

December 7 Su Reading A341 — Psalm 33 — Praising God

Audio: [Psalm 33 \(ESV\)](#)

Reasons to Praise — This psalm begins with praise, loud praise: “*Shout for joy in the LORD, O you righteous! Praise befits the upright*” (v. 1). The bulk of what follows provides *reasons* for our praise. First, we should praise Him for His Word, including its spiritual quality (“*the word of the LORD is upright*”—v. 4) and its creative power (“*By the word of the LORD the heavens were made*”—v. 6). This is the same Word identified as Christ by the Apostle John: “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ... All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth*” (John 1:1, 3, 14). Second, we should praise Him for His sovereignty. Because He rules universally over all peoples, they should “*fear the LORD ... [and] stand in awe of him!*” (v. 8). The psalm ends with our third reason to praise Him: His trustworthiness. “*Our soul waits for the LORD ... our heart is glad in him ... we trust in his holy name ... as we hope in you*” (vv. 20-22). There are many reasons to praise God, and they should be included in our prayers. If we begin our prayers with praise, then our hearts will be prepared to present our requests to Him.

December 8 M Reading A342 — Psalm 36 — God’s Steadfast Love

Audio: [Psalm 36 \(ESV\)](#)

The Realm of Godliness — David began this psalm with how deceived the wicked person is (“*he flatters himself in his own eyes*”—v. 2), and it concludes with evil people’s helpless end (“*they are thrust down, unable to rise*”—v. 12). Christians can also sometimes fall into this way of thinking, when they try to find some way to excuse their sin so they can continue in it. The righteous believer, however, lives in a much different atmosphere within the steadfast love of God. It is a realm of *salvation* (“*...man and beast you save*”—v. 6). God has rescued us from destruction, and we live within His grace. It is also a realm of *protection* (“*The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings*”—v. 7). We are safe in the arms of Jesus. It is also a realm of *provision* (“*They feast on the abundance of your house, and you give them drink from the river of your delights*”—v. 8). God is the source of all that we need. Peter summarized the believer’s blessing this way: “*His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence*” (2 Peter 1:3).

December 9 Tu Reading A343 — Psalm 39 — Reacting to Discipline

Audio: [Psalm 39 \(ESV\)](#)

Guarding Our Mouth — The beginning of David’s psalm reminded me of the comment by the humorous author Mark Twain: “Never miss an opportunity to shut up,” i.e., keep quiet. David said, “*I will guard my mouth with a muzzle, so long as the wicked are in my presence*” (v. 1). When we are suffering, we must be careful about what we say in the hearing of unbelievers. We are Jesus’ representatives, whether we are witnessing or suffering. Will we complain or express our bitterness? Will we blame God? Later in this psalm, David lets us know when we ought to also shut our mouths before God. That is when we are suffering under God’s discipline. David said, “*I am mute; I do not open my mouth, for it is you who have done it*” (v. 9). Done what? He was talking about God’s discipline; he was admitting that it was because of his own sin that God was correcting him with troubles. He said, “*...you discipline a man with rebukes for sin*” (v. 11). When David does open his mouth, it is in crying out to God for help: “*Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear to my cry*” (v. 12). We need to know when to shut up and when to cry out, both in a way that will honor God.

Victory's Reason — This is a summary chapter of the expansion and control of David's kingdom over the Philistines to the west; Moab, Edom, and Ammon to the east; and Syria to the north. Most of these areas were beyond the borders of the land promised by God to Israel. How did this happen? David was a great leader, but there was something much greater than that. Twice in this chapter, it was said, "*And the LORD gave victory to David wherever he went*" (vv. 6, 14). This tremendous expansion was from the strength and blessing of Yahweh. It is true that God chose some men of unusual human ability, like Moses, David, and Paul, but it was their dependence upon God that made them phenomenally successful. God gave them victory. The same God also gave great victories to men who were faulty and afraid, like Gideon. Most of us fall into that "weaker" category, but as Paul said for all of us, "*I can do all things through him who strengthens me*" (Phil. 4:13). It is not ability that God uses, but dependence. Trust Him to empower you today!

Handling Differences — Today's reading covers the same basic material that we read yesterday in 2 Samuel 8. Perhaps you noticed some slight differences. Since both chapters are God's Word, they are true, as Jesus prayed to the Father, "*...your word is truth*" (John 17:17). So, how are we to handle these variances? Let's look at three examples. One version says that David "*took Gath and its villages*" from the Philistines (1 Chron. 18:1), whereas 2 Samuel says that it was "*Metheg-ammah*" (v. 1), which is mentioned only here in the OT. Perhaps Metheg-ammah was a name given to the area that included the city of "*Gath and its villages*," like we might say, "the Bay Area" (where San Francisco is located) or "greater Manila." We might handle this difference with the conclusion that we cannot fully know because there is a lack of information. Another example is where the later-written 1 Chronicles 18:4 says that David took from King Hadadezer "*1,000 chariots, 7,000 horsemen*," while 2 Samuel 8:4 says only, "*1,700 horsemen*." Here, it appears that someone copying the original manuscript took a coffee break and inadvertently condensed the original, and his copy became the standard. We believe that God's Word is inerrant in the original manuscripts, but that a very few errors have crept in through the centuries-long process of making handwritten copies. One more example is that while 2 Samuel 8:9-10 speaks of "*Toi king of Hamath ... [who] sent his son Joram to King David*," 1 Chron. 18:9-10 gives these names as "*Tou*" and "*Hadoram*." The problem here is first, that these were foreign names to Jewish writers, therefore prone to mispronouncing, and second, that many names in those ancient times were modified versions of the same name, like our Dave vs. David or Becky vs. Rebekah. We should handle these kinds of differences with questions and investigation, but not with doubt and unbelief. God's Word is truth.

Showing Kindness — After Saul's disobedience, Samuel told him that his kingdom would end, and that "*The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart*" (1 Sam. 13:14). David was that man, and his heart's character is clearly shown in today's reading. David's desire to show kindness to any of Saul's descendants is mentioned three times in this chapter. First, David asked a general question, probably to his own servants, "*Is there still anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?*" (2 Sam. 9:1). That showed the God-like quality of David's heart, and it led to the discovery of Ziba, one of Saul's servants who seemed to be the leader in managing the former king's property. Second, David asked Ziba the same question, with the slight twist of calling this kindness, "*the kindness of God*" (v. 3). David had a heart of kindness because God had given it to him; he was "*a man after his own heart*." Third, when Jonathan's crippled son, Mephibosheth, was brought to David, the king said, "*Do not fear, for I will show you kindness for the sake of your father*

Jonathan" (v. 7). Because of David's generous, godly heart, he *looked for* an opportunity to show kindness. We should do likewise. Do you know someone today who could use an expression of kindness? Someone came to my mind as I wrote this. Would you give them a call? Send them a note? Buy them a gift? I'm going to make that call today.

December 13 Sa Reading A347 — Psalm 50, 53 — God's Patience

Audio: [Psa. 50](#), [Psa. 53](#)

Silence and Sacrifice — I will discuss only Psalm 50 today, since Psalm 53 is almost the same as Psalm 14, which we have already considered. The primary emphasis of Psalm 50 seems to center around two subjects, the first one being God's silence, which was motivated by His patience. He had been silent toward Israel's sin in the past, but He breaks that silence in this psalm in order to rebuke and judge His people: "*Our God comes; he does not keep silence ... He calls ... that he may judge his people*" (vv. 3-4). God also speaks of His silence near the end of this psalm: "*I have been silent. ... But now I rebuke you and lay the charge before you*" (v. 21). They had misinterpreted His silence as being acceptance, while they continued in their sin. Many people today have that same picture of God. They try to test the limits of what He will put up with in their actions. That is not being committed to God but challenging Him. The second emphasis in this psalm is about their sacrifices. Israel was faithfully performing their required sacrifices, but God said, "*Not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you*" (v. 8). The problem was that their hearts were not involved, so this was God's instruction to them: "*Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and perform your vows to the Most High*" (v. 14). Later, He said, "*The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me; to one who orders his way rightly I will show the salvation of God!*" (v. 23). Offering sacrifices was primarily a mechanical thing, but "*thanksgiving*" is something that comes from the heart. God is not nearly as interested in what we do for Him as He is in the level of our gratitude for what He has done for us.