

Anglican Church Noosa
HOPE from the Psalms
Psalm 33 and Philippians 3:17-21
March 16, 2025 - Rev'd Chris Johnson

We are in the season of Lent and our theme this year is HOPE. So all of our readings through Lent will have something to say to us about hope. We are being guided by the Hope 25 Study Book which is being used in our Connect Groups. Even if you're not in a Connect Group I encourage you to use it as a daily devotional through Lent.

You can get your copy this morning by talking to Lynda or Priya. The cost is \$15 and you will have a rich spiritual diet leading up to Easter. If you are struggling financially, and many people are at the moment, then we would love you to have a complimentary copy.

So our theme is hope, an absolutely essential ingredient for life.

There is a Peanuts cartoon in which Lucy and Linus are sitting in front of the television when she says to Linus, "Go get me a glass of water." Linus looks surprised and replies, "Why should I do anything for you? You never do anything for me."

Lucy replies, "I will bake you a birthday cake on your 100th birthday."

So Linus gets up, heads for the kitchen, and says, "Life is more pleasant when you have something to look forward to."

Psalm 33 is a Psalm which assures believers, we have a lot of good things to look forward to. It is a Psalm filled with hope. There are a multitude of reasons given here for having a very positive outlook on life.

Let me give you a brief summary before we look more closely into the Psalm.

Psalm 33 begins and ends with worship.

V1 Sing joyfully to the Lord.

V21 In him our hearts rejoice.

That's positive! The Psalm is bookended with joy.

The Psalm speaks of the character of God,

v5 He loves righteousness and justice.

The Psalm speaks of the work of God. He is the great Creator God.

v6 By the word of the Lord the heavens were made.

The psalm speaks of the sovereignty of God. The Nations may think they are powerful but the Lord is sovereign over all.

V10 The Lord foils the plans of the nations.

v16 No king is saved by the size of his army.

God looks out for those who believe in him.

V18 The eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him.

So for all these reasons we have HOPE. We can face the future.

We have something to look forward to.

Let's take a closer look.

V's 1-3 are all about worship. Why should we worship?

Because it is fitting for the upright to praise him. The idea of the upright here is simply those who have a right understanding of who God is and who they are. God is the Creator, we are his creatures. It is fitting we should sing joyfully to him.

You know life works a lot better when you simply acknowledge God is God. When you stop ignoring him, pretending he's not there, thinking that you are the master of your own universe. There is a peace and a hope which is available to all who acknowledge God is God and joyfully sing praise to Him.

The rest of the Psalm gives us so many reasons to worship God and thus find hope.

V's 4, 5 Speak about the character of God. [Read verses.] God is right, true, faithful. He loves righteousness and justice. He shows unfailing love to this world he has made.

All of these qualities of God are of course beautifully displayed in the life of Jesus. It is Jesus' words which are right and true. We've been reading his words in Luke's Gospel recently. His teaching is superb. It shines the righteousness and justice of God into our world. God's unfailing love for his world is seen in Jesus' journey to the cross.

So Jesus reveals the character of God. God has all these marvellous qualities and we are led to worship, to sing joyfully to the Lord, to find hope.

The next reason to worship and have hope is that God is the Creator, v's 6-9. The Bible's monotheism was unique in the ancient world. All of the other civilizations at that time had creation stories that featured multiple gods warring with one another, and out of their battles creating the world. The Genesis account says No! There is one sovereign creator Lord over the whole universe.

V9 God simply speaks *and it comes to be*.

V6 *By the word of the Lord the heavens were made*.

God's word is powerful in creation.

-We should worship God because of the beauty and majesty of his creation.

-We should have hope because there is one sovereign Lord who controls it all.

The pinnacle of God's creation is the human race. God takes a particular interest in the human race. Look at v's 13 to 15. [Read verses]

Did you notice the word 'all' appears in each of those verses. It appears three times.

V13 *The Lord sees all mankind*

V14 *He watches all who live on the earth*

V15 *He forms the hearts of all, and considers everything they do.*

So God doesn't just look down from heaven and see the human race en-mass. He sees every individual, he is concerned for every individual. He comes in judgement or salvation to every individual.

-To every Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist.

-To every communist or capitalist.

-To every billionaire, every poor person.
-To atheists, agnostics and believers.

He watches all. No one is excluded.

The one Creator Redeemer God revealed through Jesus, is the God to which all will have to give an account.

Now sadly, the human race is in rebellion to this idea. The Psalmist looks at it in terms of the nations. The nations don't want to acknowledge God. They want to be masters of their own destiny. They plot and plan, and jostle for position in status and power. Such is the history of our world.

But they forget that they are answerable to God. They act as if there is no God watching, that power makes right, and if they have the power and can get away with it, Go for it!

But the psalmist assures us in v10 *The Lord foils the plans of the nations; He thwarts the purposes of the peoples. V16,17 No king is saved by the size of his army; No warrior escapes by his great strength. A horse is a vain hope for deliverance; despite all its great strength, it cannot save.*

This of course is talking about military might. This is where human power resides.

But the creator redeemer God of the Psalm is so much more powerful, and while that power is often hidden from view in the historical events of our world; in the end it is God's will which will prevail. V11 *But the plans of the Lord stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.*

It is the nations and the individuals who align themselves with the purpose of God's heart who in the end will prevail. V12 *Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people he chose for his inheritance.*

The nation is blessed but so are individuals.

V18 & 19 say that those who fear the Lord,

those whose hope is in his unfailing love, will be delivered from death and kept alive in a time of famine.

So we have hope.

And the last three verses of the Psalm speak powerfully of this hope.

These verses speak of a hope which is patient, confident, buoyant, and assured.

V20 Patient, we wait for the Lord

V20b Confident, he is our help and shield

V21 Buoyant, in him our hearts rejoice

V22 Assured, May your unfailing love be with us, Lord

So our hope is in the Lord.

Now I want to apply this Psalm in terms of history. History is full of noble quests.

It is good for Christian people to join these quests and to try and make the world a better place. At the same time we need to hold to a realistic understanding of the fallen human condition. People

will always muck it up! And without the Lord our efforts are in vain. Just when we think we're making progress, the wheels fall off yet again.

In the First World War 17 million people were killed. The level of killing was so enormous that they said this would be the war to end all wars.

21 years later Europe was at war again trying to get rid of the Nazi menace. The earlier hope was dashed.

When the Berlin Wall came down in 1989 it seemed the evils of Russian communism had been overcome. There was an air of optimism in the world.

But in the 2020s it looks like a new iron curtain is going to be built through the middle of Ukraine. The Hope that was there at the end of the 20th century has dissipated.

In Australia we are on the eve of a Federal election. All the political parties and individual candidates will be telling us their policies will give the country a brighter future. In a word they will be offering hope.

I encourage you to get involved in the political process and to support the policies that you think will promote the common good.

-You may get involved at the level of simply casting your vote;

-You may lobby politicians for what you think will be best;

-You may join a political party and promote its policies.

It's good to be involved, however, don't fall for the hype that only one set of policies can solve all our country's problems. Ultimately, we have to put our hope in God and God alone.

-We wait patiently for the Lord.

-We are confident he is our help and shield.

-We are buoyant as our hearts rejoice in Him.

-We are assured that His unfailing love is with us.

I have to say that recently I have been greatly encouraged to hear about numerous people turning to the Lord. I think there is a mood out there where people are seeing the limits of human reason, and realising that if there is an answer, it has to be found in God.

I was talking to a fellow this week from Brisbane who has been attending a number of churches down there looking for a spiritual home. He said he was disillusioned about what is happening in the world and wanted to rediscover his Christian faith.

That is a theme I'm hearing in many quarters. I know there are a number of you in this congregation, that one way or another this is your story. I would like us to be a church where people can come and be comfortable to ask their questions and explore. Where no question is too silly or too hard. And I pray that it is as we read scriptures such as Psalm 33 that we begin to find God's answers to our questions.

One of the most fundamental questions in life is, where do you find hope?

Hope is a basic necessity for life,

as basic as the air we breathe, the food we eat, the shelter we need from the elements.

We all need Hope. Where there is no hope, there is no life. Certainly not the quality of life Jesus talks about. What He calls eternal life.

Sadly, we live in a world that is lacking in hope.

In our society I see people

- Living in quiet desperation,
- Others are living in frustration and angry protest
- And still others living in party mode with their heads in the sand

It's all rather hopeless.

But there is an alternative. Thersing joyfully even in the midst of our messed up world.

Put your hope in the Lord.

Why?

Because of who the Lord is.

[V4] He is right and true, he is faithful in all he does. The Lord loves righteousness and justice.

Put your hope in the Lord because of what the Lord has done. He is the great Creator God. *[V6] By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth.*

Put your hope in the Lord because He is sovereign over the nations *[v10] He foils the plans of the nations, thwarts the purposes of the peoples. It is only the plans of the Lord which stand firm forever.*

So my friends let me conclude as the Psalmist concludes v20 -22

*We wait in hope for the Lord;
he is our help and our shield.
In him our hearts rejoice,
for we trust in his holy name.
May your unfailing love be with us, Lord,
even as we put our hope in you.*