



Series: Our Refuge and Strength

Title: Pray for Justice

Passage: Psalm 33:1-22

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Introduction:

- For the past few weeks, we've been looking at how God is our refuge and strength.
- We began by looking at Psalm 30, and we learned how humbling ourselves, can turn our weeping into joy.
- Then we saw in Psalm 31, how putting our lives in God's hands, even in difficult times, is the safest place to be.
- Then we saw in Psalm 32, how we can rejoice, because our sins are paid for, by the blood of Jesus Christ.
- This morning as we continue in our series, we'll see in Psalm 33, how God desires us to worship to him with joy.
 - Psalm 33, is all about who God is, and how God commands us to worship.
 - We'll see how God helps struggling believers, worship with joy.
 - And we'll see how we can worship with joy, because we were made to worship, because of who God is, and because of the hope we have.



Point 1:

- First, we see in our passage how we can sing with joy, because we were made to worship.
- The Bible commands us to sing with joy.
 - Verse 1 states:
 - **“Shout for joy in the Lord, O you righteous! Praise befits the upright.”** Psalm 33:1
 - Our singing isn’t supposed to be solemn and quiet, but joyful and loud.
 - God desires that we shout with joy, when we worship.
- And this is fitting for believers, because this is why God made us.
 - Verse 1 states, **“Praise befits the upright.”**
 - In other words, it’s not right for God’s people to come into his house, and to close their mouths.
 - It’s not right for God’s people to feel distant from God, and be timid before him.
 - Rather, it’s right for us to worship with joyful shouting.
 - Because we were made to delight in God.
 - We were made to worship God.
 - **“Praise befits the upright.”**
- And one practical way, God helps us worship, is with musical instruments.
 - The Psalmist writes:
 - **“Give thanks to the Lord with the lyre; make melody to him with the harp of ten strings...”** Psalm 33:2-3



- This doesn't mean we can't worship without musical instruments.
 - But musical instruments can help us worship.
 - Music can help open our heart to God's word.
 - That's why before speaking God's word, the prophet Elisha says in 2 Kings 3 verse 15:
 - **“But now bring me a musician. And when the musician played, the hand of the Lord came upon him.”**
 - The Bible isn't saying that music has some magical power.
 - Rather, music can move our hearts to focus on God's word.
 - And when we focus on God's word, our hearts can find joy and strength in God's truth.
- I also love how verse 3 says:
 - **Play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts.** Psalm 33:3
 - God isn't speaking about perfection or performance.
 - Rather, he's speaking about giving our best.
 - An orchestra or band will practice for hours to perform for strangers.
 - And if people will give their best for strangers, it makes sense, that we give God our best.
 - And I'm not only speaking to our musicians, who I know practice very hard.
 - I'm speaking to all of us.
 - I know some of you have more skill in singing than others.
 - But God is commanding all of us to give him our best, to sing from the top of our lungs, as best as we can.



- I heard that Pastor Martin Lloyd Jones, would have his congregation, sing the same song again, if it wasn't robust enough.
- Let's give God our best, when we come before him.
- Not only with musical instruments, but it's by singing a new song, that we can sing joyfully to God.
 - Verse 3 states:
 - **"Sing to him a new song..."** Psalm 3:3
 - To sing to the Lord a new song, doesn't mean we can't sing older songs.
 - Rather, by a new song, the writer is speaking about new testimonies about God.
 - We oftentimes sing these words, "All my life you have been faithful, all my life you have been so, so, good."
 - When I sing those words, I remember different ways God has been good to me.
 - I don't always remember the same testimony of God's goodness.
 - That's what it means to sing a new song.
 - It means to give thanks, for new ways God has shown his mercy.
 - God's mercies are new every morning.
 - So, we can sing joyfully, when we remember new ways, God has been good to us.
- We can sing joyfully, by remembering worship is what God made us to do, with the help of musical instruments, by giving God our best, by giving thanks for new ways God shows mercy, and then finally, by remembering that God is our audience.
 - We're commanded to **"Shout for joy in the Lord."**



- When you come to church, you may think the worship team is performing for you.
 - And that your job is to listen to them sing.
 - But that's not worship.
 - Rather, all of us together, are singing to the Lord.
 - You are the choir.
 - All of you are on the worship team, singing to the Lord.
 - So, let's not come to church, wanting to be entertained, or waiting for an emotional experience, or having a critical heart.
 - Rather, let's come to church, remembering that God is before us, and we are singing to him.
 - Let's remember all that he's done for us.
 - And let's remember that God delights in us, when we sing joyfully to him.
- **“Shout for joy in the Lord, O you righteous! Praise befits the upright. Give thanks to the Lord with the lyre; make melody to him with the harp of ten strings! Sing to him a new song; play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts.” Psalm 33:1-3**
 - We can sing with joy, because we were made to worship.

Point 2:

- Second, we can sing with joy, because of who God is.
- After giving instructions on how to worship, the writer now shows why we can worship with joy.
 - And the way God helps struggling believers, is by showing us, who he is.
 - Almost every verse in this Psalm is about God.



- And by looking at God's character, the Bible leads us from discouragement to joy.
- To begin, the Psalmist speaks about God's goodness.
 - Listen to verses 4 and 5 states:
 - **“For the word of the Lord is upright, and all his work is done in faithfulness. Psalm 33:4**
- When it says that God's word is upright, this means we can trust God's word.
 - He's the King who does what is right.
 - He's the King who fulfills every promise.
- Oftentimes, God's word may lead you to a difficult situation you didn't choose.
 - God's word may lead you to forgive someone, you find it hard to forgive.
 - Or lead you to serve when it's difficult.
 - Or lead you to take a big step of faith, when it doesn't feel safe.
 - But you can trust God's word, because his word his good.
- In the book, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, it speaks about a world called Narnia, that's been overtaken by an evil witch.
 - And Mr. Beaver tells little Lucy who's worried about the evil witch, not to worry, because the great King, Aslan the Lion is going to defeat the evil Queen.
 - And little Lucy gets scared, because Aslan is a lion.
 - And she says to Mr. Beaver.
 - “Then he isn't safe?”
 - And Mr. Beaver replies:



- “Safe?”
- “Don’t you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe?”
- “Course he isn’t safe. But he’s good. He’s the King, I tell you.”
- (Lewis, Chronicles, 217)

- Obeying God’s word isn’t easy.
 - Being upright requires that we walk in ways that’s not always safe in the eyes of the world, but let’s remember, that we can trust God’s word.
 - Because he’s good.
 - He’s not always safe, but he’s good I tell you.
 - He’s the King.

- Not only is God good, he’s also loving.
 - Verse 5 says:
 - **“The earth is full of the steadfast love of the Lord.”**
 - God’s steadfast love refers to God’s commitment to us.
 - It means his love doesn’t change.
 - It means his love isn’t based on our performance.
 - It means God will never leave us.

- Once in a while, I’ll watching a Korean dating show with my wife called, *I Am Solo*.
 - I like the show, because it’s very clean and G rated.
 - And they cast normal people and help them get married.
 - Basically, 6 men and 6 women, spend a week together.
 - And after the week, each person, chooses the person they want to date.
 - And every time I watch the show, I’ll see a guy, who meets a girl on the first day, and he’ll say, “Don’t worry, I’m



- going to stick with you. You're my number one choice and that's not going to change."
- But then the very next day, he'll meet another girl, and he'll change his mind.
 - There always seem to be that one guy, who changes his mind.
- But God's steadfast love means that even when we fail, he never fails us.
 - Even when we aren't faithful, he remains faithful.
 - Even though our sin is deep, his mercy is deeper.
 - The prophet Jeremiah writes:
 - **"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."** Lamentations 3:22-23
 - Our God is abounding in steadfast love.
 - Not only is the Lord good and abounding in steadfast love, we also see in our passage the power of God's word.
 - The Bible says:
 - **"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."** Psalm 33:6-7
 - When I was remodeling my previous home, I had to go to Home Depot multiple times a day.
 - I had to go back and forth, to get the materials I needed.
 - I had to watch countless hours of YouTube tutorials.
 - I had to read multiple manuals.
 - There were times I felt frustrated.



- There were times when the work was really slow.
 - There were times I felt stuck.
- But here, it says that when God spoke, it came to be.
 - God didn't have to go back and forth from Home Depot to create the heavens.
 - He didn't have to watch YouTube tutorials.
 - He didn't have to ask ChatGPT.
 - He just gave the word, and the heavens were made.
 - That's the power of his word.
 - When he spoke, molecules appeared and began to form.
- God's word is closely tied to his work.
 - What God commands, comes into existence.
 - Nothing can stop God's word.
- God's power is also able to bring order in chaos.
 - In the Bible, water can represent chaos.
 - And when the Psalmist writes that God gathers the waters in a heap, and puts the deep in storehouses.
 - He's speaking about God's power to limit chaos, and to bring order.
 - All creation obeys God's command.
 - Every star, every planet, every molecule, every atom, is under the power of God.
 - God brings order to chaos.
 - And everything in this world, is under God's complete authority.
- God's power can create, God's power controls chaos, but even more:



- God's power also brings the counsel of the nations to nothing.
 - Take a look at verses 10 and 11.
 - **"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."** Psalm 33:10-11
 - When the leaders of the nations meet together and make plans for the future.
 - No matter the strength of their military, or the size of their economy.
 - No matter the strength of their resolve.
 - They can only accomplish what God allows them to accomplish.
 - EXPLAIN GOD IN THE COUNSEL ROOM.
 - It's only the counsel of the Lord, that stands forever.
- And in the end, when we look back at the history of world, we'll be able to see how everything was planned by God, for the good of his people, and for the glory of his name.
 - And we know that all that happens is for our good, because of verse 12.
 - **"Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!"** Psalm 33:12
 - God's nation is equal to God's people.
 - It's all of us.
 - And all of history, from creation to the end of time, was so that God could bring his people together.
 - It was so that he could bless us.
 - High officials in the Persian Empire conspired against Daniel.



- But God brought their counsel to nothing and saved Daniel in the lion's den.
- In the book of Esther, Haman conspired against Mordecai, to kill God's people.
- But God saved his people, and judged Haman.
- We don't have to be scared about the rulers of this world.
- Because God brings their plans to nothing.
- And until the end of time, God is continuing to work out his plan, until all his people are gathered together.

- When you feel there's chaos in your life.
 - When you feel the world is against you.
 - Remember that nothing is able to overpower God's word.
 - The power that created the heavens.
 - The power that limits chaos.
 - The power that brings the counsel of the nations to nothing.
 - Is working for you, to strengthen you, to bring salvation, and finally, to bring you home.

- This Psalm shows who God is.
 - And here we see that God is good, he's the King.
 - We see that God is loving, and he'll never forsake his people.
 - And we see that God is powerful, and his power is for you and not against you.
 - And so, we can sing with joy, because of who he is.

Point 3:

- Third, we can sing with joy, because of our future hope.



- The future hope we have is that God will deliver us from death.
- He's going to deliver us from judgment.
- He's going to rescue us from all suffering in this world.
- Take a look at verses 13 to 17:
 - **“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 33:13-15**
 - The Psalmist moves from the counsel of the nations to the thoughts and deeds of each person on earth.
 - Notice how these verses put an emphasis on every single person.
 - All the children of men.
 - All the inhabitants of the earth.
 - He observes all their deeds.
- If your trust is in God, this should be a great comfort for you.
 - God doesn't just look at the nations, he's also watching over every single person, especially his children.
 - He's your help and your shield.
 - That means you don't have to live in fear.
 - You can live in peace, because God, who is good, and loving, and powerful, is watching over you.
- In verses 16 to 17, the Psalmist writes about false hope.
 - **“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.” Psalm 33:16-17**



- He points to the great things people trust in.
- The great army.
- The great strength of the warrior.
- The great might of the horse.
- Sadly, none of these great things are able to save.
- You may not put your trust in an army, or warrior, or horse.
 - But you may put your trust in your ability to plan
 - Or your intellect.
 - Or your talents.
 - Or your retirement plan.
 - Or your career.
 - But none of these are able to save.
 - All these are false hopes.
 - There's only one hope in this world.
 - It's the steadfast love of God.
 - **“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.” Psalm 33:18-19**
- And so, the Lord is asking us today, can you truly say that your hope is in him today?
 - Where is your trust?
 - Put your hope in God, he's your only help and shield.
 - All other ground is sinking sand.
- God will deliver you, but God will also reward you.
 - The Psalmist says that God observes all your deeds.
 - That means:
 - God sees the faithfulness, no one thanks you for.
 - God sees the tears you cry, when no one else is around.



- God sees your heart, when others wrongly judge you.
- He sees all your deeds.
- And the hope we have is that in the future, God will remember your work, and he will reward you for all you've done for him.
- Hebrews 6:10 states:
 - **“For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do.”**
- 1 Corinthians 15:58 state:
 - **“Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.”**
- Matthew 5:11-12 states:
 - **“Blessed are you when others revile you...Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven...”**
- James 1:12 states:
 - **“Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial...he will receive the crown of life...”**
- 1 Peter 5:2-4 states:
 - **“Shepherd the flock of God... and when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.”**
- In this life, we'll face failure.
 - We'll face death.



- We'll face troubles.
 - We'll face sorrow.
 - But we can persevere in good works.
 - We can sing with joy because God sees our deeds, and on that last day, he will reward all those who hope in him.
- You can worship God with joy, because you were made to worship.
 - Because of who God is.
 - And because, of your future hope.

Conclusion:

- This past week, I heard a loud ecstatic shout in our house from my wife.
 - I asked her, "Why did you shout so loud?"
 - You know what she said?
 - She said, "A Korean grocery store is being built by our house."
 - I shared her joy, when she gave me the news.
 - I'm not sure, if a Korean grocery store is really coming.
 - But even the thought, brought joy to my wife.
- We can shout for joy when we get into the college we were hoping to go to.
 - We can shout for joy when our team wins the game.
 - We can shout for joy when our friend gets engaged.
 - We can shout for joy, when a Korean grocery store comes to town.
 - But even more, let's shout for joy to the Lord, because of all that he's done for us.
 - He works good in our lives.



- He shows steadfast love, even when we fail.
 - His power gives us strength, when we feel weak.
 - And he gives us a future hope.
 - Let's shout out loud, and give him praise.
- And if you realize today, that you've been trusting in yourself, and not in God.
 - I invite you to put your trust in Jesus Christ.
 - Because your plans will fail.
 - Your strength will fade.
 - Your health won't last.
 - Your money won't save.
 - But it's only Jesus Christ, who can save you from death.
 - It's only Jesus Christ who can give you new life.
 - And when you come him, you'll be able to worship with joy, because of his steadfast love.
 - You'll be able to see that "There's more mercy in Christ than sin in you..."
 - (Sibbes, Works of Richard Sibbes, 65)
 - You'll be able to say with the Psalmist:
 - **"My soul waits for the Lord; he is my help and my shield. For my heart is glad in him, because I trust in his holy name. Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon me, even as I hope in you."** Psalm 33:20-22