

Praise or Prosperity?

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- [0 : 00] Please turn to Psalm 30. Psalm 30 this morning. I'll read it out for us. You'll also find an outline of my talk inside your bulletins. If you're looking for someone to take notes or just to help you follow along.
- Psalm 30. It's a Psalm of David. A song at the dedication of the temple. I will extol you, O Lord, for you have drawn me up and have not let my foes rejoice over me.
- O Lord, my God, I cried to you for help and you have healed me. O Lord, you have brought up my soul from Sheol. You restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit.
- Sing praises to the Lord, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name. For his anger is but for a moment and his favour is for a lifetime.
- Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning. As for me, I said in my prosperity, I shall never be moved. By your favour, O Lord, you made my mountain stand strong.
- [1 : 14] You hid your face. I was dismayed. To you, O Lord, I cry and to the Lord I plead for mercy. 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? Hear, O Lord, and be merciful to me. O Lord, be my helper. You have turned for me my mourning into dancing.
- You have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness. That my glory may sing your praise and not be silent. O Lord, my God, I will give thanks to you forever.
- All right, I wonder if we were to do a SWOT analysis of our church. You know, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats.
- What do you think would be the greatest threat to the health of our church? Or what about the threat to your personal faith? What are the things that might keep your faith anemic and weak?
- [2 : 16] Or might even threaten to destroy it altogether? Looking further afield, perhaps, what do you think it is that keeps so many people in Australia out of our churches, off their knees, ignorant of their Bibles?
- At the heart of this psalm, literally almost at the very center of it, there is a word, one word, that I think probably captures it. Maybe this is not the whole answer.
- There are potentially others that I've neglected. But it's there in verse 6, you see. Prosperity. Prosperity.
- So let me tell you about this word. In the Hebrew, it's the word shalah. And when I look up my Hebrew dictionary, they tell me it's about living quietly and at ease.
- Living quietly and at ease. It's about carefree, light-hearted living, feeling safe, secure, tranquil, comfortable. One line from the dictionary, continually in luck.
- [3 : 23] Continually in luck. You're always just landing on your feet. Now, you might think that all sounds pretty good, doesn't it? I mean, what's wrong with that? In fact, isn't that what we're all dreaming of?

Isn't that what we want? What we work towards and study for and what we're saving up for, why you buy a house in a nice neighborhood. How could living quietly and safely be a threat to us?

It seems almost oxymoronic. But remember what Jesus said. How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God.

It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God. And he's not just saying that it's impossible for everyone to enter the kingdom because we're all sinners.

He's saying there's something peculiarly difficult for wealthy people to enter the kingdom of God. Or in the parable of the sower, a sower went out to sow his seed.

[4 : 25] He scattered some seed on thorny ground. And Jesus said, it's Matthew chapter 13 verse 22, As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word and it proves unfruitful.

Or in Luke's account, as they go on their way, they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life. And their fruit does not mature.

See, wealth, prosperity, pleasure and ease, these things do funny things to us. They have a subtle way of sneaking into our lives and strangling our faith.

For a variety of reasons, I reckon. So you know how wealth tends to make us think that we're better than other people. Listen to Proverbs chapter 18 verse 23.

The poor use entreaties, but the rich answer roughly. Isn't that so true?

[5 : 32] How quickly human behavior can change when we have the upper hand and we are put in positions of power or privilege. There seems to be no reason any longer to treat people with consideration and care and respect to compromise.

Why would we, the elite, compromise with the kind of plebs, the masses? A master doesn't have to check his tone around his servants.

I watched a horrific interview with a guy who was the manager of one of these fantastic, luxurious hotels. I think actually he'd been in several hotels and he was saying, they're all the same.

He talked about the outrageous, degrading way that the clients treated the staff. Wealth often makes us forget about the people beneath us.

And likewise, wealth often makes us forget about the God above us. We start to feel like we don't really need God. So again, to turn to the Proverbs, listen to Proverbs 18 verses 10 and 11.

[6 : 38] And have a think about how these two Proverbs are being juxtaposed, which is always something, it's one of my hobby horses. I like how the Proverbs are arranged, put together. Verse 10, Now just have a think about how these go together.

Two very different men, the righteous man and the rich man. Two very different cities, different fortresses that they inhabit. The righteous man runs to the Lord and trusts in him and hides in him.

But the rich man trusts in his wealth. Runs to his wealth. His wealth is his strong city. And then there are two very different lessons to learn from these Proverbs. Notice the righteous man in the Lord, he is safe.

He is actually safe. He has chosen wisely. But the rich man's wealth is a high wall in his imagination. In his imagination. It's so striking, isn't it?

In other words, he thinks he's safe. He feels confident about his high wall. But he's judged poorly. Wealth brings with it a false sense of security.

[7 : 54] A sense of independence. Like we don't need others and we don't need God. Moses warned the people about this kind of thing in Deuteronomy. If you remember, just as they were about to enter the Promised Land, he says, Take care, lest you forget about the Lord your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, lest when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks multiply and your super is fantastic, that's not quite in there, and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, then your heart be lifted up and you forget the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, who led you through the great and terrifying wilderness.

And you see, Moses is doing a sort of SWOT analysis for the people. He's saying, What is the great threat to Israel's faith? It's not lack. It's not stress.

It's not hunger in the wilderness. No, on the contrary, life in the wilderness, living in need, often has a way of humbling us, doesn't it? And drawing us near to God. We feel a sense of our own inadequacy and our need of Him.

But tragically, and ironically, when God provides for us, particularly when He provides for us abundantly and consistently, that's when we start to forget about Him.

And as I say, I think this is probably at least one of the greatest threats to our church today and to our own spiritual lives. And I think it explains why so many Australians are so hardened to the gospel.

[9 : 46] We live in a very lucky country, don't we? A land of rich young rulers. We have a land of immense prosperity, arguably the most middle-class, comfortable country in the world at the most prosperous time in the history of the world.

A land flowing with milk and honey, or at least with iron ore and beef. And in St. Lucia, surely we are in the eye of the storm here, aren't we?

You know, we have our Sandstone University and our prestigious schools. I mean, I reckon even our IGA has to be the most posh IGA I've ever walked into.

Some of the things they sell there. But the cars we drive in, the houses we live in, and this is what all of our friends are living for, isn't it? It's easy to have this stuff rub off on us if we're not careful and it will deaden and dampen and numb our Christian lives.

So, brothers and sisters, this theme is all over the scriptures. Let's turn our attention to Psalm 30, though, for a moment. And he, the warning of this psalm, as God, through his servant David, is teaching us about the dangers of prosperity.

[11 : 12] The psalm has two parts to it, what I've called David's theme and David's testimony. David's theme is in verses 1 to 5. First of all, he opens the psalm by talking about his personal determination to praise the Lord.

I will extol you, O Lord, for you have drawn me up and have not let my foes rejoice over me. O Lord, my God, I cry to you for help and you have healed me.

O Lord, you have brought up my soul from Sheol. You restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit. So, David wants to praise the Lord, extol him, or it means lift him up, raise him up, elevate him, you know, like you might put something on a pedestal so that everyone can see how wonderful it is.

David wants to tell everybody about Yahweh, about his God, the Lord. He wants all the world to see the Lord. Why? Because Yahweh has rescued him.

In verse 1, he says, for you have drawn me up. Now, this word, drawn me up, usually has to do with water. It's about drawing someone up from a, like drawing up water from a well.

[12 : 23] Or it can be rescuing, it can be about rescuing someone out of water, but it usually has to do with water. And I think it's helpful to realize then that David is talking here about dying.

So, in the ancient world, people thought about the world in roughly four layers. And I think I've got a diagram, Simon. Yeah, thanks. So, roughly these kinds of four layers, something like this.

Now, just to be clear, this is not what the Bible is teaching us that the world is kind of like. It's not talking about the physical structure of the world. It's more like a model for understanding the world.

You know, like when you're in school and you see one of those diagrams of an atom and they have the electrons whizzing around the outside. And then the next year, this is what my schooling seemed like. In year nine, they told you it was like this.

And then year 10, they said, actually, it's not really like that at all. It's like this. And then in year 11, they said, actually, it's not like that at all. Anyway, it's a bit like that. This is a model.

[13 : 23] It's a diagram about understanding the way the world works. So in the ancient world, the model looked like this. In particular, I want you to notice the comment here on the underworld.

The underworld was a watery or dusty prison from which no one returned located beneath the earth.

Right? The earth is sort of like this disk floating above it. And it can only be reached through death. Right? But you see that description? The underworld was viewed as a watery or dusty prison because that's where you go when you die, isn't it?

You go down into the dirt, into the mud. And that's why you see David is so thankful to have been scooped out of the water. Or again, at the end of verse three, David mentions the pit.

Again, a very common word for a well or a cistern. Right? Like the kind of thing that Joseph's brothers chucked him into. He was chucked down into a pit. But of course, wells are kind of deep in the ground.

[14 : 27] They're getting down towards the underworld spaces where it's dark and wet. So if you can imagine, David is describing here being sort of sinking down into the mud and the mire of a well.

What he's really talking about is sinking down into the underworld, into death, into the grave. That's why the pit in verse three is in parallel. Right? In Hebrew poetry, the parallelism is very important.

It's in parallel to the word sheol in the previous line. The pit is the grave or the underworld. Now, we don't know why David was feeling so close to death at this stage in his life as he was writing this psalm.

Might be that he was gravely ill or under attack. He mentions foes in verse one. Then he mentions getting healed in verse two. So maybe it was both. Either way, having been rescued from death, the sort of headline theme of this psalm is that David wants to extol the Lord.

David's theme in this psalm is he wants to personally praise the Lord. And then in verses four and five, he turns to instruct the rest of us, to call the rest of us together.

[15 : 34] So I've called this section David's prophetic instruction. David wants us to join him in singing praises to Yahweh. Of course, that's why he was such a prolific songwriter.

He wants God's people to sing his praises. And notice here in particular, he draws attention to the lopsided character of God, if I can put it that way. That his anger lasts for a moment, but his favor lasts for a lifetime.

And again, this is a theme that we see across the scriptures. Probably most famously in Exodus chapter 34, when God reveals his name to Moses, remember, he passes by Moses, the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, the Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, the numbers here are important, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children to the third and fourth generation.

So on the one hand, his love is for thousands, forgiveness for thousands. On the other hand, he won't let people go guilty, but that's to the third and fourth generation. Or what about Isaiah chapter 54?

After the Babylonian exile, God says to his people, for a brief moment I deserted you, but with great compassion I will gather you. Hear that?

[17 : 04] They sinned against him, they ignored him, they rebelled against him for hundreds of years. For a brief moment he deserted them, he punished them, he gave them, he had every right to do so, to give them up to their enemies.

We live in a society that likes to downplay God's judgment, so it is important to be clear and emphatic about it. But we mustn't forget this perfect imbalance in God that he loves to love and that he's a reluctant judge.

And again, just because this theme is so prevalent across the scriptures, listen to Hosea chapter 11. This is one of the most marvelous passages.

God says, how can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Adma? How can I treat you like Zeboim? My heart recoils within me.

My compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my burning anger. I will not again destroy Ephraim. For I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst and I will not come in wrath.

[18 : 13] See what our God is like. And notice the slightly surprising logic of the Hosea passage. See, my guess is that you might think that because God is God and not a man, because he is holy and pure and righteous, that he would be full of wrath and vengeance.

But actually, it's just the opposite he says. He says, you people, you are so quick to fly off the handle. You are so quick to judge. People are so easily angered.

And we write off our enemies. But God is not like that. Because of God's holiness, that is because of his differentness, his otherness, he can't bear the thought of giving Israel up to her sins.

He's just got too much compassion in his heart. He's growing warm and tender. He loves to love her. And isn't this just exactly what we see when God is fully revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ?

When he has compassion on the crowds and on the sick, when he goes to the cross, he shows us the warm and tender heart of God. So how should we respond?

[19 : 22] David says, sing his praises all you saints. Sing and give thanks to his holy name. Lift him up. Let everybody see him. And be assured that our time in this cursed world, where we are, as it were, blanketed under the wrath of God, be assured that our time here is short.

And it will be far outstretched by an eternity of paradise and singing God's praises and enjoying God's favour. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning. David is describing grief like a lodger.

It's like a guest that stays at your house. A temporary guest that is perhaps not one of our favourite guests. Perhaps grief may stay over at your house for a night.

Maybe grief has been staying at your house lately, I don't know. Might feel miserable for a time. But in the morning you will wake up to joy and that old wretched lodger will be gone.

So hold on to hope during the night. Keep praising the Lord. Which brings us back to verse 6 and our key word prosperity. And this is where David's story starts, or David's testimony.

- [20 : 37] Having given us his theme, if you like, now David wants to take us back and go through his journey. How did he come to this, his conclusions? How did he become so convinced, so determined to praise the Lord and to call on us to join in?

Well he says it all started with prosperity. As for me, I said in my prosperity, I shall never be moved. See, that's where it all went wrong.

Commenting on this verse, Calvin says, it's as if David had said, when fortune smiled upon me on every side and no danger appeared to occasion fear, my mind sunk as it were into a deep sleep and I flattered myself that my happy condition would continue and that things would always go on in the same course.

This carnal confidence frequently creeps upon the saints when they indulge themselves in their prosperity and so to speak wallow upon their dunghill. Well there you have it.

David began to wallow upon his dunghill and he fell into a deep sleep. He became dreadfully complacent. He forgot about the Lord and his need for him.

- [21 : 52] Just what Moses warned the people would happen. And actually the way David describes himself here is very reminiscent of Psalm 10 where he's describing the wicked person.

So if you've got a Bible with you, just turn back to Psalm 10 because it won't be too far back. And we'll pick it up in verse 4. Look at what David was saying about the wicked person in Psalm 10 in verse 4.

Paul, in the pride of his face, the wicked does not see him. All his thoughts are there is no God.

Does not seek him, sorry. All his thoughts are there is no God. His ways prosper at all times. Your judgments are on high out of his sight. As for all his foes, he puffs at them.

He says in his heart, I shall not be moved. Throughout all generations, I shall not meet adversity. See, the wicked man forgets about God.

- [22 : 57] He flatters himself in his own stability. He doesn't think about tomorrow because every day has followed on, one after the other, after the other, for so many years in comfort, he can't even imagine facing adversity anymore.

more. And tragically, that's what's happened now to David. And again, this is so much like Australia, isn't it? So many years of comfort and security, basically since the Second World War.

We can't imagine years of famine or scarcity. In fact, it's one of those big questions on the world stage at the moment, with threats kind of looming from China or Iran or Russia.

I listen to these political commentators. They're all asking the question, will the Western world wake up, as it were? Will we have enough conviction anymore as a culture to defend our freedoms and values?

We're so used to just living in ease. Well, time will tell, but more importantly, we Christians should be asking ourselves, are we awake to the spiritual threats and the realities that surround us?

- [24 : 05] Or are we slumbering in ease, wallowing on our proverbial dunghills? Have we forgotten who gives us power to get wealth? Who can really secure lasting joy and peace?

See, in Psalm 10, David was talking about the wicked person, but he's talking about the people out there, as it were. In Psalm 30, he's talking about himself. As for me, the ways of the world have a way of rubbing off on us, don't they?

We become atheistic, sort of functionally in our thinking, materialistic in our thinking, not deliberately, not explicitly, but by osmosis, as it were.

So back to Psalm 30. David goes on in verse 7. This is what he'd forgotten. By your favor, O Lord, you made my mountain stand strong. And then you hid your face and I was dismayed.

And so David forgot that he was standing by the grace of God. He forgot that he was only strong because of the Lord's favor. And then in an instant, God hid his face and David's world came crashing down.

[25 : 17] And as I say, we don't really know whether he's talking about enemies maybe being involved or sickness or both. But perhaps you might be able to think of a similar time in your life when in an instant you were just bowled over by tragedy or hardship.

And what David is saying here is that at least for him, this was a moment of fatherly discipline. When suffering comes upon us, it's not always discipline in that sense.

It's not always that you've done something wrong. But David's talking about how God, like a good father, disciplined him, chastised him. Because in his heart, in his spirit, David had grown arrogant and complacent.

And God the Father, in his mercy, disciplined him. For a moment, he's turned his face away. And this leads into verse 8.

In response to God's hiddenness, David lets out a desperate cry. To you, O Lord, I cry, and to the Lord I plead for mercy. What profit is there in my death?

[26 : 21] If I go down to the pit, will the dust praise you? Will it tell of your faithfulness? Hear, O Lord, and be merciful to me. O Lord, be my helper. So we're back to the pit, of course.

This is where David hit rock bottom. And again, friends, I don't know where you're at at the moment. If your life is going fabulously, or if you're really just sort of over it, sick and tired of everything, and every day is a struggle.

But listen to David. The right thing to do when you are desperate, and particularly in the face of death, the right thing to do is to cry out to the Lord. Don't be too proud to beg. We, middle class people, I don't know, don't like to sound too desperate, do we?

We don't like to sound too weak. We don't like to admit we've got problems, and we need help, especially as we get wealthier.

It's much easier to give to charity than to take it. But if we don't take this step, then we'll never get the help we need. We are all spiritual beggars, and we need to cry out in desperation to the Lord.

[27 : 32] It's like men who refuse to go to the doctor, and I am one of these stereotypically foolish men. Right? But the wise person admits when they need help, and goes to the person who can help them.

And God can always help us, and He's always ready and eager to help when we need Him. So remember, and particularly if you need help at the moment in your life, remember how kind and compassionate and good God is.

His anger is but for a moment. His favor lasts for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning. Don't give up just yet if you're struggling and you can't see a way through it.

Do you know, more than anyone else in the Bible, God is described as a helper. God is the very best helper there is. So if you need help, come to Him.

He is always strong enough to help us, smart enough to help us, and He's so full of grace and compassion, He loves to help us. So if you need Him this morning, do come to Him.

[28 : 45] And notice what David wants to do with his life. In verse 9, he says, Will the dust praise you? Will it tell of your faithfulness? In other words, the answer to these questions is no.

I'd say down in the pit, in death there is no hope, there is no singing, there is no praising God. So David wants to live so that he can praise God. Now I think sometimes verses like this might confuse us, because we wonder, isn't David looking forward to life after death?

Isn't he looking forward to praising God in eternity? Maybe you get the sense that there's something almost sub-Christian about this verse. Didn't David believe in the afterlife? But I think, I don't think I put it up there, but just in your heads, if you could return to that image of the cosmology, I think we've conflated two things that shouldn't quite be conflated.

The afterlife and the underworld. The afterlife and the underworld are different things. So we tend to think of death as a moment, death as an event, like if we're living on a timeline, death is kind of a line that cuts across that timeline, isn't it?

We step through from, we step from death, you know, we step from life through death into the afterlife. And after we die, Christians are looking forward to going to be with God in heaven, still alive.

[30 : 14] But in David's vocabulary, you see here, he's not talking about dying as an event per se, he's talking about a space. He's talking about a place. He's talking about the underworld. Sheol, the grave, the pit, the dust.

In the New Testament, the ultimate place that is revealed to us, of course, is called hell. And that's where David wants to be rescued from. He's not talking about being rescued from the afterlife, but from the underworld.

See the difference? So whether in this life or in the afterlife, David wants to praise God in the land of the living. He doesn't want to be allowed to sink down into the mud and the mire or even the fire and brimstone of the underworld.

David wants to tell of God's faithfulness because that's what life is about. That's what brings joy and meaning to our lives as God's creatures. Glorifying and enjoying God forever. Life does not consist in the abundance of your possessions, but in knowing God and his son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

That is life, eternal life, life to the full. So in verse 11, David's cry was heard and we see his dramatic conversion, this glorious turnaround.

[31 : 28] Verse 11, you have turned for me my mourning into dancing. You have loosed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent. Oh Lord, my God, I will give thanks to you forever.

So as the sun wraps up, we see David's transformation from death or at least from being on the brink of death to life and pulsating, colorful, boisterous life.

Right? Mourning is about death. Sackcloth is about death. But David's mourning turns to dancing. And the Lord clothes him with gladness, which is just a lovely image, isn't it?

David is wearing bright and happy clothes. His dancing is, you know, dancing is so full-bodied and exuberant. When you just can't contain your excitement, the funeral fast has become the wedding feast, you see.

Death is so bleak and stiff and cold. Life is full of walking and leaping and praising God. And after who knows how many days, wearing sackcloth and mourning and living one step away from death, finally David feels free.

[32 : 38] And he's ecstatic, elated, he's excited, he's thrilled. And he wants to throw himself into praising God. Although notice that the phraseology in verse 12 is slightly curious, isn't it?

David talks about not throwing himself into singing God's praises, but throwing his glory into singing God's praises. And I'm not sure, but I wonder if you remember back to last week, remember the word glory has to do with the weight of something, right?

It's about its importance or its significance. So I think what David is saying here is something like he wants to pour his whole weight into glorifying God. His weight as a person, as a king, he wants to throw his glory into glorifying God.

And I think actually it's quite natural and fine and good for humans to seek glory. We want to be honored. Romans chapter 2 commends those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory.

Seek for glory and honor and immortality. But again, our search for glory can be dangerous, can't it? Especially when it becomes about stealing glory from God.

[33 : 50] But actually what David's talking about is that our glory is ultimately not for ourselves. What we're supposed to do when we are honored is honor God, is honor the one above us, the one who made us, who sustains us, who cares for us.

The glory of man is for the glory of God. We need to keep pointing people to God, don't we? He is the one to be on the pedestal of our lives.

We are showing people that we are God's image bearers. That we are who we are by the grace of God. Any good thing you might see in us or ascribe to us. Ultimately, the credit must always go to God.

So David's dancing and singing and he's covered in gladness and he's giving all the glory to God. Now let me finish with a couple of reflections on what this means for us.

Two big things, I think. Number one, and I hope this hasn't been too neglected up until now. So forgive my failings on that front. But number one, let's not miss this.

[34 : 54] This psalm is about Jesus. Okay. So many of the psalms follow the same pattern. The same story arc or trajectory if you like. Which basically involves the death or near death of God's king followed by the resurrection of that king.

The rescue and the joy of that king. And this psalm follows that same basic trajectory, doesn't it? It's about pointing us to Jesus. Just as David descended lower and lower to the brink of death, Jesus descended lower and lower to the brink of death.

And then he actually did die. And of course the differences are important. In fact crucial. The reason for David's descent was because of his sin. In his arrogance and complacency, he had forgotten his maker and begun to wallow in his own self-satisfaction.

And he needed to be woken up. Because for Jesus, Jesus came from heaven to earth to deal with our sins. He wasn't being disciplined for some wrong he had committed.

No, he was stepping into our shoes. And into our place to take the punishment for the sins we have all committed. And then just as David was graciously rescued from death and exalted, Jesus too was raised up by God and exalted.

[36 : 10] And just as David wanted to live in order to praise and worship God and to call all the saints to join in, so Jesus is the perfect king. He's the ultimate worshiper who brings glory to the Father.

Right? He died and rose again to give glory to his Father. And even now, as he reigns, what he's doing is calling all the saints to worship with him. To bring glory to the Father.

Do you remember that scene in John chapter 4? He's having a discussion with the Samaritan woman at the well. Jesus talks about how the Father is seeking people to worship him. The Father is seeking people to worship him.

And then Jesus says, my food, my bread, is to do the will of the Father. In other words, he is working to bring worshippers for his Father.

Seeking worshippers for the Father. Jesus rose from the dead to praise God and to call others, to call all of us to praise God with him. So first of all, this psalm tells us about our Lord Jesus.

[37 : 10] It tells us what to expect of our glorious King and the journey he took from heaven to earth, into the pit, and back to life with the Father. You know, every time Jesus says that he must suffer, he must suffer before entering into his glory or something like that.

The little must there is pointing us back to the Psalms and to the other passages in the Old Testament that talk about this descent before glorification.

And secondly, of course, Jesus calls us to choose, Jesus calls us to choose praise over prosperity, just as he did. Now really, in the end, we don't have to make that choice, do we?

It's actually not about praise or prosperity exactly. It's about temporary prosperity versus eternal prosperity. Just as Jesus had to endure the cross before his resurrection, Christians in this life ought to be living cross-shaped lives, not lives of prosperity and ease, carefree comfort and complacency.

No, we are not in the promised land yet, brothers and sisters. We need to set our sights on the heavenly country, not be so obsessed with this lucky country. Don't let comfort and wealth fool us.

[38 : 32] Now, iron ore and beef is not the same as milk and honey. We need to be prayerful people. We need to humble ourselves. We need to be generous people. And when we pray, we should pray for each other and we should pray for our children, not that we will be the wealthiest, healthiest and happiest people in the world, but rather that we will be the most faithful, godly, new creation oriented people.

I often think that, you know, in my own heart, that my longings for my children reveal my true desires, my real theology. Now, I'm willing to sacrifice things because I know that's sort of an important part of the Christian faith.

But I wouldn't want my kids to have to suffer or sacrifice or, you know, serve the Lord too dramatically. I just hope they would live easy lives. We need to pray for ourselves and for our children, not that they will be successful and have easy lives, or that they will be sacrificial, servant-hearted.

We need to pray for our children that they will be sacrificial, servant-hearted, humble, and live God-honoring lives. You know, I heard from Ben Farlat, who's the national director for MTS, just thinking about Mission Minded coming up.

I heard from Ben Farlat, the national director for MTS, he said the biggest stumbling block, the biggest barrier to young men and women doing MTS is their Christian parents.

[40 : 14] Isn't that tragic? A tragic comment. I don't want my children to suffer and sacrifice and, you know, become too fundy or radical, something like that, for the Lord Jesus and his glory.

You know, we want to celebrate Jim Elliot, but I don't want Jim to be my kid. No, we need to pray for each other, that we will not compromise our godliness for present comforts.

That we will not slip into a sleepy sort of Christianity that is really foolish and arrogant and short-term, self-satisfied at wallowing upon our dunghills.

Calvin had a way with words. Let's pray for each other that the praise of God would always be on our hearts and on our lips and our top priority. That God would be captivating our minds.

That Jesus would be our vision. Even when the world around us has completely forgotten about him. Alright, so let's pray now. Loving Father, we pray for this deeply challenging psalm that the warning that David offers here would really strike our hearts and open our eyes and help us to see where we have become complacent and more interested in treasures on earth than treasures in heaven.

[41 : 50] We do pray, Father, that you might be merciful to us, forgive us, change us, and help us to be like our Lord Jesus Christ, following the path of the cross, sacrificial, humble service, trusting you and looking forward to our future in glory and honour in the new creation.

We pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.