

*** The Heights Baptist Church * Series: The Psalms ***
*** Topic: Praise and Worship * Psalm 33 * 3/23/25 ***

MAIN POINT

God our creator is sovereign, omniscient, and just; and He loves us. He is worthy of our praise!

INTRODUCTION

If you found out the government was bugging your home, in what ways might you act differently?

Think about the friends and acquaintances in your life. How do you decide how much a person can know about you?

Most of us are in contact with many co-workers, friends, neighbors, and extended family members. But among all of those acquaintances, it is likely we have only a small circle of close friends in whom we can fully trust, and with whom we feel we can share the most intimate parts of our lives. Our tendency is to try and control what others know about us. As believers, we look for a few trusted fellow Christians with whom we can be accountable to, but ultimately, we all can look to Jesus as our faithful and trustworthy God and friend who knows us better than we know ourselves, and loves us anyway.

Note to study leader: In today's worship service, we will be taking a one-week break from the sermon series on the Psalms for a morning of worship and praise. In our lifegroup time, we will be looking at Psalm 33, which focusses on praising God.

UNDERSTANDING

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ ISAIAH 43:7 AND EPHESIANS 1:11-12

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ PSALM 33:1-11

According to verses 1-3, what are some ways in which we as God's children are to respond to Him?

Sing joyfully to Him. Praise Him. Praise Him with music. Sing to Him and shout for joy.

What styles of musical praise do you see in verses 2 and 3?

Verse 2 tells us to praise Him with music from the harp and lyre (two instruments that make beautiful, calming music, while verse 3 tells us to shout for joy. Psalm 150:3-5 mentions praise with the harp, lyre, strings, and pipe; and also includes praise with trumpet, tambourine, dancing, and the clash of cymbals.

Note to study leader: The lyre is a musical instrument that looks like a small, U-shaped harp, which is played by plucking the strings.

For what attributes of God are we to praise Him in verses 4-5?

For His true and right word, for his faithfulness in all He does, for His righteousness and justice, and for His unfailing love.

Why is the combination of all of these attributes so vitally important for us?

We can totally trust Him, and we can know He will fulfill all of His promises. If He was righteous and just without being loving, we would all be condemned. If He was loving without being righteous and just, sin would go on unchecked.

For what are we to praise God as described in verses 6-9?

In these verses, we see the psalmist praising God as our Creator. We see an emphasis on God's power as Creator. The heavens and all they contain were made by the spoken "word of the LORD." God spoke the universe into being out of nothing (see Heb. 11:30). By merely speaking, God created the inconceivable vastness of the universe into existence, revealing and majesty, power, and glory of God.

For what are we to praise God for as described in verses 10-11?

God's plans and purposes stand firm forever. This shows us He is completely sovereign over all of creation, and neither people, the nations, nor any of the forces of evil can thwart Him.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ COLOSSIANS 1:15-17

We find another poem about God in Colossians 1:15-20. This poem is centered on Jesus, who is God the Son.

Jesus Christ is the physical manifestation of the eternal God. In other words, Jesus is the exact representation of God because He is God (see Heb. 1:3). The term "firstborn" in verse 15 is a spiritual picture from Jewish culture that shows us Christ is preeminent over all of creation. He is the Creator (John 1:1-4) who entered His creation as a man, and revealed God to us (John 1:18). Since Jesus is God, we need only look to Him to understand the character of our Creator.

How do these verses influence your understanding of what it means to follow Jesus?

In Matthew's Gospel, we read one of Jesus' conversations with His disciples, when He was preparing them for the persecution they would likely face as they spread the good news about Him. As a means of encouraging the disciples, Jesus reminded them how intimately God knows them and the security that knowledge brings.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ PSALM 33:12-22

Considering verses 13-15, what aspects of God demonstrate that He is not just the creator, but also the sustainer of His creation (Colossians 1:17)?

God didn't just create the universe and then leave us to get by on our own. He formed us in our mother's womb so we are fearfully and wonderfully made (see Ps. 139:13-14). God created individual people and entire nations to carry out His purposes, and He is intimately involved in all of our lives.

We previously read in verses 10-11 that God's plans stand firm forever, and the plans of the nations will be thwarted. And in verses 13-15, we saw that God is intimately involved in His creation. According to verses 12-17, how should a nation respond to these truths?

If a nation wants to be blessed, they should keep the LORD as their God. And the nation should realize they are not secure based on the size of their armies, but on God, who sees and considers all that is going on in the earth.

These verses have been showing us that God is watching all of us who live on earth, and that His purposes prevail. According to verses 18-19, how should we as individuals respond to these truths?

We are to fear (be in awe) of Him, place our hope in His unfailing love, and in the fact that He will deliver us from physical death as long as He still has a purpose for us here, and ultimately from spiritual death and eternal separation from Him (Revelation 2:11).

APPLICATION

What attributes of God are mentioned in the final three verses as this Psalm is concluded?

God is our help and our shield. His unfailing love is with us.

How are we counselled in verses 20-23 to respond to the description of God in these verses?

We are to wait in hope for the LORD, rejoicing in Him, and putting our trust in His holy name.

“In worship, God captures your heart; when he’s got it, then the real work begins.” — Matt Redman

Consider praying through Psalm 33 this week, praising God specifically for His attributes that are described in this Psalm.

“God is not going to share His glory with another. That statement—I mean if I said that, ‘it’s all about me and I’m not going to share that glory with anybody else’—you’d think, ‘Wow, he’s just a little bit full of himself, isn’t he?’ So what about when God says that? Here’s the difference. When I say it, it’s not the truth. Your soul is not aided by me being the center of it. The universe is not aided by me being the center of it. It’s the truth when God says it. When you put glory in anything else, it’s going to fail you.”
Pastor Randy Hahn, sermon at The Heights Baptist Church, September 27th, 2020

PRAYER

Praise God that He created all things, and that He is all knowing, all powerful, just, and loving. Thank Him for knowing everything about us, including our thoughts, desires, and actions; and He loves us anyway. Pray that God would transform our hearts and minds to know Him better, trust Him more, and remember to continually offer to Him a sacrifice of praise.

COMMENTARY

Psalm 33

33:6 This verse and what follows specify this psalm as a creation hymn (along with Pss 8 and 104). Even though they refer to different things, the word of the Lord here and in verse 4 are related in that they both originate with God. The Lord of creation is the God of revelation. This is distinctive from other ancient world religions that had myths of creation involving a “creative word” but did not tie that act to any subsequent history. In the biblical text, the God of history who interacts with His people is the same God who spoke the world into existence (see note at v. 9). This brings together the general revelation of creation and the special revelation that God gave to His people (see note at 19:7-9).

33:7 The depths uses the same word (Hb *tehom*) as “watery depths” (Gen 1:2), only here it is plural. The gathering of the waters in that context is the initial act of God’s forming and filling the earth with the separation of waters above and below the expanse. Though some interpreters argue that this could describe the exodus event, the immediate context argues for creation.

33:8 By right of creation, Yahweh is the God of all mankind; therefore, everyone should fear Him. This is in fact the ultimate goal of the kingdom of God (see notes at 8:5-8 and 22:27-31). As a result, let all the earth fear the Lord, since he exercises such power over all of creation, and over every detail of our lives.

33:9 The psalmist declared, By the breath of his mouth, he made everything out of nothing, which is to say, he created “*ex nihilo*” (out of nothing). The Psalmist uses the metaphors of gathering the waters of the sea into jars and putting the deep into storehouses to demonstrate God’s Omnipotence.

33:10-11. In the same way, God rules over human affairs. The Lord foils the plans of the nations that seek to operate contrary to his sovereign will. The plans of the Lord stand firm forever as opposed to the plans of impotent men who are always changing. The purposes of his heart endure unchanged, unlike the purposes of people. The God who spoke this world into existence continues to rule over it and to order all things by the secret counsel of his will (cp. Eph. 1:11).

33:12. This is a pivotal verse. It picks up previous thoughts and makes a summary statement. Happy is a condition of life that only comes when one is guided by God’s wisdom (see Ps. 1). When the Lord is in first place, a nation or person experiences the benefits of His creative wisdom. To ignore God’s direction is to place a nation or person at risk.

That God makes certain choices may often confuse us. His choices of people are based on His love, not on the impressiveness of people. For example, He chose Israel, which was neither the most powerful nor the most advanced civilization. God’s act of choosing is answered somewhere in the mystery of the Godhead. However, what is known is that election shows evidence of what God can do in the lives of people or nations who follow His authoritative direction. To be God’s own possession is to receive the benefits of an inheritance. This includes direction and purpose that He delights in giving those who are His. The cry of the ungodly will be a haunting refrain of regret: “God was not my Lord, and I missed His blessings.”

33:13. God not only looks down, but He observes, meaning He sees. His view is one that is not obstructed. The elevated position of heaven gives God total command of life’s scene so that from His perspective there are no hidden places or moments. Everyone has His attention (love always pays attention). This inclusive term has a double-edge benefit. On the one hand, God is very much aware when someone wounds us; and, on the other hand, He knows when we wound others. The first gives comfort while the second keeps us accountable.

33:14. The thrust of this verse is to reinforce the fact that God is all-seeing and all-knowing. The psalmist throughout this psalm used synonymous parallelism, a method of expressing the same idea with similar words. In these verses, he made extra effort to say that you can run but you can't hide from God's watching eye.

That God gazes emphasizes His awareness. He neither blinks nor winks. He is neither distracted nor unaffected. In fact, all the inhabitants means no exceptions and no exemptions. When Hannah poured out her heart, God's gaze responded to her need (1 Sam 1:9-20); when King David thought he had gotten away with his clever coverup, God's gaze brought to light his dark sin (2 Sam. 11:27-12:19); when Jonah tried to run away, God's gaze made it impossible for him to hide (Jonah 1:1-17). No matter where we go or what we do, we always have a divine audience who is both confrontive and responsive.

33:15. He alone shows God as the only true heart maker. Other influences may invade our hearts, but only God knows how to truly shape a heart. Crafts carries the meaning of a skilled artist doing his or her best work of artistry. Here is Jeremiah's picture of a potter with a purpose who refuses to give up on his pottery (Jer. 18:1-6). God is an intricate shaper of delicate detail. His image is, therefore, stamped on our hearts with a sense of rightness and wrongness at the center of our being. Although shattered by sin, all people have a God-placed inner sense of oughtness (Rom 2:15).

As the original heart designer, God is also the only heart knower. He considers all their works, meaning God never misreads our actions. With this in mind, the psalmist makes us understand that all we do must face His evaluation. Others may give us a passing grade, or we may think well of what we do, but in the end it is God's judgment that counts. Opinion polls, talk show trends, and even comparison to others are meaningless in terms of reflecting God's assessment of our lives.

33:16. The psalmist moved his song from accountability to security. Where does a person find strength to stand up to life's threatening situations? The psalmist prepares the worshiper for where the answer is found by showing where strength is not found. Verses 16-17 tell where it is not found (verses 18-19 emphasize where it is found— within God's steadfast love).

A king makes a wrong assumption when he considers his large army enough to secure victory. Under God's direction, Gideon took a small army and eliminated a large army (Judg. 6-7). Leaving God out, no matter how large his army, leaves a king vulnerable. The warrior, who has a record of great strength, may find that his strength lets him down when he needs it the most; he is not . . . delivered. The strong Samson became a weak Samson without God (Judg. 16:20-21).

33:17-19. Even horsepower is not a guarantee from defeat. It is a false hope to face a battle disregarding God and depending on swift horses. Pharaoh's army met death in their chariots being drawn by swift horses. The army's initial charge quickly turned into an attempted escape. The Israelites on foot were safe, while Pharaoh's army and his swift horses drowned (Ex. 14:28). Pharaoh learned too late the psalmist's lesson of misplaced trust.

All of our powers, whether a large army, brute strength, or a strong horse, cannot provide the security that God can provide. It is not what a person has that brings security but who has that person. Only under God's authority can a person be delivered.

33:20. Dependence upon God shows itself in three activities outlined by the psalmist. The first may be the most difficult. It is to wait for the LORD. Waiting requires patient trust. Pushed by our feelings, we often run ahead of God only to create places of pain. Sarah is one who tried to force her solution to God's situation (Gen. 16). It didn't work then, and it doesn't work now. God develops our character as we wait for His instructions instead of moving out on our own. He knows what the right action at the right time is. Waiting for God produces not only Godly character but also the appropriate response.

The waiting room becomes God's disclosure of His help and shield. The word help means a ready resource while shield carries the meaning of protection. Waiting for God means to hope in God's help to supply the emotional strength to keep going. It also means securing His defense against wrong responses. One only receives God's help and shield as he or she waits. Here is knowledge that comes through experience. There is a disclosure of God's presence in the waiting room that is only understood by those who have had the faith to wait. When God is all you have, you will find God is all you need. This is a truth to be sung about, but more importantly, it is to be acted on.

33:21. A second activity of those living under God's authority is to rejoice in the Lord. Anyone can rejoice in good times, but only genuine believers find reasons to rejoice at any time. It is proper to rejoice in praise to fulfilled promises, but it is a matter of trust to rejoice while waiting for a promise to be fulfilled. Rejoicing is an activity of believers' hearts. Rejoicing causes a believer to stand firm in a crisis who then rejoices after the crisis because he or she stood firm. The wellspring of a rejoicing heart is God's unchanging character, meaning His holy name. Trust inspires bold rejoicing even when one does not feel bold. It holds on to God even in the darkest moments with the trusting expectancy that He will always live up to His promises. When rejoicing is not an overflow, it can still be a heart felt out flow because it is based on trust. Paul and Silas sang a rejoicing song in the middle of misunderstanding and mistreatment (Acts 16:25-34).

33:22. A third act of dependent believers is hopeful praying for God's loving action. It is significant that the final verse of Psalm 33 is a singing prayer.

God's faithful love (Hebrew "chesed") is one of the key terms in the Book of Psalms. God's faithful love is the covenant love originating with God, an attribute that leads to action. It is a steadfast love that focuses on the needs of the receiver. God, the ultimate Giver, comes to the need of the receiver even when undeserved. Throughout the history of the Israelite people, their cry for help triggered the ready response of God's chesed love. Whatever their need, God's love came to the rescue. David is a good example of one who received God's love. The mark of his life was not that it was without problems, but that it had the distinguishing presence of God's love (Ps. 23:6), a need for strength beyond themselves to face challenging times. Their hope for the future is not based on themselves but upon the Lord.