

Horsley Evangelical Church ([www.horsleyec.org.uk](http://www.horsleyec.org.uk))

Minister: Rev Ken McIntosh 7<sup>th</sup> June 2020

## Psalm 33 Praise the Lord!

This Psalm is the fourth so far that is anonymous – the others being Psalms 1, 2 and 10. But perhaps Psalm 33 is placed here because it takes up the last verse of Psalm 32 and expands upon it. **Read Psalm 32:11**. One commentator describes it as a Psalm which ‘lifts our spirits and reminds us that God rules the world and that he cares for those who trust him’. Well we all need to hear portions of the Scripture which do that – and regularly.

It begins with **a call to praise the Lord** in verses 1-3. This is followed in verses 4-19 by **reasons for praising the Lord**. Then at the end in verses 20-22 we find **a response to the call to praise**. Well, may the Lord indeed *lift our spirits and remind us that he rules the world and cares for those who trust him*.

First in verses 1-3 we find **a call to praise the Lord**. **Read verses 1-3**. The call *to sing joyfully and praise the Lord* can also be translated ‘rejoice in the Lord’ because praising the Lord cannot be separated from the joy that the believer finds in him. The Lord is such a great God that if we belong to him, if he is our God and if we are in a covenant relationship with him, then what a glorious thing this is. How fortunate and blessed are we above all other people!

See how these opening lines pick up the last verse of Psalm 32. **Read Psalm 32:11**. The believer’s joy is in God; it comes from God. And there are many other verses in both Old Testament and New which tell us to be joyful in the Lord and rejoice in him continually. The ‘righteous’ here (1) are those who trust in him. The righteous trust in God’s word and in God’s mercy for the forgiveness of their sins and his leading them through life. And we are told here that it is fitting, appropriate and beautiful for the righteous to praise God. He has done so much for them.

Then verses 2 and 3 remind us that our praising and rejoicing should be done in an enthusiastic and sincere way. So those who accompany the singing of God’s praise are to play their instruments *skilfully*. They are to give it their best in order to encourage and help the worshippers. And then the worshippers are to sing *a new song*. Now that does mean that there is a place to sing new songs of worship. But it also means that the singing and praising of the Lord should be fresh and from a rejoicing heart. The singing of God’s praise should never be lacklustre or dull. Both the mind and the heart of the worshipper should be engaged. And with every new experience of God that we gain in life, there is to be a fresh response to God in singing and thanksgiving. As our relationship with the Lord develops and as we gain new insights into his character and kindness, this should move us afresh to praise him in a deeper and more fitting way.

**A call to praise the Lord**. And it’s the main business of the Christian life. The main business of life is to praise and worship the Lord. One of the first Christian books I read was entitled, “Created to praise” - and it made a big impression on me. It told me that the reason I was created was to praise God - and there is every reason why I should do that, as we shall see. But have you realised that yet? You were created to praise God. That’s why the command to praise the Lord is the most often repeated command in the Bible. And it begins by trusting in God’s Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom there is forgiveness, eternal life and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Now after this initial **call to praise the Lord** we are given various **reasons for praising the Lord** in verse 4-19. There are different ways we can group these reasons together – but we consider one of them

this morning. The first reason for praising the Lord is his *character*. **Read verses 4, 5.** The first reason that we praise the Lord then is that he is altogether *pure and holy*.

How terrible it would be if the living God were not pure and holy! How terrible it is when the leader of any group – whether it be a family or a business or a government – how terrible it is when the leader is wicked, deceitful and cruel. It creates for all those under that headship fear, insecurity and misery. But the first reason we can praise the Lord and rejoice in him is that *his character is good*. The word of the Lord is right and true (4). The Lord himself is right and true, and therefore his word, which is the expression of his character and will, is also right and true. The Lord is upright and righteous. He is not crooked. The Lord is light – in him there is no darkness. And therefore his word is true. God does not deceive us. His word can be trusted. Whichever way you look at it, there are no half-truths, grey areas or ambiguities in his word. His *word* is right and straightforward.

And so is his *work*. See the parallel line (4). He is faithful in all he *does*. He will *do* whatever he says. He will therefore *carry out* his promises. And then we are told the Lord loves righteousness and justice (5) because he himself is righteous and just. He is fair. The Judge of all the earth will do what is right. No one will ever be able to say that any of his judgements are unfair.

And then we are told that the earth is full of his unfailing love (5). That unfailing love can be seen in 1001 ways - in the beauty of his creation, in his provision of food and health, in his mercy to all who call out to him, in his overruling of evil and protection of people. But supremely, the Lord's unfailing love to all humanity is seen in the gift of his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that *whoever* believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. And so we praise the Lord for his *holy character*.

In this church we have a 12-week discipleship course for young believers. And in the first session we list together some of the attributes of God – some of the perfections of his character. And then the homework is to choose three from the list, put in your own words what this tells you about God, then describe what life would be like if God were *not* like this. So, what if God's word could *not* be trusted - what would life be like? What if God did *not* have mercy on people - what then? And what if he were *not* a God of salvation – how would that affect us? It's a good exercise, for we can easily take God's character for granted. But we must not. Every day we are to praise him and rejoice in his perfectly holy character.

Then the second **reason for praising the Lord** is his *power* (6-11). First his power seen in creation (6-9). **Read verses 6-9.** Interesting again the reference to *the word of the Lord*. We have just been told how *pure and trustworthy* is the word of the Lord. But now we are reminded of the *power* of his word. And the psalmist is echoing the Genesis account. *By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth*. How powerful therefore is the word of the Lord! All that is was created by his word. And it does us good to read an article from time to time about some aspect of space – the vast distances between the stars perhaps or the sheer number of the stars, or the gravitational forces which hold these bodies in 'mid-air'.

Our appreciation of the *power of the Lord* that brought creation into being should be even greater than the worshippers in Bible times. For we understand more clearly the size of his creation, and of course its complexity. And God created all this by the breath of his mouth. And as New Testament readers we can appreciate the richness and depth of that phrase even more. For we know that our *Lord Jesus* is described as *the word of God* and we know that *the Holy Spirit* is the 'ruach' or *the breath of God*. Our God is a trinity of persons. And each member of the trinity was involved in the creation of the universe.

Our God is great. Our God is powerful – praise him! It’s good to get out our ‘bubbles’ and living rooms and small routines to appreciate the vastness of the creation that is out there. God is not small. He is not pocket sized. He is not like us. He is God. So for us, the seas are unfathomable and untameable. But for the Lord – **read verse 7 again**. The first part of the verse could be translated, “He gathers the seas into heaps” – in which case we are reminded of the time when the Red sea stood in a heap. God can do this. Or if the translation is that, “He puts the sea into jars”, it means that the Lord can easily manage and contain these waters. Think of your little boy or girl playing in the garden with a basin of water and a jam jar.

Verse 8 then reminds us that while the praise of God is joyful, it is also reverential. **Read verse 8 again**. We praise him with a healthy fear - for the Lord is powerful. But if we belong to him and he is our Father and we his children, then this is good news! Our Father is well able to protect us!

Then the *power of the Lord* is secondly expressed in his *sovereignty over the nations he created*. The will of the Lord shall be done. And it is his power that will bring this about. **Read verses 10, 11**. It’s not that the Lord foils the plans of the nations to spite them or frustrate them. Indeed, the Lord is pleased to act through the decisions taken by the governments and rulers he sets up. Nevertheless, it is the plans of the Lord which will stand. When nations seek to oppose him in some way, when they oppress his people or try to silence the proclamation of his word, then it is the good plans of the Lord which will stand. His power will see to that!

Listen to some famous words from the prophecy of Daniel. **Read Daniel 4:34-35**. And the New Testament makes clear where the purposes and plans of the Lord are all heading. **Read Ephesians 1:9,10**. This is God’s eternal plan and purpose - to create for himself a people eager to do his will, and to have all things brought together under one head, our Lord Jesus Christ. This is where all things are headed. This is God’s purpose. And by his power this great purpose will be achieved.

**Read Psalm 33:11**. And this is something for which we rejoice and praise his name. The Lord’s plans are glorious, and they shall be done. Evil shall one day be defeated. Salvation shall be given, and for all eternity Christ shall reign and we shall reign with him, serve him and be exceedingly glad. Nothing can stop this from happening. Everything is being worked out in conformity with the purpose of his will. The world is not in chaos. God is working out his plan. And in Christ we are part of that glorious plan – praise his name!

Then we group verses 12-19 together because they remind us that the Lord is *a God of salvation*. Here is the third **reason for praising the Lord**. We praise God for his *character*, we praise him for his *power* and now we praise him for his *salvation*. Verse 12 begins by reminding Israel of the privileges which were theirs. **Read verse 12**. The Lord had given Israel salvation. He released them from their bondage and misery in Egypt. He guided them through the desert and gave them his Law. He made a covenant with them to be their God and gave them the land of Canaan. The Israelites knew the kindness and favour of the Lord.

But the Lord had also chosen Israel to be a light to the Gentiles. This God of salvation would make his salvation known to the nations as well, *through* Israel. His mercy would run to the ends of the earth. Now verses 13-15 picture the Lord looking down on all mankind. **Read verses 13-15**.

There *is* an element of the Lord’s care described here, but not the same care as that described in verse 18. **Read verse 18**. The eyes of the Lord in verses 13-15 watch over men in the sense that he *knows* all men and scrutinises all they do. Every individual is significant to the Lord. He knows each one – he is their creator.

And the Lord does show to the earth unfailing love – we were told that in verse 5. The earth is full of his unfailing love. But verses 13-15 are more about the Lord assessing and examining and recording everything that every human being does. And he sees not just the outward appearance; he considers the heart.

Yet, he gives salvation to those he chooses to have mercy upon. And this salvation is known by those who trust him and hope in his unfailing love. His salvation is not known by those who rely on themselves. So in verses 16, 17 we are told of three things which men typically relied on in these day for salvation – an army, the strength of a warrior and the strength of a horse. But these thing do not bring salvation. **Read verses 16, 17.**

No, salvation comes from God and is given to those who look to the Lord, who rely on him and trust in his mercy. **Read verses 18,19.** In other words, God is the God of salvation. He gives salvation, physical and spiritual, to those who look to him and not to themselves. And for this we praise him. He is a God of mercy.

And as New Testament Christians we again know this truth in a deeper and richer way. Salvation - physical deliverance and especially spiritual salvation come not from human effort, human achievement or careful planning. Salvation comes from God. He gives it to those who look to him and trust in him.

And for this we praise him. He knows all things. He knows all people and the hearts and intentions of all people. And he shows mercy to those who trust him and humble themselves before him. Salvation is not through human effort. Salvation is from God. And the great promise of the New Testament is that everyone who looks to God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, has eternal life and will not be condemned on the Last Day. Everyone who looks to Jesus Christ and trusts in the unfailing love of God in his Son shall be saved. Now, can you praise him for this?

If you can, then sing joyfully to the Lord, for your soul is safe. Your joy is that of the Psalmist in Psalm 32 – the joy of forgiveness. You can praise God because his *character* is such that he will never forget his promise of salvation. And you can rejoice in his *power* because that power will keep you from falling away or being snatched away. And therefore you rejoice in God's salvation.

Then finally and briefly, we have **the response to this call to praise** in verse 20-22. **Read verses 20-22.** This response is from the congregation, and is one of trust, hope and patience. The focus of each verse is very much on the Lord. The first two verses respond in faith to all that has just been said, and the last verse is a prayer to the Lord.

But the focus is all on God. And this is typical of those who truly praise and worship the Lord. Our eyes are taken off self and the problems of this world and onto the Lord. Things are simplified. That doesn't mean we fail to live responsibly in the world – or that we retreat into some spiritual ghetto. But it means that we live with a new perspective on life – God's perspective, an eternal perspective. *If* the Lord's character is pure and holy, and *if* he has all power and *if* he is the God of deliverance and salvation, and *if* the Lord is *my* God through Jesus Christ, then I know where my focus should be each day. I need to look to the Lord, give him thanks, confess my needs and then wait in expectation. Surely that is the right response!

Where are your eyes this morning? What is it that fills your horizon? Read through this Psalm again. Meditate on it. All that we need is in God. Let us therefore praise him, gladly and joyfully!