

Psalm 65

“The Hope of All the Ends of the Earth”

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Pentecost Season

Our sermon text this morning is Psalm 65, which is printed on the back of your order of worship.

This is God’s holy and inerrant word. It is more precious than gold, even much fine gold. It is sweeter than honey, sweeter even than the drippings of the honeycomb.

Psalm 65

*To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David. A Song.*

*1 Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion,  
and to you shall vows be performed.*

*2 O you who hear prayer,  
to you shall all flesh come.*

*3 When iniquities prevail against me,  
you atone for our transgressions.*

*4 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!*

*5 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;*

*6 the one who by his strength established the mountains,  
being girded with might;*

*7 who stills the roaring of the seas,  
the roaring of their waves,  
the tumult of the peoples,  
8 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.*

*9 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.*

*10 You water its furrows abundantly,  
settling its ridges,  
softening it with showers,  
and blessing its growth.*

*11 You crown the year with your bounty;  
your wagon tracks overflow with abundance.*

*12 The pastures of the wilderness overflow,  
the hills gird themselves with joy,*

*13 the meadows clothe themselves with flocks,  
the valleys deck themselves with grain,  
they shout and sing together for joy.*

Thus far the reading of God's word. It is absolutely true, and it is given to you because your Father in heaven loves you. Let's pray...

*Blessed Lord, who caused all the holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear this portion of your word, and to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest these words, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

This morning, I want us to think for a minute about what the Scriptures do for us, the way that they serve to illuminate and expand our imaginations, our sense of what the world is for, and what our lives are about.

Much of our actual moments of our days and weeks and months, of course, are taken up with the repetitive and necessary tasks of living in this fallen world.

We have to earn an income. We have to grow or purchase and then prepare food so we can eat. We have to travel from one place to another. We have to make sure we have clean clothing and sufficient sleep and that we're taking care of our bodies and our homes and whatever else it is we need to do each day to live.

And that's all fine and good, and certainly the Scriptures speak to these aspects of our lives. They tell us of the dignity and beauty of human life and work and play. They give us ethical and moral instruction for how we conduct ourselves in these activities, particularly as we relate to God and to other human beings.

And the Scriptures give us a lens to comprehend the very real suffering that exists for each one of us as we go about the daily requirements of living in this world that is marked by sin and death.

But sometimes the Scriptures go beyond our daily experience in this world and point to something greater, something beyond our everyday experience of God and one another and this world.

Beloved, there are places in the Scriptures, and these are remarkable texts, where the veil is pulled back, and we are given a picture of God's ultimate intentions for this world, what he means to do when he brings an end to our current state of existence and brings about the death and resurrection of the entire cosmos for his own glory and pleasure.

These texts are some of our most beloved parts of the Scriptures, because they give us a picture of where we're heading, and the beauty of God's righteousness when all of his promises are finally fulfilled.

I'm thinking of texts like Isaiah 25, where the prophet writes:

*"On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples  
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine,  
of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.  
And he will swallow up on this mountain  
the covering that is cast over all peoples,  
the veil that is spread over all nations.  
He will swallow up death forever;  
and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces."*

Or in Job 19, where Job proclaims, in the midst of his terrible suffering, a hope that looks to the future, declaring:

*"For I know that my Redeemer lives,  
and at the last he will stand upon the earth.  
And after my skin has been thus destroyed,  
yet in my flesh I shall see God,  
whom I shall see for myself,  
and my eyes shall behold, and not another."*

Or in Revelation 21, as we heard already this morning, where John writes:

*“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”*

*And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.””*

What I want to argue this morning is that this Psalm, Psalm 65, deserves a place among these other beloved texts, for it too gives us a profoundly beautiful picture of the salvation that God intends for all his good creation.

The structure of Psalm 65 is illuminating as we seek to understand its purpose.

The psalm begins with a simple declaration: *“Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion, and to you shall vows be performed.”*

This, we might say, is the thesis of the psalm — it’s fundamental argument — that praise is due to God. And the rest of the psalm enumerates the reasons why praise is owed to our creator and redeemer.

As verse 2 explains, one of the reasons for God’s praise is the comprehensiveness of his care for all that he has made.

*“O you who hear prayer,”* the psalmist declares, *“to you shall all flesh come.”*

That name for God that the psalmist gives is a fascinating one. He addresses God as *“You who hear prayer,”* and indeed, this is who our God is.

Ultimately, all of the many prayers we offer to God are summarized by Lord Jesus, who taught us to pray to our Father, saying: *“Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”*

Behind every desire we offer to God, every petition, every request, is a fundamental desire for the consummation of all things, for God’s kingdom to come in its fullness, for him to completely destroy the power of sin, death and the devil, and to wipe away every tear from our eyes.

I have to say, the older I get, the more I long, each day, for the new creation.

And ultimately, this is why the psalmist addresses God as *“You who hear prayer,”* because he knows that ultimately, all prayer will be answered by God’s eschatological yes and amen.

The psalmist goes on to give another reason for God’s praise — his triumph over our sin.

As the psalmist writes in verse 3, speaking to God: *“When iniquities prevail against me, you atone for our transgressions.”*

It’s worth noticing here that the psalmist is not emphasizing that God simply “passes over” our sins — no, he triumphs over our sin.

Scripturally speaking, sin is not just the “bad” things that we happen to do — rather sin is a kind of power unleashed in the world through the fall of humanity, such that Paul can write in Romans 5 that “sin reigned in death,” and indeed, this is exactly how sin functions in our lives - as a kind of power that we are subject to — but as the psalmist declares — when iniquities prevail against us, God atones, he covers, he triumphs over our transgressions.

So, according to the Psalmist, God is to be praised because he answers prayer, because he triumphs over sin, and in verse 4, he adds another reason — because he draws us near to dwell with him.

This verse 4 is the real heart of this psalm — everything else that follows flows out of this articulation of God’s blessing — which is to dwell perpetually in his presence.

Ultimately, beloved, the promise of the gospel is God himself.

As the psalmist writes:

*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!*

A longing to be perpetually in God’s special presence, to dwell forever with him is a persistent theme throughout the psalter.

To be near to God always, to no longer suffer the separation of sin, or the horror of death, is the great hope of humanity.

As the psalmist says in Psalm 27:

*One thing have I asked of the Lord,  
that will I seek after:  
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord  
all the days of my life,  
to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord  
and to inquire in his temple.*

Or as he writes in Psalm 84:

*How lovely is your dwelling place,  
O Lord of hosts!  
My soul longs, yes, faints  
for the courts of the Lord;  
my heart and flesh sing for joy  
to the living God.*

Or, as John tells us in Revelation 21, the culmination of all things will be when we hear these words:

*“Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.”*

Ultimately, the blessed one in verse 4 is Jesus himself. The psalmist here speaks prophetically about God’s own son, for he is the one who, by his death, resurrection and ascension is the blessed one whom God has chosen to bring near to dwell in his courts.

But this verse is the great hinge of this psalm because it is through the one that is chosen that the many are blessed.



Notice the shift in verse 4 from the one to the many:

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!

And then, in verses 5-13, this promise of God's life giving presence is extended from the one, Jesus, to all of creation.

And it is here that the full eschatological promise of this psalm is seen.

In verse 5, the psalmist says:

*"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 expansive kingdom of God is for all the nations, for all people.

As verse 2 put it: *O you who hear prayer, to you shall **all** flesh come.*

This is a picture of the redeemed like that in Revelation 7, where we find that people of God that have been drawn near through Jesus Christ, are a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages.

Indeed, as verse 8 declares, God stills the roaring of the seas, he stills the roaring of the waves, he rules over the tumult of the peoples, so that even those who dwell at the ends of earth are in awe of him.

But then, as we discover in verses 9-13, the righteousness of God is revealed not only in the salvation of human beings, rather all creation is to be brought to perfection by him who made all things.

These final verses are some of the most beautiful in all the psalter, as God, like a great cosmic gardener, waters the earth and brings it to full flowering and fruitfulness, a flowering and fruitfulness that can only be described by the psalmist as praise.

Listen to the words of the psalmist as he speaks directly to God and says:

*9 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.*

*10 You water its furrows abundantly,  
settling its ridges,*

*softening it with showers,  
and blessing its growth.*

*11 You crown the year with your bounty;  
your wagon tracks overflow with abundance.*

*12 The pastures of the wilderness overflow,  
the hills gird themselves with joy,*

*13 the meadows clothe themselves with flocks,  
the valleys deck themselves with grain,  
they shout and sing together for joy.*

The salvation of God envisioned by the psalmist here is earthy, it is physical.

The house of God, according to the psalmist, is not some shadowy spiritual place — no, it is green fields and flocks of sheep, and valleys rich with ripe grain — it is creation itself joining in with the redeemed, shouting and singing for joy in response to God's redeeming love.

Beloved, the picture that this psalm gives us is a startling revelation of the glory of the new creation.

This psalm is a picture of where we are headed. It is a vision of God's ultimate intentions for us and for the world — a time and place where sin's power has been fully defeated, where all flesh has come before him to dwell with him in his house, where his dwelling place is the whole earth made new by his loving hand.

Beloved, God is so kind to give us, throughout the Scriptures, these glimpses of the end.

It is so easy for us to see only what is before us, to be concerned only with the day to day details of our lives - the ups and downs, the small joys and small sorrows, and to lose sight of the great work that God is doing in human history, the great cosmic drama, of which our lives are but a small part.

For I tell you, beloved. Time is not a circle. All things will not continue on as they have always been.

No, time is going somewhere, and there is something better coming, something that no eye has seen, nor ear heard, something better than the heart of man could imagine.

For one day, we will indeed hear the voice of Jesus say: *"Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man."*

And on that day, we will say, fully and completely: *“We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, and the holiness of your temple, O God of our salvation, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas!”*

And creation itself will join with us in praise.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.