

## Joy Comes with the Morning

Psalm 30

Pastor Jason Van Bommel

### **A Psalm of David. A song at the dedication of the temple.**

**30** *I will extol you, O LORD, for you have drawn me up  
and have not let my foes rejoice over me.*

<sup>2</sup> *O LORD my God, I cried to you for help,  
and you have healed me.*

<sup>3</sup> *O LORD, you have brought up my soul from Sheol;  
you restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit.*

<sup>4</sup> *Sing praises to the LORD, O you his saints,  
and give thanks to his holy name.*

<sup>5</sup> *For his anger is but for a moment,  
and his favor is for a lifetime.*

*Weeping may tarry for the night,  
but joy comes with the morning.*

<sup>6</sup> *As for me, I said in my prosperity,  
“I shall never be moved.”*

<sup>7</sup> *By your favor, O LORD,  
you made my mountain stand strong;  
you hid your face;  
I was dismayed.*

<sup>8</sup> *To you, O LORD, I cry,  
and to the Lord I plead for mercy:*

<sup>9</sup> *“What profit is there in my death,  
if I go down to the pit?*

*Will the dust praise you?  
Will it tell of your faithfulness?*

<sup>10</sup> *Hear, O LORD, and be merciful to me!  
O LORD, be my helper!”*

<sup>11</sup> *You have turned for me my mourning into dancing;  
you have loosed my sackcloth  
and clothed me with gladness,*

<sup>12</sup> *that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent.  
O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever!*

**God’s Pattern: Cross Before Crown**

Have you ever noticed that the best movies and stories are those that plunge the hero into the deepest distress before he or she finally emerges victorious? The stories we love are the ones where Frodo and Sam almost fail a hundred times before they finally get the ring into the fires of Mount Doom, and then only with the help of Gollum, and then they seem to drop dead on the slopes of Doom before being airlifted home by the eagles. Or where Anakin dies saving his son before he can be redeemed and re-join the light side in the afterlife. Or where Harry Potter must die at the hands of Voldemort before he can rise again to defeat the Dark Lord. Or where the super hero seems absolutely beaten and utterly defeated before finally, in despair, figuring out how to defeat the enemy. Or where the sports team is down big late in the game before they make a miraculous comeback to seal the victory.

Whatever your preferred type of story, we all love the story where the underdog comes back to win against overwhelming odds. Why? Well, there's a wonderful reason we love stories like this: It's because they are intentional or unintentional echoes of the Gospel, God's Big Story of how He has rescued His Son, is rescuing His people and will finally rescue all of creation from the oppression and curse of sin and death.

The pattern established in the Bible is that of suffering and sorrow before redemption and joy. We can see this pattern repeated several times in David's life:

He spent years in obscurity, caring for his father's few sheep in the wilderness before he struck down Goliath and became the hero of his people.

He was persecuted by Saul and fleeing for his life for years before Saul's death opened up the way for his ascension to the throne – but even then, it took two and a half years of civil war before he was made the king of all Israel.

He was driven from his throne and palace by the rebellion of his son, Absalom, before he was restored and vindicated.

And finally, in the most likely background to today's psalm, David was judged severely by God for the sin of taking a census of his people and his army before God heard his plea and spared Jerusalem, giving David a place which would become the site for God's Temple in the Holy City.

All of these patterns in David's life, which we see reflected in the psalms, are meant to point us to the final fulfillment of this pattern in the life of Jesus, who had to endure the cross before His glorious resurrection. In our salvation, the cross comes before the crown, suffering before glory, judgment before redemption, humiliation before exaltation, condemnation before salvation.

The title of Psalm 30 indicates that it was written as "A song at the dedication of the Temple." The title has led to some confusion and discussion, because the Hebrew word for "temple" can also mean "house" or "palace," and so scholars have debated whether this was the dedication of David's palace in Jerusalem or the dedication of the piece of property which would become home to the Temple, built

by Solomon after David's death. I think the most likely answer is that this was written at the time that David secured the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite in 2 Samuel 24, the property which would later house the Temple.

2 Samuel 24 tells us the story of an event from the latter years of David, toward the end of his reign. David had defeated all of his enemies and secured his throne. He was planning for the transition of power from himself to Solomon. He was feeling quite secure and confident, and in this confidence he asked Joab to take a census of the people. Now a census itself is not sinful. In fact, God made provisions for how to conduct a census in Exodus 30 and God Himself commanded a census in Numbers.

The problem was that David's census was an arrogant act of self-reliance. He wanted to know how many warriors he had under his command so he could feel secure in his strength. He wanted to take pride in the mighty nation he was passing on to his son. David's heart was so misguided in taking this census that even Joab the commander of the army advised him against it and was afraid to complete it. If you know anything about Joab, you know you've gone pretty far off the rails when Joab is the reasonable voice of restraint.

The prophet Gad brought the word of judgment to David, giving him three options from God: Seven years of famine, six months of fleeing from his enemies or three days of pestilence. David chose the pestilence, preferring to be in the hands of the Lord than at the mercy of his enemies.

The text then says, "*So the LORD sent a pestilence on Israel from the morning until the appointed time. And there died of the people from Dan to Beersheba 70,000 men. And when the angel stretched out his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD relented from the calamity and said to the angel who was working destruction among the people, "It is enough; now stay your hand."* Many Bible scholars believe that "the appointed time" is a reference to the time for evening prayer, and thus the pestilence actually lasted for less than one full day. The Lord deliberately restrained His hand and did not strike Jerusalem.

The text tells us that the angel of the Lord was at the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, just to the north of Jerusalem, when David interceded on behalf of the people, saying, "*Behold, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly. But these sheep, what have they done? Please let your hand be against me and against my father's house.*"

God hears David's prayer and relents, so Gad urges David to go and build an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor. David goes to Araunah –

*And Araunah said, "Why has my lord the king come to his servant?" David said, "To buy the threshing floor from you, in order to build an altar to the LORD, that the plague may be averted from the people." <sup>22</sup> Then Araunah said to David, "Let my lord the king take and offer up what seems good to him. Here are the oxen for the burnt offering and the threshing sledges and the yokes of the oxen for the wood. <sup>23</sup> All this, O king, Araunah gives to the king." And Araunah said to the king, "May the LORD your God accept you." <sup>24</sup> But the king said to Araunah, "No, but I will buy it from you for a*

*price. I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God that cost me nothing.” So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.<sup>25</sup> And David built there an altar to the LORD and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. So the LORD responded to the plea for the land, and the plague was averted from Israel.*

Araunah’s threshing floor was on Mount Moriah, which at the time was just to the north of the city walls of Jerusalem. Solomon would later expand Jerusalem to include Mount Moriah, where he would build the temple. Mount Moriah was the mountain where Abraham had been called to offer Isaac almost 1,000 years earlier, before God intervened and spared Isaac.

David was likely already collecting silver and gold for the future temple, which he wanted to build but which God had told him would be built by his son. So, I believe David’s arrogance, God’s judgment, David’s intercession, God’s mercy in sparing Jerusalem and the securing of the threshing floor as a place for an altar to the Lord and the site of the future Temple are all in the immediate background for Psalm 30.

Now, let’s look at the text itself . . .

#### **A. You Have Drawn Me Up (vv. 1-3)**

*I will extol you, O LORD, for you have drawn me up  
and have not let my foes rejoice over me.*

<sup>2</sup>*O LORD my God, I cried to you for help,  
and you have healed me.*

<sup>3</sup>*O LORD, you have brought up my soul from Sheol;  
you restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit.*

Psalm 30 is a song of joyful and thankful praise to God in the light of a great deliverance from death. The song begins with “*I will extol you, O LORD*” and it ends with “*O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever!*” This is David’s deeply committed resolve to exalt the name of the Lord and give thanks to Him forever.

Why is David so committed to praising God? It is because God has saved him so dramatically. David says that God has drawn him up, using the image of drawing from a well. This is language of merciful condescension, to reach down and pull up from danger. Perhaps David himself had already been struck by the deadly pestilence that was sweeping through Israel, and yet God spared his life, healing him and bringing his life up from the grave.

The language of these opening verses is so powerful and so strong, it makes me think of the resurrection of Jesus. Surely Jesus could have sung these lines even more truly than David, since He was in Sheol and God drew Him up from death and brought Him out of the grave. Jesus was restored to life, brought out from being among those who go down to the pit.

Because of the resurrection of Jesus, the reality of His victory over death, and the promises of God made to all believers, we know that these lines are not only fitting for David and Jesus to sing, but

they're fitting for us as well. No matter what may strike us in this life, God always heals and delivers His own children from death.

Romans 8:10-11 expresses the promise of God this way:

*But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup> If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.*

Every prayer for healing and deliverance for a Christian is always answered, some in a temporary way in this life and all in a permanent and glorious way in the life to come. That's not just some feel-good platitude or wishful thinking. That's the Gospel hope Jesus rose again to give us.

But it's not just about resurrection and healing in the life to come. Paul also says that the resurrection hope and power is at work in us now. He prays that we would understand this in Ephesians 1:16-21 –

*I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, <sup>17</sup> that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, <sup>18</sup> having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, <sup>19</sup> and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might <sup>20</sup> that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, <sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.*

In fact, the reason why David experienced God's deliverance in his life was not because he himself was such a worthy intercessor for the people of Israel. It is also not because he built an altar and sacrificed a couple of oxen on it. No, the real reason is that David, by faith, was united to Christ and all His saving benefits. David's intercession was effective because of Christ's intercession and David's experience of a resurrection-like deliverance came because of Christ's resurrection, which was as much for David as it was for you and me.

### **B. Sing Praises to the Lord (vv. 4-5)**

Then, as David so often does, he reaches out to intentionally include God's people in his song of praise. This is, after all, a song for the dedication of the temple, so it is written for the corporate worship of God's people. David calls on all of God's people:

<sup>4</sup> *Sing praises to the LORD, O you his saints,  
and give thanks to his holy name.*

<sup>5</sup> *For his anger is but for a moment,  
and his favor is for a lifetime.*

*Weeping may tarry for the night,  
but joy comes with the morning.*

All of God's people, no matter what their personal life experiences may be, have reason to sing praises to the Lord and to give thanks to Him. Why? Because His anger is but for a moment and His favor is for a lifetime. Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.

The second half of verse 5 uses the imagery of house guests. Weeping is a house guest who shows up in the evening and may stay all night long, but in the morning, joy comes. Sometimes, the night can seem to last forever, but eventually the sun does break over the eastern horizon, mercifully bringing an end to the weeping and sorrow.

These lines are among the most poignant and poetically beautiful lines in all of Scripture. They also make me think of the resurrection of Jesus, from the perspective of the disciples. Their sorrow lasted from Thursday night when their Master was arrested through Friday afternoon when He hung on the cross in public humiliation and died, to His burial and through the long night of Friday, the long day of Saturday, the long night of Saturday night into Sunday. But as the first rays of light were piercing the eastern horizon, joy was coming, for Jesus had been raised from the dead, and the disciples would soon all be transported from weeping to joy. And the joy that the resurrection of Jesus brings is a joy that never leaves.

### **C. You Hid Your Face (vv. 6-10)**

But it is indeed a joy that comes only after sorrow, as was David's experience. David's sorrows came because of his own foolish and stubborn pride:

<sup>6</sup> *As for me, I said in my prosperity,  
"I shall never be moved."  
<sup>7</sup> By your favor, O LORD,  
you made my mountain stand strong;  
you hid your face;  
I was dismayed.  
  
<sup>8</sup> To you, O LORD, I cry,  
and to the Lord I plead for mercy:  
<sup>9</sup> "What profit is there in my death,  
if I go down to the pit?  
Will the dust praise you?  
Will it tell of your faithfulness?  
<sup>10</sup> Hear, O LORD, and be merciful to me!  
O LORD, be my helper!"*

The prideful boasting of verse 6 is contrasted with the humble reality of verse 7. David presumed that his throne was unshakable, that he would never be moved. He had overcome Saul, the Philistines, the Amalekites, his son's rebellion and much more, and he was now convinced that he was secure. Counting the troops was just a way to reinforce this sense of immovable security.

The truth, as David came to see, was that all of his strength came only from God. It was God's favor and God's favor alone that made David strong, and as soon as God hid His face from David, he was undone, dismayed, ruined.

The language of God hiding His face also makes me think of Jesus, when He hung on the cross and sky grew dark and Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?" When God the Father hid His face, God the Son was dismayed, too, and pleaded for deliverance.

God answered David's cry in verses 8-10 by delivering him from death, as the death from the pestilence was cut short. Jesus went to the grave for us, "*cut off from the land of the living for the sake of my people*" as Isaiah 53 puts it. Yet He did not remain in the grave. As Peter said on the day of Pentecost, "*God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.*" (Acts 2:24, ESV)

We cannot be sure exactly how God will answer our cries for mercy. He has His purposes for His timing. 70,000 people fell under the deadly pestilence. But the God who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead can keep His promises of mercy as surely in death as in life. He will rescue us all from the power of the grave and will have mercy on all of us who are trusting in Jesus Christ for salvation and pleading to God for mercy in Jesus' name.

#### **D. You Have Turned My Mourning into Dancing (vv. 11-12)**

And so David celebrates God's merciful answer of his plea in the closing verses –

<sup>11</sup> *You have turned for me my mourning into dancing;  
you have loosed my sackcloth  
and clothed me with gladness,  
<sup>12</sup> that my glory may sing your praise and not be silent.  
O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever!*

David had earlier used the imagery of houseguests, and now he uses the imagery of clothing. Sackcloth is the harsh clothing of repentance and mourning. When God answers His people's cry for mercy, He takes off the sackcloth of pain, misery and humiliation and replaces these harsh garments with gladness, with mirth and rejoicing.

God's purpose and David's resolve in this great deliverance were the same: to glorify God and give Him thanks forever.

These closing lines make me think of another great clothing exchange, when God graciously removes the filthy garments of our sinfulness and replaces them with the perfect spotless robes of Christ's righteousness. Isaiah 59 tells us that all of our righteous deeds are as filthy rags, but God removes those and clothes us with the righteousness of Christ instead.

If the rags of your futile attempts at self-righteousness have been removed and God has clothed you with the perfection of Jesus, you have every reason to rejoice and to sing praises to God and not be

silent. You have every reason to give thanks to God forever, even if you are in a season when weeping has taken up residence as a houseguest or you feel like you are wearing the sackcloth of sorrow. Your deliverance is secure in the resurrection of Jesus. Your hope will never fail, because of Him!

If you do not know Him, and if you are still clothed in the rags of your self-righteousness, then you need this change. Even if things are going well for you and you are relatively content, if it is the self-satisfaction of self-confidence and self-righteousness, then you are in a dangerous place. You need the mercy of God. You need the perfect righteousness of Christ. You need to cry out to Him in faith.

### **Resurrection Glory!**

It's been said that Christianity is a good news-bad news-good news story. The good news of creation is followed quickly by the bad news of sin and condemnation, which is then followed by the good news of forgiveness and salvation. That is true, of course, wonderfully true!

But the truth is that, for the believer, the bad news of our sin and sorrow and the good news of being forgiven and loved by God both continue together in this life. We know that God loves us and has forgiven us in Christ, but we continue to sin and grieve. The real good news secured for us by the resurrection of Jesus is not just forgiveness but a new creation. The best is yet to come.

Christianity is actually a good news-bad news-good news-gloriously greater news story. Jesus' resurrection has secured for His people a new life in a new creation, free from sin and shame, suffering and sorrow, where the joy that comes in the morning begins a day that never ends. This is our future hope, and it is ours because of Christ Jesus, made secure by His victory!