

7/18/21 - Psalm 65 - "A Reason to Praise God"

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[0 : 00] We have quite a powerful psalm as we read this morning as we saw the God of our salvation.

This is a powerful psalm of praise. Various psalms can be categorized based on their content and theme. Some are of lament. This one is a powerful psalm of praise. And its structure uniquely capitalizes upon its progressive nature as the psalm unwinds and unfolds for its readers today, back in centuries past, and same for us today. It communicates a progressive nature, and that progressive nature is broken up into three various stanzas, three stanzas. And each stanza actually stands out on its own and also builds up to emphasize the third stanza of which David writes.

And so, while we can admit that many of the psalms can probably be sung at any occasion in life, in the valleys of life, on the hilltops of life, you can probably turn to the psalms and see something that resonates with that experience. But for the people of God, the people of Israel, it is probably most appropriate to connect this psalm within its historical context around the Feast of Tabernacles, or known as the Feast of Booths. And we'll get into that in a little bit.

But you'll see exactly why. And I believe that even the reading this morning, you could probably pull out why that might be very appropriate to connect this psalm with that festival. If you remember back to our John series in John 7, we covered the Feast of Booths, also known as the Feast of Tabernacle.

That happens in the Jewish nation. That's a festival that's celebrated on the 15th day of the seventh month. And it lasts eight days in all, all the way up to the 22nd day. And this is when crops are brought in. This is a great feast. There's cooking. You smell the smells around the air. All the people of Israel are gathered in Jerusalem to celebrate this feast. And actually, the first fruits of the harvest are dedicated back to God. And you see this in Leviticus chapter 23 and Numbers 29.

[2 : 38] And remember the great day from John 7, that water libation ceremony. It's also known as Hashanah Rabbah, the great day. It's the last day of the Feast of Booths where they take the water and they pour it out upon the altar. And that's exactly when Jesus stood up in the crowd and saying, if anyone thirsts, come and drink. Remember, I'm the living water. That is the moment at the Feast of Booths that that occurred. And we're going to see how this psalm in particular connects to that day and that festival. So let's dive into the attitude of the praise of this psalm and which it draws upon and allow its content as well as its context and structure to align and redefine our attitude of praise today. To align us in our current day and age here in Youngstown, Ohio with God's Word. So let's do that today. And I want to ask a prodding question for all of us, which we will hopefully answer at the end of the preaching today. And that is, what hinders your praise to God? What hinders your praise to God, church? Let's pray as we begin. Father, it's by no mistake that we stand here today with our Bibles open. We desire to hear from you. Father, we have voices all throughout our lives, Twitter being some of the worst of them and social media. But Father, right now we cut the noise out, we cut the sounds, and we tune in to what you desire to speak to us today. And Father, we find that inerrantly, sufficiently, authoritatively through your written Word. And so Father, help us to align our lives with that Word. And Father, draw upon us a conviction to align our lives in the attitude of praise that this psalm gives us today. Father, it is by your Spirit alone that we can do this. And we ask the Spirit of

God to help us to soften our hearts, to open our minds to your Word today. We praise in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. I'm going to lay this out. Three stanzas basically means three-point sermon. There you go.

And we're going to have various perspectives. We're not going to have sections. We're not going to have points. I'm throwing a little curveball in there. We're going to have three different perspectives.

And so the first perspective today that we are going to see is in the first stanza of this psalm. And that's within verse 1 through 4. Does that say 3 to 4? No. 1 to 4. That's right.

And it's praise to God, to the God of grace. Praise to the God of grace. Verse 1, as we read, says, Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion.

[5 : 55] And to you shall vows be performed. Verse 2, O you who hear prayer, to you shall all flesh come.

Within these two verses, just starting this psalm out, we see a certain direction, a relational direction of praise here. This is from mankind's standpoint unto God.

And that's important because this is man unto a distinguished God. This is the one and only, the God of Zion, which Zion is focused attention upon Jerusalem, which, guess what, is also the location of the Feast of Tabernacles, known as the Feast of Booths.

And this is not like any other God. This is a distinguished God, a monotheistic God. This is a distinguished God of all. And in the truest sense of universality of God's relationship to mankind, God is God of all mankind.

And this is true regardless of man's affirmation of that reality or rejection of that reality. This is the universality of that theology, that all belong to God.

[7 : 18] But the universal, the nature of that universal and broad sense of God's dominion is that all are his, believers and unbelievers, simply to state that all belong to God, but through the narrow sense, God doesn't belong to all, essentially.

And so we'll see that this vastness will continue to reoccur. We'll see this in speaking of the hope of the ends of the earth in verse 5, and those who dwell at the ends of the earth in verse 8.

Simply to say, that all mankind belongs to God. And this psalm allows us to survey the broader range of perspective of what's going on in the world.

And what is going on since day one? That all things were created by God and for God. And so we realize very quickly that there's a point where that broadness is actually narrowed.

That all of a sudden, we got this big party where everyone was created by God, but then the road kind of narrows a little bit. And this is not appealing to our culture today, because not all will dwell with God.

[8 : 35] And that's where we get a very important and vital situation of dwelling with God, of God belonging to us.

But how is this possible, church? How do sinful men and women, Jews and Gentiles, how do they come before a God who is holy, who is perfect, who is the almighty creator of heaven and earth? How can we be assured that prayers can be heard and our soul be satisfied by him? Well, we look no further than the historical context of this psalm, because the Feast of Booths, the Feast of Tabernacles, was also a time to survey back to a few days earlier, which was the festival of the Day of Atonement that the Jewish people observed.

And so in that, David is taking his readers from the perspective of the vastness of God's creation and his relationship with mankind. And specifically, David is taking the readers to look at the Feast of Booths of God's salvation over Israel and saying, but also look at what God has been doing.

And so he gives this source of praise in verse 3 and 4, which reads, when iniquities prevail against me, you atone for our transgressions.

[10 : 00] Blessed is the one you choose and bring near to dwell in your courts. We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, the holiness of your temple.

simply to say, church, without atonement, any celebration we have is in vain. And we have every reason to celebrate because of atonement.

Without it, we have every reason to weep right now in our church, even today. Isaiah introduces that problem in Isaiah 59, 1 through 2. It won't be up on the screen, but go ahead and jot it down in your notes.

Check my context and usage. It says, the problem of sin. Isaiah says, Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, or his ear dull that he cannot hear.

But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.

[11 : 03] It's not often part of our culture today of a church growth plan and agenda to talk about atonement.

Because you cannot have atonement without discussing a proper theology of sin. You cannot have atonement without there being sin.

The truth of that reality is often not even discussed today in many churches. Far be it easier to dilute the doctrine of atonement and minimize the contentious topic that gets people on edge of saying that, actually, we're all corrupt and we need a Savior.

We're not self-sufficient. The Bible makes that clear. The culture doesn't want to hear that. So better we just kind of just brush that to the side and in turn just worry about filling our churches, of meeting our budgets and filling the seats and everything looks like basically everything's healthy but what it is, it's a dead corpse that's perfumed.

Vanity. The Bible makes atonement a necessary, essential doctrine. Specifically that of substitutionary atonements.

[12:21] And I'm sorry you're entering into a theology class because it's important that we understand this. And all throughout Scripture, throughout the nation of Israel and the Old Testament, we see the atonement occurring by the high priest where he sprinkles blood upon the ark to cover sin.

And this shielded their sins from the gaze of a holy God and ultimately, all of this was pointing towards a sufficient sacrifice that which we would receive substitutionary atonements where not only our sin is covered, but it is also removed.

So it is vital that we understand that our atonement in this essential doctrine is at the center of our faith regardless of cultural appeal. We fight and we die on the hill of substitutionary atonement.

This is what draws us to God. And so we understand that this is vital and this was accomplished by Jesus Christ alone in his body and flesh.

In other words, God alone. The universality of God's relationship with mankind ends with the day of atonement just earlier before the Feast of Booths.

[13:37] And so, we just read, not only do all belong to God, but atonement allows us to dwell with God. And it says, it goes on to say, blessed is the one you choose and bring near.

All God's doing, not our doing, to dwell, not in our courts, not in our agendas, but his courts. And look with me, and you shall, we shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, not ours, and the holiness of your temple, not ours.

And it's meant to be said of the basis of substitutionary atonement. What it accomplishes for us is that we are clothed in not a righteousness of our own, but a righteousness of Jesus Christ.

And at the cross of Jesus Christ, if you're talking about the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Booths and all these things, these were significant in a certain point in time in history in the nation of Israel.

And that these were a shadow of things to come, as Colossians 2.17 says. But the substance is Christ. So just as we wouldn't cast the shadow forward towards anything, God has instituted within his church today communion, the Lord's Supper, and baptism to cast that shadow back to the cross.

[14:59] And so our fulfillment of these festivals are no longer overseen. They're not needed today because the cross has happened, and we look back upon the cross through communion and baptism.

So church, if you are in Christ today, your sin is atoned for. It's not just covered like the nation of Israel.

It's been removed. 1 John 3.5 makes that clear. You know that he appeared in order to take away sin, and in him there is no sin.

This is good news, church. Good news. And so as we're kind of looking at this relationship with mankind of our direction of praise to him, but him being the source of his direction towards us and atonement for our sins, we see something vital in this passage that we are without excuse or compelling reason why our lives should be devoid of praise.

We have no right to be complaining. In this, we present our praise towards God because of the forgiveness that we have received from God.

[16:11] This is theology of why we sing right here to the right of me. This is why we lift our voices in praise. This is why we have the strength to overcome the challenges that we face in this life and we turn and lean upon God, our salvation.

but something important must happen. We must uncover to God that which we desire for him to cover and remove. Meaning that we must repent of our sin. We must confess our sin. And if you are a Christian today, you are the blessed one whom God has chosen. You are. He's drawn you near and to dwell in his courts. This is good news. This first stanza makes it clear in two senses. The broad sense that we are created to be in fellowship with God in praise and prayer. But the narrow sense is that God alone can atone for a brokenness in that relationship. And in him alone is our righteousness and satisfaction. All people can say, behold our God. Right? [17:25] So I gotta ask, what hinders you from that praise? What hinders you from that praise? Observing the propelling nature of this first stanza, which pushes our attention forward in the psalm, I don't want to delay any longer.

I want us to see what David is doing artistically through building this psalm into emphasis towards the third stanza. And so let's see, not only God is a God of graciousness, but we see a second perspective.

And the camera lens is zooming in a little bit further, not just in the vastness and just how he, the created order of the world and all human life, but he zooms in here and we see, praise be, praise to the God of might in verse 5 through 8.

Verse 5 says, By awesome deeds, you answer us with righteousness. O God of our salvation, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas.

This perspective that David is drawing upon right now as he's adjusting the camera lens in a little bit further is looking upon something. He's setting up the content of the following three verses, 6 through 8.

[18:59] He's building into emphasis and this is forecasting that. It is through the showcasing of God's relationship toward his chosen people and the only hope of all, not only people, but also land and sea.

So you don't only see this cosmic creation of what God's plan has, he's zooming into the world right now. He's looking at the land and the sea and let's see that might of which is proclaimed through that.

In verse 6 it says, The one who by his strength established the mountains, being girded with might, who stills the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, the tumult of the peoples.

God's might is embedded in strength of mountains. The vastness and strength of the mountains proclaim God's glory in verse 6. And it's revealed in the calming of the roaring seas and the tumult of people.

H.C. Leopold says of this glorious observation here, They did not set themselves, he says, into place or become firm and immovable.

[20:14] God established them, giving proof thereby that he is girded with power. And then he says, And of the seas, they never composed themselves.

God calmed them. You know, David, if you observe the life of David throughout these pages, especially in his contentious situation with King Saul, David was well acquainted with the roaring, tumultuous people, wasn't he?

There was always somebody after him, trying to kill him or dethrone him. David had a very good understanding of what the tumult of people had to do with.

And so what David is doing is he's allowing the viewers, the audience, to view into his lens. And David is forcing them to lift their voices as high as the mountains in praise.

To praise with the mountains and the seas. To direct their attention to the displays of God's glorious might. And verse 8 says, So that those who dwell at the ends of the earth, all people, are in awe at your signs.

[21:34] You make the going out of the morning and the evening to shout for joy. In fact, the purpose of this natural revelation of God to mankind and the world is intended to bring awe upon God.

Those who dwell at the ends of the earth. So in other words, regardless of our lostness in sin or our fondness in Christ, God's continually revealing his power and might in our lives if we would only have the sense to open our eyes to see it.

He has revealed his glory. My son and I and my father have experienced tumultuous roaring seas on our fishing trip just a couple weeks ago before my concussion.

This is for insurance purpose just because they'll probably be viewing, making sure I'm doing the right things, not going fishing. We experienced this very, very personally because setting out upon the charter upon Lake Erie, this little body of water just north of us, we set out and the sea up there, the body of water was just calm.

It was calm. It was 6 o'clock in the morning. We were excited for the day. And then just getting out of the harbor, you know, it gets a little bit choppy out there. We were all ready to cast our lines out and once we had all the lines and two fish into it, all of a sudden the winds shifted, winds started blowing in from the south and those waves got almost up over the boat.

[23 : 21] We were surrounded by six foot waves. So we retreated after our tangled lines were reeling it in and we're just like, well, we're good with two fishes, I don't want to die today. So we come in.

And what God's creation is saying through all of this is that the same God who exists, who is all powerful and almighty can calm every one of those waves.

If only we could see it. If only we could acknowledge it. It would have been a good theology lesson for my son if he wasn't seasick. But how can we possibly, how can any of this possibly bring hope in our lives?

How could it? Well, when the nations rage, I don't know if you've turned on the news lately, when the nations are raging like a stormy sea, we must turn no further than the foot of the cross in prayer, in praise, in dependence, because only God alone can fix the problems in the world.

And he shows that through the mountaintops and through calming the seas. Without God, there is no peace to be achieved. True peace cannot be established by any other means than the mighty hand of God.

[24 : 48] And the culture says, oh, we want peace, we want love, and we want joy. But they don't want God, who is the source of those three pieces in life.

Right? True peace, true love, and true joy. Their efforts, any efforts of achieving those ends by corrupt means is devoid of anything.

It falls short. Peace offered apart from Christ is a delusion, church. Love expressed apart from Christ is vain, and joy devoid of Christ is sorrow.

You see, peace, love, and joy have theological sources with theological ends, meaning that they cannot be attained through treaties, through legislation, through Congress, through the President of the United States.

Man, how quickly we can be accustomed to turn to the government to solve a theological problem. I'm thinking that it's their job too. How foolish we can be in this life.

[26 : 02] So in this, the glory of the natural revelation that surrounds us to proclaim the mighty hand of God, and the glory of what we have here known as the special revelation of which we are introduced to Jesus Christ and the testimony thereof, our grasp within our hands proclaims still the mighty grace of God.

And so church, we truly have no reason to sing songs of joy other than God alone. Our gracious God, as verse 1 through 4 says, and our mighty God, as 5 through 8 says.

Our hope is not in the red, white, and blue, it is in the red. The blood red that was spilled from Jesus Christ's body. And until only true peace with God can be established through that atoning sacrifice, that is the place of true peace between God and man.

So I have to ask again, what hinders you from praising God if the mountains praise him and if the seas praise him? Let's look into the third perspective as David brings in full emphasis in this third stanza.

We arrive at the third stanza and the perspective is the praise to the God of abundant provision. Praise to the God of abundant provision.

[27 : 32] This is the third stanza of which the two previous have been preparing us for. not only in the cosmic vast realm of the created order that we were created by God for God and not only zooming in, the mountains display that glory and praise, the seas, but now he turns in a little bit closer.

He turns that camera lens a couple clicks to the left or to the right, whichever one, zooms that focus in a little bit further and he's looking at the soil upon the earth.

Let's look with me in verse 9. Verse 9 sort of propels the rest of this third stanza. It says that you visit the earth and water it.

You greatly enrich it. The river of God is full of water. You provide their grain for so you have prepared it.

verse 9 speaks against the grain of deism that God is sort of like he's spun the dreidel and away we go and he's detached from creation.

[28 : 46] This speaks against that grain of deism and reinforces the very involved work of God to visit the earth and water it. Simply rain being that of God's work.

And the benefits being that of enrichment. And not only the benefits but the quantity of enrichment is abundant. And the effects of God's involvement in this is that there's a harvest to be harvested. It yields grain. Truly this is quite an appropriate song to be sung at a harvest time such as the Feast of Tabernacles or the Feast of Booths. Right?

Observing the miracle of rain and the abundant streams of water as verse 10 says. David is making it clear for the people then and us now reminding us that this abundant harvest belongs to God. Right? He says in verse 10, you water its furrows abundantly settling its edges, softening it with showers and blessing its growth.

[29 : 56] Man, verse 9 through 10, if I were ever considering farming for a profession, man, this would be the verse that would probably encourage me in those seasons of drought.

We're having summer nights at our house tonight, just so you know, and you'll probably see this little farming project we have that's just overtaking our entire backyard of zucchini taller than my kids.

But you're going to, these are words for any farmer. These are words to encourage us. And I am sure David had these very thoughts when he was in the field shepherding as David shepherded in his early years before being called to a king.

These are probably the words that he was being produced through God's natural revelation that even the rain is a gift from God. Just on Friday, me and my wife, we celebrated our 10th anniversary and 10 years of her putting up with me, right?

That's the persona that goes around, right? She hates when I say that. But we took a walk along this pathway that we walked when we were dating, holding hands, walking down this park in Canton.

[31 : 08] And we got to the bridge where I proposed to her. And when we were just sitting, reflecting upon just our lives over the past 10 years, at that point that was 11 years ago when we were dating, we were going to be able to see it.

We were dating challenges, how it's had its ups, its downs, its twists and turns. But God has been faithful through it all and had the last word in every situation. And then comes out of my mouth, where did all that water come from?

All this water coming under this bridge. You know, she's in the sentimental thought of our lives and I'm like, look at all this water. water. Yeah.

And she's like, yeah, you're right. And then I'm like, this would make a good sermon illustration.

Because we started thinking, then we started talking about it just because that's how we are.

We started thinking about the wonder of just the vastness and the abundance of water. The water that never stops running. Where does all this water come from? And then she talks about Niagara Falls.

[32 : 18] Think about the 167 feet drop of Niagara Falls. That thing never stops. Where does it all come from? Psalm 65 can help us.

This is the abundance of water that God gives to us. And I truly appreciate the clarity that David draws upon in this passage in verse 11 to capitalize upon a tangible imagery.

We call it illustrations in our day-to-day. And David uses a sense of an illustration. And he says in verse 11, you crown the year with your bounty. Your wagon tracks overflow with abundance.

And being indoctrinated by Disney in our household, that made me think of Prince John and Sir Hiss's wagon in Robin Hood, or the 1973 film cartoon, Robin Hood, of that wagon going down and the abundance of his bounty was stolen.

Not a good illustration, a perfect illustration here. But the bounty, the jewelry and everything just spilling out. Not only do you have the wagon tracks and the hoof prints of that wagon passing through, out from the sides is spilling out in fruit, in abundance.

[33 : 37] And David is making it clear in this simple illustration. How can you deny that God is not abundantly providing in our lives? We're coming to a close today.

And we need to think about this very hard in our day and age. Maybe in this time and season of your life right now, and what God has you in. this says that when once the droughted land, droughted land and dry land brings forth shoots of life through the abundant hand of God, when the droughted land brings shoots of life by the mighty hand of God, and its fruit is yielded, this proclaims glory to God.

Our God is our provider. What gives you the reason to be hindered from that same praise? The raging sea is stilled by God's call of command, so that the seas proclaim, great is our God of might. What gives you the reason for your praise to be hindered? And the ones guilty people receive atonement by the merciful will of God, and his chosen and forgiven people proclaim, great is our God of grace.

What gives you the reason for your praise to be hindered today? You have to think that what's being spoken of is what Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for in Luke chapter 18 verse 40, where the Pharisees were trying to silence the praising disciples, saying that if they keep quiet, if these disciples of mine keep quiet, the very stones under their feet are going to cry out.

[35 : 40] If the fruit of the soulless nature shouts the praise of God, why are we so reluctant evermore to praise God in all seasons?

To see his glory somehow. Right, church? God is the same God. God is the same. All creation is cared for and will be restored.

How much more will the God of ultimate restoration to come not give us a more tangible reason to lift our praise to him?

Right? Verse 11, getting back to the feast of booze mindset.

We are forced to reflect on not just any piddly harvest that there could be. Two fish out on Lake Erie. We're talking about an abundant harvest that God can provide.

[36 : 42] A harvest that ought to draw upon the praise of God's provision and intervention. And looking through that window of the feast of booze today, we see that there is still a harvest at work in the world around us.

And much of God is still preparing to be harvested. It's not a harvest of grain, church. It's a harvest of souls. And if only we would be more compelled to devote our lives to be part of the harvest, to be running to that harvest, to be giving ourselves more reasons to be a part of that harvest rather than excuses of why we can hide in our houses apart from that harvest.

Church, the moment you placed your faith in Jesus Christ, God gave you the tools to be equipped to be harvesters. We pray upon the Lord of the harvest.

If only there were laborers for that harvest. He's given you a Bible and a sickle in a metaphorical sense. The power to proclaim the glory of God and also to harvest those who God calls.

You are called to be disciple, making disciples, church. Is not our God a God of abundant harvest, a God of abundant provision?

[38 : 03] David knew it well in the rural regions of the Middle East, but do we, church? And in great succession of the progressive flowing of the psalm, David sort of leaves us on this cliffhanger of thought.

And I'm going to leave us here today as well. Verse 12 says, The pastures of the wilderness overflow.

That's one. The hills gird themselves with joy. The mountains, the meadows, clothe themselves with flocks.

And the valleys deck themselves with grain. And they shout and sing together with joy.

Together. And in drawing upon the emphasis upon God's hand within life, David says simply, the very fruit of nature, the blossoms that you see occurring all around us, is shouting praise to God.

[39 : 11] God. The very fruit of creation is their praise to God. They shout and they sing together. So what hinders you from that same praise to God?

In order for us to sense the weight of David's emphasis, I'd like to consider a day that everyone in this building right now and watching on the live stream at home will experience, and myself included, is that eleventh hour of our lives.

Consider the time when doctors will probably be calling and recommend that you be surrounded by family and friends. The medicine that was used to stabilize you and keep you in a state of health is now wearing thin.

The sharp pains that you once felt are now becoming numb. It's becoming that hour waiting. And family and friends filter in and out beside you.

Tears are shed at the thought of losing somebody in this life, even knowing that you are going on to glory, holding your hands, being there with you at your side.

[40 : 37] And you know it's only moments that you have left in this life, waiting. And as the hour draws near, the minute draws near, the second draws near.

With every last bit of strength left in you, you turn your frail head over towards the window into your discovery and praise, it is pouring down rain.

Indeed, praise be to God, a reminder for us of his abundance in life, the glory of his abundant salvation.

And there is nothing, not even death, church, that can hinder our praise. Let's pray. Let's pray.