall of water and debris hit Johnstown 57 minutes later, it was 60 feet

high and traveling at 40 miles an hour. People tried to escape by running toward high ground. But over 2,000 of the 30,000 people in town died. Some bodies were found as far away as Cincinnati, and some were not discovered until 20 years later.

The Johnstown Flood remains one of the greatest tragedies in American history, behind only the Galveston Hurricane and the 9/11 terrorist attacks. And in every one of those cases, life was fine. Until it wasn't. In a moment, in a way that was unexpected and most people were not prepared for, something cataclysmic occurred, and people were swept away to their unexpected and unplanned deaths.<sup>4</sup>

Did you know that Jesus spoke about his Second Advent? Listen to what he said in Matthew 24:36-39, 44:

“But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.... Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

How can you be ready for the Second Advent of Jesus? You can be ready for the Second Advent of Jesus by repenting of your sin and believing that he paid the penalty for your sin.

Let me urge you to do so today. Don't get caught unprepared like the people of Johnstown, PA. Amen.

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<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2020/april/not-ready-for-flood.html>.

# Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church  
is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ  
and membership in his church family,  
develop them to Christlike maturity,  
equip them for their ministry in the church  
and life mission in the world,  
in order to magnify God's name.*

## Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

This sermon, and other sermons, by the Rev. Freddy Fritz can  
be found at:

1. [www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/sermons](http://www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/sermons).
2. [www.sermoncentral.com/contributors/freddy-fritz-sermons-11181.asp](http://www.sermoncentral.com/contributors/freddy-fritz-sermons-11181.asp).
3. [www.sermonaudio.com/source\\_detail.asp?sourceid=FreddyFritz](http://www.sermonaudio.com/source_detail.asp?sourceid=FreddyFritz).

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