

Shouting for Joy – Living in the World of God's Care

Thomas Robinson, *Journeys Toward God in the Psalms* 4, September 7, 2014

Psalm 33

I want life to be right. I need to sing praise to God.

- ¹ Shout for joy in the LORD (*Yahweh*), O you righteous!
Praise befits the upright (true).
- ² Give thanks to the LORD (*Yahweh*) with the lyre;
make melody to him with the harp of ten strings!
- ³ Sing to him a new song;
play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts.

Experiencing what God is like calls me to praise.

- ⁴ For the word of the LORD (*Yahweh*) is upright (true),
and all his work is done in faithfulness.
- ⁵ He loves righteousness and justice;
the earth is full of the steadfast love
of the LORD (*Yahweh*).

I see His greatness in the wonder of his creation.

- ⁶ By the word of the LORD (*Yahweh*) the heavens were made,
and by the breath of his mouth all their host.
- ⁷ He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap;
he puts the deeps in storehouses.

God's creation could unite all people in revering God.

- ⁸ Let all the earth fear the LORD (*Yahweh*);
let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him!
- ⁹ For he spoke, and it came to be;
he commanded, and it stood firm.

Human actions are always small on God's scale.

- ¹⁰ The LORD (*Yahweh*) brings the counsel of the nations
to nothing;
he frustrates the plans of the peoples.
- ¹¹ The counsel of the LORD (*Yahweh*) stands forever,
the plans of his heart to all generations.

2 Corinthians 4:7-10, 13-15

⁷ But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. ⁸ We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰ always carrying in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. . . .

¹³ Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, "I believed, and so I spoke," (Ps 116:10) we also believe, and so we also speak, ¹⁴ knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. ¹⁵ For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

God as our creator understands all of us everywhere.

- ¹² Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD (*Yahweh*),
the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!
- ¹³ The LORD (*Yahweh*) looks down from heaven;
he sees all the children of man;
- ¹⁴ from where he sits enthroned he looks out
on all the inhabitants of the earth,
- ¹⁵ he who fashions the hearts of them all
and observes all their deeds.

The power of violence that we trust is a delusion.

- ¹⁶ The king is not saved by his great army;
a warrior is not delivered by his great strength.
- ¹⁷ The war horse is a false hope for salvation,
and by its great might it cannot rescue.

Our only hope facing death is God's lifegiving love.

- ¹⁸ Behold, the eye of the LORD (*Yahweh*) is on
those who fear him,
on those who hope in his steadfast love,
¹⁹ that he may deliver their soul from death
and keep them alive in famine.

We live in this world with a joy that reaches beyond.

- ²⁰ Our soul waits for the LORD (*Yahweh*);
he is our help and our shield.
- ²¹ For our heart is glad in him,
because we trust in his holy name.
- ²² Let your steadfast love, O LORD (*Yahweh*), be upon us,
even as we hope in you.

1. Read Psalm 107 thoughtfully. 2. From anywhere in the book of Psalms choose a short passage that speaks to you.

From the Depths of My Soul – Joy and Song

Have you ever thought about what a weird thing we've just been doing – especially group singing? Sophisticated, ironical New Yorkers, in the capital of Mammon and Power, together each week as an amateur choir – singing about God and love and hope? It's powerful, culture/life changing! It's the words, it's the music, yes. But it's more the act. Doing it together, all kinds of people.

Psalms begins in deep thought and pain, with wisdom (1) and lament (3-10 +), but it moves round and round through reflection, penitence, thanksgiving, toward ever more joy & praise (145-150). That is the powerful dynamic of the psalms. We never hide the struggle, doubt, darkness, but we engage it. And Psalms testifies that ultimately we can journey through to live in hope and joy.

The joy is not denial of reality. It is strong affirmation, sometimes through clenched teeth or tears, that God is stronger than death, hope more enduring than pain, love is the foundation of life.

The joy & praise is exuberant because we also know lament & penitence, and experience grace.

The NT develops this dynamic of the psalms. The suffering and injustice of the cross is the central sign of God's sacrificial, self-giving love that pervades everything. God enters our laments. But the cross also opens new, resurrection life. We endure but with a new hope, new song, new trust.

Praise that Changes My Life

Ps 33 leads us through the powerful process of praise. It is an invitation to those who want life to be right, to be just and upright/true. The summons is aspirational, hopeful, beginning a journey.

The best support for the journey is all-out joy in Yahweh, expressed in any way you can: roudy shouts, praise, thanksgiving, playing music, singing new songs. Don't hold back. Authenticity!

"For"... leads to the deep ground of joy is the character and work of God. Yahweh's word ... his steadfast love. God works before we know anything of it. This is where I learn truth, faithfulness, justice, real love. God redeems the slave. God dies for his creatures. Real joy is not a bargain with a needy God. It's the unexpected realization that God's love is deep reality.

The physical creation itself is the manifestation of God's faithfulness, power, love, delight.

God's word that teaches me truth and faithfulness also creates oceans and everything else.

Creation is continuous. God is in the big bang, supernova, goldilocks earth, evolution, you, etc.

Thus God is never narrow! Every human is part of his work and grows through knowing God.

Realizing What's Big and What's Small

We humans see our own stuff as major – our politics, things that last for years. We see great power in terms of money and military, the ability to force your way through (w 10-11). God works on a different scale, the ages and generations. Israel is blessed to be elect for a special role in God's work. But God is always working universally across all peoples and all periods (w 12-15).

When we see what's at stake in God's work, we realize how misplaced is humanity's continual trust and celebration of violence and force to give hope and real safety (w 16-17). But humans never learn to trust God's ways, to see the real, transforming power of the cross. So we keep up our trust in violence and vengeance. Praising God puts His alternate, true reality before our eyes.

Living within God's Steadfast Love

Worship flows from knowing the harsh realities that are part of life and realizing how astonishing it is that a God of steadfast, faithful love has shown himself to us in the midst of all that.

It's realizing our only hope for anything truly permanent has to lie in trust of that creator.

But God is here. That trust is not false. We live between hope and fulfillment. But because we see God's face in Jesus, "our heart is glad in him." We wait and worship, praise and shout for joy!