

GOOD NEWS, GREAT JOY

"THE ROBBERY OF GREAT JOY"

PSALM 30:1-12

This Week's Core Competency

Joy – I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances. John 15:11, *I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.*

I'm not sure how to adequately express what I sense, but I sense that joy, thanksgiving, and praise are inextricably related. Are they somehow sequential? If so, which comes first? Are thanksgiving and praise two sides of the same coin? Is joy implicit to both?

Without doubt all three are contained in Psalm 30. They are mentioned more or less explicitly in the opening verses. The psalm's opening stanza begins on a note of praise, "I will exalt you, LORD" (v. 1), continues with the reason to praise, "you lifted me out of the depths . . . you brought me up from the grave" (vv. 2-3), then returns to a call to praise, "Sing to the Lord, you saints of his; praise his holy name" (v. 4), before finally alluding to joy in repeating the reason to praise, "weeping may remain for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning" (v. 5). They are mentioned more or less explicitly in the closing verses as well. The psalm's closing stanza ends on the twin notes of joy and thanksgiving, "you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy that my heart may sing to you . . . I will give you thanks forever" (v. 12).

It is in the process of being worshipped that God communicates His presence to men.

– C. S. Lewis

The musings of C. S. Lewis on praise (and implicitly on joy and thanksgiving) are insightful and well worth quoting:

"When I first began to draw near to belief in God and even for some time after it had been given to me, I found a stumbling block in the demand so clamorously made by all religious people that we should 'praise' God; still more in the suggestion that God Himself demanded it. We all despise the man who demands continued assurance of his own virtue, intelligence or delightfulness; we despise still more the crowd of people round every dictator, every millionaire, every celebrity, who gratify that demand. Thus a picture, at once ludicrous and horrible, both of God and of his worshippers, threatened to appear in my mind. The Psalms were especially troublesome in this way—'Praise the Lord,' 'O praise the Lord with me,' 'Praise Him.' (And why, incidentally, did praising God so often consist in telling other people to praise Him? Even in telling whales, snowstorms, etc., to go on doing what they would certainly do whether we told them or not?) Worse still was the statement put into God's own mouth, 'whoso offereth me thanks and praise, he honoureth me' (50, 23). It was hideously like saying, 'What I most want is to be told that I am good and great.' Worst of all was the suggestion of the very silliest Pagan bargaining, that of the savage who makes offerings to his idol when the fishing is good and beats it when he has caught nothing. More than once the Psalmist seemed to be saying, 'You like praise. Do this for me, and you shall have some.' Thus in 54 the poet begins 'save me' (1), and in verse 6 adds an inducement, 'An offering of a free heart will I give thee, and praise thy Name.'

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Again and again the speaker asks to be saved from death on the ground that if God lets His suppliants die He will get no more praise from them, for the ghosts in Sheol cannot praise (30, 10; 88, 10; 119, 175). And the mere quantity of praise seemed to count; 'seven times a day do I praise thee' (119, 164). It was extremely distressing. It made one think what one least wanted to think. Gratitude to God, reverence to Him, obedience to Him, I thought I could understand; not his perpetual eulogy. Nor were the matters mended by a modern author who talked of God's 'right' to be praised.

"I still think 'right' is a bad way of expressing it, but I believe I now see what that author meant. It is perhaps easiest to begin with inanimate objects which can have no rights. What do we mean when we say that a picture is 'admirable'? We certainly don't mean that it is admired (that's as may be) for bad work is admired by thousands and good work may be ignored. Nor that it 'deserves' admiration in the sense in that a candidate 'deserves' a high mark from the examiners--i.e. that a human being will have suffered injustice if it is not awarded. The sense in which the picture 'deserves' or 'demands' admiration is rather this; that admiration is the correct, adequate or appropriate, response to it, that, if paid, admiration will not be 'thrown away', and that if we do not admire we shall be stupid, insensible, and great losers, we shall have missed something. In that way many objects both in Nature and in Art may be said to deserve, or merit, or demand, admiration. It was from this end, which will seem to some irreverent, that I found it best to approach the idea that God 'demands' praise. He is that Object to admire which (or, if you like, to appreciate which) is simply to be awake, to have entered the real world; not to appreciate which is to have lost the greatest experience, and in the end to have lost all. The incomplete and crippled lives of those who are tone deaf, have never been in love, never known true friendship, never cared for a good book, never enjoyed the feel of the morning air on their cheek, never (I am one of these) enjoyed football, are faint images of it" (*Reflections on the Psalms*, 90-92).

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Psalm 30:1-12

A psalm. A song. For the dedication of the temple.^c Of David.

1 I will exalt you, LORD,
for you lifted me out of the depths
and did not let my enemies gloat over me.
2 O LORD my God, I called to you for help
and you healed me.
3 O LORD, you brought me up from the grave;
you spared me from going down into the pit.
4 Sing to the LORD, you saints of his;
praise his holy name.
5 For his anger lasts only a moment,
but his favor lasts a lifetime;
weeping may remain for the night,
but rejoicing comes in the morning.

6 When I felt secure, I said,
"I will never be shaken."

7 O LORD, when you favored me,
you made my mountain stand firm;
but when you hid your face,
I was dismayed.

8 To you, O LORD, I called;
to the Lord I cried for mercy:
9 "What gain is there in my destruction,
in my going down into the pit?
Will the dust praise you?

Will it proclaim your faithfulness?
10 Hear, O LORD, and be merciful to me;
O LORD, be my help."

11 You turned my wailing into dancing;
you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy,
12 that my heart may sing to you and not be silent.
O LORD my God, I will give you thanks forever.

^c Or palace

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Draw a line from "exalt" to "lifted" in v. 1.
- * Circle "healed" in v. 2.
- * Draw a line from "grave" to "pit" in v. 3.
- * Highlight v. 5.
- * Underline "felt secure" in v. 6.
- * Circle "mountain" in v. 7.
- * Box "but" indicating *contrast* in v. 7.
- * Bracket each of the 3 rhetorical questions in v. 9.
- * Circle "dust" in v. 9.
- * Draw a line from "wailing" to "sackcloth" in v. 11.
- * Draw a line from "dancing" to "joy" in v. 11.
- * Box "that" indicating *purpose/result* in v. 12.

day 2 EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. The psalmist exalts the Lord for lifting him "out of the *depths*." To what exactly does "depths" refer? (Cf., v. 3.)
2. Describe the psalmist's *condition* when he called to the Lord for help.
3. Match the following in verse 3a to the parallel words in verse 3b: "brought me up" and "grave."
4. Explain the *contrast* contained in the *reason* given to sing to the LORD and to praise his holy name.
5. "Weeping" is practically *personified* in verse 5b (see note). How so?
6. The clause "when I felt secure" (v. 6) is translated "in my prosperity" (see note). Describe the downside of prosperity.
7. Put the *point* of the psalmist's rhetorical questions (v. 9) in your own words.
8. The Lord *exchanged* the psalmist's wailing for dancing and sackcloth for joy. For what *purpose*?
9. **Discussion:** The psalm opens on a note of praise and closes on a note of thanksgiving. Talk about the relationship of one to the other.

day 3 **EXAMINE** – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

There are different types of psalms, e.g., individual laments, national laments, thanksgiving psalms, descriptive praise psalms or hymns, as well as other minor types (see Allen P. Ross, "Psalms," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, 784). Each type is recognized by the patterned structure it shares with other psalms of the same type. For example, generally speaking thanksgiving psalms include the following five elements: 1) a proclamation to praise the LORD indicated by the words "I will praise" or "I will exalt;" 2) an introductory summary stating what the LORD has done for the psalmist; 3) a report of deliverance explaining that the psalmist cried out, the LORD heard and delivered him; 4) a renewed vow to praise, giving the LORD his promised praise; and 5) praise or instruction for others (785). Psalm 30 is a praise psalm—what one commentator calls "the flip side to the prayer psalms of the individual" (Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms*, NIBC, 154). By this he means, the prayer psalms generally close with a vow to praise the LORD once the supplicant has been delivered; the thanksgiving psalms amount to the fulfillment of the supplicant's vow.

The superscription to Psalm 30, "For the dedication of the temple. Of David," which suggests its occasion, has received a lot of attention from commentators. One goes so far as to say, "To a greater degree than is usually the case the interpretation of this psalm depends on determining its occasion" (H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms*, 251). And on the most probable occasion for the psalm, *The NIV Study Bible* claims, "If 'Of David' indicates authorship, the most probable occasion for the psalm is recorded in 1Ch 21:1-22:6. In 1Ch 22:1-6 David dedicated both property and building materials for the temple, and he may well have intended that Ps 30 be used at the dedication of the temple itself. If this is the case, vv. 2-3 would refer to David's predicament in 1Ch 21:17-30. The 'favor' of v. 5 would be an echo of the 'mercy' of 1Ch 21:13, and v. 6 would refer to his sin of misplaced trust in a large, superior army (see 1Ch 21:1-8). Later the psalm came to be applied to the exile experience of Israel. In Jewish liturgical practice dating from Talmudic time it is chanted at Hanukkah, the feast that celebrates the rededication of the temple by Judas Maccabeus (165 B.C.) after its desecration by Antiochus

Epiphanes (168). In such communal use, the 'I' of the psalm become the corporate 'person' of Israel—a common mode of speaking in the OT (note on Ps 30 title). While there is as little agreement on the structure of Psalm 30 as on its occasion, perhaps recommending the following simple structure is best (*a la Occam's razor*)—two outbursts of praise, one in verses 1-5 and the other in verses 11-12, flanking a confession of overconfidence and its dire consequences in verses 6-10 (see Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1-72*, TOTC, 146).

The opening stanza (vv. 1-5) contains the first outburst of praise. In verse 1, the psalmist summarizes his experience. He begins with a proclamation to praise the LORD, "I will exalt you," he says, "for you lifted me out of the depths." The psalmist lifts the LORD up in praise because the LORD lifted him out of a dire situation, like one would lift a bucket out of the depths of a well. He goes on in verses 2-3 to explain how he called on the LORD for help and how the LORD healed him. His illness left him as good as dead, when the LORD delivered him from the grave. The psalmist's public proclamation to praise leads naturally to a summons addressed to all the LORD's people to do likewise in verses 4-5. It's a summons grounded in the fact that the LORD's anger is short-lived, but his favor is life-long. Weeping may check in for the night, but joy inevitably evicts it in the morning. Life, including that of God's people, has its ups and downs. The Lord is a God who delivers, not a God who preserves his people from ever experiencing hardship in general or his anger in particular.

The closing stanza (vv. 11-12) contains a second burst of praise—together with the first creating an inclusio that brackets the psalmist's confession. This burst of praise describes the LORD's favor in terms of an exchange in which "wailing" is turned into "dancing" and "mourning" (i.e., "sackcloth") is turned into "joy." On this outburst, one commentator writes: "The exuberance of verses 1-5 returns, enhanced by the chastened recollections of 6-10. It is all quite uninhibited, in the buoyant spirit of the David who 'danced before the Lord with all his might'" (Kidner, 147).

The psalmist's confession is sandwiched in between his two outbursts of praise (vv. 6-10). His words suggest that prosperity led to overconfidence on his part. Feeling secure in himself, he carelessly

thinks, "I will never be shaken." In his penultimate presumption he fails to recognize that the prosperity he enjoys is from the LORD, something he realizes shortly after the LORD hides his face from him. His words echo the words of the priestly blessing found in Numbers 6:24-26:

"The LORD bless you
and keep you;
the LORD make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;
the LORD turn his face toward you
and give you peace."

Dismayed and imperiled, he calls on the LORD; he cries for mercy. His rhetorical questions in verse 9 suggest that in his view the LORD has nothing to gain and perhaps something to lose by his demise. His three questions can be turned into statements: There is no gain in my destruction, in my going down into the pit. The dust will not praise you. It will not proclaim your faithfulness. In other words, others may continue to praise you, but if you want me to praise you, then you must preserve me from the grave. This is the reasoning behind his prayer for mercy and help.

The Message of the Passage

Praise the Lord, whose anger is short-lived but favor life-long, when he turns your wailing into dancing and your mourning into joy, rather than keep it to yourself.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on 3 "living questions" to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your answers to the following *living* questions:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 1 **exalt, lifted up** "The opening line directs the worshiper to repay Yahweh 'in kind.' As Yahweh has raised him up, so the speaker wishes to do toward Yahweh" (Broyles, 154). "To extol and to thank go together: God exalts men by reversing their misfortune and by prospering them, while men can only exalt God by realizing that he is the source of their blessing, and by declaring this to their brethren" (A. A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, 1:241). "The verbal phrase 'you lifted me' is a metaphorical use of a verb meaning 'to draw up out of the water' (cf. Ex 2:16, 19). Like a bucket lowered into a well and then raised to draw up water, so the Lord pulled the psalmist out of the grips of Sheol" (Willem A. VanGemeren, "Psalms," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., 5:297).

v. 2 **healed** Knowing the occasion behind the writing of Ps 30 would help determine its meaning, but its occasion is debated, given various interpretations of its superscription: "For the dedication of the temple." "The title of this psalm is subject to two interpretations. It may mean that the psalmist composed it for the occasion of the dedication of the Lord's house. This would not be the dedication of Solomon's temple since David had already died when Solomon dedicated it. It could mean the tent that David erected in Jerusalem to house the ark of the covenant when he brought it into the city (2 Sam. 6:17). Or perhaps this occasion was the dedication of the temple site (1 Chron. 21:26; 22:1). The Lord's chastening of the king preceded both of these events. The writer referred to this discipline in the psalm . . . Another possibility is that the title did not refer to the occasion of writing but to those occasions on which the Israelites were to use this psalm in national worship. This seems less likely to me in view of the references to chastening. There is evidence from the Talmud, however, that the Jews recited this psalm during Hanukkah, their commemoration of the rededication of the temple in 165 B.C." (Thomas L. Constable, "Notes on Psalms," 2016 ed., 88, www.sonlight.com). "The whole psalm is a thanksgiving for the deliverance which the Lord granted to David and to the nation in consequence of David's intercessory prayer [1Ch 21:17]. David's description of his recovery is most appropriate, for he may, like many others, especially since he was the instigator of the deed that brought on the plague, have thought himself all but dead as a result of the pestilence then raging and about to strike Jerusalem" (Leupold, 252).

v. 3 **grave, pit** Cf., "O LORD, you pulled me up from Sheol; you rescued me from among those descending into the grave" (NET). The term [*bor*] translated "pit" (NIV) or "grave" (NET) is lit., "cistern," but it is used figuratively to refer to the "grave." The parallel Heb. term translated "Sheol" (NET) and "grave" (NIV) is used synonymously. "When the psalmist refers to *sheol*, he thinks of the tomb, the place where speaking, laughing, and praising God do not take place. R. L. Harris (*TWOT* 2:893) describes *sheol* correctly as 'a typical Palestinian tomb, dark, dusty, with mingled bones and where 'this poor lisping stammering tongue lies silent in the grave'" (VanGemeren, 665).

v. 5 **remain for a night** Heb., "in the evening weeping comes to lodge, but at morning a shout of joy" (the NET Bible, 11tn on Ps 30:5). "Weeping is likened to a passing traveler who arrives at dusk to spend the night in a place of shelter and proceeds on his way in the morning" (A. Cohen, *The Psalms*, SBB, 86). "The word for *tarry* [RSV], in our verse, suggests by itself the overnight visitor; the line could be crudely translated 'At evening, weeping may arrive for the night'" (Kidner, 146).

v. 6 **felt secure** Cf., "I said in my prosperity" (ESV, NRSV, NLT, NKJV); the psalmist's sense of security was due to his prosperity. "David recorded his prayer for deliverance from his sin of independence of the LORD. In pride he felt secure, thinking he would never be shaken (cf. comments on 15:5). The word 'secure' (*selew*) implies a careless ease. Apparently he had forgotten his need to trust in the Lord and boasted in self-confidence" (Ross, 817). "Easy circumstances and a careless outlook are seldom far apart when this Hebrew root is used for prosperity" (Kidner, 146). "The Hebrew *salwi* ('my ease,' 'my prosperity') usually denotes a state of well-being (cf. 122:7-9) resulting from God's blessings (cf. Dt 8:7-10), but these blessings had led to self-confidence. The wicked pride themselves in their boastful words: 'I will never be shaken' (cf. 10:6). Apparently the psalmist had come to the same point of practical atheism" (VanGemeren, 299).

v. 7 **mountain** I.e., "a metaphor for David's kingdom or his personal fortunes, as long as God sustained him, makes a telling contrast to the flower-like frailty (7b) of his own resources; and Psalm 104:29 applies 7b to all living things" (Kidner, 147), or perhaps, to the strength of his position as king (2Sam 7:9b-16) (Ross, 817).

v. 9 **dust** I.e., a metaphor for the remains of his body. "Will the dust of my body give thanks to you?" (GW); cf. "Once I have turned to dust, how can I praise you or tell how loyal you are?" (CEV).

v. 11 **wailing // sackcloth** Sackcloth is a symbol of mourning, hence the synonymous parallelism with "wailing." "Dancing and joy replace wailing and sackcloth so that songs of praise, not silence, may attend the acts of God" (*The NIV Study Bible*, note on Ps 30:9). The analogy of parallel terms can be represented as follows:
wailing : mourning :: dancing : joy

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

Christmas really is the most wonderful time of the year. Family, friends, food, lights, decorations, gifts and did I mention food? However, sometimes Christmastime is hard. It certainly was the very first Christmas. Jesus was born in a simple stable with no comforts of home. It was likely drafty and smelly. The whole evening, while glorious, was probably frightening for Mary and Joseph as they were alone and delivering their first baby. Shortly after His birth they had to flee the country because of King Herod's order for soldiers to search for the newborn king who was a potential threat to his regime. Worried and fearful, Mary and Joseph picked up their lives and moved to Egypt. But all the while, the Lord was with them. He was their source of strength and peace and security. In our Psalms this week, we see God turning hard things into joyful things. Only He can take a problem and make a promise. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear" (Ps 46:1-2). He will turn our "wailing into dancing" and "restore the joy of our salvation". It's easy to get wrapped up in our hardships and lose our focus on what's most important. As parents, it is important for us to press on in our faith journey through challenges. Our kids are learning to respond to hard times by watching us. I'm praying we choose joy and thankfulness!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Ps 30:1-12

1. Describe what the Lord does for us in Psalm 30:11?
2. According to Psalm 51: 12, where is our joy found?

What Do You Think

In Psalm 30, David is obviously very thankful to the Lord for rescuing him and giving him joy. What is your first response when life is hard? What is your first response when life is great?

What R U Going To Do

Think of a friend, family member or neighbor you would like to invite to church on Christmas Day. Make a card or an ornament and deliver to that person with an invitation! How great it will be to be in God's house on Christmas morning!

Core Comp

Joy - I am happy on the inside no matter what's happening on the outside.

Memory Verse

Lk 2:10-11 – *But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord."*

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30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity 2 Corinthians 13:14

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace Ephesians 2:8-9

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible 2 Timothy 3:16-17

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God Psalm 121:1-2

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ John 1:12

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church Ephesians 4:15-16

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity John 3:16

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion Psalm 82:3-4

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity John 14:1-4

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship 1 Timothy 6:17-19

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship Psalm 95:1-7

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer Psalm 66:16-20

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study Hebrews 4:12

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness Matthew 6:33

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts Romans 12:4-6

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community Acts 2:44-47

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time Colossians 3:17

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith Ephesians

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life Romans 12:1

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy John 15:11

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace Philippians 4:6-7

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness Proverbs 3:3-4

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control Titus 2:11-13

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility Philippians 2:3, 4

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love 1 John 4:10-12

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience Proverbs 14:29

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness 1 Thess. 5:15

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness Philippians 4:5

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope Hebrews 6:19-20

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



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