

3. He comes to judge the world

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Date: 20 June 2012

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[0 : 00] Well, let's pray together. The Samus rites make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness. Come into his presence with singing.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him. Bless his name. For the Lord is good. His steadfast love endures forever.

And his faithfulness to all generations. God our Father, we praise you that you are great and that you are gracious. You are enthroned on high in the heavens.

And the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain you. You cannot be confined in buildings. You cannot be confined even in the whole universe itself.

You are great and you are greatly to be praised. And yet at the same time, you are a gracious God. You have come down to us in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[1 : 06] One with you who became one of us and is one of us still. We thank you for that glorious story of the gospel. We thank you for the way that throughout scripture that story is told in so many different ways.

We have the narrative of the events. We have songs like the Psalms. We have the prophets. We have the apostles. And all of those who in large or in small ways contributed to the written words which we hold in our hands.

This open book which so fully and faithfully points us to the living word, the Lord Jesus Christ. So bless us now. Bless each of us as we meet here for those moments to not only to praise your name, but as we turn from the praising of your name to the preaching of your word.

We pray indeed that that voice, the voice which wakes the dead, the voice which spoke creation, the voice which saves and which judges. That is the voice that we will hear.

And when we hear, help us to obey. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. So we are going to read together now Psalm 98, which in the Bibles is on page 500.

[2 : 24] Psalm 98, which in the Bible says, marvelous things, his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.

The Lord has made known his salvation. He has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations. He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel.

All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. Make a joyful noise to the Lord. All the earth break forth into joyous song and sing praises.

Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody, with trumpets and the sound of the horn. Make a joyful noise before the King, the Lord.

Let the sea roar and all that fills it, the world and those who dwell in it. Let the rivers clap their hands. Let the hills sing with joy together before the Lord.

[3 : 55] For he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with equity. Amen. This is the word of the Lord.

May he bless it to our hearts and to our lives. There are some simple phrases that can have a whole variety of meaning, depending on the context, depending on how they're said.

Take the phrase, he is coming. Now, that could be a threat, couldn't it? Mother is trying to get the children down at night and say, your dad is coming and you'd better behave before he comes.

Or maybe it's the other way around. Your mama's coming home and you'd better behave before she comes. Or it could be anticipation. Your son has been away for a long time, perhaps in another country.

And you say with excitement as you get up one morning, he is coming. Isn't that great? Now, this psalm uses that phrase, the Lord is coming.

[5 : 00] And there are two ways of looking at that phrase, aren't there? One is to tremble before it, and rightly to tremble. And we saw that on the first of this studies in Psalm 96.

The other is to greet it with joy. And that's the theme of this psalm. Now, Psalms 96 and 98 have to be taken together. The coming of the Lord is no light thing, no trivial thing, not something simply to be brushed aside.

And Psalm 96 emphasizes that. Serve the Lord with fear. And we're going to see this next week in Psalm 99. The Lord reigns. Let the peoples tremble.

But this psalm particularly strikes the note of joy. Now, I said the fact that it's called a psalm probably means it was written for some special occasion.

And it may well have been a song for when the people returned from exile, when they returned to rebuild Jerusalem. You get psalms like that.

[6 : 06] Psalm 126, When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dream. Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongue with songs of joy.

So, this is the Lord is coming. How are we going to greet that coming? And this psalm sees the Lord greeted with great joy and with great rejoicing.

There are three parts in the psalm. We'll look at these briefly together. First of all, there is the call to worship. Verses 1 to 3. Oh, sing to the Lord a new song.

Then there are two responses. First of all, the response from humans in verses 4 to 6. And then the response from creation itself in verses 7 to 9.

So, you see, it's a psalm that's both very well constructed and spontaneous. There is real, genuine, spontaneous worship. But it's been put together very carefully.

[7 : 05] So, first of all, the call to worship. Why do we worship God? Well, this is a new song. The new song probably means a new deliverance.

Just as he rescued the people from Egypt long before, now he's rescued them from Babylon. And just as another psalm, Psalms 46 and 48, when he rescued his people from Assyria.

But, of course, this is a song that all God's people can sing. New every morning are your mercies, says the one bright star that shines in the otherwise dark background of lamentations.

And salvation is a new song because it is experienced newly every day. New every day are the mercies of God. And we can worship God because he has revealed himself.

He hasn't just done marvelous things. His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. But he has revealed these. That's important. Events are not in themselves self-explanatory.

[8 : 17] The Bible records events. It records the great saving events. The exodus, the return from exile. And then, of course, in the New Testament, the events to which they point. The cross, the resurrection, the sending of the Spirit, and the second coming.

But none of these events are self-evident. They need the word to explain them. Otherwise, we'll misunderstand them. Take the cross. Nearly everybody got that wrong, didn't they?

Nearly everybody misunderstood it. One or two, most dramatically and most powerfully, the dying thief who realized that Jesus was indeed the coming king and he wanted to be part of that kingdom.

People got the resurrection wrong, didn't they? His disciples have come and stolen his body away. He got the coming of the Spirit wrong. These people are drunk. They are full of new wine.

And they got the second coming wrong. Where is this coming that he promised? So we need revelation. When we sing to the Lord, we're not just singing emotive words.

[9 : 23] We are singing words because God has revealed himself. He's made known his salvation. He has revealed his righteousness in the face, in the sight of the nations.

But also at the heart of this is verse 3. He has remembered his steadfast love. Steadfast love is this great word, the word of the covenant, the particular word that's used of God's love for his people.

Loved you with an everlasting love. And so on. And one whole psalm, Psalm 136, uses this as the chorus of, give thanks to the Lord for his steadfast love endures forever.

So he has remembered his steadfast love to the house of Israel. But it's not favoritism. Look at the end of verse 3. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

People from every nation are swept up as they respond to that love. Remember the promise to Abraham. All the families of the earth will be blessed.

[10 : 35] And the great commission go and make disciples of all nations is being carried out day by day as people from every nation are added to the kingdom.

He has remembered. Now it doesn't mean he'd forgotten. It doesn't mean one day God said, Oh dear, I've forgotten about my people Israel. It means he intervenes decisively to carry out his purpose.

God remembered Noah, we are told. Not that God said, Oh, that guy in the ark, I've forgotten about him. No, it was when the time to fulfill his purpose happened. So that is the call to worship.

Sing to the Lord because he is great. Sing to the Lord because he is good. Sing to the Lord because he loves his people and through them he loves the world. That's the first thing.

And the response to that is twofold. The praise of humans. Chapter verses 4 to 6. Make a joyful noise to the Lord all the earth.

[11:37] Break forth into joyous song and sing praises. Once again, there is the sense of acknowledging that the Lord reigns.

As I said last week, it's not at all obvious that the Lord reigns. Read the news. Look around at the world. Look at our own lives. And yet the Lord reigns. So when we make a joyful noise to the Lord, we are proclaiming that the Lord reigns.

To God be the glory. Great things he has done as the choir were singing some moments ago out in the street there. There is, first of all, there is spontaneous enjoyment.

Blend of voices and instruments. Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre. With the lyre. Sing praises to the Lord.

And the like. But let's just sing praises to the Lord. Spurgeon says in his commentary on this psalm, Sing lustily and with a good courage.

[13:07] Beware of singing as if you were half dead or half asleep. But lift up your voice with strength. Be no more afraid of your voice now.

No more ashamed of its being heard than when you sang the songs of Satan. That's one of Spurgeon's characteristic comments on this.

As Wesley sang, oh for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer's praise. And he also said, oh for a trumpet sound on all the world to call.

So it's spontaneous enjoyment. But it's more than that. There is articulate praise. It's easy enough to get into chants and dance around and so on.

But this is articulate praise. Great truths about God. He is the king. He is the ruler of all creation.

Make a joyful noise.

[14:06] Verse 6. Before the king. The Lord. The Lord is the covenant Lord. And we cannot truly praise unless we truly know him.

That's so important. Unless we truly know him and truly love him, we cannot truly praise him. And that of course is a gift of grace. It doesn't mean you've got to psych yourself up and so I really do love the Lord.

No, it's not that at all. It's responding to his grace in our hearts. So the Lord is the Lord and his mighty acts. The Lord and who he is. The Lord and what he has done.

What he is doing and what he will do. Is the subject of the praise of humanity. But then there is this, the praise of nature. The symphony of nature.

Verses 7 to 9. And here we're moving well beyond this present world into the new creation. Let the sea roar and all that fills it.

[15:05] The world and those who dwell in it. This is the creation free from the curse. Free from sin. When Adam and Eve fell in Genesis 3, a curse was put on creation.

And creation is groaning just as humans are growing. And one day when the children of God are fully like Christ, then creation will be free and creation will truly praise God.

Even now, of course, we can see rejoicing in creation. By the way, this, of course, is not nature worship. This is the worship. This is not the worship of creation, but the worship of the creator.

As C.S. Lewis says, creation worships God by being truly what it was made to be. Trees, mountains, hills, and so on.

Worship God by being trees, mountains, and hills. That's what Psalm 148 says. Praise Him, sun and moon. Praise Him, shining stars. Praise Him, the waters beneath the earth and the waters above the heavens.

[16:11] There's two things to notice here. First of all, that in the praise of the new creation, God's ancient foes praise Him. Let the sea roar.

Let the rivers clap their hands. Now in the Old Testament, the sea and the rivers are especially the haunt of evil. The haunt of the dark powers. The place of Satan's influence on Satan's realm. And throughout scripture, these are the metaphors, the pictures of those dark forces. But you see, in the new creation, there is no discord.

The ancient haunts of evil are now cleansed and renewed. Rather like what it says back in Psalm 95, the sea is His, for He made it.

Its purposes will be fulfilled. And also, of course, the whole of the landscape as they were created to be. Now in Genesis 1 and in Genesis 2, when creation was made, God saw it and it was good.

[17:21] And one day it will be good again. Very good. Even better than it was. And when the Bible talks about good, it's not just saying something vague about, well, that was good, or I rather liked it.

To be good is to be what God created it to be. One day that will happen. Everything will be good. And this vivid imagery of the sea roaring, the rivers clapping their hands, and the hills singing for joy.

Now sometimes on a summer's day, you can see anticipations of the hills singing for joy. Beautiful landscape, the meadows, the mountains, and so on. Sometimes you look at the sea on a beautiful day.

You look up at the moonlight sky, and you see anticipations. Just as in the people of God, you can see anticipations of what they will be when they are fully like Christ. And we're not yet fully like Christ.

And nor is creation fully restored. That's the first thing. And the second thing is, he comes to judge the earth. That's really what the whole psalm has been working up to.

[18:33] See, if God doesn't come to judge the earth, the sea is never going to roar, nor are the rivers clapping their hands, nor will the hills sing for joy, nor will redeemed humanity ever truly praise him.

He must judge the world. And notice how he's going to judge the world with righteousness. He is going to judge the world. He's going to put things right, essentially.

He is going to restore the ancient harmony, and he'd go beyond it. This is not a nostalgic longing for a never-never land. This is looking forward to a land that already exists.

When Abraham struck out into the unknown, he looked for the city whose builder and maker is God. That city already exists. And so it is. So it is here.

So you'll judge the world right. You put the world right. There will be no earthquakes, no floods, no tsunamis, no cancer, no death in the new creation.

[19:35] But notice the peoples with equity. His judgment will be totally fair. And you get glimpses through the Old Testament of this. David's last words in 2 Samuel 23, when one rules over people with justice.

It's like the rain after a drought. It's like the sunshine after rain. And of Isaiah 42, the servant of the Lord, who will judge with fairness and with justice.

So, as we come to the end of this psalm, bearing with Psalm 96 and 98, we look forward to his coming.

He is coming. And when he comes, he will judge the earth. And that will cause a great outburst of joy. But it will also cause trembling.

Don't forget Psalm 96. And next week, we'll look at Psalm 99, which will return to the theme of trembling. Above all, don't forget what we didn't look at Psalm 95 just now.

[20:41] It's at an earlier stage. Remember what Psalm 95 says. If today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your heart.

And the title of this series, Praising His Name, of course, comes from the full motto of the city of Glasgow. People like the first part. Let Glasgow flourish.

Glasgow will only flourish through the preaching of his word and the praising of his name. And that is what we have imperfectly tried to do. Tuning our instruments for the coming of the king.

Amen. Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. See, he is coming with clouds, and every eye will behold him.

Father, as we look to your coming, we pray that our lives may be daily conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that as we live our lives, we may indeed carry that message of his righteousness to the nations.

[21 : 43] And we look forward to the day when the whole of creation will be renewed and redeemed and restored. The glory of Christ's name we pray. Amen.