

Psalm 65

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[0 : 00] But something that I think is just very necessary, and one of the great things, great gifts that we have as the people of God is that we know Him, and we know that He hears every single one of our prayers.

When I was in South Africa visiting our family this past January, December, and we were at this place, and a guy was serving us, and he happened to be a pastor. And oftentimes, when you're way out in the country there, the pastors have to do full-time work and lead their church. It's just how it is. It's an impoverished nation.

And his name was Abram, this beautiful, just humble pastor, and he says, Pastor Jesse. I was like, yeah. He's like, I don't even know how he knew I was a pastor.

I don't know if he had this insight and this gift of knowledge that God had given him. And he said, God hears every prayer. Every prayer we pray, God hears it.

[1 : 01] And I just remember being so struck by that. He didn't have all the fancy things, all the power of funds behind him or anything, but what he did have, he had a God that he knew heard every prayer he prayed and cared about them.

And this is one of the beautiful gifts we have as a church. And so, guys, just continue to pray for that community down east. And just even in your own lives, don't give up. Just remember, God hears every prayer that we pray.

It's a beautiful truth. If you don't know my name, again, my name is Jesse Kinzer. I'm one of the pastors here. And just pivoting to now to the sermon from such a sobering thing, it's not that easy to do, but we got to, so we're going to go for it.

And just want to say hello to those listening online. If you are new, we are in this series going through the book of Psalms. It's our third week in that. And we're going to be working out of Psalm 65 today.

And if you have a Bible with you, you can start turning there. It's easy to find. It's right in the middle. You'll find Psalms when you open your Bible. And Psalm 65. And Psalms, just by reminder, Psalm is a songbook.

[2 : 11] It is the prayer book of God's people. And what it does, it gives us words on how to authentically express the wide range of emotions that we experience in this life.

And within all that diversity, right? We can be high up on the mountain, just experiencing life is good, life is amazing, we're so happy. And then we can also experience just such depths of emotion and mourning and sorrow, like from things like what we were just talking about, those tragedies of life.

And so there's all this diversity. But here's the thing that the Psalms always remind us. There is one constant. In all that change and all that craziness, there is one constant. And that is God.

And these Psalms were written for us. But they were written to God as well. And so as we connect deep with our souls and the joys and the pains of life, we're always giving words that are brought to God.

And that's what it means. This is a prayer book. This is a Psalm book of God's people. And so we bring these things to Him. And so that's why we named this series. Psalms is learning to pray and learning to bring the real you to a real God.

[3 : 24] And the Psalm we're going to look at today, it's a song of praise. It's a Psalm of thanksgiving. And what it does and what I love about it, it gives us language about who God is and about His goodness.

So let's jump into it. Psalm 65, verse 1, it says this. Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion. And to you shall vows be performed.

O you who hear prayer. To you shall all flesh come. When iniquities prevail against me, you atone for our transgressions.

Blessed is the one you choose and bring near to dwell in your courts. We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, the holiness of your temple.

By awesome deeds, you answer us with righteousness, O God of our salvation. The hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas. The one who by his strength established the mountains, being girded with might.

[4 : 30] Who stills the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, the tumult of the peoples. So that those who dwell at the ends of the earth are in awe at your signs.

You make the going out of the morning and the evening to shout for joy. You visit the earth and water it. You greatly enrich it.

The river of God is full of water. You provide their grain, for so you have prepared it. You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with showers and blessing its growth.

You crown the year with your bounty. Your wagon tracks overflow with abundance. The pastures of the wilderness overflow. The hills gird themselves with joy.

The meadows clothe themselves with flocks. The valleys deck themselves with grain. They shout and sing together for joy. This is God's word.

[5 : 36] That is a beautiful, beautiful song. I mean, when you hear that and read it and read it over again. Man, go home after this, guys, and make this a psalm. Maybe you wake up in the morning and read.

And what you start to see is, man, this is a God that I want to know, right? I mean, this guy is writing beautiful stuff. People don't write this about cheeseburgers, all right? People don't get moved that deeply.

But something has moved this man, right? And you don't write stuff about ground beef because ground beef isn't really bigger than you. It's not worth exalting above yourself.

But this guy's encountered someone who is. And this is what comes out of him, this beautiful song, this beautiful poem. And it's what actually wants to come out of us when we see who God really is because we were created to praise.

The psalmist gives us a picture of what it means to be a worshiper. And here's the thing. He isn't praising God because he has to, right? It's not some, like, dead duty of, like, man, if I don't do this, God's going to be upset.

[6 : 44] He's not praising God because he has to. He's praising God because he wants to. And I would say I would go even further than that. The more I've read this psalm, I got the sense that this guy writing this psalm, he has to praise.

Psalms 65, verse 1, it starts out, Praise is due you. Due to you, O God, in Zion. And to you shall vows be performed. This guy has this countdown in his heart of when he gets to give God praise in what was the closest place he knew he could get to God, in Zion.

God is there in Zion, right? Zion is this picture throughout the Old Testament. And for the people of Israel, it was the place that they also called Jerusalem.

Jerusalem was Zion, and that's where the temple was. And the temple is where God's presence was most manifest. And so they would journey from all over Israel to Jerusalem because they could be close to God, and they can draw near to God and be with him there.

And so their praise was like, this is, they could give their praise anywhere, but man, coming to Zion to give praise, that was even more special because that's where God was. They felt near to him. They felt close to him.

[7 : 53] And that's what they wanted to do. They wanted to encounter him and behold his beauty and his glory. And that's where this guy wants to be.

He wants to be with God, where he's at, giving him praise. And that phrase that he says here, praises do you, is an interesting phrase in the Hebrew.

It kind of implies like this guy is pregnant with praise, right? He's full term, and it wants to burst out. Sorry, this is weird imagery, right?

But that's what's happening in him. Like he's got this praise baby, and like this thing's coming, and nothing's stopping it. That's how this guy is feeling about praising God.

He couldn't not praise, which sounds like he's out of control. And, you know, we don't necessarily like that. We don't like being out of control.

[8 : 47] We don't like the idea that something else could be calling the shots. But if we look deeper, actually, we would see how inconsistent that idea of like, man, I don't want anybody having any type of control over me.

I want to be my own person. I want to truly be free. It's actually very inconsistent. Because in one sense, we say, man, I want to be free to choose and do what I want. But then, that's not the same when it comes to beauty and love.

We wouldn't say that at all. What do we say about love? Oh, I fell in love. The heart wants what the heart wants. Doesn't sound like we're quite in control of that, are we?

Why do some people love certain songs while others don't? Or certain art while others don't?

Because when we look at something, it grabs us and it deeply moves us.

We don't know why. We can't really control it. It's just something wells up inside of us, right? We think like, man, I don't want to love that Justin Bieber song, but it's just so dang beautiful.

[9 : 57] I'm not saying this about, this is not Confessions of Jesse right now. It's just like, that was, no, no. But see the contradiction, right?

This is the contradiction we live in. This is the contradiction of our modern moment. And one way, one side of our mouth, they're saying, I get to determine who I want to be. And then the other side of the mouth, we're saying, I can't help who I am.

I'm just born this way. But which is the greater? What is it? Which is the greater? Are we beings controlled by our rational brains?

Self-determinant? Or are we slaves to our deepest desires? Which is it? Because you can't have both. Here's a thought. No one complains about love.

No one complains about being loved, right? When we can all remember, like when we first awoken to love and that the other gender was beautiful and we said, oh, there's someone we liked.

[10 : 59] All of a sudden, it was like, oh, wow. Wow, this is an amazing feeling. I like that person. Or they liked me. It wasn't like, oh, gosh, darn it. I wish this feeling would go away. This is terrible. No, it's something that when we awaken to it, we're like, wow, this is awesome.

This is wonderful. And then we get wounded by it. Now, you would think, you would think any rational human being, after they gave themselves over to love and put their trust in it and then they got wounded by it, that they would step back and do a cost-benefit analysis and come to a very reasonable determination before pursuing another relationship.

But the fact is, is that you and I, we never give up on searching for love again, right? Or we just become cat and dog people. But either way, you are getting love from something.

But why do we do that? Well, we're either stupid or we're stubborn, right? But being lost in love is, we know that it's just more satisfying than the alternative, which is the only other way you could avoid that is just autonomy and isolation.

And that sounds like hell on earth. See, the more you love something, the more you are captivated by it. And the more you are captivated, the more you give your life to it.

[12 : 20] Because that is where you are finding life. And what gives you life is what you praise. That is what you give your praise to. And you can tell what that is by considering the very nature of praise.

And I think this psalm is very helpful. It gives us, I think, three essential qualities of praise that we're going to look at. And these qualities, I think they're interwoven. I think they're interdependent. I don't think you can separate them from each other.

And these three things are satisfaction, wonder, and joy. Those are the essential qualities of praise. Satisfaction, wonder, and joy. In the latter part of verse 4 in this song, it says, We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, the holiness of your temple.

And then in verse 8, he goes to talk about other things that God does. And he ends with this, So that those who dwell at the ends of the earth are in awe. They're in wonder at your signs.

They're in wonder at the things that you do that nobody else can do. And then near the very end of the psalm, the very end of the psalm actually, it says they shout and sing together for joy.

[13 : 34] It uses that word joy a couple of times in the psalm. Now, we praise what satisfies. That's what we do. We give praise to what satisfies. And what satisfies is what fills us with wonder and joy.

But we also know we never stay in that state very long. How many of us have an area of life where we feel dissatisfied? Or we lack joy?

Anybody feel that? Any area of life, right? You guys are so honest. I mean, think about it. Some of the things that we do prove our dissatisfaction in these areas.

Porn, lust, adultery, what is that? It all points to a sexual dissatisfaction. Overspending. Lack of generosity. They all point to a material dissatisfaction.

We could say the same about overworking and alcohol and drug addiction and the list could go on. But the point is, is that we push into those things because we are trying to find satisfaction for our soul outside of God.

[14 : 45] And that never works. When we turn our satisfaction towards created things instead of the creator, we're always going to come up short. The soul is never going to be satisfied.

And this is what happens. We live a life where we're chasing after satisfaction that always seems to be just around the bend. If I just get there, if I just get there, I'm going to find it. If I just get there.

In St. Augustine's Confessions, he describes his life before salvation. And this literally was just a desperate search for satisfaction through pleasure and drinking and revelry and women and wealth and philosophy.

He searched all those things and found them empty. Then he found the one who satisfied his soul.

And look at what he said. This is how he starts out his book, The Confessions of St. Augustine.

You have made us for yourself, O Lord. And our hearts are restless until they rest in you. The nature of praise is finding that which satisfies your deepest longing.

[15 : 51] Which is to say that what you found is enough. When you think about Jesus talking about the man, the kingdom of God, like being a man who found a girl of great price.

A pearl of great price. Okay. That man found something. A pearl of great price. What did he do? Everything that he had amassed in life.

Everything that he thought would be enough. That he just had to keep adding and adding and adding and adding. He sold it all. And said, this is the thing that I really needed.

I have finally found the one thing that is enough that will satisfy my soul forever. But here is where we often get it wrong.

We look to other things. What do we say? Man, if I only had a spouse. Maybe you're single and you think like, man, if I just get married, then I'm going to be happy. Then my soul is going to be satisfied.

[16 : 56] Or if you're married, man, if my spouse just looked like that or acted like that, then I'll be happy. If only I made this much money or had that job, then I'll be happy.

If only I had a boat or a bigger boat or a bigger house or a car, then, man, then my soul will be satisfied. Then I'll find rest. But here's the reality.

When we get those things, you know what? They do satisfy us for a while. They do bring joy and maybe even some wonder. But you know what? The wonder wears off. The feelings start to fade. What's happened? Most likely, nothing's changed. The spouse, the job, the house, they're all still what they were. We've just discovered something new that they aren't what we want or need them to be.

And at that point, we have two options. Just live in misery or go searching for the next new and better thing. And you can often see who chooses which pathway. But the psalmist points us to a third pathway.

[18 : 06] Amen. He points us to a third pathway that will bring satisfaction and joy and wonder that never ends. It says that God is the only person that can satisfy those soul desires.

And he invites us to reflect on the one person who should be the person of our praise. And the majority of the psalm is spent confessing who God is.

And what is beautiful about this psalm is how the writer captures two things about God's nature.

He's both eminent and he's eminent.

Right? Those are big SAT words. Right? Don't be impressed with me. It's about as clever as I get. But basically, those two words mean this. Eminent means like he cares enough, God cares enough to draw near to us.

We can know him by the way he works in our lives and in creation. But he is also too great to truly comprehend.

[19 : 07] He is above all created things. That's his eminence. That means he is eminent. So here's the thing. What you know about God now is not all there is to know about him.

There is an immeasurable depth to knowing God. We will be with him for eternity and still not figure him out. And that's a good thing.

That is a beautiful thing. But how do you put someone like that into words? How do you do that?

Well, the psalmist does his best. He draws upon creation.

He draws upon the things we can see and know to help us understand who God is, to help us understand God's power and his strength. He says things like he established the mountains. And when we think of mountains, often you look at a mountain, a big, huge mountain, you stand before it and you see, man, this is power.

This is might. This is an immovable thing. It's unchanging. Like the wind can blow as hard as it wants to against it. It can rain on it. And that thing doesn't change.

[20 : 09] It doesn't get affected. And yet, as amazing and powerful as a mountain can be, as majestic as it can be, it says God made that. He is greater than that thing.

We think of the power of the ocean and tidal waves that can destroy anything in its path and nobody can stop it. It says God can steal the roaring waves. And it can steal the seas.

He can turn it into a glassy pond. In one sense, we can know God's power, right? We even see this with Jesus. He spoke to the wind and the waves in a storm and immediately everything went calm.

Imagine that in Hurricane Florence. You're like watching the newscaster out there like describing and then he just decides to say like, you know what, be still. And all of a sudden, it all goes away.

We would have been like, oh my gosh, what just happened?

Like, who is this guy? This is amazing. This is impossible. Who can fathom that kind of power? And all this points to the fact that that's just what it is.

[21 : 08] We can't fully comprehend how powerful God is. He is beyond our best reference for ultimate power. And in this sense, God's power is both knowable and yet it will always remain a mystery to us.

Now, it can be terrifying if all that power were in the wrong hands. But the other glimpse of God we get in the Psalms is how good he is. Verses 9 to 13 just talk about this.

It says, God's this like most amazing God.

He just knows what to do. He knows how much to give and what it needs and how to bring it into abundance. I love this. You crown the year with your bounty.

Your wagon tracks overflow with abundance. The pastures of the wilderness overflow. The hills gird themselves with joy.

[22 : 23] The meadows clothe themselves with flocks. The valleys deck themselves with grain. They shout and sing together for joy. God has more power than you and I can imagine so that he can do whatever he wants to do.

But that power is directed by his goodness. That is beyond our ability to comprehend. We see it here in the way he cares for his creation.

Man, did you see the words? He wasn't stingy. He isn't this God who's like, I'm just going to give you enough so that you're just barely hanging on and holding on and you're running to me for help all the time.

So what does he do? Man, everything, it's abundance and it's overflowing. Like we're looking at a land that is just decked with abundance of life.

Everywhere you look, you see life to its full. And that's the picture that he wants us to get. God doesn't want us to worship him in misery and fear of kind of wrathful reprisal.

[23 : 28] He's a God who blesses us with abundance beyond our imagination. Just because he can and just because he wants to. You know, one of my favorite guys that talks about the attributes of God and writes about the attributes of God is A.W. Tozer.

And he talks about God's goodness. And this is what he said. The goodness of God is that which disposes him to be kind, cordial, benevolent, and full of goodwill toward men.

He is tenderhearted and of quick sympathy. And his unflinching attitude toward all moral beings is open, frank, and friendly. By his nature, he is inclined to bestow blessedness.

And he takes holy pleasure in the happiness of his people. The goodness of God is the drive behind all the blessings he daily bestows upon us.

God created us because he felt good in his heart. God is strong enough to do what he wants and good enough to give us what we need, an abundant, never-ending supply.

[24 : 41] And you know what? That sounds amazing. And I think for many of us, like if you started following Jesus or you've been following Jesus for a long time, we kind of just get accustomed to it and used to it and we kind of take it for granted.

It's easy to do that. I mean, when was the last time you really stopped and really thanked God for the rain that was falling? Or the toast that you were going to eat for breakfast?

It's easy to drift into entitlement. It's like, hey, you know, God, we kind of deserve your blessings. And that's where we have to remember that God doesn't have to do any of this for us.

He doesn't. We don't deserve it. And you know what? The other part of that is we can't do it ourselves. What he's describing here, this abundant life, this measure of blessedness that he bestows on us, we can't do this ourself.

We can't pull this off ourself. And this is the last thing we're going to look at in this psalm is the posture of praise, which to a degree I think is self-evident and comes very natural to us.

[25 : 43] When we think about praise and the posture of praise, we look at athletes and artists, we give them praise. Why? Because they can do things that amaze us and that we can never do.

We see them do stuff and we're just like, oh my goodness, that was just mind-blowing. It's that wonder part of our praise. But God's work is very different to an artist or an athlete.

Think about this. An artist doesn't create music or a painting so that he could be closer to you and me. That's not his primary motivation.

Like he's not thinking about that. But that's exactly what God's most significant work does. Look at verses 2 to 4. There is nothing like this on earth.

The greatest artist who paints the dawn and the sunset. The greatest power who calms the storms. The richest benefactor who clothes the earth with life for our enjoyment.

[27 : 01] He wants to be near to you and me. And I think LeBron is an amazing basketball player and does awesome stuff. I'm not waiting and expecting him to ever invite me to his house, let alone move in.

That ain't going to happen. That's not going to happen with anybody we look to and are on.

Whether that's a politician or the rich and famous or the artist. They create distance and barriers between us and them.

They appreciate our praise and our money. They appreciate the profile that we give them. But they're not saying like, hey, I got this room. Just like appreciate you can just move in anytime you want.

But God does. God does that. And he doesn't do it for adoring fans. He does it for sinful rebels.

Verse 3, it says he atones for our transgressions.

He atones for our sins. That word transgression, it's an imagery of a boundary line being crossed.

We cross God's boundary lines all the time.

[28 : 10] Right? And what's the penalty? It should be death. And the idea of death to the Hebrews was, I think, very different to our understanding of it.

It wasn't just dying and life ending. Their idea of death was Sheol. It was going down into the pit. It was a darkness. But it was also being the farthest place away from God that you could be.

And there was nothing worse in their minds than that idea. Being far from God's presence. But atonement.

The atonement is penalty paid. That penalty paid for the sin that you and I commit. Something had to die in our place.

And that's what Jesus did. God sent Jesus to die for sinners. So that God could forgive those sins and draw near to us who are sinners.

[29 : 14] He saves us. He brings us into his house. He says, move on in. You've got a place here in Zion. You've got a place here in the temple. You've got a place here in my presence. You can come in.

You're my son and your daughter. You've got a room in my house. And that is just another level of goodness. That is mercy and grace that satisfies the soul like nothing else can.

We can never do anything to earn that. God chose to do it. It says in verse 4, blessed is the one that you, God, choose and bring near.

Who's doing the action? Is it us or is it God? Blessed is the one you choose. Blessed is the one you bring near.

To dwell in your courts. And when we realize that that's how it works, it kills that part of us that can feel entitled. Right? Instead, you are filled with humble gratitude.

[30 : 14] And that's the heart's posture for praise. Which is why praise rests. Why praise rests on you and I understanding grace and getting grace.

If you're a moralist or a legalist, then you believe that your way to God is earned by your actions. If I do enough right things and if I behave the right way, if I have the right rules and follow the right rules, then God has to bless me.

God has to respond by what I do. And therefore, to the moralist and legalist, praise is a foreign concept. It just feels like a dead duty that you kind of have to do.

So they kind of, when it's time to sing songs to God, you put your hand in your pockets and you kind of mouth the words, but it doesn't really mean anything. Why? Because you feel entitled to everything God's given you.

You don't get grace. But the one who gets grace can't help but praise. They're like this guy that wrote this song.

[31 : 22] They are filled. They are pregnant with the grace of God and it is welling up in praise that wants to come out. It has to come out. It wants to burst forth with singing and the satisfaction that their soul has found in the wonder of who God is and his mercy and grace and kindness and goodness toward us that you didn't deserve and it is full of joy.

As the band comes up, I want us to consider how we can respond. If you're here and you're not yet a Christian, man, I'm so glad you're here to listen to this, that you get to hear and learn about who this God really is.

Because, you know what, there are pictures of who God is that are held out to us all the time. And you know what, most often they're just wrong. They're adjusted gospels.

They're false gospels. They're false senses of images of who God is. But the Bible here tells us exactly what he is like. And he is holding out to you. Even if you're not yet a Christian, he's holding out to you today, man.

He's saying, come, come, drink the waters of my salvation. Come and step into that abundant life that I have prepared. You can come and be a part of that and take hold of that.

[32 : 36] And that way is paved. It doesn't matter that you're a sinner. It doesn't matter that you may feel guilty and wretched and shameful of the things you've done. He says, man, look to my son that I sent.

He died in your place to pay the penalty for your sin. And by faith in him, all that sin is taken away. The guilt of it is taken away. The shame of it is taken away.

And instead, you get to come into the grace of God, the goodness of God, and know who he truly is. And I want to invite you to do that today. If that is you, man, don't leave without saying, you know what, Lord?

I surrender. Jesus, I surrender. You are too good to pass up. And the Bible says if you believe on Jesus as your Lord and Savior, and you confess that, you are saved.

That's all it takes. It doesn't take anything else. And we're going to get to a time of praying and examining our hearts. And that might be the response that God is leading you to take today.

[33 : 34] And I would encourage you to do that. And if you do, man, after the end of the service, come up to us and say, hey, Jesse, I was that person. First time.

We would love to know that and celebrate that with you. If you're here and you are a Christian, I just want to ask us these couple of questions.

I want to just take time to examine our hearts. And here's two questions. Are you depending on God's grace? Are you depending on something else?

Second question. Is God your greatest satisfaction, joy, and wonder? Are you depending on God's grace?

Are you depending on something else? And is God your greatest satisfaction, joy, and wonder?

Before we do communion, I just want to give us a moment. Just examine our hearts.

[34 : 36] Come before God and speak to him. Let him speak to you. Listen to what he's saying. Let's do that now. Let's do that now.

Let's do that now. Let's do that now. Let's do that now. Jesus, you are good.

Lord, fill us with satisfaction in you.

Fill us with wonder and awe. Fill us with joy. Not in ourselves, but in you and all that you have done for us. Amen.

Amen. You want to stand with me before we respond with actually singing praise to God? We're going to take communion together. This is something that we do as Christians.

[36 : 12] And, you know, one of the words that is used to describe this moment in many places throughout the world in churches, it's called Eucharist. And Eucharist literally means thanksgiving.

It's giving thanks to what God has done. It's what he's done for us. Us rebels. Us rebels. That he's called and he's made us his sons and his daughters and he's made a place for us.

He wants to draw near to us. And this is one of the ways that we draw near to God. We draw near to him in remembering his sacrifice for us. He chose us. He brought us an ear.

And he did that because Jesus came. His body broken. And his blood shed for you and me. Not because we deserved it, but because he chose to.

Because he loves us. So let's take and eat and drink celebrating him. We're going to sing a song right now.

[37 : 20] And when I see something amazing, when I see something beautiful, there is an emotional response that is appropriate.

And when we sing about this God and the truth that he is, I want to challenge you. Like when you see an amazing play, I bet your hands aren't in your pocket.

I bet you're not going like, yes, that was awesome. And you see something beautiful, you're like, oh. Oh, the expression of praise is it comes out of our bodies and our souls. We're integrated beings.

And we want to praise with our song that we sing.

We want to project that loud and proud. We want to say that, who God is. We want everybody to know it. We want God to know it. And we sing to him.

[38 : 17] Man, we sing to him in freedom. We sing to him like, man, full of gusto. And if you feel like raising your hands and that's how God's leading you, go for it. That's an expression of praise.

Whatever it may be, man, let's not hold back. This is an amazingly abundantly generous God. Thank you for listening.