



Part Three - January 12, 2020

OPEN

In the hustle and bustle of life it is common for the gaze of our soul to shift from God to our own concerns. How do we ensure that we ponder what our Almighty God is doing...in our lives...our church...our world? This simple chorus suggests one step you can take.

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full, in his wonderful face
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of his glory and grace*

Today we are exploring Psalm 147:1-20 where we see that God is most certainly at work. That being true, it is therefore essential that we learn to lean upon Him.

DIG

In the Septuagint (LXX) this psalm appears as two: [a] verses 1-11 [b] verses 12-20. However, in our English Bibles, we have all twenty verses as one single song of praise. The first verse, in my view, is slightly set apart from the entire psalm. The first words are a familiar phrase to any reader of Biblical worship texts: "Praise the Lord!" Is it an instruction? Or is it an invitation?

Further, this phrase is followed by a **reasoned argument**. Why should we praise God? It is good. It is pleasant and fitting. The rationale is twofold. *First of all*, the act of worship makes sense because of who God is – which will become very evident in the following 19 verses. This truth reflects the call to give ourselves completely to God which is "true and proper worship" (Romans 12:1).

Secondly, the act of worship nurtures the believer's soul. We are sustained by worship. God has promised to "inhabit the praises of His people" (Psalm 22:3). What better place to be than in a posture of praise?

With this in mind, we might assume that the call to praise the Lord is detached from our day to day struggle. That is where Psalm 147 brings us face to face with God's activity. And as we know, this time of the year is all about getting active! Some 26 verbs are used in this passage to assure us that God is **active and alive** – He is equal and superior to the problems that we face.

[1] God is active in restoration - vv. 2-6

The first way in which God is active is in bringing restoration to the broken places of our lives. In verses 2-3 we read that God builds up, gathers, heals, and binds up those who are in need. Verse 6 tells us that whereas God will bring down the wicked, He supports the afflicted. According to the verse 4 God counts and gives names to the stars – which reflects His greatness, power, and understanding.

Author Derek Kidner says of Psalm 147:4-5 that we are "singing the same tune as the prophet". (*Tyndale OT Commentary: Psalms 73-150*, IVP, 1973, 485) He is referring to what we read in Isaiah 40:26-28.

God is actively applying His work of restoration into our lives. Many times, we must take this by faith. Our circumstances tempt us to think that God is unaware or unaffected. But He most certainly knows and acts!

[2] God is active in re-creation - vv. 7-11

Today, there are innumerable opportunities for *recreation*. But what we see in this passage is that God's ability in creation leads to His activity in re-creating.

In verse 7 we are invited/instructed to sing our thanks and praise to God – and to use the lyre/ harp. And what should elicit thanksgiving and praise? It is God's ability in creation. In this way, Psalm 147:7-11 points us to the way that God is bringing re-creation into our lives. Note that the transaction is Holy Spirit produced as we read in Titus 3:5-6, "He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior."

According to verses 8-9 God is active meteorologically, agriculturally, and in husbandry. However, verses 10-11 make it clear that despite the amazing ability He has given to animals (horse) and humans (warrior), God's power is greater. What pleases Him is that we lean upon Him. "The Lord favors (delights in) those who fear Him."

God delights to accomplish His work of recreation in our lives. But much like the fitness advice of Hal and Joanne, we must be active in our response to God. He will produce change as we yield to Him in faith.

[3] God is active in revelation - vv. 12-20

Hmmm...what should I do? What does God want me to decide? This is not an uncommon problem. We may be deeply committed to doing God's will, but we are unsure which way to turn. This can be very a destabilizing experience in our faith journey. If only God would make His will clear!

Psalm 147:12-20 invites us – especially in times of uncertainty – to move past our doubt and believe that we can hear from God. And this begins by approaching Him in confident celebration – see verse 12. In the following verses we are assured that God is actively revealing His will to us.

- *God reveals Himself as Faithful Father* - the psalm writer documents that God fortified and secured Jerusalem – and God also blessed His people with progeny and peace. (vv. 13-14)
- *God reveals Himself as Sovereign Sustainer* - this is seen in the way He has ordained the snow, frost, ice, wind, and water. (vv. 15-18) Consider hoar-frost (“hoar” is from Old English meaning grey). This is a “grayish-white crystalline deposit of frozen water vapor formed in clear still weather.”
- *God reveals Himself as Truth Teller* - God makes known His truth to us – not just in natural revelation – but also by His written Word. Verse 19 celebrates the value of God's words, statutes, ordinances to Israel, whereas other nations have languished for want of them. In Psalm 119:1-8ff there is a powerful testimony of the blessing of keeping God's Word (“statutes” occurs 22 times in Psalm 119).

REFLECT

Last week we talked about developing a heart of reliance upon God. We are urged by Jesus to develop “vigilant dependence.” Read Matthew 26:41 carefully and think about Jesus' invitation for His followers to “watch and pray”.

Haddon Robinson stated, "Prayer is the battle; ministry is gathering the spoils."

Joseph Scriven put it this way in his song lyrics...

*Oh, what peace we often forfeit
Oh, what needless pain we bear
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer*

But for our prayers to reflect “vigilant dependence” we must learn to ponder anew what the Almighty can do. This is what Psalm 147 urges – to have a renewed, powerful pondering of who God is. When this occurs, our prayer life will be transformed.

Listen to the powerful lyrics of Joachim Neander (1650-1680) in his hymn [“Praise To The Lord The Almighty”](#) which reflects truths from Psalm 147.

If we pull out just the “let's adore Him” portions of Psalm 147 we have a little song of worship and praise made from verses 1,5,7,12, and 20b.

*Praise the Lord. How good it is to sing praises
to our God, how pleasant and fitting to praise
Him! Great is our Lord and mighty in power; His
understanding has no limit. Sing to the Lord with
grateful praise; make music to our God on the harp.
Extol the Lord, Jerusalem; praise your
God, Zion. Praise the Lord.*