

Worship A-Z

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 27 October 2013

Preacher: Tom Muir

[0 : 00] So we're going to look at Sam 1.45 this morning. Now if you want a way of thinking about this Sam, you could think of it as a worship A to Z.

Now the reason I was thinking of that is a couple of things. First of which is this Sam, or this poem, is what's called an acrostic. So that means that every line begins with a different letter of the alphabet, in this case bar 1.

So what the Samist is doing is he's deliberately structuring the Sam so that all the letters of the alphabet come to prominence at one point in order to praise God.

This is a Sam of worship and he's structured it so that that is emphasised. The whole thing is structured so that God is lifted up and praised. But the other thing about an A to Z, an A to Z is a map obviously, but we think of A to Z as like a guide.

If you say something is an A to Z of whatever topic, you think of it as like a guidebook. Well this Sam, I think, helps us and it guides us how to worship God.

[1 : 12] That's something that we sometimes struggle with. Now maybe this morning you don't know how to worship God, you don't know God, you maybe want to find who God is or what the Bible says to us about God.

Now this Sam really helps with that. And I think also those of us who are Christians, it reminds us of why we worship God. Because the truth is that sometimes even as believers in Jesus, we can be so distracted or worn down by different things in life that our sense of worship is distracted, is thrown off course, or we just struggle and we need to be reminded how and why to worship God.

So the theme is worship. I think this Sam helps us to worship. I was reading one comment here who helpfully I thought suggested that in this Sam, and particularly as I said in the first chunk, the first seven to nine verses or so, he looks at it in two ways.

There are two aspects to worship and I'm going to use that as a structure. The first thing is that this shows us the nature of worship. In other words, what it looks like. What does it look like for this Samist to worship God?

What's he saying about himself and his practice of worshiping God? And the second thing is why? Why does he worship God? Why should we worship God?

[2 : 34] So that's the kind of breakdown that we're going to use. Firstly, as I said, we're going to look at the nature of worship. Or what does it look like for this man at this particular time in history to worship God?

The first thing is that it's a present, personal, real experience that he has. That really comes across when we read this opening section, doesn't it?

If you notice that as we read through, let's just read the first couple of verses. Because in the first couple of verses, it's like an explosion of praise and worship pouring out of him to God.

I will exalt you, my God the King. I will praise your name forever and ever. Every day I will praise you and extol your name forever and ever.

It's personal. You really get the sense that it's real. This isn't a ticking box experience for him, you know? He's not just doing this because he was brought up to do it every morning by his parents.

[3 : 37] Although he may well have been brought up to worship God. The fact is that this for him is like a living thing in him. You see that as you go through the Psalm. Because the words he uses for praise or worship, the phrases that he uses just keep pouring out of him.

It's like a tumble of words and it builds up as we go through. So let's just, I want to just pick out some of the words and you follow as I pick them out. You have him saying in verse one, I will exalt you.

So in other words, God is a priority for him. He wants God's name to be big in his life. I will exalt you, I will praise you. He says it again in verse two, I will praise you.

In verse two, he says I will extol your name. You know, these aren't words that you necessarily use in everyday life. But if you support a football club and you talk about them all the time, you extol them.

You know, you kind of, you want to talk about them and lift up that club or whatever it is that you like. So these are the words that the Psalmist is using to lift up God and who God is. And as you go through, this just carries on.

[4 : 47] He talks about commending your works. He talks about speaking of the glorious splendor of your majesty, telling of the power of, you know, this isn't just a one-off passing reference to God who he thinks is okay.

It's just tumbling out of him. All these words of worship and of how great God is. So it's personal, it's real to him, it's alive, religion, his faith isn't a dead, dusty, boring thing for him.

There's a cumulative effect as all of these things, all of these words pile up. So in this sense, as we begin the Psalm, it's in the present, it's personal, it's real.

But there's also a future aspect to it. You may have noticed as we were reading through, because he also says, verse one, I'll praise your name forever and ever.

What a great hope that is that he has. He's able to say with certainty, I will praise your name forever and ever.

[5 : 56] And he goes on in verse two, in verse two, every day I will praise you and extol your name forever and ever. Now, I'm not going to spend time on that, but I want us to notice it. That's an important aspect of faith is the promise to the believer.

And this psalmist, David really has taken hold of this. This is an experience for life, but there's the promise of this wonderful sense of being with God in his presence and praising him forever.

And that's what he looks forward to. That's the promise for a Christian. So just touching on that, there's a future aspect also. But the next thing that we notice about the nature of worship or what it looks like, as well as being personal, there's a really strong sense and a really important sense here that it's corporate or that it's not an individualistic thing.

He's not saying, this is my faith and I'm going to keep it to myself and just kind of luxuriate it and enjoy it myself. We have a really strong sense of how important it is to him that other people also praise God, because God's worth it, because he really wants other people to praise God.

So we see this in verse four. One generation will commend your works to another. We want to pass on to the next generation, what we think of God, what we know of God.

[7 : 24] We want to pass on to the next generation our love for him so that our children will love him and that they will know him as well.

A really important aspect is that we get this quite often in the Psalms. We get the personal aspect and we get the corporate aspect, the body. And so how encouraging it is for us this morning to be together to worship God.

We don't stay at home with our doors closed all the time. We do that during our lives, but we come together and we worship. Well, this is an important thing for more people to know, for more people to pass on knowledge of God so that others...

And this goes into verses seven and verse nine. You'll see that it shifts from the I will praise you. In verse five, they will speak of the glorious splendor.

Verse six, they will tell of the power of your awesome works. Verse seven, they will celebrate your abundant goodness. So he really wants the coming generations to have the same experience of knowing and praising God that he does.

[8 : 34] That's an important thing for him. Now, that's something that we should and we can relate to. If you think about applying this just briefly into our situation, I want to read just a couple of verses from 1 Thessalonians.

Because the same experience of knowing God individually, personally, but also wanting to shout that goodness out to the world so that more people will know about our faith and more people will know about Jesus.

We see, I think there's a really good example of this. I'm just going to read a verse in 1 Thessalonians. In 1 Thessalonians, Paul commends the believers.

First of all, because of how they've taken hold of the gospel. He says that the gospel came to you and you took hold of it. So that's to be commended. They believed in Jesus. But he goes on to say, let me read from verse 6, You became imitators of us and of the Lord.

In spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and the Chia. So they welcomed the message.

[9 : 44] But then he says, the Lord's message rang out from you, not only in Macedonia and the Chia, but your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore, we do not need to say anything about it.

He's delighted that this believing community in the New Testament have the gospel and they don't just kind of gently pass it on. You get the sense that they're just, it's beaming out from them to the different communities around about them.

So the nature of worship, it's real and it's living and it's personal. It also has a future aspect and it's for a community and for future communities.

We just get a sense here of what it's like to worship God. And at the core of this, of course, is just lifting up the Lord's name. Now, the second thing is why?

Why do we worship God? Why does the Sammet feel the need to worship God in particular? Well, I'm just going to pick out again some of the ways in which we see this as we go through this first chunk.

[10 : 51] Again, this is first of all from a personal experience. But the first thing I want to say about this is, he wants to worship God because he knows what God is like.

He knows what God's character is. You know, he must have a reason for worshiping God. And it's because he knows the things that the way that God is, who he is and what he's like.

And the second thing is what God has done. He can take confidence in God and he'll worship God because of what God has done. So the first thing is the first reason for worship is what he's like.

We see this as we go through some of these verses again. Verse three, great is the Lord. When we read Psalms, we can get very used to these kind of words. Okay, so these Psalms are great as the Lord and good as the Lord.

Don't get too used to them and just pass over them because these, this is the key thing. Great is the Lord. He thinks the Lord is just the best thing and most worthy of praise.

[11 : 50] His greatness, no one can fathom. He knows what God is like. Look down to verse seven. He's talking again about future generations praising God, but he says they will celebrate your abundant goodness.

He believes that God is good. That's a reason to worship God and to praise him. And then in verse seven, this is a really important part. They will celebrate your abundant goodness and joyfully sing of your righteousness, righteousness.

A term maybe completely unfamiliar to you, one earthly talking about here. He celebrates the fact that God is pure and holy and perfect.

As he looks at God, in God's character, in his nature and what he is like, he sees perfection. He sees a good God, a pure God and a just God.

In everything that God does, he is good. We sometimes forget to look at God and see how good he is, but this Sam brings us back again to what God is like.

[13 : 04] And that is a reason to worship him because of how great he is. And so that's the first thing. But the second thing really follows out of this.

He praises him because of what he's done, because of what God has done. Now we see this again in some of the verses. Verse four, one generation will commend your works to another.

They'll pass on to each other, not just what God is like, but what he's done. Verse five, he says in the second half of that verse, I'll meditate on your wonderful works.

In verse six, they will tell of the power of your awesome works and I will proclaim your great deeds. See, these were people. David was an Israelite.

He was a member of this people. These people knew themselves to be God's people. God had spoken to them and he revealed himself to them.

[14 : 07] And they were to be set apart to be holy. They were to be people who worshiped God. And they were to be a light amongst the nations. In other words, they were to be people who shared this knowledge of God and people around about them.

That was who they were. That was they were God's people. So they were to have this sense of knowing God and of knowing what he had done for them. You think of an example, the Israelites are in captivity in Egypt, totally just helpless underneath this oppression that they're facing. And God brought them out. That was one work that God had done in saving them. A really obvious example that as a people, as a nation, they had a really clear idea of how God had worked in their history.

So that was one example that they could look back on. Somebody like David can write a Psalm looking back on the works that God has done. So, you know, they have a really vivid national memory of the crossing of the Red Sea.

How great God is because he's done these things for us. We can remember all that he is to us. And his promises to us are good because he acted to save us.

[15:20] So, the psalmist wants to praise because he knows what God is like and because he knows he wants to re-remember as it were and get down and writing what God has done.

And draw people back to this again and say, remember what our God is like, remember what our God has done. And this means that he's worth worshipping.

This means that he's worth praising. Now, this is, if you read through the rest of the Psalm, a lot of this is repeated and this kind of plays out in the rest of the Psalm.

But I want that to be the kind of extent, really, of how we look at the Psalm. But it's important, isn't it? Because at this point we can maybe feel a sort of disconnect because this is a song written a long time ago from a particular situation, writing about a particular people and a particular way in which God worked in their history.

And you might even think, well, okay, I can understand that and I can see why he's excited about God and I understand that he wants to worship God. But I don't understand why that would make me worship God.

[16:28] I'm not part of this community of people. That's not in my personal or my national consciousness to think back to things like the Red Sea Crossing. So what we have to be able to do is to take the core of what's going on here and say, well, how then can we not have a detachment from this?

How can this Psalm inspire us to worship? Because that's what we need to do with this. We need to let the words that were written by the Psalmist, by David, so long ago speak to us now.

Again, I read this, just this brief passage from one person writing about this. I think it's helpful. Let me just read this sentence. He says, even David, the writer, could have had little inkling of the fulfillment in store for his words in this Psalm.

Not only in the fact that his generation still speaks to ours and his small circle still speaks to the world, but in that God's mighty acts and his wondrous works and his awesome acts would reach a new climax in the gospel events and still be moving now towards their consummation.

Now, what this writer is doing is he's saying that we have to make a connection between the way that the Psalmist looks at God and celebrates him and who God still is today and what God has done that we can take hold of so that we can celebrate him.

[17:57] So that we don't just see this as an old song in an old book that really bears no relation to who we are. There's a couple of things I think we need to do. A couple of things I think we need to focus on to help us do that.

Now, the first is this, just in applying this as we come to the end. All of this that the Psalmist saw about God, all of the goodness of God, all the way in which he wanted to lift up God because of what he was like, the righteousness of God, the Psalmist knew that he didn't have that.

He knew that he, when he stood before God, when he stood in God's presence, he wasn't righteous and he wasn't pure. He wasn't able to come before God and be accepted into God's presence on his own merits.

He knew that as a nation, the Israelite people, they couldn't come before God and say, here we are and you should accept us because we're as you are God. We're not, we're pure.

He couldn't say that. So when he looks at God and sees God's righteousness and his mercy and his goodness and all of these great attributes of God, he recognizes that he himself just doesn't have that.

[19:13] And that's true for us as well. When we stand before God, we come into his presence this morning. We don't do so because we're worth it. We don't come before God because we're pure and expect him to accept us on that basis.

But that's why he was so, so glad at God's righteousness because God's righteousness, God's goodness, meant that he acted towards him in love and in mercy.

But Samus desperately just knew he needed help. He knew he wasn't righteous. He knew that when he stood before God, he needed help. He knew in order to get into God's presence, he needed something that he didn't have and God provides it.

He sees God as a savior. He sees God as a merciful God who comes to him in his righteousness and in his perfect justice. He acts towards him in mercy.

Now, the second thing that we need to see in order to help us connect with the Son, first of all, is to be as the Samus is, understanding that we can't come before God by our own merits.

[20 : 28] So we sit here this morning. We don't have the righteousness that God has. That's not ours. So we can't come before God on our own merits.

But we have to see that when we look at God, we see a perfectly righteous God, perfectly good God, but a perfectly good God who works.

As he worked for the Israelite people to save them, he works for us and he did that in Jesus. In Jesus is God's perfect nature, his goodness and his righteousness, and his perfect works as Jesus came to be the savior and came to die so that we might trust in him.

And as we understand that about Jesus, that leads us to him. It brings us to him so that we can worship him. If we lose sight of that, if Jesus becomes just a passing character in the pages of history, not personal, if we don't understand how we don't have this righteousness that will help us to be at peace with God, then we won't see the need for him.

And we won't see the need to worship him when we recognize all that he's done for us.

Understanding this is what makes reading a verse like Romans 3, 21 such.

[21 : 55] Good news for us. Let me just read this verse. He's writing from the point of view that when we look at the law and the requirements of God, we don't have that.

We can't stand up before God on our own merits, but he says, and the writer says, but now our righteousness from God, apart from the law, has been made known. The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. And so it can be our experience this morning to look at what God is like and to see his perfect goodness, but also to see the way in which he sent his son.

You know, one of the most famous verses, John 3, 16. What does it say to us? It says, for God so loved, there's his nature, there's what he's like, that he gave his son, he worked, he sent his son Jesus, who was the one who would save us.

And as we look at what he has done for us, we can see once again just of how great God is. And it is the reason why we can worship him this morning.

[23 : 09] It's what lifts up our hearts to want to worship him and to pour out our hearts before him. I think that's the way in which we can take this Psalm and be inspired so that we ourselves may worship God.

But I want just to focus on one final verse just in closing. There's one important thing, just one word I want to pick out just in finishing that the Psalmist mentions. And I think it's very important.

I know it's important to me because I think with all saying all of this, it can still be really hard for us to feel like we focus on God, to feel like we have the time to focus on God sometimes or the inclination to focus on God, to remember his goodness or to remember his works in Christ for us.

And you see in verse 5, I'm just going to read verse 5, they will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty. And then he says, I will meditate on all your wonderful works.

So we've looked at that already, the wonderful works. But that word, I will meditate on all your wonderful works. That challenge is me because it speaks to me of the need to put this God in the center of my attention.

[24 : 25] If he's a bit part player in my consciousness, in my thinking, in my experience, then I could easily drift through the day without paying him much attention or being much inclined to remember all that he has done for me and so worship him because he's so worth it.

It's a challenge to us, I think. To take that word meditate and use it in the right way and to say that we're going to fix our eyes on Jesus, who's the author and perfecter of our faith.

And that's going to be what we're about because that is what helps us get clarity in the middle of all our distractions and all the problems and very valid things that we have to deal with.

But it's what brings us back again to the focus which leads us to him. That's at the core of what we believe. So the core, the heart of Christianity, that we follow and we worship Jesus because of who he is and because of what he's done.

So it's a great challenge to us there. And I think we need God's help with that. We need to fix our eyes on him and we need to ask him that he would help us and that we'd be able to meditate on him.

[25 : 38] And as we sang at the start, the Spirit would help us and lead us into, just into the rest of our lives and into the daily need to come before him and to worship him and to focus on him.

So let's bow and I'm just going to ask the Lord to help us to worship him. Lord, thank you for your word and for the greatness of the Psalms, which sometimes speak to us of humanity in great need. Some Psalms are written out of desperate struggle. Sometimes the Psalms are written out of a real sense of angst because of sin or because of a mess that somebody is in.

And sometimes they really help us to direct our eyes to you. Lord, help us by your spirit this morning to see how great you are and to see your good works towards us.

Thank you for Jesus. And Lord, help us to see this as real. May this be personal for us. And help us to speak to each other about this as well, to encourage each other so that faith is a living thing for us and not a dead thing.

[26 : 52] We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.