

Human Folly

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[0 : 00] All right. God, we're thankful here to be before you this evening. God, we recognize your goodness. God, we recognize your perfection. We come recognizing the great love that you have for us.

God, we ask as we gather here this evening that we would be honoring to you. God, we'd be honoring to you with the thoughts that we have, with the songs that we sing. God, with the inclination of our heart that it would be towards you.

And it would be towards proclaiming your goodness. God, it would be towards the advancement of your kingdom. We ask all of this in your name. Amen. Let me read Psalm 53 for us.

The fool says in his heart, there is no God. They are corrupt doing abominable iniquity. And there is none who does good.

God looks down from heaven on the children of man to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. They have all fallen away.

[1 : 02] Together they have become corrupt. There is none who does good, not even one. Have those who work evil no knowledge, who eat up my people as they eat bread, and do not call upon God?

There they are in great terror, where there is no terror. For God scatters the bones of him who encamps against you. You put them to shame, for God has rejected them.

Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion when God restores the fortune of his people. Let Jacob rejoice. Let Israel be glad.

As we look at the psalm, we're going to look at it as a dichotomy in the sense of being an either-or option.

The psalm prevents for us an either-or option. No middle third option. So the two groups that are presented here in the psalm are the opposers of God and the people of God.

[2 : 14] So the opposers of God are described there with this foolish attribute that comes through in verse 1.

They're described as a fool because they say in their heart, there is no God. This is a description that overwhelms who they are.

This belief, this lack of belief in God, this lack of reverence for God. And these opposers of God in verse 1 are also said that there is none who does good. And in verse 3, it goes on to explain that as God inspects them, God finds there is none who does good, not even one.

One of the things we see with the opposers of God in this psalm is that there's no mitigation in God's description. These people are without virtue.

They are people who stand in complete opposition to God. And as we come and look at these people, we are left with the realization that even their seemingly good actions are going to be corrupted by self-interest.

[3 : 33] So I think as we look out upon people who are not part of the people of God, people who oppose God, people who say there is no God in their heart, we want to come and say it's maybe not that bad or there's still some good in them.

There's still something righteous in them that's inclined towards God. We don't want to see them as completely opposing God. But this is how the psalm describes such people.

These ones, the fool who would say there is no God, they are completely without good. They are not even one that's found. And so as we come and think, how do we understand these seemingly good acts that people who are not following God are doing?

As we come and evaluate those, one of the things we can find is that these good acts can be an attractive disguise for a corrupted heart.

So it looks good on the outside, but the motivations within are not God-honored. In fact, the motivations are self-honoring, which speaks to really the fundamental nature, the fundamental problem that humans have is this nature, this inclination towards self-honoring choices rather than decisions that are God-honoring.

[4 : 51] I think an illustration that might be helpful as we think of a con artist who comes and with much kindness and concern and apparent love approaches someone in an effort to build up their confidence.

And then as it comes to find out that the con artist has really done all these good things in an effort to perform sort of a trick or deception upon the person.

And so as we come and think about these opposers of God, what about the good things that they're doing? And we come and ask, where's the heart?

That's the question that we need to ask. It's not what are they doing, but where is the heart? Because the heart is that which will truly guide them. And we also see that these opposers of God, that they are described as eating of God's people as they eat bread.

So there in verse 4, you can see that description of them. And we see that these opposers are those who experience some temporary success. Some things go well. They're feasting on God's people.

[6 : 04] They seem to have some sort of advantage that is taking place there. But ultimately, God will respond to that. We see in verse 5 that God responds with great terror, with great fear that God will put upon these people.

I said we were looking at two opposite things today. We had the opposers of God, but we also have the people of God. And so the second half of the psalm brings up the people of God. And as we come and think about the people of God, I think it's important to know that the people of God are not righteous either.

And we've looked at the flaws of the opposers of God, but the people of God are just as flawed. Deuteronomy chapter 9 is a lengthy description of God's people and specifically how God's people are not righteous.

Let me read part of that passage for you. Just so we can see that the people of God, even though they are the people of God, have no righteousness of their own.

So it's in Deuteronomy chapter 9, verses 6 through 8. Know therefore that the Lord your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness.

[7 : 20] For you are a stubborn people. Remember and do not forget how you provoke the Lord your God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day you came out of the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against the Lord.

Even at Horeb you provoked the Lord to wrath, and the Lord was so angry with you that he was ready to destroy you. So we come and think of the people of God.

That God has chosen them and preferred them, not based on their righteousness, but based on God's choice for them. We will find that the people of God, despite not being righteous, that God will defend his people.

That God will defend them. And we see in verse 5 that God scatters the bones of him who encamps against you. And as we think of God defending his people, I think for us that's an important thing that we can use in our life.

It's the recognition that God will defend us. So often we want to rely upon our own strength, our own power. When people oppose us, when people bring evil upon us, when people bring frustrations upon us.

[8 : 36] Rather than looking to God and saying, God, defend me now. God, take up my case. God, I come before you to implore you. God, be the one who battles for me.

Another thing that we see for the people of God is that God offers hope. And there in verse 6 we see the psalmist as the psalmist reflects upon the forthcoming goodness that God will provide.

There in verse 6 the psalmist says, Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion. So this idea of salvation for Israel.

We come and we find that fulfilled in the work of Jesus. Because God's people, they're not righteous. They need God's help. And there is a salvation that the psalmist look forward to.

It's a salvation that we can look and see that is fulfilled in the work of Jesus. As Jesus comes and lives a perfect life. Is able then to stand on behalf of these unrighteous people.

[9 : 41] And make a way to God. And so when we come and see the psalmist look for the salvation. We know that that salvation for which the psalmist look is ultimately fulfilled in the work of Jesus.

And even as the psalmist had hope in the salvation that was to come. We too on this side of Jesus' work still have a hope. A hope in the fulfillment of Jesus' kingdom.

That was started when he first came. And started with his ministry. But has not reached its culmination. So even now we are filled with hope. As we look forward to the work of Jesus.

And the completion of his kingdom. And all things in creation being brought together. As we've looked today. There's been two groups of people. The opposers of God and the people of God.

There's no middle ground. And there's... We come and think about that. I think that's a hard reality for me to utilize as I interact with people on a daily basis.

[10 : 44] Because I want there to be some middle ground. I want to be able to look at people who oppose God. And recognize, oh look at what they're doing. Or think, you know what?

They're moving closer to God. But there's really no middle ground. There are people who oppose God. And there are the people of God. And without that middle ground.

That I personally would... It's easy to gravitate towards. I would say my experience with people within a church. Is that it's easy for those faithful people of God. To also gravitate toward.

To move away from that. That recognition that God... God looks upon people who without Him. And says these people have a judgment that's coming. A judgment that they don't want.

A judgment that separates them permanently from God. That's what awaits. That's what awaits these people who oppose God. Because in these people who oppose God, there's no righteousness to be found.

[11 : 43] As we think of that recognition. I think it... For me... It provides an urgency towards sharing the good news with people.

An urgency towards evangelism. Recognizing there's opposers and there's people of God. And we want people who are opposing God to become people of God.

And there's nowhere in between. They need to turn towards God. And with this recognition... I think it does bring us about an urgency.

An urgency of the gospel. An urgency of the gospel that goes beyond simply what we think. But an urgency of the gospel. The urgency to share the good news. That goes into the way we live on a daily basis.

And on a daily basis... We have this... Compulsion... To share the good news with people. The people around us. The people that God has put into our path.

[12 : 41] Our neighbors. Our co-workers. Our family. Our friends. The people we meet on the street. The people we meet at a park. The people that our life brings us in contact with.

Do we have an urgency of the gospel for them? As we think of this urgency of the gospel... When we look at an example...

That comes from the scripture. It comes from Jesus. If there was anyone who had an urgency... To tell people about God... It was Jesus. So I'm going to read... A bit of a passage here...

From Matthew chapter 14. It's just an event that takes place in Jesus' life. And what has happened just prior to this... Is that Jesus has learned... Of John the Baptist's death.

So John the Baptist... Who was actually Jesus' cousin... Was a relative. But also it seems to be someone that he knew. Someone that he's close to. And John the Baptist...

[13 : 36] Who seems to have lost his life... And just on a whimsy. And now as Jesus has learned about that... He is trying to withdraw himself from the people.

Obviously experiencing great grief. Let me read for you here... In Matthew chapter 14. It's beginning in 13. And as I'm reading... I want you to think about... The urgency of the gospel.

That we see with Jesus. As he is in a time of great personal grief. Now when Jesus heard this... That being the death of John the Baptist...

He withdrew from there in a boat... To a desolate place by himself. But when the crowds heard it... They followed him... On foot from the towns. When he went ashore...

He saw a great crowd. And he had compassion on them. And healed their sin. Now when it was evening... The disciples came to him and said...

[14 : 31] This is a desolate place. And the day is over now. Send the crowds away... To go into the village... And buy food for themselves. But Jesus said... They need not go away.

You give them something to eat. They said to him... We only have five loaves here... And two fish. He said... Bring them here to me. Then he ordered the crowds...

To sit down on the grass... And take in the five loaves... And the two fish. He looked up to heaven... And said a blessing. And then he broke the loaves... And gave them to the disciples. The disciples gave them to the crowds.

And they all ate... And were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets... And they took up twelve baskets... Full of the broken pieces left over. And those who ate... Were about five thousand men.

Besides... Women and children. You think of Jesus... Just trying to be by himself. A moment of personal greed. And yet he asked compassion...

[15 : 26] For the crowds. And then it comes to a moment... Where even his disciples were like... Jesus just send them away. Jesus had that moment there. A perfectly legitimate moment.

To send the crowds away. Because that's really what he wanted. But Jesus is like... No, we're not sending them away. We will not send them away. Jesus shows great urgency...

To tell people about God. And we likewise... Need to show great urgency... To tell people about God. To tell people the good news... For them...

That comes through the work... Of Jesus Christ. Let me pray for us. God... As we do come before you this evening... We are thankful...

That you have provided your son. You have provided Jesus... As a way that we might have... A relationship with you. God... As we come through this life...

[16 : 22] And the events of this life... God... And the distractions of this life... God... Let not the wonder... Of our salvation... Ever become far from our minds. God... Let us always remember...

The greatness of our God. God... The amazing gift... That you have provided... In singing your son... On our behalf. We ask all of this in your name. Amen. Amen.