

*Tell the Truth*

A sermon preached by Dr. John Clayton at Covenant Presbyterian Church of Fort Smith, Arkansas on April 9, 2023.

I will tell of your name to my brothers;  
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you:  
You who fear the LORD, praise him!  
All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him,  
and stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!  
For he has not despised or abhorred  
the affliction of the afflicted,  
and he has not hidden his face from him,  
but has heard, when he cried to him.

From you comes my praise in the great congregation;  
my vows I will perform before those who fear him.  
The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied;  
those who seek him shall praise the LORD!  
May your hearts live forever!

All the ends of the earth shall remember  
and turn to the LORD,  
and all the families of the nations  
shall worship before you.  
For kingship belongs to the LORD,  
and he rules over the nations.

All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship;  
before him shall bow all who go down to the dust,  
even the one who could not keep himself alive.  
Posterity shall serve him;  
it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation;  
they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn,  
that he has done it (Psalm 22:22–31).<sup>1</sup>

The twenty-second psalm is certainly prophetic, telling of Christ's passion, but also didactic, teaching us how to cry out to God in our suffering, through the poetry of David's anguish. It was King David's words that the King of kings quoted, crying out upon the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (22:1). David's cry carried the weight of his agony, but Christ's cry carried the weight of God's wrath. This should not lead us to discount David's suffering,

---

<sup>1</sup> Unless referenced otherwise, all Scripture quotations are from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2001).

## *Tell the Truth*

however, especially knowing, as the apostle Peter puts it, in our trials we “share in Christ’s sufferings” (1 Peter 4:13). But Christ’s suffering, unlike ours, was of atoning significance. He became, the apostle Paul says, “a curse for us” (Gal. 3:13), but also a conduit of righteousness: “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21).

This is the general theme of this psalm, victory succeeds suffering, pointing ultimately to Christ’s suffering and victory. The last words of this psalm are telling: “He has done it”! This is not coincidental. Preaching at Pentecost, Peter said that David actually “foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of Christ” (Acts 2:30-31), which helps us better understand the suffering in the first half of this psalm and the celebration of the second half. When we consider this psalm through the lens of Christ’s cross, we see that David’s greater need is met in the one who also cried out, “forsaken,” and suffered for our sake but was also raised to life that we might have life.

What David foresaw became reality, as Christ suffered, died, and resurrected from the dead. This is the core of Christianity, as Paul summed it up, “I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3-4). That he was raised is key. Apart from the resurrection, Christ’s death, though noble, is of no significance but for historical trivia. As the apostle Paul confessed to the Corinthians, “if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied” (1 Cor. 15:17-19). But, Paul goes on to say, in fact, “Christ has been raised from the dead” (1 Cor. 15:20), a fact he personally witnessed, as well as several thousand others, attested to by the apostles, and confirmed by the Holy Spirit’s presence in all who believe.

We assemble on this Easter Sunday, and every Lord’s Day, in light of this truth. That Christians celebrate the Sabbath on Sunday rests squarely on one historic event: the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And every Sunday that we assemble we are telling ourselves and the world of its significance, to the glory of our resurrected Lord. And it’s a truth worth telling, as the writer of Hebrews says, “For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers saying, I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise” (Heb. 2:10-12).

### **Tell the Truth**

The writer Hebrews, in quoting from the twenty-second psalm, directs us to Christ’s work on our behalf with intent, to tell of the name of the Lord. Actually, the “name” is “the LORD,” as it’s translated in English, or *YHWH*, the four-sacred-lettered name, or *tetragrammaton*, of God’s self-revelation, namely his glory in creation, redemption, and covenantal relation. For David to say, “I will tell of your name to my brothers,” then does not mean they don’t know the LORD or his name. Rather, given what we know of David’s suffering from the first half of this psalm, to

## *Tell the Truth*

“tell” of the LORD’s name connotes the proclaiming of God’s provision. The LORD has heard the prayers of his suffering servant and is faithful to provide what he needs when he needs it. As David says,

For he has not despised or abhorred  
the affliction of the afflicted,  
and he has not hidden his face from him,  
but has heard, when he cried to him (22:24).

The abandonment David felt and the suffering he endured is met with the presence and provision of the Lord.

That David tells his brothers the “name” of “the LORD,” however, is more than a personal testimony of God’s provision. It’s the Lord’s testimony, who he is and what he has done. Who God is and what God has done is not true because you believe it, nor is it conditionally true for you but not for someone else. It’s true because he is truth. We hear this, for example, in Peter’s confession, as he and John stood before the Jewish council and fearlessly told them the truth:

“let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead ... is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:10-12).

Like David before him, Peter tells the name of the Lord, for the name is divinely exalted, the name above every name (Phil 2:9), the name we call upon and are saved (Rom. 10:13), the way, and the truth, and the life (John 14:6). And, this is truth worth telling, to ourselves, our brethren, the world, the truth of salvation in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Tell Your Brother**

In the name of the Lord, David says to the church,

You who fear the LORD, praise him!  
All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him,  
and stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel! (22:23)

He’s not talking to pagans but covenant children, not unbelievers but those “who fear the Lord,” not the wayward but worshipers, to whom he issues a call to worship: “glorify ... stand in awe” of the Lord. To glorify God is to rightly acknowledge in thought, word, and deed God’s greatness, that he is most glorious, and to respond to this truth in worship. When we see and acknowledge God for who he truly is, figuratively speaking, we stand in awe of him. David is in essence saying to the church, what the prophet Isaiah proclaimed from the mountain top: “Behold your God!” (Isa. 40:9).

## *Tell the Truth*

Simply put, that's what worship is, beholding and responding rightly to God. When the children of Israel encountered the visible and audible manifestation of the Lord's presence upon Mount Sinai, they cowered in terror, crying to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die" (Ex. 20:19). But to stand in awe of God is not to cower from him but to behold him with reverence and awe, not flippantly but fearfully, a respectful reverence for the One to whom the seraphim sing continually,

"Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;  
the whole earth is full of his glory!" (Isa. 6:3).

And, as David directs the Old Testament church to stand in awe of God, it is our privilege to do the same, offering to God, as the writer of Hebrews describes it, "acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:28-29).

Of course, we praise the Lord in our personal lives, but we are not islands unto ourselves but stones of the holy temple the Lord is building, his church. And we must understand that our part in it and of it is an integral part of what it means to be a Christian. David comes to praise not in the confines of his closet but in the congregation:

From you comes my praise in the great congregation;  
my vows I will perform before those who fear him.  
The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied;  
those who seek him shall praise the LORD!  
May your hearts live forever! (22:25-26)

He has come to the physical "church," just as we have done today, not to be amused but to adore, praising the Lord, fulfilling what God created us to do, fulfilling what God has called us to do, fulfilling what God promised we will do, glorifying and enjoying him forever. Here we get but a taste of heaven, as the church militant joins the church triumphant in ceaseless praise.

Though afflicted in this life by trial and tribulation, by sadness and sickness, or simply by the consistent reminder of our sinful flesh, in corporate worship we are directed away from self-obsession and to the Lord, as we come to together with the singular purpose of praise. We come not as consumers but worshipers, ready to "eat and be satisfied" on the outward and ordinary means of grace. As the living Word of God is read, sung, and preached, we are nourished, as the Spirit does his active work in and through it. Through the sacrament of baptism, we are sealed and set apart for the Lord, witnessing in it the gospel of grace. And through the sacrament of the Lord's Supper we see the gospel portrayed and then taste that indeed the Lord is good, as he feeds us spiritually upon Christ's body and blood. And every time we assemble in worship, we pray with each other, for each other, even in song, lifting our prayers of adoration and petition as children to our heavenly Father. And through ordinary means of grace worship, we rejoice weekly, over and over again, in the truth of Christ's provision for us, knowing that in him our hearts will live forever.

## **Tell the World**

## *Tell the Truth*

Right worship inevitably flows from corporate worship outward. In fact, that's what evangelism is: Through the gospel of Jesus Christ, fellow-worshippers are welcomed into the church to join in worshipping the Lord. In the sixty-seventh psalm, the psalmist leads the congregation in singing of God's gracious favor upon them, "that [God's] way may be known on earth, [his] saving power among all nations," culminating in universal praise:

Let the peoples praise you, O God;  
let all the peoples praise you! (67:1-3)

Likewise, David says,

All the ends of the earth shall remember  
and turn to the LORD,  
and all the families of the nations  
shall worship before you.  
For kingship belongs to the LORD,  
and he rules over the nations.

To "remember" and "turn to the LORD," is to celebrate and obey. David desires universal praise and faithfulness, on every square inch of planet earth. As a covenant child of God, he certainly remembers God's covenant with Abraham and that through him "all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). The gospel then is a universal call to worship, as the kingdom of God advances not by sword or state but faith.

David says,

All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship;  
before him shall bow all who go down to the dust,  
even the one who could not keep himself alive.  
Posterity shall serve him;  
it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation;  
they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn,  
that he has done it (22:29-31).

The rich in their prosperity and the poor in their poverty will all return to the ground, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. Why then would we waste our living breath on the superfluous, when we were created to worship God? In his book, *We Become What We Worship*, G.K. Beale observes, "People will always reflect something, whether it be God's character or some feature of the world. If people are committed to God, they will become like him; if they are committed to something other than God, they will become like that thing, always spiritually inanimate and empty like the lifeless and vain aspect of creation to which they have committed themselves."

David says, No! Worshipping the Lord is primary; everything else is secondary. He will tell his children, and the next generation, and the next, leaving a gospel legacy even for the unborn, not of how he amused himself to death but how he was saved from death to life in the promise, fulfilled for us in Christ. It's a truth worth telling your brother and the world. What is your life

## *Tell the Truth*

telling? Let the legacy you leave your children and your children's be not all the hand-me-downs of all you consumed (or what consumed you) but what Christ conquered, saying, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20); no longer shall I live for myself but for him who for my sake died and was raised (2 Cor. 5:14-15). Let our lives tell the truth that "he has done it"!

### Prayer of Intercession

Almighty God,  
give us peace, that we may cast away the works of darkness,  
and put upon us the armor of light,  
now in the time of this mortal life  
(in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility);  
that in the last day when he shall come again  
in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead,  
we may rise to the life immortal;  
through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
now and forever.  
Amen.