

Reflection on Psalm 33 Revd Kyla Sorensen

This week, apart from Wild Church on Wednesday, we have been taking a look at some of the psalms, considering how they are a useful tool for prayer, how reading and praying with them can help us to access our emotions when we think about our relationship with God.

So far we have looked at psalm 42, 139 and 118 and today we are reflecting briefly on psalm 33.

Why these particular psalms you ask? Praying with the psalms had been on my heart for a while, and I had made a list of the psalms I wanted to talk about or reflect upon, and then I took a look at the lectionary for this week. The lectionary is the all of our scripture divided into each of the days of the year over a three year period, with OT, NT, psalms and the gospel readings for each day.

The psalms we are looking at this week are from the lectionary – just as they were on my list! It felt like a God moment – prompting me to reflect in this way over the series. As an overarching theme for the week we are holding in our hearts and minds as we come together like this, v6 from Psalm 34, which we will finish with on Saturday. “This poor soul cried, and the Lord heard me and saved me from all my troubles.”

But first let us sing a hymn: *O Praise Ye the Lord!*

*O praise ye the Lord! praise Him in the height;
Rejoice in His Word, ye angels of light;
Ye heavens, adore Him by whom ye were made,
And worship before Him in brightness arrayed.*

*O praise ye the Lord! Praise Him upon earth,
In tuneful accord, ye sons of new birth;
Praise Him who hath brought you His grace from above,
Praise Him who hath taught you to sing of His love.*

*O praise ye the Lord! All things that give sound;
Each jubilant chord re-echo around;
Loud organs, His glory forth tell in deep tone,
And sweet harp, the story of what He hath done.*

*O praise ye the Lord! Thanksgiving and song
To Him be outpoured all ages along!
For love in creation, for Heaven restored,
For grace of salvation, O praise ye the Lord!*

Psalm 33

- 1 Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous, •
for it is good for the just to sing praises.
- 2 Praise the Lord with the lyre; •
on the ten-stringed harp sing his praise.
- 3 Sing for him a new song; •
play skilfully, with shouts of praise.
- 4 For the word of the Lord is true •
and all his works are sure.
- 5 He loves righteousness and justice; •
the earth is full of the loving-kindness of the Lord.
- 6 By the word of the Lord were the heavens made •
and all their host by the breath of his mouth.
- 7 He gathers up the waters of the sea as in a waterskin •
and lays up the deep in his treasury.
- 8 Let all the earth fear the Lord; •
stand in awe of him, all who dwell in the world.
- 9 For he spoke, and it was done; •
he commanded, and it stood fast.
- 10 The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to naught; •
he frustrates the designs of the peoples.
- 11 But the counsel of the Lord shall endure for ever •
and the designs of his heart from generation to generation.
- 12 Happy the nation whose God is the Lord •
and the people he has chosen for his own.
- 13 The Lord looks down from heaven •
and beholds all the children of earth.
- 14 From where he sits enthroned he turns his gaze •
on all who dwell on the earth.
- 15 He fashions all the hearts of them •
and understands all their works.
- 16 No king is saved by the might of his host; •
no warrior delivered by his great strength.
- 17 A horse is a vain hope for deliverance; •
for all its strength it cannot save.
- 18 Behold, the eye of the Lord
is upon those who fear him, •
on those who wait in hope for his steadfast love,
- 19 To deliver their soul from death •
and to feed them in time of famine.
- 20 Our soul waits longingly for the Lord; •
he is our help and our shield.
- 21 Indeed, our heart rejoices in him; •
in his holy name have we put our trust.
- 22 Let your loving-kindness, O Lord, be upon us, •
as we have set our hope on you.

This psalm is about the greatness of God and our innermost desire to praise him. It reminds us how he is beyond our biggest understanding and yet he is close to us, as he is close to everything in his glorious creation. The psalmist talks about how by his word the heavens and the seas were made. And yet he is interested in us – he looks to our hearts with love. He made the earth and all that is in it and he watches over us all with the steadfast love we were made familiar with in yesterday's reflection on psalm 139.

We can sometimes feel small in the vastness of the world around us. The busyness of the world is fascinating but can also feel overwhelming. As technology, ideas and the need for change seems to move on at a rapid pace, we can be left feel a little lost at times. Strangely enough, being at home can also leave us feeling a little lost and forgotten. We are separated from those we love, and for an indeterminate time we are withdrawn from that busyness, looking at it only through glass via the TV or computer. Isolation can be hard that way.

That's why it is important to come together in prayer and reflection like this. On Monday we heard the words of Bishop Stephen Cottrell, when he said in his new book – "we are a body of men and women centred on Christ" That we are. But as we are apart like this it is important to remember that we are still together in the love of God, which doesn't overlook anyone. What a reason to shout praise! There is not a sparrow that falls that God does not see, nor a hair on our head that God does not know. The psalmist is calling us to be together in prayer and praise for God and everything he does for us, though we cannot always understand it.

This psalm is about God's loving kindness, no one person is above another in his love, no one person is separated from the ways of that love. And what do the ways of God's love look like to us now?

Take a moment and think about that. How is God showing his abundant love to me today?

It may be that it is in the offer of help from another. You may think, oh it's only me, I can manage, but these gifts of help are just that, gifts. The people who are offering to assist are showing reflections of God's love for you. In the same way we spoke yesterday how our NHS workers in their dedicated work are showing resonances of the Hebrew word *hesed*, that is mercy or steadfast love. Or perhaps you are the one offering help, and God is showing his love through you and for you. This love builds friendships and communities, it supports the lonely, it builds up the weak, it brings the right people to us when we need help even if we don't want to admit it. In my Maundy Thursday talk I spoke of how if we refuse this help – who are we really refusing?

This psalm reminds us that to place our hopes in anything other than the compassion and might of God is unfounded. God is our help and our shield.

We can be encouraged by this psalm today, encouraged to trust in God and his ways with us. Trust in his steadfast might to protect us. Trust that we are not lost or forgotten but instead we are loved with such abundance that is beyond our

comprehension. God deserves our awe and praise. And we are called to delight in praising him.

We love and are loved by a God that is so great he created the heavens and so close to us that we can feel his loving gaze upon us if we just stop for a moment and rest in it. We pray and praise him, knowing that he hears us:

Let your loving-kindness, O Lord, be upon us,
as we have set our hope on you

Let us spend time today, thinking of how God shows his love for us. As individuals and as a community. Let us remember with thanksgiving all those who are in our lives who offer help to us. Let us commit to recognising God's help, to ask for it when we need it, knowing that he hears us.

O praise ye the Lord!