

Reasons for Rejoicing

Psalm 68:1-10

Some days it's easy to exult before God, to be jubilant with joy! Under a beautiful blue sky, anticipating a wonderful lunch, it's easy for us to do what verse three says, to exult before God, to be jubilant with joy!

And David also rejoices in God for the same sorts of reasons. In verses 9-10, he points to the rain that God provides for His people, a precious commodity indeed in a semi-arid climate like that of Ancient Israel. By sending the rain to nourish the earth, and by giving His people the Promised Land in which to live, God is the One Who feeds His flock. In all these ways and so many more, God is the One Who provides for the needy.

And God still provides, even for the most vulnerable members of society. Today, we rejoice that we are surrounded by our family and friends. Today, we celebrate all that our mothers have meant to us and we rejoice with these young ladies whom we have seen grow up and now are looking forward to the next chapter in their lives.

But David reminds us that God blesses even those who do not have such relational riches. In verse five, he rejoices that God is a Father to the fatherless and a protector of widows. He celebrates that God is the One Who settles the solitary in homes, in families. He points out that God provides not just our physical needs, but our relational needs as well.

But that's only the beginning of God's blessings. For in verse six, David says that God is the One Who leads the prisoners to prosperity, and in verses seven and eight, he recalls the greatest example of this – when God led His people out of slavery in Egypt.

And living on this side of the cross, we know that God has freed us from so much more than physical bondage. We know that by taking the punishment due to all our sins on Himself on the cross, Jesus has freed us from the power of sin and death itself. So, yes, let us rejoice! God has given us the blessings of food and family and friends, of life and love and liberty. So as verse 3 says, of course we should exult before God! Of course we should be jubilant with joy!

But did you notice who verse 3 says should do all this rejoicing? The righteous, those who are living in the right sort of relationship with God. And verse 8 points to this same truth more subtly, as it reminds us of something else that happened at the time of the Exodus. Yes, God brought His people out of slavery in Egypt, but not so that they could just live however they pleased. No, that's why David calls God the One of Sinai – God brought His people to that mountain so that He could give them His law. It was at Mt. Sinai that the earthquake of verse 8 occurred – when God came down on top of the mountain to give His people His commandments, to show us what it really means to love Him with all we are and all we have, and to love others as ourselves.

And so even as we rejoice in our liberty, we should never confuse it with license. We should never imagine that Christ freed us from the power of sin only so we can go on living only to please ourselves. Instead, we should remember the God of Sinai, the God Whose enemies will be scattered, the God Whose enemies will melt as wax melts before the fire. We must remember that God not only showed His love and mercy as His people walked through the Red Sea on dry ground. He also showed

His perfect justice as Pharaoh's army drowned at the same spot when the waters rushed back in upon them.

And believe it or not, God's perfect justice is also a reason why God's people should be glad. For no matter how mixed up and messed up our world may be, and no matter how the wicked may persecute God's people, verse 2 reminds us that the wicked will perish. That means that God will not only provide for His people – He will protect His people even from the worst that this world can do.

And how does God do that? Well, even though this Psalm was written about 1000 years before Jesus was born, David understood something about the person and work of Christ. A little later on the in psalm, In verse 18, he predicted Christ's incarnation, His resurrection and His ascension in these words: "You ascended on high, leading a host of captives in your train and receiving gifts among men." In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul reminds us that Christ descended from Heaven to live among us. Then, after His death on the cross, He rose from the dead and ascended into Heaven.

And so, yes, because Christ died, He has freed us from the penalty of death that we all deserve. Because He is seated at the right hand of the Father, He continues to bless His church in all the ways that lead us to rejoice today – with family and friends, with food and fellowship. He continues to protect us from the power of sin and from the persecution of the wicked. He continues to call us to holiness and righteousness, to a more perfect relationship with Him.

So, for all these reasons, and so many more, Jesus Himself is the greatest reason we should be glad, the greatest reason we should exult before God, the greatest reason we should be jubilant with joy. So, let's do what verse 4 says. Let's sing to God, sing praises to his name. Let's lift up a song to him who rides through the deserts; his name is the LORD. Let us exult before him!