

A Psalm for Election Day

Psalm 33

Studies in the Psalms #35

© 2016 Daniel R. Hyde

It's always wonderful in God's providence when we turn to just the right Scripture at just the right time. Psalm 33 is that Scripture as we as citizens of this nation prepare for another election day this coming Tuesday.

And as we saw last Lord's Day, this is a Psalm of praise, calling us to worship our wonderful God with joy: **Shout for joy in the LORD, O you righteous! Praise befits the upright** (v. 1). It calls us to give thanks to our God: **Give thanks to the LORD with the lyre; make melody to him with the harp of ten strings!** (v. 2) It calls us to sing out to our God: **Sing to him a new song; play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts** (v. 3).

It's interesting that Tuesday night some are going to claim victory. But the victory belongs to God. That's what a **new song** is all about. Turn over to Psalm 149. We are called to "praise the LORD" and to "sing to the LORD a new song" (v. 1) as we "rejoice in [our] King" (v. 2) and go forth "to execute vengeance on the nations and punishments on the peoples, to bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron" (vv. 7–8). Now turn to Revelation 5:9–10. Here the elders in heaven praise the Lamb who is the Lion

with “a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.’”

Finally look at Revelation 15:3-4: “Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.”

So we are called to praise our God with songs of victory. And that’s what we see this morning.

He is Victorious in His Character

We praise our God because *he is victorious in his character*. **For the word of the LORD is upright, and all his work is done in faithfulness** (v. 4). What he says is **upright**; what he does is **faithful** to his word. We all think politicians are liars and deceivers, don’t we? I mean, every day you can go online or turn on the radio and listen to another scandal. There’s a reason our Congress has somewhere around a 10% approval rating! Don’t forget, these are just mere men and women, sinners like you and me. But the Lord

alone is **upright** and **faithful**.

And **he loves righteousness and justice** and then verse 5 goes on to say **the earth is full of the steadfast love of the LORD**. I think every one of us would admit that our nation has been plagued by unrighteousness and injustice since its founding. We all should see that our society does not love what God loves. And we deserve the outpouring of his wrath that we are experiencing now as a result (Rom. 1:18ff.). Nevertheless, his **steadfast love**—that special word we've been seeing everywhere in the Psalms—is everywhere. He makes covenant promises and he keeps them. That's our God!

He is Victorious in His Creation

And his character is shown in what he's made. We praise our God because *he is victorious in his creation*. Recently theoretical physicist Mikio Kaku said, "I have concluded that we are in a world made by rules created by an intelligence. Believe me, everything that we call chance today won't make sense anymore. To me it is clear that we exist in a plan which is governed by rules that were created, shaped by a universal intelligence and not by chance." This reminds me of that fictional story of the array of scientists who climb the mountain of ignorance and think they have reached the peak and

discovered the meaning of the universe, only to find a group of theologians sitting, who say, “What took you so long!”¹

We sing because **by the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host** (v. 6). How powerful is God to create? It took a mere word, a mere exhale of breath to make everything come to be! How powerful is our God over creation? **He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap; he puts the deeps in storehouses** (v. 7). All the chaos and power and turmoil of the seas he simply gathers and contains! And so the Psalmist says, **Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him!** (v. 8) Why? He says it again: **For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm** (v. 9).

But we know the parties and the politicians and the powers that be will not **fear** him, will not **stand in awe of him**. So what are we to do? Campaign harder and longer for the next person who promises the moon? I want to encourage you to pray for the conversion of politicians. Conversion is that change of mind and change of life that comes about through

¹ “For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountain of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries.” Robert Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers* (Second edition; New York: Norton, 1992), 106–107.

repentance and faith. I also want to encourage you to do what generations used to do so much of: write to your leaders. You can email, but write to them in the spirit of Romans 13 that you are praying for them but also to set before them what God requires of them: wield the sword of justice to the wicked and praise the righteous. And if they are not doing so, call them to repent and put their hope in the King of kings and Lord of lords!

He is Victorious in His Counsel

The character of our God revealed in the creation of our God leads us to verses 10–11 where we praise our God because *he is victorious in his counsel*.

Children, some of you at school are voting for student council this week.

And the rest of us have seen the signs to vote for someone for city council.

Do you know the difference between a council and counsel? A council is a group of leaders; counsel is what they say. Children, does God have a council where he meets with others and then he decides what to do in his counsel?

Absolutely not! And notice the contrast verses 10–11 make:

The LORD brings the *counsel of the nations* to nothing; he frustrates the *plans of the peoples*.

The *counsel of the LORD* stands forever, the *plans of his heart* to all generations.

Every single person running for every single office already has every

single thing they want to do planned and ready to go. Some of these things we like; some of them we fear. Brothers and sisters don't forget what we read in the Proverbs recently: "The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will" (Prov. 21:1). Don't forget what Paul once said, "And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place" (Acts 17:26). Every single one of our leaders is a pawn in the Lord's plan. Every single nation has an amount of time to exist and an amount of territory to exist in. Period. End of story. And every counsel they give and every plan they have that stands opposed to the Lord's will, will come to nothing either in this life or the life to come. Didn't we pray this morning, "Thy kingdom come?" And don't we say in our Heidelberg Catechism this means not only, "Rule *us* by your Word and Spirit in such a way that more and more we submit to you," and, "Preserve and increase your church," but also, "Destroy the devil's work; destroy every force which revolts against you and every conspiracy against your holy Word" (Q&A 123).

He is Victorious in His Care

Finally, notice how this counsel of our God towards the nations is

turned towards his people in verses 12 and following. We praise our God because *he is victorious in his care*. **Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!** (v. 12) This is not a slogan to paste on your American flag, beloved; this spoke of ancient Israel in the past, it speaks of the Israel of God now and into the future. As Augustine said, “One nation alone is truly happy, the one whose home is that heavenly city which has chosen as Lord none other than its God.”²

His care is demonstrated in his seeing all: **The LORD looks down from heaven; he sees all the children of man; from where he sits enthroned he looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth, he who fashions the hearts of them all and observes all their deeds** (vv. 13–15).

Because of his care the Psalmist exhorts his leaders: **The king is not saved by his great army; a warrior is not delivered by his great strength. The war horse is a false hope for salvation, and by its great might it cannot rescue** (vv. 16–17).

He then brings it back full circle to us, the people of God in verse 18: **Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love, that he may deliver their soul from death**

² Augustine, *Expositions of the Psalms*, 389.

and keep them alive in famine (vv. 18–19). Our hope is not military arms—**the war horse**—our hope is the covenant faithfulness of our God to remember his promises he’s made to us in Jesus Christ. He’s promised us that the gates of hell cannot prevail against the church; so don’t fret the threats against the church by certain parties and politicians. He’s promised to work all things for our good, especially persecution, famine, nakedness, danger, and sword; so don’t lose hope as the cultural tides ebb and flow. He’s promised never to leave us for forsake us, to be in the midst of us like a lampstand in darkness; so don’t think God is done with us as a congregation in the midst of this part of the world!

And so we praise, so we sing, so we hope: **Our soul waits for the LORD; he is our help and our shield. For our heart is glad in him, because we trust in his holy name. Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us, even as we hope in you** (vv. 20–22). May this be our creed today, this election day, and every election day until our Lord comes for us on the clouds of glory to make all things new. Amen!