

The Biblical Narrative (Praise Night)

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- [0 : 0 0] All right, we'll read God's word together from Psalm 105, the first six verses. Remember the wondrous works that he has done, his miracles and the judgments he uttered.
- O offspring of Abraham, his servant, children of Jacob, his chosen ones. All right, I'm going to reflect with you just for a few minutes on the psalm. The psalms are the musical prayer book that God's given us in the Old Testament for the church to sing throughout all the ages.
- And when you read through the psalms, there's a real unity amid diversity of psalms. So sometimes we sing psalms of lament and grief and times of sorrow.
- And sometimes we sing psalms of celebration and times of festival, Thanksgiving. So there's all different types of psalms. The one we just read, Psalm 105, is a psalm of praise, a psalm of worship.
- So there's a whole category of songs in the Old Testament called songs of praise, psalms of praise. And praise, worship, we sing because all we mean by that is ascribing value and praise to he who is praiseworthy.
- [1 : 3 3] So we give value in life to things that are worthy to be called valuable. Or praise to things that are worthy to be praised. And the psalms just say something very simple over and over again.
- Praise the Lord. Sing to the Lord. He is worthy to be praised. So we ascribe praise to him who is praiseworthy. And that's what the psalms of praise do to tell us, sing.
- Sing to God because he's worth it. He's valuable. He deserves for his name to be glorified through songs. So we human beings, God made us to worship through singing.
- We can't help it. Whether it's to God or something else, we worship through singing all the time. And it's not just because we want to sing, but singing also shapes us.
- So if you've ever watched The Sound of Music, what do they sing? They say, I don't sing because I'm happy. I'm happy because I sing. Right? So as much as we sing because we desire to sing and ascribe praise, singing actually shapes us.
- [2 : 3 4] It directs us in a certain way towards that which we sing about and that which we praise. What do Christians sing about? Well, there's so much we sing about truth, goodness, and beauty.
- We believe that God has made truth, goodness, and beauty in our world. And so when we see truth, goodness, and beauty, we ascribe value to the one who has given that to this world. But here in Psalm 105, there's this moment, this really important moment that tells you why we sing to God very specifically.
- In the Old Testament, when the Israelites would come up to the temple, they'd come up for festivals and pilgrimages every year to the temple. And often there would be a choir in the temple court.
- And the choir in the temple court would sing psalms like Psalm 105. And they would say to the people, sing to the Lord. And it would be antiphonal. And then the people would sing something back. And it would go back and forth.

I thought about trying it, but I just don't know. Maybe one day we'll try it here. But lots of the songs are antiphonal. So the choir would sing and then the people would respond. There's a church tradition, oftentimes in subcultures of Christianity, especially in the United States, that are a bit more vocal in church.

[3 : 49] And the minister, the pastor will often say to the people, God is good. And the people will say, all the time. And then the minister will say, all the time.

And the people will say, God is good. God is good all the time. All the time, God is good. What are they saying when they sang this? What was the choir doing when it was saying, sing praise to the Lord and the people would return antiphonally and say something back to the choir?

What were they saying? They were saying what Psalm 105.2 directs us to for the reason to sing. And it says in Psalm 105.2, we sing because he has done wondrous works.

That's what the text says. We sing, sing to the Lord. Why? Because he has done wonderful works, wondrous works. Now today, in our bulletin and the way we've ordered this service a little different than normal, we've had four parts.

God calls us. God forgives us. God speaks to us. And then God will send us in just a few minutes. Why? These four sections are describing the fourfold movement of God's wondrous works.

[4 : 55] So the Psalm says, sing to the Lord for his wonderful deeds. What are those wonderful deeds? And God calls us into worship. Why? Because first he created us. So if you ask, where did that come from?

The Bible says God made you. You were his. So come when he calls to worship and make joyful noise to God, the maker, the creator. God created you. So he calls you to worship because he made you.

God forgives you. Why? Because we rebelled, yet he redeems in Christ. And then God sends us. God speaks to us and God sends us until he makes all things new.

Now if you break that down into its four parts, this is what we call the wonderful works of God. The fourfold movement of his mighty deeds. He created the world.

We rebelled against him, but he did not destroy this world. He redeems us, even though we don't deserve it in Jesus Christ. And he promises not to give up on this place, but to renew the creation and to make all things new.

[5 : 56] To kick sin and evil and death out of this world forever. The fourfold movement of history. The fourfold movement of God's wondrous works. He created us. We fell, but he held on to us. He redeems us and he will bring new creation.

We call that creation, rebellion, redemption, new creation. Seeing because God has done wondrous things. It's the movement of history and that's what the psalmist is talking about here.

We call it the biblical narrative. But as Christians, we believe it's also the story of world history. Not just the narrative that comes from a text, but the text describes the objective order of world history even.

We praise, Christians praise, we praise tonight because of that. Now, let me finish with this. In 1979, a man named Jean-Francois Lyotard, a French philosopher, he wrote a very important book called The Postmodern Condition.

And in it, he coined a very famous term. He made popular a very famous term that we now use a lot, metanarrative. And in this book, he talked about how people, human beings, create metanarratives, big stories for where we come from, what's wrong with the world, who we are, what's our identity.

[7 : 16] We ask questions like, do I have meaning? Do I have value? Can I be loved? Is there purpose? Is there hope beyond the sad things of this life? And he said around those enormous questions, he called it metanarratives.

We create meta-big narratives, stories of who we are and where we've come from and our destiny, stories of destiny. But alongside a number of other philosophers in the middle of the 20th century, he called it a metanarrative because he said the word metanarrative means, describes the fact that every single one of these stories that we create are merely opinions.

That's what he said.

He pointed out in the past. Is for a person to stand back and say all the philosophies of this world, all the big stories of where we came from and where we're going, all the religions that have been believed in throughout world history.

If you're going to say they're all opinion, none of them can be verified. None of them are true. What kind of a position are you taking to say something like that?

[8 : 47] You're standing back and creating a totalizing theory, a metanarrative that says all of your opinions, all of your beliefs, I should say, are just opinions.

And I know it because I know better. Right? And so the claim falls upon itself. And all I want to do is finish with a simple claim. And that's this. Christians sing.

Not because we believe we hold a personal opinion about the meta story, the mega narrative of history. That God created the world. We rebelled.

God's redeeming all things in Christ. And he's kicking all the sad things out of this world one day in new creation. We don't believe that because we say it's my personal opinion and it adds value to my life.

Instead, we come and make that claim because we believe that God himself has actually entered world history and done these wonderful deeds. So it's not a subjective claim.

[9 : 44] It's an objective claim. It's a claim that says not only has God done it, but God then wrote about it in a book so that generations afterwards could continue to read it and see it, the Bible.

And so let me invite you to something tonight. Whether you are a Christian, and many people are in this room, and perhaps you're here tonight and you're not a Christian but you're curious or you're a skeptic, the invitation I have for you tonight is to do something maybe if you've never done it before.

And that's take the step of asking questions like, where did I come from? Is there hope beyond the grave? Is there meaning that stands above my subjective opinion?

Is there a story, an objective story that can make sense of my life and ultimately give me hope? And when you come to a question like that, even if you're a Christian and you've never really dug deep into that, you've never really looked for questions of truth, both intellectually and existentially.

It can reignite your faith or perhaps give you faith for the first time. And so when you're doing that, let me just give you one qualifier, and it's this. Don't ask when you search for something that can make sense of your life, make sense of the world, and actually give you hope.

[10 : 58] And I believe that is the Christian story. But when you search, don't ask, is this a value-added belief for my life? Instead, ask this question, what grand story makes sense of reality intellectually, is historically reliable, and existentially satisfying?

So what philosophy, what religion, what worldview is intellectually true, historically credible, and existentially satisfying? Ask that question, and take a dive into that journey, if you've never done that before.

We Christians believe that the only right answer, the only real hope for that, is through God who has done wonderful things. God, our maker, God our redeemer, God who will recreate the heavens and the earth, and kick sin and death out of this world.

But, I'll finish with this final word. We sing, we sing tonight, if you're a believer tonight, you'll know this. We sing, not because it's easy. We, boy, becoming a Christian is actually a really hard thing, in fact.

It's a hard realization. This is just how objective and not subjective it remains. It's because, when you become a Christian, you have to say something like this. I sing, because the world does not revolve around me.

[12:17] I exist, because God made me, and I'm here for his glory. It's so objective. It's so grand. It's so big. And you have to say, boy, I'm not who I should be.

To become a Christian, you have to say, I'm not who I should be. But thanks be to God for his grace. And so, the objective story of grace can be your story of grace.