

PP: "God is Good, so let us praise him"

Today we continue in our series God's (un)Secret Identity and we are talking about the Goodness of God, so let's praise him. It's helpful that last week's sermon was on the sovereignty of God because these two attributes of God's character go hand in hand. What I mean is that when we are talking about the goodness of God many people assert that...

PP "If God is good, he is not all powerful and if he is all powerful then he is not good, otherwise how could a good God allow bad things to happen?"

This is the ultimate question. In one sense this question cannot be answered except by the one asking it. Here is what I would suggest. Only in a western society are we left without hope when we ask this question. Most every other culture and religion in the world accepts the reality of pain and suffering, but only in our culture are we confronted with the issue and our assumption is that there must not be a God. The problem with this assertion is that the question of "why" still remains and if there is no God then truly our pain and suffering have no meaning. In my opinion, only a Christian worldview can stand up to this question. As we heard David sing, God redeems the life of believers and does not allow them to be condemned. Although we may never have the answer to the question "why" we can be confident then none of our suffering is meaningless. Timothy Keller when dealing with the "why" question says, "We need to avoid pad answers, embrace living without an answer, anticipate the ultimate answer." What he means is that when people are struggling with the "goodness" of God we must not simply tell people they need to have more faith. We must also recognize that similar to Job when he asks why we must be comfortable with God's response, "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?" Additionally, we must anticipate the that the ultimate answer, which is found in the person of Jesus Christ. Initially I thought this was going to be an easy sermon, but yikes.

On the face of Psalm 34 you might think that David is having a good day. He must've awoken to a beautiful sunrise with the smell of coffee in the air, and he is likely now spending some alone time with Jesus. However, that couldn't be further from the truth. This Psalm was actually written at one of the lowest points of David's life. As a matter of fact, it is 1 of 14 Psalms written by David that has a historical context. In many of your bibles it likely says at the beginning, "Of David, when he changed his behavior before Abimelech, so that he drove him out, and he went away." (Abimelech is a title for the King of Gath and means "the king is our father") In order to help us get into the mindset of David when he wrote this Psalm, I want to read the story for you from...

PP- (The whole passage)

1 Samuel 21:10-15.

David at Gath

"¹⁰ That day David fled from Saul and went to Achish king of Gath. ¹¹ But the servants of Achish said to him, "Isn't this David, the king of the land? Isn't he the one they sing about in their dances:

“Saul has slain his thousands,
and David his tens of thousands?”

¹² David took these words to heart and was very much afraid of Achish king of Gath. ¹³ So he pretended to be insane in their presence; and while he was in their hands he acted like a madman, making marks on the doors of the gate and letting saliva run down his beard.

¹⁴ Achish said to his servants, “Look at the man! He is insane! Why bring him to me? ¹⁵ Am I so short of madmen that you have to bring this fellow here to carry on like this in front of me? Must this man come into my house?”

To help paint the picture for you, David fleeing for his life runs to the city of Gath, which just so happens to be the hometown of a man you may or may not have heard of before, his name was Goliath. Also, important to note as David was fleeing for his life, a priest, Ahimelech, gave him some bread and a sword. Very thoughtful, except that the sword he gave David was Goliath’s sword, remember the one he used to separate Goliath’s head from his body. So now David running from Saul finds himself in the city of Gath, with a target on his back. Let’s just say people begin to notice. Surely this is it for David, there is no way it could get any worse, but it does... instead of David taking it like a man he pretends to act like a crazy person carving marks on the doors of the gate and drooling. This is not a good look for David. My question is how did he get there? Out of all of his options why did he choose this one? Oddly enough, God in his sovereignty uses David’s embarrassing behavior to cause Achish to say, “Do I lack madmen, that you have brought this fellow to behave as a madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house.” Because of this David was sent away and escaped with his life. Now, David likely from a cave pens this incredible poem/song to God. What I find interesting is that David wrote this poem in a way so that it could be easily remembered. He wanted to remember the goodness of God in delivering him from his enemy. I am not sure what you are facing at the moment, but as we look at this psalm together, I hope you can join with David and me as we praise our God, even if you are, like David, at the lowest point of your life.

Now that we understand the mindset David was in as he wrote this Psalm when we read it, we can clearly see that there are 2 parts. The first part is more like a song and the second part is more like a sermon. We are going to look at these 2 parts so we can see the goodness of God and along with David praise God.

PP: Part 1- The Song vv. 1-10

PP: The Invitation vv.1-3

As David begins this song by praising God, he says the he will bless the Lord and his praise will continually be in his mouth. Often when we think of blessing, we think of blessings as coming from God and it isn’t likely that we think about blessing God however, David is speaking a good word about God and his love for the Lord is making its way to his mouth. He goes on to say that his soul makes its boast in the Lord. David is bragging on God and he is sharing the goodness of God at work in his life. David is so excited that he invites all who are humble to magnify and exalt the Lord together. We must not miss that David is appealing to the humble. It’s the

humble who recognize that they deserve no good thing so that when they take inventory of their life, they understand that anything good they have is a reflection of God's goodness. To see the goodness of God and to be able to praise him for it requires us to walk in humility.

We also must not miss the importance of the word together! There is something about not containing the goodness of God at work in your life, but sharing it with others. Not only does it help us to appreciate God, but it allows the world to see God at work in our lives and it encourages other believers to share as well. This is particularly important for us to be reminded of in this season. As we gather together and worship God with one another we are exemplifying for the world around us the hope that we have in Christ and testifying to God's ability to sustain us. I was convicted while reading this psalm in considering that I have not been vocal enough about the goodness of God in my life. Have I been so prideful that I haven't had the ability to see the goodness of God in my life so that I would remain silent at a time when the world so desperately needs the hope that I have in Christ? This morning can we humble ourselves and join in with David, lifting our voices together in praise to our God.

PP: The Testimony vv. 3-7

In verses 3-7 David begins to praise God for his very specific deliverance from Achish. Although David acted like a crazy man, he doesn't for take credit for his own freedom, but attributes it to God. David very specifically says, "I sought the Lord and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears... this poor man cried out, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear him, and delivers them.

I feel inclined to challenge cynicism. If David would've died at the hands of Saul or Achish would that have made God any less good? I am sure it can be easy to read this and consider that God delivered David, but he hasn't delivered you...oh but he has. God sustained David's life in this specific moment and God is sustaining you. Not just now, but for eternity. That is not a pad answer, that is all that matters. All of the pain we experience is being used by God to accomplish his purpose in our life. If our inclination is to respond cynically, we waste our pain and making it meaningless. Cynicism robs you of seeing the goodness of God in life's difficult moments. When David wrote this, he was nowhere near from being out of harm's way, we still find him in a dark place yet he is praising God because for that moment he could see how God delivered him and ultimately he knew that even if he died in the hands of evil men that God would redeem his life and that he would not be condemned. I remember when God did that for me... can you recall a time when God did the same. He hears you and he will deliver you. The angel of the Lord encamps around you.

PP: Taste and See vv. 8-10

After inviting us to join in praise with him and testifying of God's goodness David tells us to try God out for ourselves. Similar to when you bite into something delicious and say, "You got to try this!" David is inviting us to experience the goodness of God for ourselves. To taste is to personally experience and to see is to fully know. Again, let us be reminded of the condition in which David found himself when he writes these words. This is not a man unfamiliar with

difficulty and yet he is convinced that if we learn to trust in God we will be blessed. Another familiar idea that we see again in this passage is the importance of fearing the Lord. Of course, this is not fear in the sense of being afraid of God. Earlier David said that God had delivered him from all of his fears. The word for fear in connection to God is different from the fears and worries that we have in our daily lives. When David invites us to fear the Lord he is speaking of the fear of God in a positive way. It's a fear that gives us confidence that this God we are praising is far greater and mightier than all other fears. When we learn the fear of the Lord, we learn not to be afraid of anything else and I don't need to tell you there is a lot that we could be afraid of.

PP: Part 2- The Sermon vv. 11-22

PP: Wisdom for Life vv. 11-14

PP: The Righteous vs The wicked vv. 15-22