

Sing While We Wait

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[0 : 0 0] Psalm 33. Sing joyfully to the Lord, you righteous.

It is fitting for the upright to praise him. Praise the Lord with the harp. Make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre. Sing to him a new song. Play skillfully and shout for joy.

For the word of the Lord is right and true. He is faithful in all he does. The Lord loves righteousness and justice. The earth is full of his unfailing love. By the word of the Lord, the heavens were made.

Their starry host by the breath of his mouth. He gathers the waters of the sea into jars. He puts the deep into storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord. Let all the people of the world revere him.

For he spoke and it came to be. He commanded and it stood firm. The Lord foils the plans of the nations. He thwarts the purposes of the peoples. But the plans of the Lord stand firm forever.

[1 : 0 0] The purposes of his heart through all generations. Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord. The people he chose for his inheritance. From heaven the Lord looks down and sees all mankind.

From his dwelling place he watches all who live on earth. He who forms the hearts of all. Who considers everything they do. No king is saved by the size of his army. No warrior escapes by his great strength.

A horse is a vain hope for deliverance. Despite all its great strength it cannot save. But the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him. On those whose hope is in his unfailing love.

To deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine. We wait in hope for the Lord. He is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice for we trust in his holy name.

May your unfailing love be with us Lord. Ever as we put our hope in you. Thank you Nicola.

[2 : 0 3] Well good evening. My name is Jamie and I'm one of the ministry trainees here at St Silas. And let me add my welcome to Jonathan's. It'd be a great help to me if you could keep your Bibles open at page 560.

And now let me pray to God as we turn to his word. Heavenly Father, King of Kings. We ask you that you would guide us in this time in your word.

That you would help us to see how singing this psalm declares your goodness. We thank you for how your word is alive and active. And we pray you would speak to us now through it by your spirit.

We pray this in the almighty name of Jesus. Amen. Well I presume some of you here have seen the new Barbie movie this summer. And even with its bright sparkly pink colour.

It very early on makes quite a profound point. It points out that existential questions aren't always popular. Thoughts of death kind of kill the vibe at the party.

[3 : 0 6] But tonight I would like to start with asking a few existential questions. Just how does the world work? Who's in charge?

Of everything I mean. Who or what dictates the trajectory that history goes? Is the world getting better or worse? Just where is the world heading?

What's the end goal of everything? Will it get there? I ask these existential questions because our psalm today is full of beautiful imagery on the largest scale.

This psalm is a song that we can sing even when we feel most hopeless about humanity. Even when we feel there is no escape then this is a song that we can sing.

Because it tells of the God who reigns over all. So as we hear what this psalmist writes in this song. Let us see what it means for us to sing it. And sing who our great God is.

[4 : 0 6] So tonight we're looking at the 33rd psalm. It's towards the end of the first section of psalms. And the first collection of psalms are generally laments. But here we are in the middle of three that talk about blessing.

In the previous psalm. Psalm 32. King David talks of the weight of his unforgiven sin. The pain he is in when he doesn't confess. But then he shares the blessing of being forgiven.

The blessing of God making him righteous. The psalm following our psalm 34 says that it is those who take refuge in God that are the blessed ones.

But here in the middle. We see in the middle of our psalm verse 12. That it's not an individual that's blessed. But a nation. A people. God's people.

God's people are the blessed ones. They are blessed because they are key to God's purposes as he rules over all. So.

[5 : 0 9] Our psalm begins. Sing joyfully to the Lord you righteous. It is fitting for the upright to praise him. Who are these upright and righteous?

Well they are precisely the blessed ones of the previous psalm. Those whose sins have been forgiven. Or later in psalm 37. We see that the righteous are those with an inheritance given by God.

The law of God is on their hearts. And their salvation comes from the Lord. So they're not the do-gooders. The self-righteous. The I'm better than you. Goodie two-shoes.

Who've never been put a foot wrong. After all. No one can truthfully say that. No. The righteous here is the normal Christian. The one who has faith that they are righteous because God has made them righteous.

And so what the psalmist is saying here in verse 1 is that the world works like this. The righteous sing. They sing joyfully and they should sing to the Lord.

[6 : 1 3] That it is fitting for the upright to praise him. It's appropriate. It's right. It's how life works. Keep reading. We're not just to sing but to get the whole band out.

The whole orchestra. The harp. The lyre. The piano. Sure. Let's throw a ukulele in there. Not to make a tuneless racket. But to play skillfully. To make this song of praise as beautiful as it can be.

Rich in melody. In harmony. And of course deep and profound lyrics. Use whatever musicality you've got to give it your all. Give your best in this joyful sound.

But don't let any of that skillful playing mean you lose the passion of this hymn. A shout for joy. The psalmist writes in verse 3. Loud with meaning.

Pour your soul in. You're praising the king of kings. The Lord. Yahweh. If you want to praise his magnificence. You've got to give it your all. Nothing less could share the joy we have a praising our majestic ruler.

[7 : 1 6] Well, some of you will know that it was the World Pipe Band Championships this weekend. And some of you will also know that I have been rather excited about it. Particularly over this last week.

And for me, this experience is a little, a small glimpse as to the joy of skillful playing with a shout for joy. My heart does a little dance every time I hear a drone in the distance.

There's something uplifting hearing that song. Now maybe it's not bagpipes that do it for you. But I think we all know something of that experience. Of music giving us joy deep down in our hearts.

And this song is one that gives that deep joy as you proclaim to yourself and to others that we should praise the Lord for who he is.

But who is the Lord? What has he done? Who is this God that he is so worthy of this praise? Well, look at verses 4 and 5 with me. It's simple, really.

[8 : 20] The Lord, Yahweh, is good. In both his words and his actions, he is faithful. Isn't that worth praising? Isn't that what we need for the king of the universe?

If the God of the universe is good, then the future is good. Right? His word is true. It happens. And it's right. It's what's needed.

He loves righteousness and justice. They're not an added bonus onto who he is. It's his very being. In fact, he's so full of these things that the entirety of creation is full of his unfailing love.

That's what we need from the one who rules the world. Unfailing love. Love is so good. The love of your parents, of children, of your spouse.

It can be life-changingly good. Endless songs and poems and movies have been written about love. We're obsessed with it. Sometimes, rightly so. But sometimes our love fails.

[9 : 25] It lets down. It disappoints. Not so with the Lord. His love, unlike ours, never fails. It's unfailing. It cannot.

It's who he is. The world is overflowing with his love. His unfaltering, faithful, secure, and steadfast love. That's how he reigns over all.

With unfailing and unending love. And the psalm goes on. The song continues. And we can declare not just his unfailing love, but his sovereignty over the whole world.

Beginning with the creation of the universe itself. Look with me at verse 6. By the word of the Lord, the heavens were made. Their starry host by the breath of his mouth.

Who is this Lord? He is the creator. He brings order out of chaos and everything out of nothing. You can't possibly sing of God's creative works and think he is weak or his word isn't powerful.

[10 : 29] With but a breath about the simplest thing we can do. He made not just you and me. Not just the earth. But the entire starry host of the sky. The Lord has ruled since the beginning.

And he continues to control creation. He gathers the waters of the sea into jars. Now, at first I thought, as I'm sure you all did, I wonder how many jars that is.

And it turns out the sea would probably hold about 3 billion trillion normal jam jars. Which is quite a few. Now, impressive as this is, at least for my fellow mathematicians, it's probably not what the original author was thinking.

In truth, this control over water quite likely reminds the original Israelites, the original Israelite reader, of the splitting of the Red Sea.

You see, the exodus from Egypt is the great story of how God formed his people, his nation. And just as he formed the cosmos and formed humanity, so he forms a nation by rescuing his people from the horrors of slavery in Egypt and defeats Pharaoh's plans while establishing his own.

[11 : 41] The final scene of God's victory over Pharaoh is told in Exodus 14. And God splits the sea to allow the entire nation to walk through, right through the middle, with great waves on either side.

And then as soon as they're through, the sea comes back. They've crossed and the chasing Egyptians are washed away. God's creation power is epic. And he uses it to form his nation, to deliver his people.

And amazingly in Exodus, as soon as God does this, his people sing. A song that is not unlike this one, and it ends like this. The Lord reigns forever and ever.

That's what we sing in this psalm too. The Lord reigns unfailing and forever. So the Lord is worthy of praise because he reigns over creation. But that is not all.

We don't just have confidence because of what he did in the past. We can also trust that his purposes reign across all time, even now. What is it about the world today that worries you?

[12 : 51] There's a fair amount, I'd say. The state of the planet, rising inequality, the list goes on. And it's sometimes people that are worrying, right?

Powerful people with powerful plans. And sometimes it's, well, scary. The scariest of all often being national leaders. Xi Jinping, Vladimir Putin.

These are terrifying men with terrifying power. What if they somehow start ruling the entire world? What hope is there then? Maybe that's not your fear.

But it's what's happening closer to home. You fear the directions of our parliaments in Westminster or Holyrood. Maybe it's their purposes that make you uneasy. But do not fear.

The Lord is in control. See in verse 10 what he does. He foils the plans of the nations. He thwarts the purposes of the peoples. These terrifying men and women may seem powerful.

[13 : 49] They may seem unstoppable. What on earth can we do? Well, that's the wrong question. We sing of what he can do. He thwarts them.

He's the king of creation. Of course he could stop them. Follow their plans, their wicked schemes. He did it to Pharaoh and he can do it again. History has been full of tyrants.

But their empires are all gone. One day, Russia, China, the United Kingdom will all be gone too. But there is one whose plans shall not change.

Whose plans shall come to completion. The Lord's. His plans stand forever. Unmoving and unchanging. The purposes of his heart throughout all generations.

All generations. All of time. Has him reigning over it. I asked at the beginning, who's in charge? Well, it's him.

[14 : 48] Our God. Yahweh. The Lord. All of history belongs to him. Nothing shall stop his purposes. Is that something you want to sing?

Is this not the comfort you need when the news is just tragedy after tragedy? And fear after fear? This is good news. The Lord's purposes stand through all generations.

His purposes being exactly what he's already begun. Glorifying himself in his creation. And yet also glorifying himself in building a people.

In bringing us to himself. The Lord's purposes are building his people. And we now come to that blessing. I said at the beginning that this is the middle of three blessings.

Psalms 32. Blessed is the forgiven one. Psalm 34. Blessed is the one who takes refuge in God. But here we have that blessed is the entire nation whose God is the Lord.

[15 : 51] The people of the Lord are blessed because they are his people. Because their God is the Lord. I mean, of course they are. If the Lord's purposes stand.

If he determines the path for humanity. Then being his people. Trusting him. Following him. Fearing him. Has to be where the blessed life is found. The good life.

The happy and fulfilled life. Could not be anywhere else. Than being part of the people whose God. Whose king. Whose ruler. Is the sovereign Lord himself.

Who reigns over all. What a relief to declare. That the Lord's purposes. His choosing of us. To form part of his people.

And blessed nation. If you are on board with the Lord's plans. Then you are blessed. His purposes shall continue. They won't be stopped. So why bother getting in the way?

[16 : 49] Run with the grain of his rule. That's the people that are blessed. The psalm continues. We see God's reign in his watching over. From verse 13.

I feel here. We can picture a little ant on his hill. His colony is enormous. His home towering above him. He treks for hours. Marching in line to obtain food. And yet from our perspective.

A significantly larger than an ant. His whole life is almost trivial. It all takes place in a single field. Maybe even your back garden. We watch above as its little life unfolds.

And this is nothing compared to the height. Which God is above us. The Lord God is above all. He's looking down from heaven. We sometimes worry about government seeing into our lives.

But the holy God. The creator of the universe. He formed our very hearts. He knows our inmost thoughts. He sees and observes everything.

[17 : 53] His considering everything they do. As it says in verse 15. Is a terrifying prospect for the wicked. For the proud who think they can stand in the way.

In his way. The Lord sees men trying to deliver themselves. He watches over all. And sees the futility of the plans of men.

Look at verse 16. No king is saved by the size of his army. The same goes for presidents today. He won't let the strong bully their way out of trouble.

A war horse was the great weapon of the ancient world. Quick and strong. They enabled effective victories on the battlefield. But what can they really deliver you from?

What today can long range missiles save us from? Invasion? Well, maybe. But not famine. Not hurt or pain. Not dread.

[18 : 53] Not hopelessness. And no weaponry. No economic marrow. Whatever it is that the kings of today hope in. Will ever. Deliver them from death. All around.

We see hopes placed in almost anything. But they don't. Deliver from death. You can read a thousand and one books. On how to cope with death.

How to grieve well. Maybe even how to move on. Possibly how to still have hope. But none of them. Tell you of how to be delivered.

Because they can't. This is sobering for us to sing. But it's needed. If we're to ever know true hope. Yet, as the Lord's people.

God's considering the ways of our hearts is not terrifying. Well, at least not in the same way. See, verse 18. We sing, but the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him.

[19 : 56] Fear of God is good. I mean, how could you not when you see his awesome power in creation. His amazing above us all-ness. But this fear is not separate from the hope found in him.

For if you fear him, you also know of his unfailing love. Of his ability to bring true his plans. Of his ability to truly deliver, even from death.

We now come to the final verses of our psalm. Verse 20 to 22. We wait in hope for the Lord. He is our help and our shield.

In him our hearts rejoice. For we trust in his holy name. May your unfailing love be with us, Lord. Even as we put our hope in you.

You see, despite all we have declared about the Lord's ruling and reigning. Despite the Lord being our God. Sometimes it just doesn't feel like it.

[21 : 00] Doesn't look like it. The world around us in reality can be bleak. The trajectory of the nations, even our own. Sometimes feels unpromising at best.

And terrifying at worst. For me, personally, there's no doubt it's the climate crisis that terrifies me. I don't know how we'll make it through this century.

Without a lot of hurt for a lot of people. But that's why I need to sing this psalm. Because I'm waiting. I can be assured of the Lord's unfailing love.

Of the certainty of his promises. And his purposes coming to completion. I can have hope. You can have hope. We have hope.

Because the Lord will not fail to accomplish all that he desires to do. We're safe. He's our shield. Our help. It's almost crazy. I mean, if you're part of this blessed nation.

[21 : 56] If the Lord Almighty is your God. Then you can face absolutely anything. You can face war and famine and global collapse. And yet rejoice. You can sing with joy.

Because you trust who he is. You trust his holy name. As you wait. You can sing. And we do have the privilege of knowing what it is we're waiting for.

It's for Jesus to return. For it is in Jesus Christ that we see the purposes of God's heart to completion. The people of God are the people washed in the blood of Jesus.

Jesus, with his word, calmed a furious storm. And left his closest friends in utter fear, crying, who is this man? It is in Jesus that the plans of rulers and nations are thwarted.

For their plan was to kill him. And yet it was in his death. It was his death that instead thwarted their plans.

[22 : 56] No king is saved by his army. Well, Jesus didn't save with an army. He gave up everything. Even his own life. That's where hope is found.

And of course, Jesus rose again, defeating death. That is why we can have hope to be saved. To be delivered from death. Because he is the great deliverer.

He shall return. And we will cry, he is worthy. The hope that we can cling to is Christ alive. And seated in heaven right now. Even as we wait for our deliverance from death.

The final verse here is the only one directly addressed to God. The psalmist request is, and our request can be, simply this.

May you be with us, Lord. May your unfailing love be with us. And yet, by definition, we can have confidence in this prayer being answered. Because if God's love is unfailing, then it won't leave us.

[24 : 00] It will always be with us. That's a reason for hope. That's the greatest request you could ask for. Unceasing, unending, faithful love.

Is yours already. If you call the Lord your God, then this blessing is yours. So as we wait for deliverance, we can trust that God will be our shield.

And as we fear the way the world seems to work, with tyrants oppressing and the strong taking, we can trust that we will be delivered. That we can find escape in the Lord.

Because he really reigns over all. Jesus reigns. We can sing to him while we wait. Because we know that his purposes, forming his people, will come to fruition.

So it is knowing Jesus and fearing Jesus and as a part of the people who crown Jesus as their God, that we sing while we wait.

[25 : 02] Let me pray. Heavenly Father, I thank you. We thank you that you reign over all. That your rule is supreme and means that your plans will all come true.

That we can trust your word. So Father, help us to sing of your goodness. To praise you, Lord, as we wait for you in hope.

We pray all this in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen.