

Psalm 33.1-9

1 Shout for joy in the Lord, O you righteous! Praise befits the upright. 2 Give thanks to the Lord with the lyre; make melody to him with the harp of ten strings! 3 Sing to him a new song; play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts. 4 For the word of the Lord is upright, and all his work is done in faithfulness. 5 He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord. 6 By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host. 7 He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap; he puts the deeps in storehouses. 8 Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him! 9 For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.

- Praise does befit the upright!
- We want to acknowledge that the you are faithful
- That you are the one who made the heavens by the word of your mouth.

India Trip Update

Many of you know that I was on a trip to India for the past two weeks and I truly want to give glory to God for an amazing trip! It was a very transformative trip in my life. I have been to many countries in my life but I was not prepared for what I saw, especially in India. Physically and emotionally it was 12 of the most challenging days in my life but simultaneously, without question it was some of the most rewarding and fulfilling days of my life.

Introduction to the Message.

Now I want to share with you some of what I experienced and learned on this trip. And since we are in the Psalms, I thought what better way to share my trip then through the lens of Psalm 33. This is a Psalm of God's sovereignty over the nations and the reason we should praise and hope in him. So turn in your Bibles to this great Psalm and what we can do is read the Psalm in chunks and it breaks down in such a way that I can explain much of what I saw and experienced through the points that the Psalmist makes. And my hope is that this will be more than just a report on an experience but that the experience will illustrate and highlight the deep truths found in this Psalm. In fact, this Psalm really helped me process some of what I saw and heard.

We opened our prayer time through the first 9 verses of this Psalm. Let me explain a little of how this Psalm is structured. The first three verses is a call to praise. The Psalmist is inviting us to join him in praise. He says, Shout! Give Thanks! Sing!

Now perhaps you are not feeling particularly like doing those things. Why should I shout and give thanks and praise. And David gives us three reasons:

Shout to the Lord

- Reason #1: God's Word is Upright
- Reason #2: God's Will Prevails
- Reason #3: God's Gaze Discerns All Therefore we hope in God.

These first 9 verses are declarative in nature which means the Psalmist is simply stating true facts. This is similar to saying, there is gravity on earth and it rains every year and the sun rises every day. David is simply declaring true things about God.

- And the main thing he's declaring is that God's Words are upright. His speech is straight as opposed to crooked which means that what God says comes from the best possible motive. There is no hidden agenda with God. You can always trust that what he says to you is for your good.

And what comes next I think all describes and gives further definition to what it means to be upright. At the end of verse 4 the faithfulness of God is called out. Then In verse 5 our attention is drawn to the righteousness, justice and steadfast love of God. Then we see the power of God in making the created order by a simple word from his mouth. The absolute power, sovereignty and dominion of the Lord.

And David says, because of who God is, praise befits the upright. Which means when we look at what God has done and is doing it is the fitting and proper response to praise him.

So I want to start this India report by praising God and acknowledging God's sovereign orchestration of this trip and what he has been doing in these countries and what he is doing. Based on what the Psalmist is saying here, this is fitting. It is fitting to give credit to the God who arranges all things according to his plan. God loves justice and uprightness. Part of his love of justice and uprightness, part of his desire to is sending missionaries into the world to be a blessing to those who do not experience it.

In verse 8 the Psalmist says, "Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him!" Not just Christians. Everyone. And so God sends missionaries into the world to do this.

I had so many people praying for me and I want to show you some of the evidences of answered prayer on the trip. Even from the first day on the plane.

Maybe 20 minutes before I board the plane I get an email from Tia asking me about a few last minute details. So shoot off this email.

[email from Tia]

As I'm boarding the plane I get bumped up to business class which wasn't so bad and the seat next to me was empty. I thought everyone had boarded and so I was going to snap a picture of the empty seat next to me so that I could gloat about it, when who sits down next to me? This guy.

[Friend photo]

So turns out this guy studied for three years in Bangalore, India, the exact place I am headed. Not only that he is a devout Hindu and so we talked the entire flight about Hinduism and Christianity. We exchanged numbers at the end and he asked to attend our church next time he's in town. It was so helpful for me because I, probably like you, didn't know very much about Hinduism and had never actually talked to a Hindu person in my life. So it was so, so helpful and I was so thankful for the opportunity to share Christ with him.

What an encouraging start to the trip! That really set the tone for everything. I was so encouraged. A little bonus blessing of God was the two empty seats on either side of me and the bonus legroom for the international portion of the trip!

[legroom]

And it's very appropriate I think to look at this part of the trip through what David says next in the next portion of the Psalm.

Shout to the Lord

- Reason #1: God's Word is Upright
- Reason #2: God's Will Prevails

Look at what verses 10 and 11 says:

The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations.

India

Now a little background on how we even got here. Our relationship with pastor Tia began 4 years ago on an Israel trip. I was part of a commissioning service for Tia. Here I'm praying for him as some of the other pastors on our Israel trip lay hands on him.

[prayer for Tia]

And over the years our relationship developed. We supported a few of his students and it seemed like this was the next natural step to go over and visit some of what he was doing. So I did, and I was blown away!

Let's look at India through the lens of the next point the Psalmist makes because these next verses in the Psalm are perfect for considering India and the particular experience I had.

So let's remember the structure here.

Shout to the Lord

- Reason #1: God's Word is Upright
- Reason #2: God's Will Prevails
- Reason #3: God's Gaze Discerns All

He speaks in verses 12-15 of the omniscience of the Lord as he looks down over the people:

"Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage. The Lord looks down from heaven; he sees all the children of man; from where he sits enthroned he looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth, he who fashions the hearts of them all and observes all their deeds (Psalm 33:12-15)."

Here God is pictured as looking down from heaven and observing all the actions of man and observing all their deeds. Now generally speaking that is an amazing thought, but my experience in India added layers of meaning to that. The best word to describe the emotional reaction for a westerner visiting India is chaos.

Here's a little time lapse that gives you an impression of the movements of life. This is pretty much every intersection in the city. The only traffic rule in India is me first.

[time lapse]

India is an amazing country. If homogenous describes China, diversity describes India. India has 22 official languages, one for each state. So each state has it's own official language. In addition to that there are 1650 mother tongues. You drive 20 miles in any direction and you are in an area with a different mother tongue. It's totally wild. So I talked to this little kindergarten kid and found out that in the school system, the instruction is in English, you have to learn Hindi and then the state language as well. And then because there is 1650 mother tongues in India, it's also very likely that the language spoken in your home is different than any of those three languages so most kindergardeners are learning 3-4 languages. So many different people with so many different perspectives.

Speaking of kindergardener, here's what it looks like dropping off your kids for school.

[motophoto]

And to think that God looks down on all the inhabitants of the earth and knows what is going on!

To us this is just chaos but the text says that God looks down on the inhabitants of the earth and he sees them all and observes all their deeds. That's staggering. But there's also something sobering. You know what God sees when he looks down on the inhabitants of the earth. I guarantee you he sees a lot of suffering. So much suffering. And what is the cause of all that suffering? There's an answer: making something other than God your Lord. Now this Psalm says blessed or happy is the nation whose God is the Lord. And of course

unhappy is the nation whose God is not the Lord. Now in the context here, this of course is talking about Israel but there is application to any nation whose God is the Lord. Even though we are drifting quickly from our roots, the United States is clearly a nation that was modeled after Christian principles. The United States is the outworking of the Christian worldview. Soon it will become the outworking of an atheistic worldview. Traveling to India or any other nation whose God is something other than Jesus Christ and you will see many very surprising differences.

Hinduism

Hinduism is by far the majority religion in India at 80% and it has unbelievably depressing effects on it's people.

Hinduism says that all men are born in prison. And we are in this cycle of birth, life, death, rebirth. And the goal is to reach Moksha which is escape from that cycle and become a god. So there is strong belief in this re-incarnation and a sort of pantheism as well.

And so because there is a belief that we are trapped in this cycle suicide is very common. Life is simply not valued. If you die, oh well, you just start over again and try again next time. Also, because the key moment in Hinduism is the very moment of death and what you are doing at that exact moment, many will live very immorally thinking, I will just wait until I get old to consider God.

Much of the Hinduism practiced here in the United States is part of what is known as Krishna-Consciousness. The reason this is appealing to many Americans is because some of the modern gurus have taken some of the teachings of Jesus, especially some of the ideas from the Sermon on the Mount and integrated them into the religion. But Hinduism as it stands as an ancient practice is very evil.

If you study Krishna, he was a very immoral man. He would ride around and steal women's virginity. Even today, many bizzare and ancient customs are still practiced.

There is a horribly tragic tradition whereby parents dedicate their young female children to the temple to work as prostitutes by night and beggars by day. These women are called devdasi's and are given by the parents before they reach adolescents and it's considered a great honor for the parents to do this. Even though it's been banned by several laws in India the practice still continues today. Again an outworking of these people's form of Hinduism.

While I was in India I saw this article in the paper and many more like it. [newspaper]. This is the logical outworking of this man's form of Hinduism.

Cows of course are holy in India and all over you see cows in the streets. Instead of traffic they call it cowfic. And the worship of cows has some very unbelievable implications. While in India, I missed it but, Tia saw it. He saw a lady walking behind a cow and the cow began to urinate and the lady grabbed some of the Urine with her hands and drank some and then poured it over her

head. Why? Because the cow is the God that brings life. This is the logical outworking of the ladies form of Hinduism.

There is a Hindu practice called Sati where when the husband of a woman dies and in Hinduism cremation is the proper way to return the body back into the ongoing cycle. And so during that cremation ceremony it is the wife's responsibility to jump into the fire and be consumed so they can come back together in the next life. This is the logical outworking of this villiages form of Hinduism.

When a person is converted to Christianity, in the radical sects of Hinduism, the family member is killed in what is known as honor killings and many times the governement turns a blind eye. Because it's so common for people to hang themselves, the enraged family members will kill the convert, hang them on a tree and the officials will declare it a suicide. I've seen many of these types of things reported in the Voice of the Martyrs magazine.

Now not all Hindus believe these things and some of them would decry it just like we do, but the point is that this is the logical outworking of the religion. And the Psalmist here looks around and says, blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD. Whose Sovereign is YHWH.

[temple picture]

While we were there we actually visited the Krishna Consciousness temple in Bangladore. This was the temple of the guy I saw on the plane. It was a wild experience. One of the most obvious things about the temple is that the entire thing is setup such that it is very difficult to approach and reach the diety. You have to zig zag back and forth through dozens of gates and around shrines and idols. And then up some more stairs and do it all again. And the message to the worshipper is plain. It is not easy to approach the divine.

When you get to the top, you actually see people worshipping idols in a similar way, I'm sure to the OT. It's very strange. But you see such fervor, such zeal, such dedication, all of them afraid that they will continue to be stuck in prison. They want to escape and so they are working so hard, trying to be so sincere.

Another obvious effect of Hinduism is the cast system. Talk about just crushing someone from the very moment they are born. They have four casts Brauhman being the highest and then the lowest being the untouchables. When you look in the personal ads in the newspaper, they will say something like rich Brauman male looking for educated Brauman female. So it's all about staying in your class. Parents will arrange marriages for their children. Even today 90 percent of marriages are arranged. It's all about class and status. If you are born into these lower classes you are stuck. You can never escape. So these untouchables are on the streets sorting garbage. Nobody talks to them. It's so deeply woven into their identity. It's very sad.

Hinduism favors boy children over girls so it is actually illegal to identify the gender of the baby before birth because so many parents will try to kill their babies if they are girls even though abortion is technically illegal.

[abortion newspaper]

We visited an orphanage while we were there and you will notice a trend in the gender.

[orphanage]

The boy you see here has a serious hearing problem and so that is why he was abandoned. Here was a little girl abandoned because she had down syndrome.

[down syndrome]

You see not all worldviews are created equal.

"Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage.

Poverty

Another thing that Hinduism breeds is poverty. According to Hinduism, the poor are poor because they are born into a class whose job it is to serve the higher class. After all, poverty is a virtue in Hinduism so it's not bad that they are suffering. We shouldn't help them.

Everywhere you go there are people in severe need. Attached to the very house I stayed in was a little lean-to house made of pallets and cinder blocks that someone was living in. The slums were everywhere, people just living under sheets of metal. People dying in the streets. What do you do about all this?

While I was there, I met a man named auto raja and visited his restoration home. Basically this guy lived life on the street and came to Christ and decided to make his life about rescuing people who nobody will care for. And what he did was unbelievable. I won't play the video he showed me because it's honestly way too graphic for this audience. But in that video he is collecting people off the street with festering wounds with hundreds of maggots eating their flesh, bones showing from open wounds, skin and bones from starvation and he collects these people and begins to love them. I want to play just a short clip about his testimony and the ministry he is involved in.

[Auto Raja]

This man is a hero of mine. Truly amazing work he does. Such a humble man and doing what I would consider impossible work.

[Video of home of hope]

We visited his ministry and what you are seeing here are mostly restored people, but on the fringes are people who are dying. Outside of this group of people are people just face down on the concrete some of who died while we were there.

The Psalmist says, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage." Following God as a nation produces much blessing.

I returned thankful for the Christian heritage that we experience, even if for many it is unknowingly.

One of the things that was very humbling is how profoundly thankful they are for the United States.

[lay photo Murry and Louis]

Tia and his wife along with Tia's partner Murry and Louis come from a state in the North called Nagaland. Nagaland is very uniquely Christian. It's something like 90% Christian. But it wasn't always that way. In 1872 Dr Clark sailed from the US to evangelize Northern India. There were 14 tribes in Northern India all of whom hated each other and were headhunters.

[show vest]

But the gospel made a profound impact. And these people came to know Christ. Over and over again they would say we would still be naked and headhunting and without Christ if it wasn't for the United States.

Tia and his wife along with Murray and Louis left their homeland and traveled to Bangalore to start a school to reach other states like his. They are missionaries within their own land. Bangalore is in the second most Christian state with 10% and is friendly toward Christians. So they have started a seminary here to train men to go into other parts of the world and reach people for Christ.

So I was able to teach and his seminary, speak at the graduation.

[photos of sem and grad]

I was so impressed at these students. I had been speaking there for a whole week and it was time to go. And I had a chance to talk to one of the students, the only one whose name I could pronounce, James. I casually asked him how long it takes to get home for you. He lived in Myanmar. He said, "More than a Week." He has to take a train 3 days to northern India and then walk through the jungle for a couple days to cross the border. He can't cross in the normal place because he doesn't have money to pay the corrupt border crossing guards. Then he goes another day by train, then by boat and then by motorscooter and then by foot and finally he is home to his all Buddhist villiage that burnt down his father's house when he became a Christian. That's what he was going home to. Here's this smiling kid whose been listening all week and I find out this is what his life is like. It cost this guy to be both a follower of Christ but also a student at the college. There's a different kind of hunger for Christ from men and women who are in these situations.

As I said the seminary is located in Bagladore, but the real vision of the seminary is to relocate to a very unreached portion of India. They are calling this place the mission. In a place called Halispura which is about 3 hours from Bangalore. They frequently travel to this location and conduct services.

[pic of church]

The church meets in a renovated chicken coup that looks like the dollar store exploded inside. The village here is somewhat of a hub. There are about 250 villages in this area and this is the only church. This area is 99.9% Hindu. There are two pastors that work this area and every day they travel to a different village and preach the gospel and try to teach and instruct the believers. The main pastor was beat and left bleeding and unconscious on the side of the road for preaching to these people and yet he still goes. I've never seen a happier guy in my life. He was just brimming with excitement to see us and was so hospitable. He kept on saying, eat more. The more I give to you the more blessing it is for me.

[polio]

In his home he took in a son of his who was severely affected by Polio. Because he can't walk, he was laying on the floor and someone stepped on him and crushed his Pelvis so he had to have surgery so his whole bottom half was in a cast. He was so sweet but so sad.

And so this is their ministry. So incredibly challenging. The change is from Hinduism to Christianity for these people is slow and hard. It's a massive worldview change. The illiteracy rate here is 90%. But these people are hungry for the gospel. So I got a chance to speak through a translator here and wow, what an experience. Here's a little clip from the worship service.

[worship service clip]

And again, it's hard for us to conceive of the spiritual hunger that these people had. Some of the women who came to the service, got up at 6:00am and walked four hours to make it to a 10:00am service, they sang for 2 hours before we even showed up and they were fasting along the way. We provided a meal for all of them at the conclusion of the service and it was such an amazing experience.

When I finished preaching and the service came to a close, I was suddenly surrounded by people who were wanting prayer.

- Old ladies were asking me to pray for their eyes,
- women were asking me to pray for their abusive, drunk husbands,
- men were asking me to pray that they could find work because they were fired after becoming Christians,
- several people asked me that God would remove the demons that were tormenting them.**

So I just prayed and prayed and prayed for these people for a long, long, long time.

At the very end this precious woman came to me. She had been waiting to talk in private.

[julia photo]

She wanted prayer because two weeks ago she converted to Christianity and she was having family problems. When her husband discovered she converted, he started slashing her with a knife and then took a red hot poker and started burning her arms. On her arms were deep wounds. Then he went off and had an affair with another woman and threatened that if she came back he and his family would kill her. And so she was asking me if she should go back to her husband. Part of her delima was realizing that if she was labeled a divorced women, socially and financially her life was over. She wanted to do the right thing but she was stuck.

What a heartbreaking story. And so we did what little we could do and just prayed for her and helped connect her to the pastors there who could care for them.

[prayer]

Hope in God

This was hard for me to process all of this. But this Psalm helps, doesn't it. Remember where he is going. You might look at the world and say, look at all the pain and suffering. God why don't you do something about it. I don't feel like praising you right now.

Reason #1: God's Words are Upright (vs 1-9) Reason #2: God's Will Prevails (vs 10-11) Reason #3: God's Gaze Discerns All (vs 12-15)

THEREFORE: Hope in God (vs 16-22)

Don't look at what's going on in the world and think this is somehow news to God. His gaze discerns all.

The Lord looks down from heaven; he sees all the children of man; from where he sits enthroned he looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth, he who fashions the hearts of them all and observes all their deeds

It's perhaps new to us, but not God. In this Psalm, the Psalmist reminds us that pain and suffering is caused form the absence of the Lord, not the presence. The presence of the Lord brings healing and hope.

God sees it all. He knows it all. And when people are in these desperate situations, where can they turn? Not to men.

The king is not saved by his great army; a warrior is not delivered by his great strength. The war horse is a false hope for salvation, and by its great might it cannot rescue. Behold, the eye of the

LORD is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love, that he may deliver their soul from death and keep them alive in famine.

The solution to the problems in the world is turning them to the Lord Jesus Christ. He has the answers. He can deliver them from famine. He can rescue them from their plight and the enemies they face. The Psalmist Concludes:

Our soul waits for the LORD; he is our help and our shield. For our heart is glad in him, because we trust in his holy name. Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us, even as we hope in you.

I am so excited for the ways in which we can partner with this ministry in the future. Nobody is helping these guys. They are working on an annual budget of \$12,000. We need to be praying for them. Our financial gifts can go a long ways to help them. They have so much to offer us in what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ when it costs you. I truly am so excited to be a part of a ministry that can give hope to a people that desperately need Jesus Christ.

Refugee

Now this is a perfect time to invite up Carolyn Langley and Ross Economy. These guys have been involved in refugee ministry. One of things I can tell you for certain, is that if there is a refugee here in Boise, there is a reason for it, a serious reason. There are millions of people who would love to come to the US. The application lines are endless. So the ones who make it here have real stories of serious persecution and they need friends. They need the love of Christ.

India is a long way away and I am excited to help in Tia's ministry. What an amazing opportunity. What providence of God to connect us. But you don't have to leave America. You don't have to leave Idaho. You don't even have to drive 5 miles. The opportunities to help are real and so I want to give these guys a few minutes to tell us about what's been going on in their life.

Closing Announcements

- Welcome Visitors
- Technology, Parenting and the Heart.
- Building Update