

## A Psalm about God's Nature

What brings us to praise?

What is worthy of praise?

We give praise for lots of things don't we,

We praise celebrities,

We praise our soldiers,

We praise our kids,

We praise our sporting stars when they win.

We even praise our pets,

But what stops us from praising things?

What stops us from praising things even when they continue doing stuff that we like?

For example, when the Blues beat the Maroons this year they received great praise and rightfully so.

But what about the Maroons, did they receive the same amount of praise when they won last year?

Well no, they didn't

But why is this?

I put it to you that we become accustomed to things and we stop giving them the praise they deserve.

The QLD team had only lost one series in the last twelve years.

QLD supporter had become accustomed to them winning and as a result the praise they received was dampened.

I think the same can be said about us when it comes to God.

How often do we praise the LORD?

When we first become a Christian, we start off praising God for what he has done.

But as the years go on quite often our praise for God slips. I know this has been the case for me.

Well if this is also true for you, then like me this psalm has much to remind us.

In today's psalm the psalmist is summoning us to praise the LORD.

Praise the LORD!

I will extol to the LORD with my all my heart in the council of the upright and in the assembly.

The psalmist is calling us to praise the LORD with all our hearts and in all places.

Both in public and in private.

But why is the psalmist summoning us to praise the LORD?

Well God is to be praised because of his works and also his nature.

Verse 2 and 3 speak of the same thing that Mark showed us last week in the beginning of psalm 19,

that creation shows us of the glory of God, it points to a creator and his work, God creates, He sustains, He directs, and He governs.

Like last week's psalm, Today's psalm moves from the generalised to the specific.

The psalmist specifically reminds his reader of the what God has done for the nation of Israel,

4 He has caused his wonders to be remembered;  
the LORD is gracious and compassionate.

5 He provides food for those who fear him;  
he remembers his covenant forever.

6 He has shown his people the power of his works,  
giving them the lands of other nations.

These verses reminds the reader that God has powerfully taken the nation of Israel out of Egypt, He sustained them for 40 years in the wilderness and then He delivered them into the promised land.

In verse 4 we see that the LORD has caused his wonders to be remember.  
The LORD will not let his people forget what He has done for them.

Israel was to remember these events by the festivals that God had instituted.

Lev 23 list the seven festivals that God appointed for Israel to remember what He had done for them.

We may look at these festivals as being burdensome on the people and at times this is exactly how Israel saw these festivals.

But when we view these festivals in their proper context, we will see that these are celebrations of what God has done,  
they are a party.

They are a set time when the people of Israel are to praise God for what he has done,

reminding them of Yahweh's care and protection of them.

Reminding them that Yahweh keeps His promises that He makes.

These festivals are like Christmas is for Christians,

Christmas for Christians should be a great festival where we celebrate Christ birth, where we praise God for sending His Son into the world.

But for many people Christmas has become a festival that has nothing to do with God Son coming into the world,

Christmas has become so commercialised and has become burdensome for many, it has lost its goal of reminding us to praise God for what He has done in sending Jesus as the saviour of the world.

The psalmist in verse 7 then reminds his readers of the law and its promises.

As Mark showed us last week, the law is much more than just a set of instructions that need to be followed, the law reveals to God's people, God's character. The psalmist here reminds Israel that the law is trustworthy and is to be followed in faithfulness and uprightness.

Israel is not to follow the law as a way of salvation but in response to the salvation that God has already shown to them.

Remember how the ten commandments start,

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. Yahweh has saved his people and is now using the law as a reminder His people what He has done for them and of His character.

Israel is to mirror the character of Yahweh, they are to live out His laws reflecting His character to the surrounding nations.

God has continually shown Israel that He is faithful to His promises and that Israel can trust Him.

He has provided redemption for His people, He has established His covenant forever.

All Israel needs to do is trust in the LORD.

The psalmist concludes the psalm by taking his readers full circle, reminded his readers that having reverence for God is the beginning of wisdom, See true wisdom is only found in realising who God is and having proper reverence for Him.

As a result of this true wisdom people will follow His laws showing that they have good understanding, and all of this leads them to praise the LORD.

Whilst this psalm is a psalm that calls Israel to glorify God in the present and is reliant on the ancient events of salvation, for us as non-Israelites it still has great value.

See this psalm reveals to us the very nature of God.

The psalmist uses an acrostic poem structure to remind his readers of the characteristic of Yahweh from A to Z.

Yahweh is the creator, v 2

Yahweh is the sustainer v 2 and 3

Yahweh is righteous v 3

Yahweh is gracious v 4

Yahweh is compassionate v 4

Yahweh is the provider v 5

Yahweh is powerful v 6

Yahweh is faithful v 7

Yahweh is just v 7

Yahweh is trustworthy v 7

Yahweh is the redeemer v 9

Yahweh's name is holy and awesome v 9

The psalmist poetically reminds his reader of why they should be praising Yahweh. Compare this to the contrast of the other so-called gods of the surrounding nations. These gods whilst being numerous they are all limited to only one or two characteristics.

Other nations would need to praise so many gods trying to appease them all. Whereas Yahweh is truly worthy of our praise because of his very nature.

Yahweh is not limited to one or two characteristics, no He is limitless and He is truly worthy of our praise.

Now as non-Israelites, who live some 3,000 years after this psalm was written, we too can still join with the psalmist and praise God, because the truths of this psalm are still true for us today.

Not only can we still see God's mighty hand at work in creation.

When we turn and look at Jesus and His redemptive work that He has done for us we should be drawn to praise.

Hear these words again from Ephesians 1

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. <sup>4</sup> For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. <sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace <sup>8</sup> that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, <sup>9</sup> he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, <sup>10</sup> to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

We like the Israelites can give God praise because

we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing

we have been chosen to be holy and blameless

we have been adopted

we have been loved

we have been redeemed through Jesus' blood

we have been forgiven

we have been given insight

God's deeds and words in the exodus tradition declared to Israel the same message of divine love and power that the story of the cross and resurrection proclaims to Christians.

And our response should be exactly the same as that of Israel's  
to Praise Yahweh!

But how do we praise God?

Well I point you back to verse 1,  
I will extol the LORD with all my heart  
in the council of the upright and in the assembly.  
We are to praise the LORD with all our hearts, in all situations.  
We are to praise the LORD when things are going well.

Although this seems logical, this is one of the hardest times that I find to praise the LORD.

I find that when things are going well, I end up just getting on with life and sometimes I even find myself praising myself saying “well done Matt, keep up your good work”.

Instead, I should be turning to God and giving Him the praise that He rightfully deserves.

We are also to praise the LORD when things are not going so well.

Often, I find that it is easy to come to God when things are not going well, but during this time I don't find myself praising God, instead I find myself grumbling to God.

See it is difficult to praise the LORD during hard times, but as this psalm reminded us today, Yahweh is faithful, He is powerful and He is in control.

So, we should be coming to God and praising Him.

We are to praise the LORD in private,

It shows how important private devotion is, I strongly encourage you as Mark did last week.

If you do not do private devotion I encourage you to start this not out of obligation but out of the pure joy that it is to relate to God.

Yahweh is relational, He loves it when we turn to Him. And how awesome is it that we can come to the Creator of the universe and relate with Him.

We are to praise the LORD in gathering.

Just because we are no longer under a nationwide covenant, this does not mean that we should stop coming together to praise God.

In fact, the imagery given in the NT is that of a family, uniting us even more closely together.

We should be wanting to encourage one another in our praise and sharing with each other.

We should come to church with the mentality of how we can serve our brother and sister as opposed to what can I get out of church.

So, I want to conclude where I started this sermon.

What brings us to praise?

What is worthy of our praise?

Today's psalm has reminded us that it is God's work and his nature that bring us to praise

And it is God who is worthy of our praise so let us do that by praising his name in song.