

Celebration Psalm

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Preacher: Lee Roberts

[0:00] So as we change over to a new year tonight, we're going to look at something unchanging, and that's the character of God. And we're going to do that by looking at parts of three! Psalms. So on New Year's, we're going to be talking about Thanksgiving with a lower case T. And these three Psalms recount what God has already done and what he has promised to do in the future. And the verses also remind us what our response should be. You might have noticed that the heading says 1 Chronicles 16, 7-36, and that is true. The parts of the three Psalms are covered in that section of 1 Chronicles. The first portion of the Psalm correlates with Psalm 105, verses 1-15. The second portion correlates with Psalm 96, 1-13. And then the last portion matches up with Psalm 106, 1, and then also 47 and 48.

So we're going to read the entire passage in 1 Chronicles, and then we'll set the context before we look at the Chronicles verses in detail. So let's read the passage. Here's 1 Chronicles 16, 7-36. It says, On that day, David first delivered this Psalm into the hand of Asaph and his brethren to thank the Lord. O give thanks to the Lord, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the peoples. Sing to him, sing songs to him, talk about his wondrous works. Glory in his holy name, let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the Lord. Seek the Lord in his strength, seek his face evermore. Remember his marvelous works which he has done, his wonders and the judgments of his mouth. O seed of Israel, his servant, you children of Jacob, his chosen ones. He is the Lord our God, his judgments are in all the earth. Remember his covenant forever, the word which he commanded for a thousand generations, the covenant which he made with Abraham and his oath to Isaac, and confirmed it to Jacob for a statute, to Israel for an everlasting covenant, saying, To you I will give the land of Canaan as the allotment of your inheritance, when you are few in number, indeed very few, and strangers in it. When they went from one nation to another, and from one kingdom to another people, he committed no man to do them wrong.

Yes, he rebuked kings for their sakes, saying, Do not touch my anointed ones, and do my prophets no harm. Sing to the Lord all the earth, proclaim the good news of his salvation from day to day, declare his glory among all the nations, his wonders among all peoples, for the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised. For he is also to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the people are idols, but the Lord made the heavens. Honor and majesty are before them. Strength and gladness are in his place. Give to the Lord, O families of peoples. Give to the Lord glory and strength. Give to the Lord the glory due his name. Bring an offering and come before him.

I worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Tremble before him all the earth. The world also is firmly established. It shall not be moved. Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad, and let them say among the nations, The Lord reigns. Let the sea roar in all its fullness. Let the field rejoice and all that is in it. Then the trees and the wards shall rejoice before the Lord, for he is coming to judge the earth. O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endures forever. And say, save us, O God of our salvation. Gather us together and deliver us from the Gentiles to give thanks to your holy name, to triumph in your praise. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. And all the people said, Amen, and praised the Lord. So that is a long stretch of scripture there. So we are going to set the background by looking at the occasion for the psalm. And verse 7 says, On that day, David first delivered this psalm into the hands of Asaph and his brethren, to thank the Lord. So that day was the day that the Ark of the Covenant was finally moved to

Jerusalem. And to understand the full reason for the celebration, we have to look at a lot of background. And we are going to look at more background than usual tonight. And that is because I want to make sure everybody really understands why they were so thankful and why they had such reason to be thankful.

[4:44] So look at 1 Samuel 4, verses 1 through 3 first. Those verses tell us, And the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out to battle against the Philistines and encamped before Ebenezer, and the Philistines encamped in Aphek. Then the Philistines put themselves at battle array against Israel. And when they joined battle, Israel was defeated by the Philistines, who killed about 4,000 men of the army in the field.

And when the people had come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Why has the Lord defeated us today before the Philistines? Let us bring the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord from Shiloh to us, that when it comes among us, it may save us from the hand of our enemies.

So the Israelites incorrectly assumed that the presence of the Ark meant that God's presence would be with them as well. But verses 10 and 11a of 1 Samuel 4 summarize what happens in the next battle.

It says, So the Philistines fought, and Israel was defeated, and every man fled to his tent. There was a very great slaughter, and there fell of Israel 30,000 foot soldiers. Also the Ark of God was captured.

So the Philistines then moved the Ark through several cities, and it eventually came to Ekron. But before we talk about that, do you remember why the Philistines moved the Ark of the Covenant so much?

[6:07] They had plagues everywhere and went. Philistines suffered serious health issues, and so the Ekronites knew that. Listen to what they did whenever they got to Ekron.

And here's 1 Samuel 5, 11 and 12. Those verses say, So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said, Send away the Ark of the God of Israel, and let it go back to its own place, so that it does not kill us and our people.

For there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city. The hand of God was very heavy there. And the men who did not die were stricken with the tumors, and the cry of the city went up to heaven. So after the Philistines sent the Ark back to Israel, it came first to Beth Shemesh.

And that city learns the same lesson that the Philistines did. And we hear that by looking at 1 Samuel 6, verses 19, all the way to 1 Samuel 7, verse 2.

And those verses say, Then the Philistines have brought back the Ark of the Lord.

[7:28] Come down and take it up with you. Then the men of Kirjath-Jerim came and took the Ark of the Lord, and brought it into the house of Abinadab on the hill, and consecrated Eliezer his son to keep the Ark of the Lord.

So it was that the Ark remained in Kirjath-Jerim a long time. It was there twenty years. And the house of Israel lamented after the Lord. So fast forward then to when David became king, and he and the other leaders decided to move the Ark back to Jerusalem.

And now we're getting into some real familiar passages here. 1 Chronicles 13, verses 5-14 document that attempt to move. It says, So David gathered all Israel together from Shihor in Egypt to as far as the infants of Hemeth to bring the Ark of God from Kirjath-Jerim.

And David and all Israel went up to Bala to Kirjath-Jerim, which belonged to Judah, to bring up the Ark from there, from the God of the Lord, who dwells between the cherubim, where his name is proclaimed.

So they carried the Ark of God on a new cart from the house of Abinadab, and Uzzah and Ahioh drove the cart. Then David and all Israel played music before God with all their might, with singing on harps, on stringed instruments, on tambourines, on cymbals, and with trumpets.

[8:41] And when they came to Chidon's threshing floor, Uzzah put out his hand to hold the Ark, for the oxen stumbled. Then the anger of the Lord was aroused against Uzzah, and he struck him because he put his hand to the Ark, and he died there before God.

And David became very angry because of the Lord's outbreak against Uzzah. Therefore that place is called Perez-Uzzah to this day. David was afraid of God that day, saying, How can I bring the Ark of God to me?

So David would not move the Ark with him into the city of David, but took it aside into the house of Obed-Edom, the Gittite. The Ark of God remained with the family of Obed-Edom in his house three months, and the Lord blessed the house of Obed-Edom and all that he had.

So we're getting closer to our focal passage tonight. Just a couple more places to look at before we really hone in on the verses. Skip to 1 Chronicles 15, 1 through 3 now.

It says, David built houses for himself in the city of David, and he prepared a place for the Ark of God and pitched a tent for it. Then David said, No one may carry the Ark of God but the Levites, for the Lord has chosen him to carry the Ark of God and to minister before him forever.

[9 : 49] And David gathered all Israel together at Jerusalem to bring up the Ark of the Lord to its place, which he had prepared for it. So David's second attempt to move the Ark is successful because as well as preparing a suitable place for the Ark, he also instructed and organized the Levites in how to carry it properly and how to transport it without causing problems.

And that brings us to 1 Chronicles 16, and there verses 1 through 4 say, So they brought the Ark of God and set it in the midst of the tabernacle that David had erected for it. Then they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before God.

And when David had finished offering the burnt offerings and the peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord. Then he distributed to every one of Israel, both man and woman, to every one a loaf of bread, a piece of meat, and a cake of raisins.

And he appointed some of the Levites to minister before the Ark of the Lord to commemorate, to thank, and to praise the Lord God of Israel. So all of that background is to say that when 1 Chronicles 16, 7 says that day, it's referring to the day that the Ark first returned to Jerusalem.

And you can see all of the difficulty they faced and all of the problems that happened when they tried to move the Ark incorrectly or when the Philistines had the Ark. And so because of that, you can better understand why they were so thankful when they actually successfully moved the Ark.

[11 : 13] So let's begin by looking at the psalm itself, because it's going to remind us about three things concerning God's character. The first is God's faithfulness. So faithfulness is the first blank that you have there.

And the section on God's faithfulness covers 1 Chronicles 16, 8-22. But we're going to take those verses in sections, and we'll look at verses 8-11 first.

Verses 8-11 tell the people to do several things, and once again, here are those verses. They say, O give thanks to the Lord, call upon His name, make known His deeds among the peoples, sing to Him, sing songs to Him, talk of all His wondrous works, glory in His holy name, let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the Lord, seek the Lord in His strength, seek His face evermore.

So what's the first thing you see in verse 8 that they're supposed to do? Give thanks to the Lord.

And David wanted his people to realize that God was the source of all their blessings, and to express thanks to Him.

So David wanted to make sure everybody knew God was the source of the blessings. He doesn't call for them only to feel thankful, but to give thanks. So from that we can learn that expressions of thanks are necessary.

[12 : 30] God's people are also instructed to do more than just give thanks in that verse there, to call upon His name. Matthew Henry says, Praying for mercies is accepted as an acknowledgement of former mercies.

So in other words, when you pray for mercies to come, you recognize and you realize that God is the source of mercy because He's provided mercy in the past. What's the last thing that verse 8 says to do?

Yes, they're supposed to make known God's deeds among the peoples, and the peoples here is a reference to the surrounding nations. So surrounding nations is what fits there.

And we see already here the reminder that God had called the nation of Israel to be a witness to others, and not to simply regard God as their exclusive possession. Then verse 9 gives two more commands.

First, God's people are to sing to Him. And God is so great that one form of praise is not sufficient. In addition to thanking Him in prayer, His people are to use their voices in singing.

[13 : 34] And the singing is intended to offer praise to God rather than just entertaining the worshipers. And then next, the people are to talk of God's wondrous works.

So we can take from that that in addition to talking to the surrounding nations about God, the people of Israel work to fill their own conversation with each other by talking about the things of God.

And another psalm puts it this way. Psalm 111.2 says, The works of the Lord are great, studied by all who have pleasure in them. So you can see that we're to tell others about God.

We're also to tell each other about God and remind everybody what God has done for us. And then verse 10 calls the people and tells them to glory in God's name.

And remember that the name of God represents His character. So while others glory in things such as money, pleasure, sports, careers, or other things, the children of God then are to glory in the various attributes of God Himself.

[14:33] And the Lord conveyed the same to Jeremiah. I'm sure you know where we're going on this one, even if it wasn't in your handout. But Jeremiah 9.23 and 24 are a key cross reference here.

And Jeremiah 9.23 and 24 are the verses that say, Let the wise man glory in his wisdom. Let not the mighty man glory in his might. Nor let the rich man glory in his riches.

But let him who glorifies glory in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, exercising loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth.

For in these I delight, says the Lord. So if we go back to our main text, the last line of verse 10 says, To let the hearts of the people rejoice in the Lord.

So this seems to picture the heart as wanting to rejoice in the Lord, but instead is suppressed or held down by the cares and burdens of this life. So our job then is to avoid allowing our burdens to beat us down so that we have no joy in our hearts.

[15:35] So once again, our job is to avoid allowing burdens to beat us down so that we have no joy in our hearts. But we're not told to do that without giving an answer of why we should do that and how we can do that.

Because verse 11 tells us how we can avoid allowing our burdens to beat us down. It says, Seek the Lord in his strength. Seek his face evermore. And the word seek there implies intense concentration.

So seeking means that you really should concentrate on what you should do and concentrate on finding God and realizing his blessings for you. The people were to recognize their own insufficiency then and they were to cast themselves totally upon God's sufficiency.

And David also calls upon them to seek God's face. God's people should always be such that his face can be turned toward them in approval rather than turned away from them in displeasure.

And we can be confident when we seek the Lord in his strength and we can be confident because he's been faithful in the past. And just like what we said before, because he's been faithful in the past, we can be confident that he'll be faithful in the present and future.

[16:51] Then verses 12 through 22 summarize God's faithfulness to Israel in the past. And so here are those verses again. Verses 12 through 22 say, Remember his marvelous works which he has done, his wonders and judgments of his mouth.

O seed of Israel, his servant, you children of Jacob, his chosen ones, He is the Lord our God, his judgments are in all the earth. Remember his covenant forever, the word which he commanded for a thousand generations, the covenant which he made with Abraham and his oath to Isaac and confirmed it to Jacob for a statute, to Israel for an everlasting covenant, saying, To you I will give the land of Canaan at the allotment of your inheritance, and when you were few in number, indeed very few in strangers in it.

When they went from one nation to another and from one kingdom to another, he permitted no man to do them wrong, yes, he rebuked kings for their sake, saying, Do not touch my anointed ones, and do my prophets no harm.

So before we look at the rest of the verses, let's consider the term prophets in verse 22, because God's prophets are a term, those whom he chose to represent him on earth, in this case.

And in Genesis 27, we see an example that Abraham was called a prophet in Genesis 20 verse 7, and this title also could apply to Isaac and Jacob. But here in verse 22, God's prophets poetically refers to the nation of Israel.

[18:15] So if you're following along in the handout, it's God's prophets poetically refers to the nation of Israel. And verses 8 through 22 say that the nation should remember God.

Of course, we see that in verse 12, because he remembers them. And think about that for a second, because the Lord God who exercises universal rule remembered his covenant and his oath with the people.

And his covenant was made with Abraham, it was confirmed in Isaac's presence, and then it was also given to Jacob later on. And of course, Israel then, God said, would be a great nation, and would possess the land that God had promised.

So how amazing is it, really, that the God of the universe is remembering his covenant to his chosen people, even when his people hadn't been faithful to him.

And so this section also traces something of Israel's history in which the Lord fulfilled his promise to make them a great nation. So in other words, the writer here is telling us that, well, if you don't believe that God will still be faithful, just remember what he's done in the past to get you to where you are now.

[19 : 24] Because think about that for a little bit. The Lord protected them while they sojourned in other lands. We saw that, even starting out with Abraham, because Abraham was protected in his journey from Ur in Chaldea to Haran, and then Canaan and Egypt, and then also living in strange areas with other peoples.

And then the Lord sovereignly led Israelites into Egypt and exalted Joseph later on in their history. And then of course, in Egypt, God made his people very fruitful, and that's where they became a great nation and then were later oppressed.

So the Lord had to work wonders in Egypt then, and of course those wonders were the plagues on Egypt that eventually led to the people being released from Egypt. But they weren't just released from Egypt.

Remember, they were actually given a lot of booty when they left Egypt. So the people were actually very relieved when they left and actually helped them leave. And then after that, the Lord had to lead the Israelites through the wilderness, and of course he provided quail and manna and then water from the rock to sustain them.

So even during Israel's wanderings, he was faithful to them. So all throughout their history, from the very beginning in Abraham, they had evidence of God's faithfulness to them.

[20 : 39] So the faithfulness of God in past generations then encourages Israel to respond in faithfulness now. And of course, we can take comfort in that too because Christians look back not only on the acts of God in the Old Testament, but we also see the salvation he provided in Christ in the New Testament.

And of course, that gives us the ultimate basis for our trust today. So we have even more to look back on than what the people of Israel had at the time that this psalm was written. And then verses 23 through 33 comprise the second section of the psalm.

In it, we see God's worthiness. So God's worthiness is what goes into your second blank there, or your next blank, that is. And verses 23 and 24 echo some of the same things that we saw in verses 8 and 9.

And here are 23 and 24 again. They say, Sing to the Lord, all the earth. Proclaim the good news of his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the nations, his wonders among all peoples. And then verses 25 through 27 lists several reasons why God is worthy of such worship. Starting in verse 25, it says, For the Lord is great and greatly to be praised.

[21 : 51] He is also to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the people are idols, but the Lord made the heavens. Honor and majesty are before him. Strength and gladness are in his place.

So the mention of other gods in verse 25 is clarified by verse 26 because the gods mentioned with little g in verse 25 really are just idols.

So this is a poetic way of denying the existence of other gods because these gods existed only as statues and not persons. And if we go back to Jeremiah again, Jeremiah 10 expands on this thought.

Listen to Jeremiah 10 verses 2 through 5. It says, Thus says the Lord, Do not learn the way of the Gentiles. Do not be dismayed at the signs of heaven. For the Gentiles are dismayed at them. For the customs of the peoples are futile. For one cuts a tree from the forest, the work of the hands of the workmen with the axe. They decorate it with silver and gold. They fasten it with nails and hammers so that they will not topple.

[22 : 56] They are upright like a palm tree and they cannot speak. They must be carried because they cannot go by themselves. Do not be afraid of them for they cannot do evil nor can they do any good.

And then if you skip down a few verses in Jeremiah, Jeremiah 10, 8 through 10 have these words. Just to clarify it even further, it says, But they are altogether dull-hearted and foolish. A wooden idol is a worthless doctrine.

Silver is beaten into plates. It is brought from Tarshish and gold from Uphaz, the work of the craftsmen and of the hands of the metalsmith. Blue and purple are their clothing. They are the work of skillful men.

But the Lord is the true God. He is the living God and the everlasting King. At His wrath the earth will tremble and all nations will not be able to endure His indignation. So back to our main text then. Look again at 1 Chronicles 26b in verse 27. It says, But the Lord made the heavens. Honor and majesty are before Him. Strength and gladness are in His place.

[23 : 58] So our God then is the one who made everything and is therefore superior. Moreover, His temple or His sanctuary is characterized by splendor and it's also called majesty and glory in some translations and also strength.

So in other words, our God is glorious and strong in the midst of His people. So how much of a contrast is that to the idols that we saw earlier and also the ones we just looked at in Jeremiah? There's quite a bit of a difference there. So what should our response be to that truth? And if you want to just look at the next few verses of the psalm, you see what our response should be to that truth because verses 28-30 say, Give to the Lord, O families of the peoples, give to the Lord glory and strength, give to the Lord the glory due His name, bring an offering and come before Him, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness, tremble before Him all the earth, the world also is firmly established, it shall not be moved.

So here the psalmist is calling for the families and that literally means tribes there. So when we're talking about families, we're talking about tribes of the earth to ascribe glory and strength to God and to worship Him.

And of course, we know that someday every knee must bow before the sovereign Lord whose holiness is awesome. Of course, everyone's much better off if they worship God now before they're actually forced to worship God later.

[25 : 29] And of course, the positive side for us in these verses is that these verses develop the thought of inviting Gentiles to worship in God's courts. And the Old Testament describes a future era when the Gentiles received the light by picturing them coming to the Jerusalem temple and even the lesser temple after the exile.

So the Gentiles then are to bring an offering and to worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness. So the key takeaway for us is that we Gentiles will be welcomed in God's house.

And that's what I really wanted to emphasize to you there is that the Gentiles will be welcomed in God's house. And of course, that's important for us because, as I said, we are those Gentiles. Then check out verse 31.

It says, Let the heavens rejoice and let the earth be glad and let them say among the nations, The Lord reigns. And the Lord reigns was a countercultural cry back then.

When they said the Lord reigns, the ancient Israelites were saying that in a world that believed that God could rise and fall at any time. So in contrast, the living God, he remained the ruler for all of eternity.

[26 : 37] And the universal rule of the one true God who's above all the other gods, and we know those gods are worthless anyway from verses 25 and 26, that's good news to all who will acknowledge him because we can rely on the universal rule of the one true God and rely on his kingship.

So look at verses 32 and 33 again. They say, Let the sea roar in all its fullness. Let the field rejoice in all that is in it. Then the trees of the woods shall rejoice before the Lord for he is coming to judge the earth.

So when all kinds of people gladly receive God's rule and worship him according to his gracious character, then the rest of creation will celebrate as well. And creation will celebrate then, we see here, because God is coming to judge the earth.

So eventually, we know that God will come to judge the earth. And these bold personifications of the heavens, the earth, the sea, the fields, and the trees may indicate that all creation will flourish then when righteousness reigns on earth.

And of course, this will be when the curse is replaced by blessing. So the earth will no longer groan then, waiting for the day of redemption as it's doing right now. And of course, we know that the earth is groaning based upon Romans 8, 20 through 22.

[27 : 51] And the rule of the Lord described in this psalm is one which will be established when Christ returns to earth. And instead of the international chaos we see in human history, the world is going to be settled and efficiently managed by the Messiah in the millennial kingdom.

And the Lord also will establish international peace and stability in the future messianic kingdom. He's also going to rule the world with peace and impeccable justice at that time. So that's the end of the second section on God's worthiness.

So we've seen God's faithfulness, we've seen God's worthiness. Now we're going to look at God's forgiveness in the last section of the psalm. And the final section of the psalm does look forward to God's forgiveness.

When you look at verse 34 it says, O give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his mercy endures forever. So the goodness and mercy of God are especially praiseworthy in light of Israel's historical sin pattern.

And of course we can personify that as well because the goodness and mercy of God are especially praiseworthy because of our historical sin pattern as well. And Daniel 9.9 put it this way, Daniel 9.9 says, To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness though we have rebelled against him.

[29:05] And then Psalm 86.5 says this, it says, For you, Lord, are good and ready to forgive, abundant in mercy to all those who call upon you. So you can see that forgiveness and mercy go together.

And of course going back to our main text, 1 Chronicles 16.35 tells Israel what else to do. It says, And say, Save us, O God of our salvation, gather us together and deliver us from the Gentiles to give thanks to your holy name to triumph in your praise.

So the psalmist pleads on behalf of the nation and in light of the covenant for the nation to be regathered in Israel. And he remembers what the men in Moses' day forgot.

He remembers God as their Savior. And even though the tribes of Judah and Benjamin return to Israel and Ezra and Nehemiah, this text really looks forward to the regathering of Israel at the time when Christ returns to rule over the promised Davidic kingdom.

So of course that's the millennial kingdom on earth. So what can we see here? We can see that though the people had been faithless, the Lord was still their God. He's going to be faithful and he's one day going to return and they will have a home in his mercy and they'll have a promise of eventual triumph.

[30:19] We have one more verse to cover. Verse 36 is a doxology. It says, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting and all the people said, Amen and praise the Lord.

So this verse is a grand benediction that focuses on the eternal character of God and of course it focuses on the eternal character of God in the grand benediction because he's Israel's and our Savior.

And how long does it say the Lord is God? It says, from everlasting to everlasting. How long is from everlasting to everlasting? A long time.

So the application then of this psalm is pretty straightforward. When we focus on God's faithfulness, God's worthiness and God's forgiveness we can be prepared to face any challenge whether it be a new year, a new day or even a new task.

And throughout the psalm we've seen what the appropriate response should be. Verses 8 through 11 and in verse 36 summarize that response better than anything else we could say. It says, Oh give thanks to the Lord, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the peoples, sing to him, sing songs to him, talk of his wondrous works, glory in his holy name, let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the Lord, seek the Lord in his strength, seek his face evermore.

[31:42] So when you think about that, that's really a summary of the Christian life when you look at what we should do. We should give thanks, we should call upon his name, we should make him known, then we should sing songs to him and talk of his wondrous works.

And then of course when we do all that we can say what's said in verse 36, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting. And all the people said amen and praise the Lord.

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