May the worship of the Lord bring you into closer fellowship with Him.

*Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

 Ephesians 4:1-3

How beautiful it is to be the prisoner of the Lord instead of the prisoner of satan. Satan is a cruel jailor and merciless in his tortures. Having Jesus as your captor is the only means of true freedom.

We have been called to be Christians which means that we are part of the body of Christ here on earth. A human body cannot last if it fights against itself or harms itself; it is the same with Christ’s body. It only makes sense for us to treat one-another with kindness and with patience.

Because we are human-beings, we will inevitably irritate each other. Our calling, though, is to keep this from being a problem. Regardless of personality differences, we decide to love each other and ignore those things that we may naturally clash with.

Jesus calls us to unity in the truth. To show tolerance for someone else means that you disagree with them but you accept them anyway. This does not mean that we accept an untruth. We can love and accept someone with whom we disagree; but that doesn’t mean that we ever compromise the truth.

Jesus is the truth. What we read in the Bible is the truth. These are absolute truths that cannot be watered down. We strive for unity, but never at the expense of truth.

In Christ’s love

John

 8-15-21

Psalm 104 (5)

As we have made our way through this Psalm of worship, we have considered some of the reasons for worshiping God. For one, He is worthy of worship just for who He is. He is God and He is above everything else. His existence is awe inspiring; He is impossible for us to comprehend. He is all-powerful, He is everywhere, and He knows all things. His wisdom is beyond us. He is unchanging; and by the common grace He has for everyone, we are able to live and move and have our being.

God is worthy of praise for His creativity. That is the focus of this Psalm. It corresponds to the days of creation in the first chapter of Genesis. At His word, light came into existence. God spoke and giant stars came to be along with all the planets and moons; each staying in its own orbit and place where He commanded it to be. The unruly seas obey Him and don’t go past their boundaries. He made the earth bring forth all kinds of plants. He gave life to many diverse creatures from the giant leviathan of the sea to the tiniest mouse of the forest. Yahweh created people in His own image and gave them an eternal soul.

We also considered that worshiping God is good for us. It is pleasing to Him when His children consider Him and His glory. We develop a deeper communion with our Creator when we worship Him. The Holy Spirit becomes more effective in our lives as we worship and we are better able to recognize His leading; and better able to follow it. Jesus worshiped His Father. When we do so, we are imitating our Master and becoming more like Him; in worship, we are sanctified.

As we have looked at the first 30 verses of this Psalm, we have been taken through the first six days of creation. There has been time to wonder at God’s wisdom and His mighty power. The diversity of His creative abilities and His imagination are stunning. Even with the fall of mankind into sin and the curse brought upon the earth, what He has made remains of tremendous beauty. It is unimaginable to us what the new creation will look like when the stain of sin is gone and it is no longer exposed to curse but only to blessing.

Verses 31 through 35 somewhat consider the seventh day of rest; but they go beyond that into eternity. The first part of verse 31 says, “*Let the glory of the Lord endure forever*”. No doubt, the Lord is glorious in and of Himself and He lives forever; so, His glory will endure forever. This is a prayer for His creation to endure forever, because His creation also displays His glory. Now, we have promises in the Bible that let us know that God’s creation will last; even if some of it is made new. This is a prayer that is according to God’s promise and therefore is a prayer according to God’s will.

This is important because our best prayers are the ones that are in His will. To pray according to His will shows that our will has become aligned with His; this is one of the goals of sanctification. We want to become like Jesus and part of that is to have His mind; His way of thinking. God’s good creation glorifies Him, so the prayer is that His creation will exist forever and it will show His glory forever.

It may seem odd to pray for what God has already decreed will happen, but there is example of this in the Bible. In Daniel chapter 9, it is recorded that Daniel was reading the prophecies of Jeremiah. He read that the people of Israel would be released from captivity in Babylon after 70 years. Daniel realized that the 70 years were almost up so he prayed confession for his people asking forgiveness, and that God would follow through on His word to Jeremiah. This was prayer according to God’s will and it is pleasing to Him. It is the basis for the promise of answered prayer.

I think we are also familiar with the section of the prayer that Jesus taught us where we pray for God’s Kingdom to come to earth. We know this is going to happen, but Jesus expects us to pray for it. This is hard to understand, but it is part of the mystery and miracle of God working through the prayers of His saints. Yes, God can and will work by Himself; but He seems to prefer to work through His creation; be it people or angels.

The next section of verse 31 is a prayer and a call. “*Let the Lord be glad in His works*.” First, it is a prayer; praying that God will be pleased and glad in His creation. The account of Noah lets us know what happens when God becomes displeased with His works. All creation is His and He can do with it as He wishes; pray that He is glad in His works.

It is also a call; it is a call to we who are His children. We are His work and how we live should make Him glad. Now, when we accept Jesus as Saviour, we inherit His righteousness. Because of this, we can be in the presence of God in prayer, and God is always looking on us with favor. He loves us and holds us in high esteem and nothing will change that. At the same time, our reasonable response to God’s love is to love Him back by doing our best to please Him and avoid grieving the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

This is something we must be very careful with as Christians; we are forgiven in Christ Jesus, we are covered in His righteousness, we have been given the irrevocable gift of the Holy Spirit. But because of our human tendencies, we tend to take these things for granted. May the Holy Spirit always keep in the forefront of our minds the cost Jesus paid for us to have these good things. We are, because we have accepted Jesus, called to live a holy life. This requires effort on our part; but this effort brings about the Lord being glad in we who are His works.

The Lord made all His works in six days, then, He rested from His work of creation. During that rest, God is worthy to be worshiped and glorified by what He has made; He deserves to be glad in His work. That seventh day rest was a foreshadowing of our rest to come in Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us in Hebrews 4:10, “*For the one who has entered [God’s] rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His*.” Once we enter into communion with Jesus, our way to heaven is secure. We cease to try to work our way into God’s favor. Our salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ; we rest in Him.

Verse 32 is a reminder to us of how awesome God is. “*He looks at the earth, and it trembles;
He touches the mountains, and they smoke*.” What is being described here is what we call a Theophany. A Theophany is a manifestation of God’s presence in a powerful way. One of the best examples is the account in Exodus where God comes to Mount Sinai to give the ten commandments and meet with Moses. Exodus 19:18, “*Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked violently*.”

Even the inanimate does its best to glorify the Lord in His presence. How much more should we who have been blessed with understanding and are fearfully and wonderfully made in His image.

The Psalmist considers all these things and proclaims “*I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being*.” His song is a song of worship; it considers all the things God is worthy of being worshiped for. It is never a waste of our time or life to sing of God in praise. The ambition here is to praise Him for all of one’s life. There doesn’t come a time when we are too old or when we have praised God for long enough. Worship is a life-long occupation.

Even more is the commitment to sing while he has his being. We are eternal creatures. We have been created with a soul that will never die; we have been promised resurrection bodies that will last forever. What we start here on earth in this life will be continued in our next life. The Bible tells us that even now, the angels continually praise God in heaven. When we leave this life, we will join them. We won’t be able to help ourselves when we finally stand in the actual physical presence of God. We will experience joy unspeakable. Surely, we need to start practicing now.

Verse 34 starts with a commitment and a prayer, “*Let my meditation be pleasing to Him*”. This and the previous verse tie in with verse 31; these are things that will let the Lord be glad in His works. Meditation consists of all the things we think about; things we dwell on in our minds. This is a very important area because all sin is born in the mind. Whether it comes through satanic suggestion, worldly influence, or temptations of the flesh; if the mind takes the idea and considers it, the sin will come to pass.

Jesus warned us of this in the Sermon on the Mount with several examples. One of them was to not become angry with another. To do so is to have already committed murder in our heart. This is very deep and has a lot to it that outside of the focus of this message. Our focus here is if we become angry with someone and dwell on it long enough and hard enough, it will eventually lead to us committing murder. Even if we don’t get to the action, the intent of our heart has made us guilty. Obviously, this kind of meditation is not pleasing to God.

All of us have had the experience of some horrible thought suddenly coming to mind. We may even be trying to pray and a sinful idea comes to mind. We wonder “Where did that come from?” It came from satan or from our flesh. That initial thought is not sinful, but what we do with it afterward may be. We need to kill the thought immediately, fight against it, move our thoughts to something good and of the Lord. The problem would be if we entertained the thought; if we meditate on it. To dwell on the evil thought is to sin.

In the statement “*Let my meditation be pleasing to Him*”, the commitment is to push evil thoughts away and only think on those things that are good and pure. The prayer is asking the Holy Spirit to help us with this. We do our best to think on good things, but we are aware of our fallen human nature and that we desperately need the divine help of the Holy Spirit to have pleasing meditation.

The second part of verse 34 is a kind of fulfillment of verse 31: *As for me, I shall be glad in the Lord*. Being glad in the Lord is the result of desiring and working toward Him being glad in us. We are glad in the Lord. He is the magnificent creator; He is the all-powerful God: and He has made it that we need not be terrified of him through Jesus Christ. Being glad in the Lord shows we have our focus on the permanence of eternity, not the temporariness of earth.

The first part of the last verse almost seems out of place in this Psalm, but it is a glimpse into the future of God’s creation. *Let sinners be consumed from the earth, And let the wicked be no more*. This is a sober warning to go along with all the uplifting words of this Psalm. There are those who refuse the goodness God offers to them; those who live in rebellion against their Creator. There are many who have chosen to reject God and insist on living according to their own terms. They turn away the precious gift of Jesus Christ.

Their decision in this short life here on earth results in eternal consequences that there is no getting out of. In refusing the gift of Jesus paying the price for their sins, they have chosen to pay the price themselves. Sinners being consumed from the earth and the wicked being no more does not mean being annihilated from existence. It means they are not part of the new heavens and new earth that God creates. It means they are not part of the eternal joy and communion with God that Christians will enjoy. They will exist, but it will be in torment, paying the price for sin themselves in hell.

This consideration leads us to another reason to worship God: salvation. God the Father provided the way and the means for us to be made holy before Him and be declared “not guilty”. The way and means is Jesus Christ; God the Son. Our God Himself took the punishment we deserve. Jesus is the only way to be saved; but we don’t need any other way. He is the gate that is open to anyone who desires to come through it.

Considering this, the Psalm ends in much the same way as it began. *Bless the Lord, O my soul*. Bless Him for all He has done on our behalf. He has done the impossible through Christ in resurrecting our spirits, cleansing us of sin, providing for our bodily resurrection, and granting us eternal life. Bless Him simply for who He is.

The ending “*Praise the Lord!*” is a fitting way to close. In the Hebrew this is the familiar and jubilant “Hallelujah”. As we close our study of this Psalm, let us go forward in our Christian lives looking to worship God more through Jesus Christ. It is good for us to do so; it is the all-consuming occupation of the inhabitants of heaven.

Prayer

Holy Lord, Your angels in heaven offer You worship; proclaiming Your majesty and holiness. In the name of Jesus, we also offer You praise and are in awe of You. You are the one true God, whose name is Yahweh; You are the great I AM.

We confess that our offering of worship is poor; but it only adds to Your glory that You condescend to accept us. It is only by the work of Jesus on the cross that what we offer is acceptable to You. Thank You for cleansing us that we may come to You.

We ask You, Lord, that Your Holy Spirit would focus us more on worshiping You. May You be praised by our words and by our actions; even by our very lives. We hope to live to Your glory and with the help and strength of Your Spirit, we will be able to do so.

Thank You Lord, in Jesus’ name.

Amen