
The Pilgrim's Morning Joy

Psalm 30²⁰

Russ Kennedy

Dawn. The light breaking over the edge of the horizon. Beautiful. After the night and the cold comes the morning.

This Psalm was composed after a time of chastening through sickness. We do not know the specific instance of this chastening but we do know that it was so severe that David felt near to death (v. 2-3). He had been restored from his sickness and now reflects on the state of his heart. He had been prideful and self-sufficient. God had humbled him and brought him to place of gratitude and gladness.

We have all known such times. Oh, if you are truly one of God's children, you have experienced the chastening hand of your loving Father. We know that, "No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way." (Hebrews 12:11, NLT)

What makes this Psalm surprising is when it is sung. Some say that the inscription is wrong and should be house. I don't think that is necessary. It is likely that this was sung at the dedication of the Temple just as the header says. But, it was written during David's lifetime. It was selected as one of the featured songs to be sung (possibly at David's direction) at the dedication of the Temple when it was completed.³ And we will have to think about that...

What does God have for His people in their morning joy? What does that song sing?

²⁰ Unless otherwise designated, Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

We Praise God**(v. 1-5)**

In our morning joy we praise God.

For Healing Sickness**(v. 1-3)**

We worship God in our personal experiences of Him.

¹ I will extol you, O Lord, for you have drawn me up
and have not let my foes rejoice over me.

² O Lord my God, I cried to you for help,
and you have healed me.

³ O Lord, you have brought up my soul from Sheol;
you restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit.

The Psalmist praises God for not giving his enemies reason to celebrate through his death. He has been raised up from the sick bed where he almost died. God had helped him and healed him. So he extols God who drew him up.

This is his own personal experience. He is extoling and worshipping God in public giving testimony of what God has done for him personally. This is an important aspect of prayer. It distinguishes the God of the Bible from all the false gods. Our God personally moves in our lives. Therefore we can worship the Lord out of our own relationship with Him.

For Enduring Favor**(v. 4-5)**

We exhort others to worship God corporately.

⁴ Sing praises to the Lord, O you his saints,
and give thanks to his holy name.

⁵ For his anger is but for a moment,
and his favor is for a lifetime.

Weeping may tarry for the night,
but joy comes with the morning.

Hear the change in voice? It moves from "I praise you, God" to "You all praise God." What a wonderful aspect of worship. That we can say and sing to others, "Oh worship God. Praise Him. Extoll Him. Lift up your voice to the Lord."

But this worship is not empty of content. It is not the mindless, thoughtless worship that fills many religious auditoriums. "You all worship God because..." and reasons to worship follow.

Verse 5 is a synthetic parallelism. That is, the first two lines are stretched and expanded by the last two. Worship God because:

God's anger and thus our weeping is momentary;
but God's grace and thus our rejoicing is everlasting.

Our weeping in the dark is replaced by our joy when the morning dawns. So all of us, praise God for the passing moments of God's anger and the enduring grace that replaces it. Dry your tears. The morning is dawning. Let joy rise.

God's people praise God for His personal care and for His joy-bringing favor and grace.

We Plead with God **(v. 6-10)**

We so prize God that we will pour our hearts when we feel distant from the Lord.

Not to Hide His Face **(v. 6-7)**

We plead with God not to hide His face from us.

⁶ As for me, I said in my prosperity,
"I shall never be moved."

⁷ By your favor, O Lord,
you made my mountain stand strong;
you hid your face; I was dismayed.

Our Presumption **(v. 6)**

Here is a danger. It is foolish of us to think that we are invulnerable when things are going well. This is pride and arrogance.

His Favor **(v. 7a)**

So we acknowledge that we stand only in God's favor and grace. If we are doing well, if our lives are stable and blessed, then it is only because we are under the gracious favor of God.

Our Dismay **(v. 7b)**

But oh when God slips behind the clouds of his disfavor. He hides His face and we are dismayed. He withdraws the sense of His presence and all our pleasure and prosperity, our power and place, simply withers away.

Except for many Christians this is not so. God long ago hid His face from you and withdrew His favor and grace and you are oblivious to it. It is of little concern. You do not resonate with this text.

For many of you though you dread this. Your conscience is alive and sensitive towards God. You long for the sense of His presence. You want His smile and His delight in you more than anything. May you walk with Him.

To be our Helper**(v. 8-10)**

We plead with God to help us.

⁸ To you, O Lord, I cry,
and to the Lord I plead for mercy:
⁹ "What profit is there in my death,
if I go down to the pit?
Will the dust praise you?
Will it tell of your faithfulness?
¹⁰ Hear, O Lord, and be merciful to me!
O Lord, be my helper!"

Our Need**(v. 8)**

Once again we are faced with our need for mercy. We hearts are so full of pride. Our thoughts are filled with presumption that we need the humbling of mercy. We come to God, even in this day, as petitioners. We come as children. He is our Father. But He is also the Sovereign King, the God of the Universe. In humbleness then we ask for His mercy.

His Argument**(v. 9)**

What an argument the Psalmist puts forward. God be merciful. Heal me. Preserve my life. *What good am I to you if I am dead? How will I praise you among God's people?* Does this cause you to pause a bit?

Okay. I have been presumptuous in thinking that I was immovable. God struck me down with an illness to teach me. I cred out and God healed me. Now I need Him again. I know I need His mercy. So let me tell God how important I am to His program of praise? If I am dead who will tell people about how faithful You are, O God.?

Is this the way we ought to pray? Or is this another manifestation of pride and presumption? Or is it possible that David is just a child of his time in redemptive history?

I do not think this is pride. It seems to me that David is presenting an almost plaintive reason for God to raise up David as the Lord has in the past.

First, the structure of the Psalm places this stanza as parallel to the stanza of verses 4-5. The Psalm looks like this:

Worship (v. 1-3)
Call (v. 4-5)
Problems (v. 6-7)
Cry (v. 8-10)
Worship (v. 11-12)

This stanza then is symmetrical with verses 4-5. The night is the near death illness and the morning is the advent of God's mercy in healing

Second, this is surrounded by a plea for mercy in verses 8 and 10. This is a man who was or is close to dying. His death to sickness will give the Lord's enemies much cause for rejoicing. In some way, David's death would be seen by others as God not being faithful. He wants more than anything to be allowed to live so that he may praise the faithfulness of God.

David wants to live to praise and proclaim God's faithfulness. This is a good thing.

Our Request

(v. 10)

Be my helper. That is our request. We recognize our need for mercy. We recognize our need for help. We cannot help ourselves. Self-sufficiency is always destructive in the long run. So we confess our neediness before our God.

God's people plead with God for His great and gracious mercy.

We Thank God

(v. 11-12)

And God graciously moves on our behalf. So what else is there to do but thank Him?

¹¹ You have turned for me my mourning into dancing;
you have loosed my sackcloth
and clothed me with gladness,
¹² that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent.
O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever!

For His Wonderful Reversals

(v. 11)

Is this the way you feel about God and what He has done for you? God has taken our sorrows, our sadness, our darkness our mourning. The Lord has given joy and dancing and gladness in its place. Do these words give voice to your heart?

For His Purposes of Praise

(v. 12)

God has raised David up from sickness. Therefore David will do what he said. He will praise God. He will glory in Christ. He will give thanks forever. And so will we.

God's people thank the Lord for what He has done to transform their lives.

Reflect and Respond

The irony of this Psalm is that David from the dust does still yet praise and proclaim God's faithfulness. This Psalm was sung long after his death and now is regularly sung and read in the churches.

Why would you ask to have this sung at the dedication of a building (whether it is David's house or God's house)? Because there is a great change that takes place when the tabernacle is taken down and the Temple is built and put into use. That great change pointed to the change that would take place when Jesus died. His tabernacle would be put off at the cross. The new creation temple would be put on in the resurrection. Our own death is described by Paul in similar terms in the New Testament. It is the putting off of the old tent and one day, putting on the new one. Singing this Psalm at the dedication of the Temple then anticipates the glory and praise that God is due when the old is gone and the new has come.

What do people do when they think about dying and living?

God's people praise God for His personal care and for His joy-bringing favor and grace.

God's people plead with God for His great and gracious mercy.

God's people thank the Lord for what He has done to transform their lives.

(Cont...)

Hebrews 12:1-11 – (GOD'S WORD, 1995)

¹ Since we are surrounded by so many examples [of faith], we must get rid of everything that slows us down, especially sin that distracts us. We must run the race that lies ahead of us and never give up. ² We must focus on Jesus, the source and goal of our faith. He saw the joy ahead of him, so he endured death on the cross and ignored the disgrace it brought him. Then he received the highest position in heaven, the one next to the throne of God. ³ Think about Jesus, who endured opposition from sinners, so that you don't become tired and give up.

⁴ You struggle against sin, but your struggles haven't killed you. ⁵ You have forgotten the encouraging words that God speaks to you as his children:

“My child, pay attention when the Lord disciplines you.
Don't give up when he corrects you.

⁶ The Lord disciplines everyone he loves.
He severely disciplines everyone he accepts as his child.”

⁷ Endure your discipline. God corrects you as a father corrects his children. All children are disciplined by their fathers. ⁸ If you aren't disciplined like the other children, you aren't part of the family. ⁹ On earth we have fathers who disciplined us, and we respect them. Shouldn't we place ourselves under the authority of God, the father of spirits, so that we will live? ¹⁰ For a short time our fathers disciplined us as they thought best. Yet, God disciplines us for our own good so that we can become holy like him. ¹¹ We don't enjoy being disciplined. It always seems to cause more pain than joy. But later on, those who learn from that discipline have the peace that comes from doing what is right.

Dawn. The light breaking over the edge of the horizon. Beautiful. After the night and the cold comes the morning.

Joy. The gladness breaking over the edge of the heart. Beautiful. After the darkness and the hardness comes the joy.

Mercy. Our God breaking over the edge of our lives. Beautiful. After the discipline and the chastening comes the song.

This is the pilgrim's morning joy. May it be yours...

Notes

³ *I am rejecting the notion that the heading is either incorrect or that the word, Temple, here should be house referring to David's house.*