

Psalm 146

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[0 : 00] So, joy to be with you this evening. Thanks so much for all the very kind invitation.! Who or what do you put your trust in?

When times are difficult, when there is uncertainty, where do you turn for provision, for hope, for peace, for joy?

It's interesting, I haven't been around for that many general elections, but in general it feels like each time the significance and the seriousness of the election is ever more important.

There's a sense in the culture that if an election does not go the way we want it to, then all will be lost. Slate magazine ran an article looking at the history of the phrase, most important election of our lifetime.

The earliest record they could find was in October 1805. One amusing example of the saying being used was, Greenfield Democrat Sun, a newspaper in Tennessee, reported in 1923 that the most important election in the history of the county will take place, where Green County will vote on resurfacing the roads.

[1 : 47] One campaign manager for Barack Obama said he was regularly called up by Bill Clinton and told, Every presidential election around the world is always a referendum on the future.

Now what Psalm 146 tells us is that that is not true. That governments, politicians, the people, even ourselves, none of us hold the future.

God does. Certainly elections and governments are important. We should care about the state of our nation. We should be praying for our next leader.

But ultimately, God is in control. He rules. He reigns. And ultimately, whoever is in charge, whoever wins the election, isn't ultimately in charge.

And they cannot ultimately do what we most fundamentally need. They cannot save us. God reigns. God rules.

[3 : 02] And he does so with infinite wisdom and goodness. And so we should put our hope and our trust in God. So in Psalm 146, we're going to see three reasons why we should put our trust in God.

God is creator. God is creator. He is creator. He is savior. And he is king. So firstly, God is creator. Let's read verses 5 and 6. Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God, who made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in there.

We worship the God who created the universe, who holds it in his hands. He uttered a word and creation came into being.

Nothing is outside of his control. He sustains it. He is the help that we have. The one who brings us what we need to go on.

[4 : 06] He's the one behind what we need because he has all resources in his hands. He has all power. Colossians 1, we read, not only did he make all things, all things were created through him and for him, but that he is before all things and in him all things hold together.

I've read Economics University and it's often said, how do you summarize economics? It's how to allocate finite resources with infinite ones. God has infinite resources.

Because he creates all things out of nothing. He is infinite. He is eternal. Yet we scramble around looking for help in places where they don't have the power or the resources to give us what we need.

In all things, he's behind us, working together in his wisdom. Now some here, you may just say, well, I don't, I definitely don't, I'm fairly ambivalent about politics.

I don't trust my trust in politicians. I'm not like those people. But don't we end up putting trust in ourselves? I can do this.

[5 : 20] I can make it. I made this happen. But see what God says in Deuteronomy 8. You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers as it is this day.

Our gifts are from God. We are utterly dependent on God. He's the one who gives us the ability to do what we need to do.

Because he's sovereign and overrules all things as creator. We see this in Psalm 127, don't we?

Unless the Lord builds the house, the workers labour in vain.

Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. That's not to say that help in this world is useless or can't do anything.

Or that politicians in elections are unimportant. Rather, we need to trust the Lord. And know that he is the one working behind all things. He is the help behind the help.

[6 : 26] Remember Jesus' words to Pilate. You have no authority but that which is given from above. I very easily forget this. While I see what's going on in the world and I get frustrated.

We need to remember that God is in control. He's sovereign. He's the creator. It's fairly known that anxiety and mental health issues are worse than ever before.

Particularly amongst young people. And I can't help but think our nation's moving away. I know Christians struggle with these things as well.

I can't help but think our nation's moving away from trusting in a sovereign creator hasn't helped. As Spurgeon said, the sovereignty of God is the pillow upon which I lay my head.

The world does not have that pillow. And this also means we can turn to God in prayer. Perhaps a big way our nation's shifted is our lack of trust.

[7 : 35] The fact that we don't turn to God in prayer. Fascinating. Famously, May 1940. Dunkirk. What happens? The nation is called to prayer.

When it seems that all is lost. Fast forward to 2020. And the uncertainty and the chaos of COVID and nothing.

We're placing our trust elsewhere and even told it's too dangerous to worship God. It was not essential. When we have and know a sovereign God, we go to him in prayer.

It's been said the spiritual health of a church can be seen in its prayer. But this isn't just a big national issue. It's for the small issues in our lives too.

Nothing is too big or too small that we can't go to God in prayer for. As one commentator put it, these verses.

[8 : 41] A God who has the wisdom and power to create the universe certainly has the wisdom and power necessary for us to experience well-being in every area of our lives.

If we genuinely believe and know that God is creator and sovereign, then we would surely turn to him in prayer more.

We would go to the one who holds all things in his hands and trust in him. So we can trust God because he is creator. He is sovereign. Secondly, God is savior.

Let's look back at those verses again. Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God. End of verse 6. God is who keeps faith forever, who executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry.

The Lord sets the prisoners free. The Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down. The Lord loves the righteous.

[9 : 47] The Lord watches over the sojourners. He upholds the widow and the fatherless. God, being sovereign and creator, is also savior and redeemer.

Now these words in this passage are strikingly similar to Isaiah 61, which Jesus quotes in Luke 4. It says, As was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day and he stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him.

He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovering of sight of the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

He rolled up a scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon him. And he began to say to them, Today, this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.

[10 : 56] The fulfillment of all that's in this psalm is found in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Jesus' name literally means, Yahweh is salvation.

All of these images in Psalm 146 are pictures which Jesus performed in his earthly ministry. He welcomed the oppressed, he fed the 5,000, he healed the blind.

All these were pictures of the great salvation that Jesus accomplished for us by his death and resurrection and ascension. One thing we always need to remember is that no politician, no mere mortal man, no one we look up to, no one we admire, can do what we most fundamentally need. Our greatest need is salvation, because our greatest problem is our sin. And that's why we put our ultimate hope and trust in Christ, because he is the only one who can deal with that by taking the penalty that was due us, going to the cross in our place, when we deserved death and judgment. He died that we might live, and he did this because he loved us. Whilst we were still sinners, God's shown his love for us, then this might die for us.

[12 : 25] Only Christ could do this. Only he could save us. And so that's why verse 3, put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation.

Instead, we put our trust in the prince of peace, the son of man, in whom there is salvation. There is no other name by which we may be saved.

So whoever wins the leadership election, whoever wins our next general election, whoever wins whatever election, they cannot save us. But God chose us before the foundation of the world to be adopted into his family, to stand before him, holy and blameless.

The Holy Spirit works a miracle in our hearts, opening our eyes, taking out our cold, dead hearts of stone and turning them into hearts of flesh.

He makes us righteous. The righteous ones. The Lord, verse 8, the Lord loves the righteous. The righteous there are his children. That's us that he loves.

[13 : 37] His children that he has bought and that he is sanctifying. And so that puts everything into perspective. When faced with uncertainty and trials, whatever we're going through, we can remember and hold on to the fact that Jesus Christ, the son of God, died for us so that we can stand forgiven.

And so he hasn't given us a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. He has given us a spirit of adoption as sons and daughters by whom we cry, Abba, Father.

And so knowing God as Saviour gives us perspective and a reason to rejoice, to trust in him. And what's important here is that not only has Jesus made us righteous, but by his spirit he empowers us to live holy lives.

And so trusting in God as Saviour is not only knowing our need for a Saviour and trusting in that, but also trusting God that his ways are better and the way he has called us to live is better.

But we would only see that if we know God as Saviour and that he is good. Otherwise, we end up making the same mistake as Eve, doubting the goodness of God, listening to the serpent say, did God really say.

[15 : 03] As Christians, our disobedience can often be because we think whatever choice we're wanting to make will be better than what God has for us. We doubt that God's ways are good.

But when we see God as Saviour and Father who wants the best for us and follow him in light of his love, then we can come to trust him knowing that obedience is good.

We can sing with the psalmist in Psalm 19, the law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.

The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the others. We can only sing that, pray that, if we know that God is good.

whatever situation we're in, we need to trust God that obedience to him will always be right. So whether it's the temptation to lie about something, to cover up, such as at work or in your family, downplaying your faith, hiding what you believe about a particular issue in front of colleagues, or entertaining the idea of dating or marrying a non-Christian because of fear of never marrying, there are a million ways where we can be tempted to be disobedient because in the moment we think it is best.

[16 : 35] But God is good. Trusting and being obedient to him is always the way forward. But we'll only see that if we taste and see that the Lord is good.

Blessed is he who takes refuge in the Lord. Now look at the end of verse 6. The Lord who keeps faith forever. He is faithful.

He will do what he has promised. He won't leave us or abandon us even when we make what seem to be costly decisions out of obedience to him. I can genuinely say the times when I'm the most delighted in Christ are the times when I've been under the most pressure or opposition.

A couple years ago or two years ago I got into a bit of trouble because I said the denomination that I'm a part of should hold on to orthodoxy and drive out false teachers.

Said it with more words and less nuanced. and for whatever reason it got a bit more response than I had or as we'd been expecting.

[17:55] It was for Christian San. and I think on the Sunday it was discussed on BBC Radio 4 at some point. I think I came here which was a blessing.

But basically a fundamentalist figure says the stuff. and it was a really difficult time and lots of criticism lots of opposition from without and from within family saying you shouldn't have said that what you're saying is wrong you're being hateful and lots of pressure and it was in that moment I can genuinely say that I was able to praise God and say he is faithful.

So even in the most difficult times God is faithful he is with us he sustains us. As Jesus says in this world you will have trouble but take heart he has overcome the world.

We have eternal hope that puts everything in perspective as Paul says for this light and momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen for the things that are seen are transient and the things that are unseen are eternal.

In the gospel we have all we need because we have Christ because he is our saviour. He has rescued us he has given us salvation something that no other person can do. Others might say it's only in Christ that there is no condemnation.

[19:54] So yes we need to pursue holy lives. Jesus died he predestined us to be conformed to the image of his son. He died that we may say no to ungodliness but even when we fall and slip up and make mistakes and sin there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Trusting God also means trusting that that we are forgiven that there is grace so we can trust God because he is our sinner he is good.

Finally God is king. Verse 10 the Lord will reign forever. Your God is Zion to all generations.

Christ is ruling and reigning right now and establishing his kingdom. He's already established his kingdom. Nothing can afford his purposes. no matter how big or powerful or influential whatever it is in front of us in our lives God still reigns.

see the contrast with verse 4 when the prince departs he returns to the earth on that very day his plans perish.

[21:17] Even those we read about in the history books and left legacies they still died and became dust. God's plans will never perish.

They will come to pass. He is king of kings and lord of lords. So no matter what any power ruler or authority or government says or promise it is ultimately God who reigns.

That's what we see in this psalm. We see it in Psalm 2. We see it in Romans 13. All authority is his.

Or Philippians 2. God has highly exalted Christ bestowed on him the name that is above every name so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

So one day every knee will bow. even Liz Truss and Rishi Sinai even Joe Biden or Putin or Zelensky or Boris Johnson they will all bow and whoever becomes our next Prime Minister it doesn't change the reality that Christ is King and so they will bow either as sons and daughters or in fear of God's judgment because it will one day come.

[22:52] We see the ultimate destinies for those who do not trust in him and the way of the wicked he brings to Rory at verse 9 but if we know Christ as our Saviour and King as our help verse 4 verse 5 we are blessed we are happy we have joy and peace God is King he rules he reigns he has all power so trust him we've seen three reasons why we should put our trust in God he is creator he is Saviour he is King now just two diagnostic questions for you as we think about do you trust in the Lord you may say we do how do you respond when things are going badly do you get anxious and worried doubt God's control and sovereignty doubt God's goodness perhaps you get frustrated

I know that I can do you turn to God in prayer or try to find a way through it independently in your own strength do you fall into despair as though all is lost do you turn your eyes on the things that are wrong do you forget the rich blessings that he has lavished on us in Christ how do you respond

when things are going badly secondly how do you respond when things are going well do you think it's your own doing that you have achieved things for yourself are you grateful and thankful to God is your happiness in your circumstances or in God do you praise and thank you so two diagnostic questions how do you respond when things are going badly how do you respond when things are going well so how can we trust in God how can we grow in trust firstly we need to meditate on God and who he is on his character know the rich goodness of his character hear his voice in the words of scripture meditate on who he is this psalm itself is glorious has glorious truths about who he is as we read scripture we are hearing

God literally speak to us he is our father secondly repent and pray ask for forgiveness for our lack of trust ask God by his spirit to give us greater faith and trust in him do we turn to God in all circumstances Paul says in the Philippians do not be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be known to God one theologian described prayerlessness as practical atheism turn to God in prayer in the good and the bad i.e. always turn to God in prayer and third and finally praise the Lord this is what we see in this psalm praise the Lord praise the Lord oh my soul I will praise the Lord as long as I live I will sing praises to my God while I have my being notice the resolve I will I will this is the first of the last the five hallelujah psalms at the end of the psalter all of them beginning and ending with praise the Lord hallelujah all of the psalms have been working up to this point of praise just as all of history is working up to this point all of our lives working up to this point praise the Lord hallelujah resolve in the good and the bad as long as we have our being meaning as long as we are alive to sing praises to our God singing praises to God is not only in response to the trust in God but it builds our trust in God praise the Lord oh my soul tell yourself preach to yourself implore yourself to praise and worship

God because that is ultimately what we are made for Charles Ferdinand commenting on these verses and I'll close with this wrote when we praise God let us arouse our innermost self our central life we have but one soul and if it be saved from eternal wrath it is bound to praise its saviour come heart mind thoughts come my whole being my soul my all be all on flame with joyful adoration up my brethren lift up the song praise ye the Lord I shall not live here forever this mortal life will find finish in death but while it lasts I will lord the Lord my God I cannot tell how long or short my life may be but every hour of it shall be given to the praises of my God while I live our love and while I breathe our bless the glorious Jehovah is my God my own God by covenant and by blood relationship in Christ Jesus I have no being apart from my God therefore

[27 : 59] I will not attempt to enjoy my being otherwise than by singing to his honour twice the psalmist says I will we cannot be too firm in the holy resolve to praise God for it is the chief end of our living and being that we should glorify God and enjoy him forever Amen Amen Thank you.