

Too Good to Keep to Ourselves

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Date: 05 August 2018

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- [0 : 00] Amen. So, to get us thinking this morning, I wonder when the last time in your life something happened and you thought to yourself, that is too good to keep to myself.
- That is too good to keep to myself. Turn to your neighbor round about you for 10 seconds, okay? What was the last thing in your life that you said, that is too good to keep to myself? And this will involve talking, okay? So go for it.
- Okay, that is 10 seconds right there. I wonder what you came up with. So I always really, I find it fascinating in life, the things that get us excited.
- Like for me, Airdrie winning a football game gets me excited. For me, the discount aisle in Tesco gets me excited. But I had a friend run for dinner recently and he was telling me a story about a rare book that he found.
- He loves books, does my friend. And the story went something like this, that he had his heart set upon finding and reading this antique book that he really wanted to find.
- [1 : 08] So he took his fiancée at the time and he dragged her around every secondhand bookstore and every single charity shop that Edinburgh had to offer. And after a whole afternoon of no joy, and in his words, in the 12th shop that they went into, there in the middle of the bookshelf was a battered and torn copy of this antique book.
- So he's telling me this story. I'm trying to pretend like I'm excited at this point. He was ecstatic. She was relieved. But it gets better, he said. It gets better. And you can tell that he's from Scotland with this next comment that he made.
- I opened the cover and inside were the words £1.50. And so as an excitement, my friend starts telling everybody that he met that he found this rare antique book that he always wanted to find.
- So funny, isn't it? The things in life that get us excited and get us talking. This psalm this morning is a psalm that celebrates the God who is quite simply too good to keep to ourselves.
- It's our big idea this morning. The God who is too good to keep to ourselves. With Psalm 96 open in front of us to fully appreciate what this psalm is saying, we need to see that it's a psalm with a uniquely brilliant context.
- [2 : 28] We find it in the book of 1 Chronicles in chapter 16. Here is King David. He's just been crowned king of all Israel.
- He's just captured Jerusalem. He's just made Jerusalem the capital city. But there's one thing that's missing from completing the set. And it's the thing that down the ages has set Israel apart from all the other nations.
- And that is the very near and the very real presence of the Lord with his people symbolized in the Ark of the Covenant.
- And after some time in the hands of the Philistines, that is the enemies of the Israelites. And after some time, it seems in the kind of background, the peripheral of Israel's story, David and his men have brought the Ark to rest in Jerusalem.

This is a huge deal. A huge deal. So huge, in fact, that we're told that King David danced and celebrated, making himself, in his words, undignified before the watching world.

[3 : 33] I presume when I read that, that means that he has his hands in the air like he doesn't care. He doesn't care what others think. He's giving it his all for the Lord because he cannot keep the excitement down in his soul. And they bring the Ark to rest in the tent that David has prepared for it.

And as they get the proper worship that God had prescribed started again, David appoints his best musicians, complete with the lyres, complete with their harps, complete with their cymbals, complete with their trumpets.

And he says to them, your job is to lead us in singing the praises of our incomparable gods. As we recall who he is and as we recall and celebrate and rejoice in everything that he's done for us.

It's why we sing our songs on a Sunday morning, isn't it? Recall who our God is and celebrate who he is and what he's done for us. This is what they're doing. Psalm 96 is a section of that song that David wrote for this moment as we find it in 1 Chronicles 16.

Now, Psalm 96, look at it there if you've got it there. Three times in the first three lines. Sing, sing, sing. See it?

[4 : 48] Sing, sing, sing. Call me crazy. I think we're supposed to sing. You see, in Hebrew poetry, one of the ways that you draw your reader's eyes to the central truth or emotion of what you're writing.

Remember, nobody owns a MacBook Pro in 1000 BC. It's not by putting it in italics. You don't put it in bold. You don't put it in Comic Sans or Wingdings. You repeat it. Sing, sing, sing.

He wants them to sing. And not just sing this song to the inside. Sing this song to the outside.

See, there's something intensely evangelistic about this psalm. In other words, this is not just a song for a Sunday. This is a song for God's people to sing at home.

This is a song to sing at work, to sing at uni, to sing at school, to sing with your family, to sing on the pitch. Because this song invites the peoples of the world to listen and to come and see how good this God is.

[5 : 56] And to come and know him. Come and put your faith and your trust in him and make this song your song. Why is this God too good to keep to ourselves?

There's four reasons. We'll rattle through these quickly this morning. Four reasons why this God is too good to keep to ourselves. Here's the first one, verses 1 to 3. Because no one rescues like this God.

Got a new clicker this morning. I'm not sure how it works. Is that right? No one rescues like this God. What is worth celebrating? Look at there in the psalm. His salvation.

That's what's worth celebrating. That he is the God who has rescued them from Egypt. He is the God who has parted the Red Sea. He is the God who has triumphed over both Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt.

He is the God who has time and time again protected them from their enemies. And he is the God who, by his grace, despite their constant hard hearts, he is the God who has brought them into this land that they now call home.

[7 : 03] Nobody rescues like this God. Nobody rescues like him. We love a rescue story, don't we, in our culture? One of the most heartwarming stories of this year, in fact, of this summer, was a rescue story.

Those 12 boys and their coats stranded in the caves in Thailand. Helpless, staring death in the face before the most daring and incredible of rescue missions which saw them all make it out alive.

That was an incredible story. I hope that got your heart. I'm sure it did this summer as we heard about it. An incredible story of rescue. But friends, no rescue story compares to the gospel.

It just doesn't. How much more can we sing this song and make it our own as New Testament believers because we know the full extent and the full contours of the rescue story, God's rescue story because of Jesus?

Because the gospel says that I wasn't just stuck. I wasn't just drowning. I was dead. And Jesus stepped into my story and he left the splendor of heaven.

[8 : 19] He humbled himself by taking on flesh. And he did what I couldn't do. He lived the perfect life before God, the one that I couldn't live. And Jesus took, as we've been singing this morning, the death and punishment that should have been mine because of my sin.

He took it on the cross. And Jesus rose to life, meaning that my debt is really paid. And that death won't have the last say on my life because it didn't have the last word on Jesus' life.

And Jesus, despite my constant and daily failings, he has me in the palm of his hand. And no one is taking me from there.

And by his grace, he will take me home. No rescue story compares to the gospel. Now what are God's people to do with this rescue story?

Verses 2 and 3. They're to tell it. To declare it. To take the news about who this God is and to take the news about what he's done and go and make it known.

[9 : 29] Among the nations, you'll see it there. Among the peoples. Of course, this is what God had always envisaged for Israel. That it's his chosen and rescued people, those set apart to live for him.

That they were to be shining lights in this world of darkness round about them. That people outside were to look in at everything that was going on in Israel and declare, Wow, not how good you are, but wow, how great is the God that you know and worship.

Because this God is a missionary God. This God is a global God. This God is an eternally loving God with a heart for the unreached and lost people in the world that he has made.

And he calls his people to go and make him known. And notice when. Not occasionally. Not sporadically. But to make him known from day to day.

Do you see it in the psalm? Every day recalling and celebrating. Every day telling and declaring. You know, it's so funny as you read your Old Testament and you look at Israel.

[10 : 34] If you had to pick two things that they excelled at. I mean, if you had to make Israel into a top trump and rate their abilities. Do you know what would be coming out on top? Forgetting and grumbling.

Forgetting and grumbling. Grumbling. Ten out of ten. Top score. You cannot beat it. But as I look into my heart. And my life.

See, if you had to pick two things I'm particularly good at. It'd be forgetting and grumbling. Not so much what Jesus has done for me. I don't forget the fact of the cross.

But what it means for me in my everyday life. That's what I forget. All the time. Friends, how are we doing with the help of the Holy Spirit.

At daily reminding ourselves of the gospel. And daily declaring the gospel to our families. To our friends. To our neighbors. And to our colleagues. And doing that day after day.

[11 : 37] Because nobody rescues like this God. This God is too good to keep to ourselves. Secondly, verses four to six. No one compares to this God.

Verse four. Look at it there. Great is the Lord. That's the declaration. He's saying that the Lord is the best. He is the superior. And because of that. He is greatly to be praised.

And he is to be feared. Revered. Given rightful recognition. Worshipped. Adored. Above all gods. Notice the small g there.

Because as the psalmist looks out. He sees a world full of people. But people that are worshipping. All sorts of divine pretenders. They are cover gods. Ever been to see a cover band?

Right? Pretending to be the real thing. But really failing at being the real thing. I once heard of a middle-aged man. Down in Wales. Who was touring the country a while back. Calling himself Blobby Williams.

[12 : 37] This is what the psalmist is saying to the peoples of the world. You are worshipping covers. You are worshipping pretenders. Creative things. Material things. Pretending.

And failing. At being the real thing. Because nobody compares to this God. And in comparison to him. Verse 5. Your gods are worthless idols.

You're living for things that you think will deliver you. You're living for things that you think will satisfy you. You're living for things that you think will complete you. But they will not. Because those things.

They will be here today and gone tomorrow. Those things will be here one minute and gone the next. And do you see how in a world full of many cover gods.

God's people are invited to lovingly say to the peoples round about them. You worship the things of creation. How about you come and join us and worship the creator. I wonder what you're worshipping this morning.

[13 : 39] If only I could get that promotion. If only I could get that boyfriend or girlfriend. If only I could get that house that meant that my kids got into that catchment area.

That meant they can get into that school. If only we could go on that trip of a lifetime. If only I could get into that university. If only I could look like that. Then I'd be set.

Then I'd be happy. Friends how much energy our world spends. And tells us to spend chasing the things that will not complete us.

No wonder we stress that our minds in our world. These things will not complete us. I think of Jim Carrey. The famous Hollywood actor. One of my favorite actors growing up. He said.

I think everybody should get rich and famous. And do everything they ever dreamed of. So that they can see that that is not the answer. Well enter Jesus Christ to our muddled equation.

[14 : 38] Who would say to a stressed out world. To a burnt out people. Come all ye to me. And find in me your all in all.

And come to me. And get rest in who I am. Find your identity in me. Let me take your burdens.

This is our God. The immense freedom. I wonder if you remember. If you're here. You're a Christian this morning. Remember that moment when you first heard those words.

The immense freedom that there is in coming to Jesus. Come all ye to me. What does the psalmist say? Splendor and majesty are before this God.

Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. There's no one that compares with him. This God is too good to keep to ourselves. Verses 7 to 9. Thirdly no one invites like this God.

[15 : 37] Again notice in these verses. The threefold repetition. A scribe. A scribe. A scribe. It's almost like there's something three in one about this God. But we can talk about that later. Okay.

It means give to him. It means he is worthy of all things. He is worthy of that. Worthy of what? Glory. And you see that this is not just God's people who are invited to come.

And to ascribe. And to give to God. This is all the peoples of the world. And the thing about this God. The wonderful thing about this God. Is that he doesn't just invite people to come on.

And like a painting. A gallery. Just look at a distance and admire. He invites people to come near to him. And to know him. Verse 8. Remember still speaking to the peoples of the nations round about him.

The psalmist invites them to approach this God. And to come and to know him for themselves. What does he say? Bring. There's a word of invitation. Bring.

[16 : 34] Bring what? An offering. Bring it where? Into his courts. See these sacrifices. These offerings that God had prescribed. That would atone for the people's sin.

And would make people right with him. And would enable people to live in fellowship with him. The splendidly holy God. How good is this God that he would make a way for us to come to know him?

He didn't need to do that. How good is this God? It's interesting that the people at this point in this psalm are being reminded of God's holiness. Of course in the context and the story in 1 Chronicles.

What's just happened is that when David's men are first carrying the ark to Jerusalem. This man called Azza. He's done what God has specifically said not to do. And he's touched the ark.

And he's dropped down dead. A poignant reminder at that point in history that this God is holy. And they are not. Mr. Beaver said to Lucy about Aslan and Anarnia books.

[17 : 38] Safe, said Mr. Beaver. Who said anything about safe? Of course he isn't safe. But he is good. He's the king, I tell you. See, God had graciously told them and made a way for them to approach him.

And only in that way may they approach him. Not complacently. But because of this sacrifice. Confidently. See, God has prescribed a way by which people can worship him.

God has made a way through which people can know him. In the beauty of his holiness. And again, how much more? As New Testament believers can we sing this song?

And how much more can we confidently approach this holy God? Because of Christ. And his blood shed on the cross for his people.

The perfect sacrifice. That gains us access to him. Not as orphans. But as adopted sons and daughters.

[18 : 38] With access to the very throne room of God. And address this God. Not his sir. But his father. How good is that? As the old hymn says.

To God be the glory. Great things he has done. So loved he the world that he gave us his son. Who yielded his life an atonement for sin. And opened the life gate. That all may go in.

No one invites like this God. This God is too good to keep to ourselves. And fourthly and finally. Verses 10 to 13. No one rules like this God.

The Lord reigns. See that declaration there? It's the one that we've seen throughout this. This little set of Psalms. It began in Psalm 90. This is what it's about. The Lord reigns. He is king. The world is established.

It shall never be moved. Which I think is a way of saying that. Just as the globe will not stop turning. Just as the sun will not stop rising and setting. So this God who will never change.

[19 : 35] Will never be moved from his throne. This God is never running out of resources. This God is never finding himself out of control. This God is never finding himself a match.

Because he is the king. And he will judge the peoples with equity. Meaning that his rule is 100% right. Friends that is great news.

Is that not the world that we all want? Is that not the leader that we all need? As we look out on the mess of our world at the minute.

Do you know what we see? We see lots of people with lots of power. But there's zero compassion and love. And we see lots of people with lots of compassion and love. But no power to do anything about it.

But in this God we have both in abundance. We have a God who is all compassion. All love and all power. And we see that so beautifully in the person of Jesus Christ.

[20 : 33] As we see him in the pages of the Bible. And Jesus will return as heaven's king. And on that day, get this, verse 11. Look at this. The heavens will be glad.

The earth will rejoice. The sea will roar. The field will exalt. The trees of the forest shall sing. Because here is creation. No longer, as Paul says in Romans 8.

Waiting in eager expectation for its renewal. Here is creation metaphorically doing to its nth degree. That which it was always designed to do. And that is to give endless praise to the one who made it.

Creation at the moment, if you like, is like a full piece orchestra. It's all set up. All ready to go. But it's sitting in a darkened hall gathering dust. But on that day, on this day, it will gloriously play.

And I want to be there to hear it play. Friends, with that you see how what God is doing through the gospel. What God is doing through the work of his son. And through the power of his spirit. Is bigger than just me and Jesus.

[21 : 40] It encompasses the cosmic redemption and renewal of all things. So where will you stand on the day that King Jesus comes? And where will you stand before the perfect judge?

As he gives the perfect judgment about our lives. Because we get two choices really, don't we? We can either trust that I am paying for my sin.

Or we can trust and by our faith know that Jesus has paid for our sin. And we used to live down in Bristol before we moved to Edinburgh.

There was a man that we knew in our church family called David. David was in his 90s. David went home to be with the Lord earlier this year. I used to speak to him on Sundays when I saw him. And I used to ask him, David, what have you been up to this week in your life?

What have you been doing? And he used to say to me that, Graham, I've been taking a few trips on the bus. Making the most of that free bus pass. They love a bargain too, the English.

[22 : 39] Been going on the bus. What have you been doing on the bus? I just go and I speak to people on the bus. So what do you ask them? I just ask them how they're doing. Ask them about their lives. And I just get speaking to them about Jesus.

And what he was getting at, particularly to people of his generation, is that the lawyers were telling them to think about their wills. The bank was telling them to think about their money.

The funeral directors were telling them to think about the funeral. The family were telling them to think about the home. But only the Bible was calling you to think about your soul. And he used to say to people, have you stopped to consider what will happen to you and I once we die?

And so often the person would say back, do you know what, I've never given it a second thought in life. Maybe I should start doing that. David used to say, well, I think that would be a great idea.

How about we meet up together and let's just talk about it. A man in his 90s went home to be with the Lord. His last day, just going at it for Jesus. Friends, let me ask you, just as we draw this to a close, when was the last time that you spoke to someone?

[23 : 49] He just got talking to them about Jesus. Friends, are you here this morning and you need to think about, because life is here today and gone tomorrow. You need to think about what will happen to your soul on that day with this tremendously holy but loving God.

No one rules like this God. And this God is too good to keep to ourselves. Friends, just as we close, let me take you back to my friend. Remember the one that found the rare antique book?

He's still around at our dinner table. He's still talking. The story goes on. He's really into his book. He goes home. He's got his book and he shows it to one of his friends.

And one of his friends stares at it for a while. And she opens it and she examines it. And she hands it back to him and she says, I think what you've got there is a much bigger deal than you realize.

Because what had happened is he hadn't just picked up a rare book. What he'd done for £1.50 is that he picked up a first edition of that rare book.

[24 : 57] Long story short, he put it on eBay. And a little while later, there's a buyer in America who's given him over £1,300 for it. There's the honeymoon paid for. My friend is telling everybody he meets about that story.

And it got me thinking in preparation for Psalm 96 today that there are some things in life too good to keep to yourself. But the longer I go on as a Christian, the longer I go on as a follower of Jesus, life certainly doesn't get easier.

And I'm more aware of my feelings and my sin more than any time in my life. But as I go on by God's grace, I increasingly realize that Jesus is a much bigger deal than I think he is. He is far more glorious than a first edition.

And what he's given me is eternal life, way more than £1,300. In Jesus Christ, we have a saviour, we have a king, who is way too good to keep to ourselves.

Finally, let's pray. And maybe just in the quietness of your own heart, just before we proceed on with the service, maybe you want to just offer your own prayers and your own petitions to the Lord.

[26 : 19] Father, we thank you that you truly are the incomparable God. And that your son is truly an incomparable saviour.

And that your spirit truly is an incomparable spirit. And so we simply ask that you would help us this week to make John the Baptist's confession our confession, that we would decrease and that you would increase.

All for your glory and for the upbuilding of this church and the church throughout the world. Help us to make you known, we pray. In Jesus' name we ask. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.