

Who Gets the Glory?

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[0 : 0 0] So it's interesting that one of the themes that Kathleen touched on very powerfully when she was speaking about the work of Sparkle Sisters is trust.

And trust is an absolutely huge part of the healing process that those who are involved in Sparkle Sisters have to come through because they've experienced a huge amount of broken trust in their lives and we all know to a greater or lesser extent what that's like when we experience it in life.

So we find that we rely on people and we lean on people and we value people greatly and when that is broken, that's a huge thing, isn't it?

But we find that we measure relationships and we measure life in many ways to work out what is weighty and what is significant and what is worthy of our trust.

Who is worthy of our trust and what is worthy of our trust? And really that whole concept of something having substantive significance is really what is the meaning of glory actually.

[1 : 2 7] That's what glory means. It means something that's weighty, something that's worth trusting. And I think for us it's very often linked closely with what we love, isn't it?

What we value most is what we love most and what we love most is what we put our trust in. Now you know what I'm going with this, don't you? A preacher can't be that subtle sometimes.

But we do entrust our life to what we love or what we put weight or significance, who or what we put weight or significance on.

And you know that there's everyday trust that is important. But when we move from everyday trust to ultimate trust and place ultimate trust on something that really can't carry the weight of our expectation.

And Corrie mentioned that last week. Then we find that our lives begin to fall apart in many ways. Because what the Bible teaches and what we've come to know as Christians, I hope and pray, but what we struggle with sometimes is that only God is worthy of our ultimate trust of being the most important person in our lives.

[2 : 4 2] The one that we entrust our lives to at kind of whole ultimate level. And that's the teaching of the Bible and that's what we say as Christians and that's what we teach and that's what we try to live as Christians when we put our faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

But what I'm going to ask the question of why is the call to trust God, which we often make from here, or to give Him the glory to put it in another way, which is something we find difficult, I think, to understand what it means to give someone the glory or really to give first place to.

Why do we find it so unpalatable? You know, what is the gospel? The gospel, another word for the gospel is good news. It is good news, isn't it?

It's great news, but when you hear that, you say, yes, it is good news, but it's not exclusively good news at one level, is it?

Because we find a battle. Usually we find good news, great and very easy to follow and to run behind. But this particular good news is a struggle for us sometimes to understand, to trust God.

[4 : 00] And you may be a Christian and I have been a Christian for a long time and we still struggle to trust God and to give Him His rightful place. Why is that? And maybe, and I would stress that maybe I would suggest that, not explicitly, but implicitly this comes through in the Psalm, which we will, I promise, go on to look at.

But I think it's implicit in the Psalm in many ways. There's two reasons. The first is we can't see God, okay? We can't see Him. That makes it difficult for us to trust in Him because it's hard to trust in something or someone that we can't see directly because we're physical beings and we're made with eyes and ears and we need faith to put our trust in a person that we can't see.

And it's not blind faith, but it is faith and it's a gift from God and we need to be humble enough to ask for that. So I think it's sometimes difficult for us in our day-to-day living to trust God because we can't see Him.

That's a very simple reason maybe. But I think the second reason might be is because, this is less palatable of course, is that we're sinners.

Fundamentally, and basically, we are hardwired as sinners at our very core to question the reality of God and to question the importance of trusting in Him.

[5 : 27] And we rather choose to rely on our own judgment and sometimes maybe unthinkingly replace Him and give weight to someone other than God, sometimes to our own instincts, to other people, to other ideas or philosophies or pleasures.

I mean, Romans 1.25, which I think is, I've got the verse for that on the screen, Romans 1.25, Paul explains that when he says, they exchanged the truth of God, about God for a lie and worship and serve created things rather than the Creator who is forever praised.

So we tend to naturally, as sinners, gravitate towards things we can see and touch and materially experience or even sense, but without God in the picture.

We become the creators instead of recognizing God as the creators, and we create other gods for ourselves, whatever they may be.

Because as I think we've mentioned recently again as well, we must worship. We're all worshipers, whatever it is, we choose to worship. And when we take God out of the picture, we create things or people or relationships to worship.

[6 : 52] But the problem with that is, and we see it in verse 8 of the Psalm, is that without God in the picture, without God at the core, we become like what we create.

That is, we are unable to look and live and relate to God in a spiritual relationship. Verse 8 says, those, it's just spoken about idols that the people may, we'll come back to that.

We make them, become like them, so do all who trust in them. When we trust in only the material world that we see or the relationships of people around us, without God, we become like those without God in our lives.

We become what we worship. So the challenge of this Psalm, and I think the challenge of God's work, and the challenge for us daily as Christians, if we are Christians here today, is that we're made to love God we're made to be in a relationship with our Creator, the one we made, everyone, every single person who loves us, he speaks and acts into our disordered lives, and he saves us from trusting and putting ultimate faith in anything and everything that cannot carry the weight of our expectation, that cannot give us what we're looking for, satisfaction, peace, eternal life, and forgiveness.

So it's important, I think, for a few minutes to consider who God is, which is what we always do, isn't it? As he's revealed in this Psalm, I think, and then why does he matter to me?

[8 : 35] You might be here today as an inquirer, you might not be a Christian, you might have just come along for the first time, whoever you are today. I think it's a good question to ask, you know, who is God, and does he really matter to me at all in life?

So there's a few things in this Psalm which explain a little bit about who God is, only a little bit about who God is, but we're going to look at them and then hopefully see why it's so relevant.

The first is in verse 15, I'm not going to go through the Psalm methodically from verse one to the end, but we will be looking at the whole Psalm. Verse 15 says, may you be blessed by the Lord who made heaven and earth.

So it's speaking here about who God is, he's the maker of heaven and earth. Now just, I know you know that, but I want you to stop and think about that for a moment, it's such a claim.

It's an amazing claim that the Bible makes, because when we think about it, we absolutely marvel at even our own human ability to create things. It's mind-blowing what humanity can create.

[9 : 39] You know, when I was as young as some of the kids who were up here at the front, which was a long time ago. I remember that when someone phoned the house, you had to go out into the hallway to the one phone that was in the hallway, and the hallway was like minus 12 degrees in the winter.

It was freezing, and you would have to pick up this massive big heavy phone and speak in the hallway because it was the only phone that was plugged in. And if you wanted to phone someone, you had to dial around numbers to get them.

Okay. Well, it is quite long ago, but it's not that long ago when you see how much we have created and progressed since then, even with regard to communications and to phones.

And you young people would laugh at the concept of having to go out into a hallway or use a public phone. No, it's a public phone box anymore. I used to have to phone my girlfriend.

It had to be waiting for a call in a phone box. How bad was that? Anyway, we have great creative abilities seen in that tiny little way, but it only speaks into this divine being who created, not a mobile phone, but the universe from nothing by the word of His mouth.

[10 : 57] Outside of time Himself, outside of the creation, uncreated Himself. Forget the question who created, you know, God created us, who created God. That doesn't exist because He's the uncreated one, complex yet personal, who made humanity like Him, to worship Him and love Him and even create like Him to a degree.

Who gave us as verse 16 says here, and if you've got your Bible, keep it open at Psalm 115, the heavens are the Lord's heavens, but the earth He has given to the children of men. He's given us this glorious and beautiful planet out of all the planets.

As far as we know, unique in all of the universe in its ability to sustain our lives, gloriously different and beautiful, the maker of heaven and earth.

And if we reject Him, it's catastrophic for us in terms of the world and in terms of our own lives, maker of heaven and earth.

Everything is that it says He is in heaven in verse 3. Our God is in the heavens or in heaven, He does all He pleases. We'll come back to that third one. He is in heaven, okay?

[12 : 09] That's a reminder to us as the whole Bible always reminds us that this is, this material world that I've spoken about before is not all there is. There is another reality.

There is a spiritual reality that is not primarily material. You can't see it. I can't see it. We can't measure it. We can't touch it. We can't even prove it empirically.

But it is what the Bible tells us, the place where God exists with other created beings also beyond this earth. I don't know what it looks like. I don't know what heaven is like.

But we're spoken of here powerfully. It's invisible. And we can only believe in it with the eye of faith when we believe and put our trust in God.

We're in heaven, this other world that still exists even though we can't see it. The third thing is what we read there in verse 3 as well. He does what He pleases. Now, now for us, that's a disaster, isn't it?

[13 : 10] That's a disastrous verse. God who does what He pleases. Why? Because if we apply that to ourselves, we think that's a miserable trait.

Someone who just does what they please. We really, you may be experienced someone who just is arrogant enough or uncaring enough just to do whatever they please.

Why would we not bring up our children that have been down the front here? Just, no, that's fine. Just do whatever you please. Anything. Just whatever you want. Just do it. Why do we not think like that?

Why do you immediately recoil from that phrase when it speaks of God as the one who does whatever He pleases? Because we know when we experience either in ourselves or in others just doing what we want, it just erupts characteristics within us that are unpleasant.

We're spoiled or selfish or greedy or proud or uncaring. Just it doesn't matter who it hurts or what happens, we're just going to do whatever we want. It exposes exactly what the Bible says we are, that we're sinners and that if we do whatever we want, it is catastrophic and disastrous.

[14 : 28] It exposes our hearts because we make bad gods. We're a bad god ourselves. To take the glory to ourselves is to be the kind of people who simply do what we think is right or do what we please.

You know, you wouldn't want to trust someone like that, would you? We don't want to trust someone like that. Someone who's always wanting to get their own way but God, why is it different with God?

Because we need to stop comparing like with like. We need to stop saying if this is bad in me then as a sinner, it must be a terrible trait in a god who is all powerful.

But we can't compare like with like to this uncreated maker of heaven and earth who is perfect in justice and in love.

Who alone is worthy of doing what he pleases because he's perfect and because he is good and pure and right and loving. He's all powerful but he can channel that because of his character into doing what he pleases.

[15 : 40] And that takes us to the core of the Psalm which is speaking about his worthiness. So God it says here did, does what he chooses to do and does what pleases him.

Now he could do anything. What does he do? What does he do what pleases him? Well this is book, this is, remember we've been looking at the Psalms which are split into five books.

So Cori last Sunday morning looked at the last Psalm of book four which was Psalm 106. So book five is the last section of the book of Psalms and it runs from 107 to 150.

And many commentators believe it was compiled later after the people of God in the Old Testament had both rebelled against God, been taken into captivity and then returned from their exile back, a much smaller body of people returned back to Jerusalem.

So there was this whole section from Psalm 107 is much more optimistic. God hadn't forgotten them. God had fulfilled his promises and he had brought them back but there was much more still to come.

[16 : 51] And so there's a lot of praise in this last section of the Psalms. And verse Psalms 113 to 118 which is part of which Psalm 115 is in the middle.

They're called the Hallel Psalms, so the Hallel Ya, hallelujah, praise God Psalms. So they're praise Psalms and they would, these specific ones, 113 to 118 would have been sung before the Passover celebrations which remembered God redeeming and rescuing the people out of Egypt, out of slavery into the promised land.

And that's why they're so full of praise. Now some of the older people here and the free church people here might remember that more often when we celebrated the Lord, when we celebrated the Lord's supper, we still do it actually.

Just when we take communion here, we'll often, before that, we'll sing one of these Psalms, Psalm 113 to 118 because the Lord's supper is the New Testament, follow on from the Passover and so there was that sense of praise as we remember the redemption that we have found in Jesus Christ.

So what was it in this Psalm that God is pleased to do? Well, I'm going to take just one or two verses from the New Testament just to remind us and then apply it to Christ.

[18 : 20] So John 3 verse 16, you all know that one, for God so loved the world, this is what it pleased him to do, that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him would not perish but have eternal life.

And then in Matthew 317, his voice from heaven said, this is my son, speaking of Jesus, whom I love with him, I am well pleased.

And in the Colossians, third verse, it tells us, for God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in who, in Christ, and through him to reconcile all things to himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven, these two, earth and heaven, by making peace through his blood shed on the cross.

So what we find is that God who could do whatever he wants to do chose to buy us back, chose to heal, chose to come and redeem us, to save us, to bring us back into, of all the things in the universe that he could do, that's what he chose to do.

It pleased him to send Jesus, in Christ we trust. And that is at the very core of the Psalm, because in Christ we see God.

[19 : 39] You know what he says, see God's invisible? Well, in Christ we see him. So what we have in Christ is a flesh and blood God. The invisible becomes visible in Christ.

More than that, he becomes one of us, so this God that we find it hard to trust in reveals himself in the person with the Son, Jesus. And Jesus' eyes and ears and a nose and a mouth and hands and feet, he's just like us, so that we can know and understand God through Christ, because Jesus is the way back to the intimacy that this people of Psalm 115 were looking for and seeing and understanding.

It's the God we can see. And through Christ we are opened up into this most basic of all relationships of trust that we need, a trust with the living God.

The intimacy, that's what we, that's our greatest need. It's not to create either relationships or things in which to trust to give us meaning.

It is to get back into a relationship with the God who made us and the God who therefore wants relationship with us who.

[20 : 58] What does He see us? He hears us, He speaks to us, He acts for us, He guides us, He walks with us in the sufferings and joys and the darkness of death.

He does what nobody else and nothing else can do, which is why this Psalm speaks about idolatry in verses 3 to 8, you know, it gives these beautiful picture of the idols that they made, that the people made themselves.

They had eyes and noses and hands and feet, but they couldn't see or smell or speak or move. And they said, how crazy was that? That they made idols that they worshiped in place of God, inanimate things to live for instead of living for God.

Now we don't, I hope we don't make the same kind of idols, but we do worship sometimes. We give significance and importance to the inanimate things of life, the pleasures, the careers, the bank balance, and make that the most significant thing.

Or we just simply take God out of the picture and make ourselves and our relationships the most significant thing. But none of these things can satisfy what we crave most as a relationship with our Creator.

[22 : 18] It only deepens our spiritual emptiness, makes us less human, makes us further from God and further from being able to love both Him and one another as He created us to do.

That's the significance of what Jesus has come to do. So what I want to finish with is to just go beyond the Psalm and remind ourselves that Jesus sung this Psalm on the night before He was crucified as He celebrated the Passover and becomes its fulfillment in His singing of the Psalm.

Isn't that quite remarkable? The night of His crucifixion, He would have sung these words, where is their God?

Verse 2. And He was saying, I'm the fulfillment of that. I'm the God that the nations mock Israel for trusting in, the invisible God that they can't see so they make idols in His place.

And so Jesus, as He prepared for the crucifixion, was He saying something like, well today, in my body, I will smell this stench of bitter rejection and of betrayal and death.

[23 : 37] I will see the darkness. I will hear the cry, crucify Him. My hands and my feet will be nailed to the cross in action.

And with my voice, I will cry out to my God, why have you forsaken me? Because I am taking the death and the hell my people deserve.

He's no idol. He's no immaterial, dumb focus for us. But in His resurrection, He says, I will be their life.

I will be their help. I will be their shield. I will be their redeemer. My blood covers them from the angel of spiritual death that we remember from the Passover. In the Old Testament, when they put their trust in me through the penance and faith, they will know my rescuing love and my life and the spiritual intimacy with God that I was created to enjoy.

And I will see them. I will hear them. And I will listen to them. And I will speak into their lives. And I will guide them through my word which nourishes them.

[24 : 51] And my hands and my feet will act on their behalf. And I will walk with them. And I will smell the offering of their lives that they give in sacrificial service to me.

And they will do that by faith. And all they need to do is ask for that faith to see and to trust in the living God.

So we're called from the Psalm as it exposes these realities in Old Testament terminology to give to God the glory and the trust and the praise today.

And verse 9 says that, O Israel, trust in the Lord. He is their help and shield. Trust in the Lord. Trust in the Lord. And we know that. I've said it often.

We know, don't we? We're repeated in the Bible like that, it's usually because they want to be emphasized. Trust, trust, trust.

[25 : 52] Remember verse 1, why do we trust in God? It's not because He's Creator primarily. It's because of His steadfast love and faithfulness.

His great love, steadfast love, His covenant love, His mercy. That's why He is worth trusting in. It's relational qualities.

It's relational qualities. It's about trust. It's that great thing that Kathleen spoke about, about trust. We all do it. We're all involved in it.

It's whom we trust. Steadfast love and faithfulness. Verses 10 and 11 again, that repeated emphasis. He's their help and shield.

He's their help and shield. He's their help and shield. It's repeated three times for emphasis. Jesus promises to be your help and my help and our shield, our protector through sufferings and even through the valley of the shadow of death.

[26 : 53] And then in verse 13, it speaks about 12 and 13, the blessing. Now if you ever remember back to some of the earlier Psalms, we talked a lot about the blessings that Psalms speak about.

Just another word for true happiness, blessing. And four times he says, he will bless us. He will bless the house of Aaron. He will bless those who fear the Lord, both small and great.

This relational God is the one who brings the giver of life physical and spiritual. There's actually no true happiness without Him when we're separated from Him.

And it's for small and great. It's for anyone. God is no respecter of persons. Anyone who simply recognizes who He is and why He is so important for life and indeed for eternity, because without Him we are separated and under His judgment.

And lastly, as we call to give glory, it's to have a heart of praise and worship that reflects the priority we give to Him.

[28 : 04] So it finishes as many of them do in this section specifically praise the Lord. Hallelujah. Corey talked about that last week.

That's what we're called to do. And it's compared with those who are dead who don't praise the Lord, nor do those who go down into silence. Now that could speak of physical death, but I think it also speaks of being spiritually dead, where our life gives no praise to God.

He's insignificant. He's unimportant. He's far away from the center of our lives. We don't really trust in Him. We are full of mistrust in Him.

And He says we are called to move from that place, to seek forgiveness for it, and to live our lives as Christians, we are called to live our lives in such a way that gives God the glory and the praise.

That's a real challenge to me today. I hope that's a challenge to you as well, not just this hour that we're together, but our lives that our lives give praise and glory to God.

[29 : 11] And we can say, hallelujah, as we bless the Lord for what He's done for us. His love is so great, and it changes us.

That's really the only motive for living. You know, we're driven a lot by guilt, aren't we? We're driven a lot by fear. We're driven a lot by duty. But actually it's a changed heart is the only one that will enable us to share what we have and live for His glory.

So we're always praying, always praying for a changed heart. Amen. And we pray that God will bless that thought from Psalm 115 to us all, and go home and read it again, read it afresh, read it with your Bibles with you.

We do have Bibles at the back. We've started using the Bibles at the back again. We do take them up and look through it as we speak through it and preach it.