

SERMON – 6/3/22
'Hallowed be Your Name'

Psalm 92:1-15

“You, Lord, are for ever exalted.” (Psalm 92:8)

Today is the first Sunday in Lent and over the coming six weeks as we follow Jesus to the Cross our focus on discipleship will take us to the place of prayer. If what we have been looking at in the First Letter of John these past few weeks has been in some measure about how other people see us as Christians and what it means outwardly to be a disciple, our studies in the coming weeks on different aspects of prayer will take on more of an inward journey, focussing on deepening our relationship with God in Person.

Our focus will be on Psalms and we will discover that there is a psalm for every occasion and every mood. I hope we can learn something here not only about finding new words to pray but also that we may become more confident in developing an altogether deeper prayer life as we seek to follow Christ. In that regard, as headings for these sermons I am using phrases from the Lord's Prayer which Jesus taught His first disciples not so much as a form of words to recite but as a pattern from which to develop their own prayer life and ours.

We begin this morning with the first cry of the Lord's Prayer: 'Hallowed be Your Name' and I would like to reflect with you today on what it means to give God His place not only in our priorities and our commitment but in the way we live, the way we worship and the way we pray. “You, Lord, are for ever exalted,” the psalmist declares in the words of our text this morning – and that is a statement of fact which must have major consequences for us if we are serious about claiming to be followers of Jesus. The Lord *is* forever exalted – that is His rightful place whether we acknowledge that or not, so the primary focus of our praying must always be to restore that perspective.

“You, Lord, are for ever exalted.” That is to say God is on the eternal throne; He is God of gods, King of the universe, Lord of creation; He is the Most High and, as the New Testament teaches

us, Jesus is in very nature God and therefore worthy of equal honour with the Father, which is why even though He humbled Himself and submitted even to death on the Cross, the Father exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, at which every knee shall finally bow. As we pray and as we live we need to humble ourselves before God in Christ and give Him His rightful place. So where does that take us?

The first thing I want to highlight in the psalm is that in the heading we are told it is 'a song for the Sabbath day.' This probably means that it was written to be used when God's people gathered, whether as families around the table for the Sabbath meal on a Friday evening, as communities in the synagogue on a Saturday morning, or with pilgrims from all over the country at the festivals in the Temple in Jerusalem.

In the earliest days of the Christian Church immediately following the Day of Pentecost, the Book of Acts tells us that the first believers met together in the Temple courts, that they broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts "praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people." (Acts 2:47) God's name was honoured among them. Corporately and publicly, Christ's disciples declared the praises of God – and we are told that "the Lord added to their number *daily* those who were being saved."

You can also see what an impact praising God publicly had later in the Book of Acts when Paul and Silas were in prison in Philippi (Acts 16:25-34). In the middle of the night they were praying and singing praise to God and we are told that the other prisoners were listening to them. When the earth shook and the prison doors flew open, the prisoners didn't run off but remained with their guard and his family to hear the Good News about Jesus Christ that was so clearly fundamental to Paul and Silas' life, and before daybreak the Lord had added again significantly to their number. When the Lord's name is honoured by God's people, there is growth. Be exalted among us, Lord.

The second thing I want to point to briefly in the psalm is that there are people in the world who just don't 'get' that the Lord is

"for ever exalted." They are variously described in the psalm as 'senseless people' or as 'fools', as 'the wicked' or 'evildoers', as the 'enemies' of God or as the psalmist's 'adversaries' and 'foes'. That is the reality in our world – as John writes in the introduction to his Gospel, 'though the world was made through [Christ] the world did not recognise Him' (John 1:10). There are many people who are completely oblivious to God, blind to what He has done and deaf to the Good News of Christ – another reason why it is important that our hallowing of the Name of God is something that is done publicly and openly and not hidden away.

"But," says the psalmist, "You, Lord, are for ever exalted." We may despair that what seems to be an increasing majority of our fellow-citizens have no time for the One we know holds all things together, but that does not alter the fact that God is indeed the Most High and that one day every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

And the key point I want to leave you with today is declared in the opening verse of the psalm: "It is good to praise the Lord." We really underestimate the significance of worship not just in the context of our gathering as a church week by week - worship must be about so much more than this - but also in our personal walk with God in prayer. When was the last time you personally took time to put into your own words what God means to you?

The psalmist speaks about proclaiming the Lord's love in the morning and His faithfulness at night, about singing for joy at what God has done, about pondering how profound the thoughts of God are. Yet how often do we simply get up in the morning and get on with the day? How often do we lie down to sleep without giving a single thought to the blessings we have enjoyed throughout the day that has been? How often do we actually pause simply to give God His place? "You, Lord, are for ever exalted," says the psalmist. Would people know that from my life, or yours? I venture to suggest that the Lord's name will be heard far more often in the homes and streets of Kinross on the lips of the senseless adversaries of God who litter their sentences with 'My God' and 'Christ' and 'Jesus' than on our lips crying 'Holy is the Lord Most High' and truly meaning honour to His Name.

The Lord *is* for ever exalted. The question is whether we acknowledge that in any meaningful way day by day. Let me encourage you in these coming weeks not just to say those oft-repeated words: 'Hallowed be your name' but to exalt the Lord with every breath, with every thought and attitude, with every step and every deed. Perhaps it is no accident that in my daily reading yesterday King David in another psalm wrote this: "I will extol the LORD at all times; his praise will always be on my lips. I will glory in the LORD; let the afflicted hear and rejoice. Glorify the LORD with me: let us exalt his name together." (Psalm 34:1-3)

- Let anyone who comes through these doors on a Sunday morning have the same experience as Paul described to the Corinthians: 'They will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, 'God is truly among you.'"' (1 Cor.14:25)

- Let those in the world around us who thus far have been blind to the reality of God in the world have their eyes opened as they hear the wonders of God declared in a language they can understand. (Acts 2:11)

- And let there be meaningful space each day in our lives to give God His place.

It is good to praise the Lord. He is for ever exalted. May He be exalted in your life and in mine today and every day.