

Psalm 33
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“Shout for joy,” (v 1), “Give thanks to the Lord,” (v 2), and “Sing to him a new song” (v 3). Psalm 33 is a song of praise. Most songs of praise begin with a call to praise the Lord. Then they give us reasons for doing so. The focus of this particular call to praise is on “the word of the Lord:” it’s character, it’s power, and it’s counsel.

First, the psalm emphasizes the praiseworthy quality of the faithfulness of “the word of the Lord.” His word is faithful because He is faithful. “For the word of the Lord is upright, and all his work is done in faithfulness. He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord” (v. 4, 5).

Second, the power of the word of the Lord is emphasized by considering its roll in creation. “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host. He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap; he puts the deeps in storehouses” (v. 6,7).

In response to the display of the Lord’s powerful word in creation, the poet sings: “Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him! For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm” (v. 8, 9).

We can add to the trio of exhortations in verses 1-3 the exhortation to “fear the Lord.”

The third emphasis on “the word of the Lord” is on His counsel. Notice how the “counsel of the nations” is contrasted with the “counsel of the Lord” in the following verses. “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. Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage! (v. 10-12).

The poem moves from the faithfulness of God’s word to the power of His word in creating the world, and then to the counsel of the Lord. The poet elaborates on the Lord’s interaction with the kingdoms of men and the plans they make. “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 his great might it cannot rescue” (v.16, 17).

In v 18, we return to the theme of fearing the Lord—mentioned first in v 8—and to the real source of deliverance. “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.”

Based on the faithfulness of the Lord’s word, His steadfast love, the power of His word and sovereignty, the question of where we place our confidence is obvious. The call of the psalmist is to “shout for joy in the Lord,” “to give thanks to the Lord,” “to sing to him a new song,” “to fear Him,” “to stand in awe,” and to “wait for the Lord.”

The poem ends: “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” (v. 20-22).

We witnessed the rise and the fall of many in last year’s election. The plans of some came to naught, and the hopeful plans of others have been announced. We are to pray for those in positions of power to the end that we might live a peaceful life and that the course of the gospel is not hindered (1 Tim. 2:1-7).

In the past, my attention on Psalm 33 has typically been on v. 6-9. A reading of the entire poem has enhanced my appreciation for its breadth. And, because of last year's election, v. 10-12 seem particularly important. "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. Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage" (v. 10-12)!