

Psalm 97

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 12 August 2018

Preacher: Euan Dodds

[0 : 00] Okay, well, if you have your Bible, it would be great to have it open, Psalm 97. I found this Bible on the pew. I don't know if it's the church Bible, but it's on page 603. If you happen to have a Bible that looks a little like this one, and that would be great to have that open before you.

Psalm 97, beginning at verse 1. The Lord reigns, let the earth be glad. Let the distant shores rejoice. Clouds in thick darkness surround him.

Righteousness and justice are the foundations of his throne. Fire goes before him and consumes his foes on every side. His lightning lights up the world.

The earth sees and trembles. The mountains melt like wax before the Lord, before the Lord of all the earth. The heavens proclaim his righteousness and all peoples see his glory.

All who worship images are put to shame. Those who boast in idols worship him, all you gods. Zion hears and rejoices, and the villages of Judah are glad because of your judgments, O Lord.

[1 : 09] For you, O Lord, are the most high over all the earth. You are exalted far above all gods. Let those who love the Lord hate evil, for he guards the lives of his faithful ones and delivers them from the hand of the wicked.

Light is shed upon the righteous and joy on the upright in heart. Rejoice in the Lord, you who are righteous, and praise his holy name.

Let's pray together. O gracious God and Father, we thank you that you are the most high over all the earth.

That the heavens proclaim your righteousness and all peoples will one day see your glory. And as we come now to your word, Lord, we pray that we would have a glimpse of that glory.

You would show us something of the eternal things which are to come. That you would quieten our hearts, you would humble our spirits. And that by your Holy Spirit, you would speak to us and into our lives now.

[2 : 18] That we might see your face. We might love you more. And we might live for that glory. And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, let me thank you again for the invitation to come this morning.

It's always a joy to come to Brunsfield. And when I realized there was a church lunch, my joy increased all the more. And I've invited myself to lunch. And Graham has very kindly accepted that invitation.

And I hope to spend some time with you after. As I mentioned, this psalm was brought home to me in a very vivid way, listening to that song, Let It Rain, by Michael W. Smith.

And it's just a wonderful psalm, isn't it? That speaks of God, our God, who is exalted above all the so-called gods of the world. One of the highlights, I suppose, of the summer, one of the images that will remain with us, is the sight of the French national team driving up the Champs-Élysées in their open-top bus, going up to the Élysées Palace.

The French planes flying overhead with the tricolor. And it was just a wonderful scene, wasn't it? Especially if you're, I suppose, a French football fan. And the French team celebrating their victory in the World Cup, just as well for them.

[3 : 31] Scotland didn't qualify. But they were the champions. They were exalted over all the other teams. And those in France, the people gathered in Paris that day, celebrating their triumph.

But, of course, as they celebrated, there were many who grieved, who mourned, who were disconsolate, people whose nations didn't win, who might have been knocked out in the first round, maybe even the semifinals.

It was a sad day, wasn't it, for many. And that was true in our house. We have a little competition, these events where everybody picks a team, and we follow that team's progress.

My seven-year-old daughter, Anna, picked France. And her dad picked Croatia. And while she was rejoicing, I, of course, was greatly distressed.

But that's what we see in Psalm 97. We see God triumphing, God exalted over all the so-called gods of the earth. And verse 7, those who worship idols being put to shame, sorrow, remorse, that they were on the losing side.

[4 : 35] They picked the wrong team. That's what we want to think about today, the greatness of God over his earth, over all the so-called gods. And to do that, I just want to understand a little bit of the context.

I believe you've been looking at these psalms over the past few weeks, really from Psalm 90 through to Psalm 97 today. And as you've been reading these psalms, you'll have seen certain themes which recur.

There is the idea that God is the creator. He is the king and the ruler of the heavens and the earth. Psalm 95 says this, The Lord is the great God, the great king above all gods.

In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him. This sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land. He is a great king, for he created this world.

And as the creator, he rules this world. Psalm 96 verse 10, Say among the nations, the Lord reigns. The world is firmly established. It cannot be moved. He will judge the peoples with equity.

[5 : 45] And the psalms speak about God as the righteous judge, the one who will draw history to a close, who will right all wrongs. It's Psalm 96. Let the sea resound and everything in it, the world and all who live in it.

Let the rivers clap their hands, the mountains sing for joy. For the Lord comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples with equity.

God is the king. He is the ruler. He is the judge, and the judge who judges in righteousness. Psalm 99 verse 4, The king is mighty. He loves justice.

You have established equity in Jacob. You have done what is just and right. And so our psalm begins by looking at these great themes and saying, verse 1, The Lord reigns.

Let the earth be glad. Let the distant shores rejoice. This is cause for rejoicing, that our God is a king, that he reigns over the whole earth, that he is the one who made it, and he is the one who will one day judge it and root out sin and evil and wickedness.

[6 : 53] And that is rejoicing, isn't it, for us too in our lives. It was lovely to hear our brother Tim's testimony that God is in control.

I remember interreeling once around, ironically, Croatia. That's not why I picked the team. It was just a sheer coincidence. But I was interreeling around once, and I ended up in a Baptist church on Sunday with some Americans, and we went for a lunch, another church lunch.

There seems to be a pattern emerging here. And I was sitting talking to one of them, and I said, well, tell me, brother, what are you doing tomorrow? And he said, well, I work as a policeman for the United Nations, and tomorrow I have to go and arrest an armed war criminal who's locked in a hotel, and he says he's not coming out alive.

And I said, how do you as a Christian approach these situations? And he said to me, my God is bigger than that situation. Now, I don't know what your Monday morning has in store, but Psalm 97 verse 1 tells us that the Lord reigns, and so we can rejoice.

And we can rejoice when there is talk on the news, isn't there, of food and medicine being stockpiled in anticipation of a no-deal Brexit next year. We can rejoice when there is talk of a new Cold War as sanctions bounce back and forth across the Atlantic.

[8 : 13] We can rejoice because, as Psalm 97 verse 10 tells us, that those who love the Lord hate evil, for he guards the lives of his faithful ones and delivers them from the hand of the wicked.

There is a higher throne than all this world has known. The Lord reigns, and so we can rejoice. And what the psalmist does now from verse 2 down to verse 9 is he takes up this idea of the Lord, the righteous judge, coming in judgment, and he portrays for us this very vivid scene.

It's an image we've seen in Psalm 96. It's an image you'll see, I guess, next week in Psalm 98. And in both of those psalms, the image is one of joy. We have this wonderful language, trees of the forest singing for joy.

We have the rivers clapping their hands. And yet in Psalm 97, it is a scene both of joy, but also of terror, as the awesome God is revealed to his world.

We see that, don't we, in the descriptions in verse 2 down to verse 6, these descriptions of natural phenomena. Verse 2, we're told, clouds and thick darkness surround him.

[9 : 28] Though it was a little bit cloudy this morning, wasn't it, when we woke up and there was a bit of a har. I lived next to Arthur's seat and it was obscured by cloud, but he's not talking about a few pleasant little clouds and a little bit of mist.

This is impenetrable cloud, cloud in which you cannot see your hand before your face and thick darkness. And again, he's not talking about a pleasant evening under the stars with your friends looking up and looking at the Milky Way.

He's talking about the kind of darkness those boys in Thailand experienced when for over a week they were in a cave in which there was absolutely no light, complete and utter darkness.

Verse 3, we're told of fire going before him. I was at a wedding last week and it was nice to have these fire pits at night and as you sat down for the reception, you were given a bag of marshmallows.

And I thought, well, that's a rather interesting wedding breakfast, but maybe there's more to come. And my wife explained it was for after the meal and you took them outside and you toasted the marshmallows and it was a lovely thing to do.

[10 : 35] It isn't that kind of fire. This is the awesome fire of God's judgment. This is the fire you see in Greece burning like a wildfire. As lightning lights up the world again, it's impressive lightning, isn't it?

Thunder and lightning, particularly if you're inside on a rainy night. Not so impressive if like a friend of mine, you're in an aeroplane and the lightning begins to strike the wings.

Terrifying, awesome. And the mountains melting like wax before the Lord, before the Lord of all the earth. So we have this scene and it is a terrifying scene of the whole earth convulsing, the whole earth preparing for the arrival of the righteous judge.

And it is an awesome sight. And of course, it brings to mind a scene from earlier in Scripture. If you turn back in your minds to the life of Moses, you remember Moses as he met God in the fire of the bush.

And the Lord used Moses to deliver his people from their enemies in Egypt. And after the Passover, the Lord went before them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

[11 : 51] And the Lord led them through the wilderness. And he brought them to Sinai, to Horeb, the mountain of God. And when he brought them there, the Lord appeared to them in cloud and in fire.

Listen to the description in Exodus chapter 19. Mount Sinai was covered with smoke because the Lord descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace and the whole mountain trembled violently.

As the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him. The Lord descended to the top of Sinai and Moses went to the top of the mountain. When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled in fear and stayed at a distance.

What happened in that scene is that God presenced himself among his people in cloud and in fire and the mountain shook and the lightning struck and it was a terrifying scene.

And they were afraid of the Lord. Afraid of his power. Afraid of his purity. Remembering that righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne.

[13 : 07] He is the holy God and he taught them that he is the only God as he gave them the commandments instructing them to have no gods except him.

We've been singing these wonderful songs this morning, haven't we, about God in his glory, God in his exaltation. Our God is an awesome God. We didn't sing that one but it came into my mind and the psalmist wants us to recognize that our God is an awesome God.

And sometimes, of course, we can forget that in our Christian thinking and perhaps even in our evangelism. As Christians, we have the great joy of being children of the living God through our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we rejoice and speak rightly of the fatherhood of God. And as believers, we know what it means to have friendship with God. Romans chapter 4 speaks about Abraham, the friend of God.

And though once we were enemies, we are now reconciled to God and are friends. We rejoice in the fatherhood of God. We rejoice in our friendship with God but we can perhaps neglect to speak of the fear of God.

[14 : 20] Of course, a former generation spoke of this perhaps too much but we're in danger, I think, of losing this idea of the fear of God. I was reminded of it the other day just in the central library as you go down the stairs to the art library and there's that lovely tiled frieze and it has certain verses from the book of Proverbs and the first quote it has is Proverbs 1 verse 7 the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

Interestingly, apparently that's the motto of Aberdeen University. Well, in our generation we always run the danger, don't we, of forgetting about the fear of God.

Craig Bartholomew, the Bible scholar defines it like this, to fear Yahweh is to sense his power and holiness and yet at the same time to embrace him in love and obedience.

We are in danger of making God as David Wells, the author says, weightless. This is what he writes in his very helpful book No Place for Truth. It is one of the defining marks of our time that God is now weightless.

I do not mean that he is ethereal but rather he has become unimportant. He rests upon the world so inconsequentially as not to be noticeable. He commands less authority than their appetites for affluence and influence.

[15 : 44] He is less interesting than television. His judgments are no more awe-inspiring than the evening news and his truth is less compelling than the advertiser's sweet fog of flattery and lies.

That, says David Wells, is weightless because we have lost the fear of God to sense the power and holiness and yet at the same time to embrace him in love and obedience.

And I find here an analogy with the sea quite helpful. We holidayed at the start of July in Dornach, around Dornach and we had a lovely day at the beach and we took the children down to the sea with the buckets and the spades and we played in the water and we looked at jellyfish and we had a lovely day.

But at the end of that week I visited some friends in Oban and one of the friends had organised a boat trip on a speedboat, a rib. If you're familiar with that sort of boat, I wasn't and I'm not very much familiar with it now actually but it was very fascinating and it was very exciting.

But before we got on it we were given waterproof suits, we were given life jackets, we were given instructions about what we should and shouldn't do and then we sailed out into the Atlantic and the pilot of the ship said we're now going to go and we're going to sail past, sail over, in fact, the third biggest whirlpool in the world, I think it was called the Korovaque Ridge and I questioned in my head whether that was a very good idea but we got there and there was no whirlpool and I breathed a sigh of relief and then he said, well, we'll try and start it ourselves and he circled round and round and created these giant waves and lo and behold the whirlpool appeared.

[17 : 23] But it was quite a different experience, wasn't it? Playing on the beach in Dornoch with the children and then sailing out into the Atlantic and trying to raise a giant whirlpool from the ocean floor.

We love the sea and we play with the sea and we delight in the sea and yet we fear and respect the sea and you don't trifle with the sea, you don't mess around with the Korovaque whirlpool.

And so it is with God, we can fear the Lord, we can sense his power and holiness and yet at the same time embrace him in love and obedience. As Christians, we perhaps take ourselves a little bit too seriously but we can never take God too seriously.

And we need to examine our lives and think, do we manifest the fear of God in our worship? Are we more interested in the screens on our phone than the pages of Scripture?

Do we neglect prayer trusting that everything is by grace and the Lord knows in advance what we need before we ask it and so we forget to pray? Or we leave prayer to the very end of the day when we've done everything that's important to us and we squeeze in a few words before we fall asleep on the pillow?

[18 : 41] Do we make time for the Lord or do we, as one man said to me this week when I invited him to church, I'll come if I have time. Do we wait and see if we get a better invitation on a Sunday morning?

Or do we honour the Lord with the firstfruits of all that we have? It's very easy, isn't it, to forget as we rejoice in the fatherhood of God and the friendship of God to remember the fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom.

But of course when Scripture speaks of the fear of the Lord it doesn't mean that we have confidence to approach God. On the contrary, we are invited into his royal courts.

We are invited to come before this throne of grace. The New Testament says that we come with confidence and with boldness. We come, as the song says, as guests invited.

And we must remember, therefore, when we come to God to pray as we are commanded and invited to do so before whom we come. I enjoy our little time with the children at night before bed and we say our prayers and we just think about things we want to give thanks for and to pray for from the day.

[19 : 56] And it's lovely when young children, our children are primary age and some of the things they pray for are very sweet. They might pray, for example, that their teddy bears will sleep well or after a trip to the zoo they might give thanks for the penguins.

Just sort of little sweet prayers of course, they pray for other things and it's right to encourage them and it's lovely to hear the young voices praying but some of the things they pray well, they bring a smile to my face and I'm sure they bring a smile to the angels in heaven as well.

We must encourage them in all of their prayers. But I suppose the problem is when a child becomes an adult and when the mature Christian gets down to pray, whether our prayers are of the same type, whether we're just so concerned with small things in close proximity to our lives, Lord, help me get a parking space when I go shopping.

Help me to recover from this cold before the weekend. May we have good weather on our family holiday. I trust the interview goes well, that the kitchen engineer will come and repair the washing machine quickly.

I mean, these are nice prayers, they're important prayers, they're prayers that perhaps we should pray but if that's the end of your prayer life, then there's an issue. If all we are praying for as the Lord will help us in our daily lives, it's right for that that may be the beginning of our prayer lives but not the end.

[21 : 16] John Newton in his, one of his hymns says this, you are coming to a king, great petitions with you. Bring, we need to be ambitious for Christ in our generation and in our prayer lives.

There is nothing the Lord cannot do, there is no one he cannot reach by his grace. On Friday, I had lunch with an American who works for an international mission organization and he told me of a story.

They were given a house on an island in New York State. It was a Christian couple and when they passed away, they left the house in the will to this Christian organization and it's a beautiful island and they run a Bible college there but it was just spoiled because as you got on the island, there was a big inn where wealthy New York residents would come at the weekend and there would be drunkenness and all kinds of misbehavior.

And you'd be sitting in the Bible college and you'd see this and you'd hear this and the people there running the Bible college thought, well, we need to pray about this and so they began to pray. The Lord would do something and one day, the director of the Bible college after a time of prayer said, I'm just going to go and speak to them and he walked across the island and he got to the inn and the manager was in a bad mood and he said, what do you want?

And he said, well, I'd like to buy the inn and the manager said, well, that's incredible because this morning I woke up and I'm so fed up with running this place. I said, if somebody walks in here now and offers to buy it, I'll give it to them for free.

[22 : 49] And the inn is now part of the Bible complex. You are coming to a king, great petitions with you bring. We need to be ambitious praying about our own lives but remembering we worship a God whose heavens proclaim his righteousness, who sits upon the throne of the universe.

F.B. Meyer says this, you do not test the resources of God until you attempt the impossible. Andrew Murray, the theologian, not the tennis player, says this, beware in your prayers above everything else of limiting God, not only by unbelief but by fancying that you know what he can do.

Expect unexpected things above all that we can ask or imagine. Psalm 97, verse 2 to 9 reminds us that we have an awesome God, a God whose glory is far above the heavens and yet a God, verse 10, who guards the lives of his faithful ones and who sheds light upon the righteous and pours joy into the heart of the upright.

And that is great cause, isn't it, for rejoicing. The psalm goes on to tell us that not everybody rejoices in the Lord. You've noticed as we've read through there are really two categories of people in this psalm.

There are those who are introduced to us as the worshippers of idols. And then there are those, verse 8, who are the worshippers of the Lord. And on the day of the Lord's appearing, there are two very different responses.

[24 : 21] There is the response, verse 7, of those who worship idols and they will be put to shame. All peoples will see God's glory and they will be put to shame.

However great the throngs which worshipped with them, however marvellous their temples, however ancient their traditions, they will be exposed as having been worshipping created things rather than the Creator.

And they will be put to shame that their worship and their service were misdirected, that they supported Croatia instead of supporting France.

There is a danger that we can invest our lives in the wrong things. We can invest them so thoroughly in making names for ourselves and making fame for ourselves in our career or academic success in our relationships that there is no space or place for God.

and that at the end of our lives or when the Lord returns we will be put to shame because we invested too much in the wrong places and we forgot the primary thing to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness.

[25 : 31] When the glory of God is revealed among His people we will be put to shame. There are those who worship idols but there are also those in this category who oppose the true worship of God.

Verse 3 Fire goes before Him and consumes His foes on every side. In every time in every generation there are people who oppose the worship of the one true and living God.

We see that periodically don't we? In Scotland one of the stories over the summer was the humanists I believe who were complaining that you find crosses in crematoria and they argue that because less than 50% of people in Scotland now identify as Christian this might cause distress or offence to non-religious people using the crematoria for their funerals.

Paul wrote, didn't it, in the first century there were enemies of the cross of Christ and it seems in the 21st century the offence of the cross is still an issue.

So there is mild opposition in Scotland but of course we are living through one of the worst persecutions of the modern age the persecution of Christians in the Middle East in Iraq and of Syria and we know there are enemies of God enemies of the cross who oppose the true worship of the one true God.

[26 : 54] Psalm 97 says they will be consumed on every side. So on the day of the Lord's appearing there will be those who are put to shame and yet the Psalm goes on to say there are many who will rejoice verse 8 Zion hears and rejoices the villages of Judah are glad because of your judgments O Lord.

The Lord's people will be delivered from the hand of the wicked. The Lord's people will be vindicated for their faith in him when he is revealed as the one exalted far above all gods.

They will be rescued and they will be rewarded for their faithfulness. Isaiah 25 has the people of God saying this is our God we waited on him and he saved us.

Maybe you're here today and you're coming under pressure because of your Christian life and your Christian testimony. Maybe you are thinking it would be easier just to give up and to follow the crowd and to do things just the same as everybody else.

It would be so much easier just to fit in and accommodate to the standards of this age. People maybe say to you why do you spend all that time in church when you could be away every weekend you could take your boat round the Koravaki Ridge off the west coast.

[28 : 23] Why do you give up your evenings to go to the Christian Union at university and get involved in those lunch bars and those outreach events? Why do you spend so much time and give so much money to that church in Brunsfield?

Why do you experience such mocking and ridicule from your friends or from your colleagues? Life would be so much easier if you just went the same way as everyone else.

Well, Psalm 97 verse 8 tells us there is a day when we will rejoice and be glad because of the judgments of the Lord. All the earth will see his glory and we will know that we supported the right team that our hope and our confidence were in the right place and we had faith in the one true and living God.

This is our God. We waited on him and he saved us. So the psalmist describes the coming of God in judgment and it depicts these two camps those who worship other gods so called or oppose the true worship of God they will be put to shame they will experience that judgment and yet the Lord's people those who kept faith who waited upon him who lived in the light of his coming will be rewarded and vindicated and saved.

And these two themes of the Lord's enemies being judged and the Lord's people being saved run all the way through scripture. We see it don't we at the story of Noah. We see it as we've mentioned in the story of the Exodus as the people of Israel were delivered and the armies of Egypt were judged.

[29 : 58] And we see it of course in the New Testament and if you have your Bible before you if you could perhaps open to the page on which we have Thessalonians 4 again in my Bible it's page 1188 but we want just to look at two passages in this book.

Thessalonica is the city in Greece it's a very attractive seaside town and Paul you recall went there in Acts he preached all around the Mediterranean and as he got to Thessalonica he experienced some of that opposition and this mob it brought him to the court and said this man is preaching he's defying Caesar's decrees because he says there is another king one called Jesus.

we've been thinking haven't we in the psalm of a great king who comes in cloud and who comes in fire to judge and to save well in the New Testament Jesus is called the king and the Thessalonians put their trust in this king and they believed on him despite much opposition and Paul wrote to the church he was unable to visit the church but he wrote on two occasions to encourage them in their faith and to remind them of their hope and in 1 Thessalonians 4 he writes to tell them about the coming of the Lord the day of the Lord when the Lord will return for his own and in chapter 4 verse 17 verse 16 rather Paul says this the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a loud command with the voice of an archangel and the trumpet call of God and the dead in Christ will rise first after that we who are still alive who are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so we will be with the Lord forever

Paul reminds us in this chapter that when a Christian dies they simply fall asleep in Christ that's why cemeteries were called cemeteries it's from the Greek word meaning to sleep because we fall asleep in the Lord trusting that one day the voice which rose Lazarus from the tomb will wake us from our sleep we will be taken up caught up with the Lord in the clouds Jesus used the language of clouds didn't he just before his trial Mark 13 he said this people will see the son of man coming in clouds with great power and glory and he will send his angels and gather their elect from the four winds from the four ends of the earth so the New Testament gives us a picture of this king coming in clouds to save his people to save them from their enemies to save them from the last enemy which is death what a wonderful hope to have as Christians that we fall asleep in the Lord and one day as he woke

Jairus' daughter with those words little girl I say to you awake you will come to us and speak our names into our ears and say I say to you wake up and we will be forever with the Lord the king who comes in cloud and as we go to 2 Thessalonians we see another image of the Lord's return this time not coming to save his people from their enemies but coming to judge those enemies in verse chapter 1 verse 5 Paul says this this is evidence that God's judgment is right and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which you are suffering God is just he will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled this will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels he will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ the Lord coming the same event but from a different perspective not the Lord coming in the clouds to save but the Lord coming in fire to judge the great king of heaven and earth his glory visible to the whole world saving his people and judging their enemies and so we see the same themes appearing both in the Psalms and in Paul's correspondence to the Thessalonian church and the wonderful thing of course about the Christian gospel is that we're able to move aren't we from one body of people to another maybe you're here today and maybe you're saying well

[34 : 36] I'm not a worshipper of God and I'm not a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ what hope have I the wonderful thing about the gospel is that the door is open the way is open for us to return and that through the death and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ our sins can be forgiven we can go from being sinners to being saints we can go from being those who walk according to the flesh who go the way of the world to those who are led by his Holy Spirit we can go from being enemies of God to being his friends those who go from hating God to those who love him and are loved by him those who are dead in sin and trespass who are alive in Christ and raised with him and living according to his ways we can move from being children of wrath to children of God and this is a profound transformation isn't it we have the great hope verses 8 and 9 but we have the present experience verse 10 of knowing the Lord's providential care in our lives he guards the lives of his faithful ones and he delivers them from the hand of the wicked wonderful to hear

Tim and Hazel's testimony of the Lord guiding and the Lord providing and I'm sure many of us will be able to share something of that the Lord's provision just the right time and in just his way we know God as our father and we know him as our friend and that transforms our present experience verse 11 light is shed upon the righteous and joy on the upright in heart what a wonderful joy it is to be a Christian to be brought out of the domain of darkness and brought into his wonderful light instead of hostility with God and with others to know peace with God and peace with men so let me ask you friends where are you this morning are you verse 7 a worshipper of idols or are you verse 8 somebody who rejoices in the Lord are you somebody under God's judgment or somebody who has enjoyed his salvation are you somebody who fears the Lord oh yes but knows him as a father and a friend or are you somebody opposed to his purposes indifferent to his promises and his plan for all that he has made the wonderful news in the gospel is that we can come in to that family we can be cleansed from all of our sins we can be filled with his Holy Spirit and incorporated into his people and we can have hope and a future what a wonderful gospel we can be on the winning side like my daughter who supported France we can join in the celebrations and we can share in that wonderful joy the Lord reigns let the earth be glad let the distant shores rejoice well we rejoice and let's pray together as we close

Father we do thank you that you are indeed an awesome God that your lighting lights up the worlds the earth sees and trembles and yet we thank you oh God that you though exalted on high stooped down to lift us out of the ash heap to set our feet upon a rock to put a new song in our mouths and we pray this week Lord as we face trials and temptations of many kinds that we will look not to our weakness but to your strength and we will bring before you in prayer all the matters which trouble us trusting that you care for us and we pray that you would help us to walk in your ways Lord to live distinctively as salt and as light to be willing to suffer for being a Christian knowing that there is in store for us great glory and that you have plans and purposes for us to give us hope in the future so we thank you for our Lord Jesus Christ through whom we have boldness and confidence to come to you and we pray that as we close our service and begin our time of fellowship you would just bless us as our Father as our best and our most powerful friend and help us to encourage one another toward love and good deeds and all the more as we see this glorious day approaching and so we thank you for this time now in Jesus name

Amen