

Psalm 75

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Preacher: Geoff Hall

[0 : 00] G'day everyone, my name is Geoff. Can I add my welcome to King Lee? It's great to see you here. Be good to turn your Bibles back to Psalm 75, the passage that Ruth read a moment ago.

And hopefully you have an outline that was handed to you on the way in. It should help you to follow along. Shall I pray?

Our Father, we thank you for your word. Thank you that we've just been able to hear it read. Thank you that we've been able to hear you speak. We ask that you would give us your spirit of understanding so that we might know how to respond.

Would you open our hearts and our eyes and our minds so that we know how to put this word into practice in our lives?

Amen. Well, I wonder if you ever suffer pain in order to gain anything. I'm sure that you do. I have an uncommon problem from birth which causes my nose to bleed on occasion.

[1 : 22] I'm sure some of you have seen that before. A couple of years ago, I got a blood clot in my leg. Blood clots are a bit more common.

And they're relatively easy to get rid of. All you need to do is take blood thinners for a while and they go away. And it's as simple as that.

If you've got a blood clot, take thinners. They go away, right? But if you're predisposed to bleeding, blood thinners are actually poison.

Super unfortunate. And so I had to suffer pain to be healed because that's the only way. There's no other way to get rid of it.

I reckon plenty of you have had to suffer pain for gain. I reckon plenty self-inflicted as well. In recent weeks, we've been looking at a few Psalms of Asaph.

[2 : 26] And I'm sure you'll agree that what we've looked at, there has been great pain, hasn't there? We've heard lamenting and pleading God's people on their knees, crying out to him, saying, When God, remember us.

But there's also been comfort, hasn't there? Knowledge in the goodness and character of God, even in what feels like his absence.

On the screen we see, you hold me by my right hand. You guide me with your counsel. And God is my king from long ago. He brings salvation on the earth.

Comfort in the character of God. Well, today after we've heard much lament and pleading, there is finally praise.

Praise for God's timely judgment against the wicked and for the righteous. And what we'll see is through much hardship and pain comes great good and gain.

[3 : 32] The psalm begins with praise in verse 1. Take a look in your Bibles. Verse 1. We praise you, God.

We praise you for your name is near. People tell of your wonderful deeds. It's something that hasn't been heard much before, isn't it? Previously, we heard lots of in the last two psalms, rise up, O God.

Defend your cause. Remember how fools mock all day long. Pleading and desperation were on the lips of the psalmist. But now something has changed.

It's good to remember that this is not a narrative, not retelling a story. But there is a display of emotion, isn't there, within this poetic expression.

And we can see and feel what's gone on in the psalmist's life, in his relationship and his experience with God, where there was desperation and hardship and isolation, in a place where you might expect God to swoop in.

[4 : 44] Now he praises God for something he's done. What is it? God's name is near. People tell of his wonderful deeds.

And what does that mean? Well, it's timely judgment. Have a look at verse 2 and 3. He speaks from God's perspective. You say, I chose the appointed time.

It is I who judge with equity. When the earth and all its people quake, it is I who hold its pillars firm. When God's people have been longing for him to show their enemies what's what?

Well, he finally does. Now I say finally because that's how my small mind works. Even the psalmist was saying how long.

But did you notice what God says? I choose the appointed time. God's judgment is timely, even if we'd sometimes like it right now.

[5 : 53] Relief God. Help God. Now God. No, God says the appointed time. And it's not just a slap on the wrist, is it?

When God comes to judge, it says, the earth and all its people quake. That sounds significant. It makes me wonder if those people that God is judging really knew who they were mocking when their mouths lay claim to heaven.

When they defiled the dwelling place of his name. I wonder if maybe like us sometimes, they thought, where even is God?

Can he see me? Is he watching? Is he there? A bit like me as a kid watching TV after school when I knew I wasn't allowed. And with dad's office in the house.

I mean, if I can't see him, is he even there? This is in the days as well when, I'm showing my age, when turning the TV on and off was with a big loud knob.

[7 : 05] Dad's coming quick. Talk. Was I stupider than these people? Am I these people? Or whoever they are, the focus is on them in the following verses and we see how they hold themselves.

We see how God feels about them and we see what he will do. Have a listen in verse 4. To the arrogant I say, boast no more. And to the wicked, do not lift up your horns.

Do not lift up your horns against heaven. Do not speak so defiantly. Secondly, he warns them because of how they hold themselves before God.

That is, with boasting, with defiance. And he uses a funny phrase to talk about what they do. It's common in the Bible, but it's a little bit weird for us.

Did you notice it? He says, they lift up their horns. Horns often symbolize strength. You can imagine a bull raising its horns before it's going to charge.

[8 : 15] Or maybe in a similar kind of way, it might be like someone puffing out their chest in a challenge or just speaking very highly of themselves. Do you even know how good I am?

The way they speak is in that I'm all that kind of way. You can picture that wannabe tough guy, can't you? Or for me, in my mind, it's usually a schoolboy picking a fight with his neck out.

Oh yeah? You what, mate? You know, don't you? Yeah. Or driving down King Street, perhaps, midnight on Saturday, blasting their horns, maybe literally revving their engines.

Oh yeah, check me out. But as much as we may laugh at this, the people in the psalm, what they're doing, is that a laughing matter? Listen to verse 6.

No one from the east or the west or from the desert can exalt themselves. It's God who judges. He brings one down, He exalts another. God is the one who has the final word.

[9 : 27] No one can exalt themselves before Him. It is not good for them, is it? But it's not all bad news, is it?

Yes, it's true that no one can exalt themselves before God, but some are exalted. Did you notice that? But who is it? Well, it's the righteous.

In this final section, we see all three groups of people and what happens to them, that is God, the righteous, and the wicked. In verse 10, God says, I will cut off the horns of all the wicked, but the horns of the righteous will be lifted up.

But who are the wicked? Who are the righteous? Well, we started with long-awaited praise, didn't we?

Timely praise. And for what? For judgment. judgment. It's funny to think about God being praiseworthy in judgment, isn't it?

[10 : 34] How do you feel about praiseworthy for judgment? judgment. The psalm gives an image of God's judgment in verse 8 in a cup of wine.

Have a look at it. In the hand of the Lord is a cup full of foaming wine mixed with spices. He pours it out and the wicked of the earth drink it down to its very dregs.

It's an odd image. Eerie maybe, even a bit scary. The Lord pours out a cup of foaming wine and the wicked of the earth drink it down.

It kind of has a sense of finality and weight to it. Do you feel that? And when it happens, what does the psalmist do? Did you see?

Forever praise. Verse 9, As for me, I will declare this forever. I will sing praise to the God of Jacob. Why sing praise?

[11 : 34] Because the strength, the power, the horns of the wicked, what? Have been cut off and the righteous will be lifted. What a reason to praise.

The wicked dealt with. Evil destroyed and brought low despite their pride and arrogance. They are cut off.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Excuse me. But there's something niggling at me, sort of poking at my mind in this praise.

What is that? Is this good news for me? We see God as judge, don't we? Finally, timely, with no opponent.

but am I, are we, the righteous? Has he lifted up my horn?

[12 : 41] Like, I don't feel like I'm arrogant. I'm not sure about you, but I don't think I've defiled his dwelling place or anything like that.

I like to think I'm on side with God, don't you? And I don't think I'm just talking myself up. I mean, aren't we?

Like, what are we doing here? What have we been doing for the last 35 minutes? Praising God? We're certainly not like some, that's for sure.

Those who shake their fist at God, you probably know them. Those who mock Jesus on the cross, not like them. But I wonder, even if we aren't like those described here, who set themselves up against God.

There is a sense in which we do or at least have spoken defiantly against God. You see, we're reminded constantly that life in Christ is about more than the boast we make with our mouths.

[13 : 57] It's about our decisions. It's about our character. It's about our life and following in Christ's steps. While I may not be one who arrogantly lifts up my voice to heaven, yeah, whatever God, my sinful nature certainly demonstrates that attitude.

One of arrogance. One of self-reliance. And considering this, especially since I plead for God's help, I beg, how long?

I pray, come Lord Jesus. Well, there was a time when I, when we, were on the wrong side of that timely, praiseworthy judgment.

And isn't it challenging to consider that God in his judgment is just as praiseworthy when I am under the hammer as when someone else is?

How can I praise and long and plead for the judgment of God if I am the one who rightly deserves that judgment?

[15 : 13] well, it's because of the cup in verse 8.

In the Gospels, we hear about Jesus drinking the cup. The cup gets a mention in every gospel, sometimes twice. For example, in Matthew 26, I think there's a slide.

It says, going a little further, he, that is Jesus, felt with his face to the ground and prayed, my Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me yet not as I will but as you will.

Or John 18, Jesus commanded Peter after he'd done something very heroic. Put your sword away. Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?

The way Jesus talks about this cup is so fascinating. He is absolutely resolute in his decision to drink it but he desperately does not want to.

[16 : 17] And I guess it isn't really that surprising. A cup the Lord pours out in judgment on the wicked of all the earth.

Would you? The psalmist praises God for his timely judgment of the wicked who arrogantly defy but only quake in his presence when he comes Jesus, the only righteous one goes to the cross to suffer the punishment of the wicked.

The one who is truly righteous who's never boasted before God but has every right to drinks the cup of God's judgment down to its very dregs.

I wonder if you can remember the last time you said praise God. What a beautiful day it was today. Praise God. I'm finally feeling better.

Praise God. for these reasons and more God is praiseworthy, right? Isn't he? But this judgment shows us more clearly than anything else how praiseworthy God is.

[17 : 35] when the sky goes dark, when Jesus cries out, why have you forsaken me? Then we see the real weight and finality of God's judgment.

In the cross, God at the same time cuts off the horns of the wicked, defeating sin, Satan, and death and raises up the horns of the righteous giving life and victory to those who are in Christ.

We can praise and plead and long for the judgment of God even when we know we deserve it because in his judgment and destruction of all wickedness, Jesus dies instead of us.

Like we saw in the Philippians passage, he humbled himself not simply to humanity but to death even on a cross. yes, I had to suffer pain from a medication in order to be healed but you know that's not that uncommon in medicine.

You might have experience with something similar. It's not that uncommon in other parts of life. Jesus suffered far more pain than we could imagine for a far better gain than we could ever comprehend.

[18 : 59] God. As a result, our sin is destroyed and we who hold on to Jesus will be lifted up with him in eternal life.

Praise God. So what do we do because of this? Well, I hope it's obvious. Praise. praise. But how do we praise?

When the psalm there was lots of praise with words, the psalmist sings praise to God and tells people about him. Well, that's a good starting point, isn't it?

It's worth reflecting on. Do you praise God with words deliberately, thoughtfully? You know, it takes practice to bring praise language into your life and into your responses.

Huh. Isn't God good? What a great help God was today. Oh, thanks God for that.

[20 : 06] What a legend. It sounds funny sometimes, but people notice and he deserves it. I also wonder if like my defiance and the boasting is more than words, maybe my praise is too.

Jesus praises like this. He modelled it when he prayed about drinking the cup, not what I will, but what you will. He knew that the judgment of God was praiseworthy and good, even though it meant God would take away his life.

And so he gave his life in praise to God and he declared to the world that God's judgment is right and good.

God's God. I think this really challenges us because it's very hard to praise God when he doesn't give us what we want, which is like maybe every day.

In a moment we're going to sing a song of praise, a very familiar song, I think quite a fun song, a song which encourages praise of God's name, of his amazing deeds, and which even praises him in suffering and hardship.

[21 : 37] It reminds me of Jesus begging God to take away the cup, but submitting to his will. It challenges me to praise God even if he takes away what I want.

this passage, and I think this song, should remind us of how praiseworthy God is in his timely judgment against wickedness.

I think it would challenge us for the next time we don't get what we want from God, so that even as I plead with God, take this away, or please would you give me whatever it is.

I might also have the strength to say, praise God, isn't he good, for your name is near, and I will sing and declare this forever.

We're going to sing this song together now.