

Realigned Reality: Psalm 50 (Paul)

In this sermon series, we have been learning how to realign our reality to God's. It's easy to be grateful when things are going well, but it becomes harder in challenging circumstances. In Cam's story, we learned how God met him in a time of trouble and delivered him. God was there for him.

In case you haven't noticed, our world is experiencing a bit of trouble right now. People are living in fear, isolation, and despair. Leaders are at a loss. The church is asking God to make it normal again. The truth is God wants more than "normal." His will is not to make life easy, but to make the church faithful. Ultimately, God's plan has been to create a new reality: the kingdom of God, where Christ is King and all bow to him.

The Book of Psalms is a collection of songs for the church. And while the Psalms begin with blessedness and end with praise, there are times when we don't feel either blessed or like praising. Psalm 50 is for those who are broken and crying out desperately to God. How do we bring something to God, who has everything?

Psalm 50:1-15 (ESV)

*The Mighty One, God the Lord, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting.
Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth.
Our God comes; he does not keep silence; before him is a devouring fire, around him a mighty tempest.
He calls to the heavens above and to the earth, that he may judge his people:
"Gather to me my faithful ones, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!"
The heavens declare his righteousness, for God himself is judge!
"Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, I will testify against you. I am God, your God.
Not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you; your burnt offerings are continually before me.
I will not accept a bull from your house or goats from your folds.
For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills.
I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine.
"If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine.
Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats?
Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and perform your vows to the Most High,
and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me."*

In this Psalm, we see that God is taking his covenant people to court. He will not be silent. He declares that he needs no sacrifices of bulls and goats, since everything is already his. So what can we bring him that matters?

- (1) First, God desires that we bring him a **sacrifice of thanksgiving**. When we declare our gratitude to God we are speaking truth. And when we speak truth and give thanks, we are entering into his heart and drawing closer to him. We see that in Luke 17:11-19, Jesus healed 10 lepers. Only one came back to thank him, and Jesus asked, "Where are the others?" He desires that we show gratitude.
- (2) Second, he desires that we **keep our promises** that we made to him. God is asking us to be faithful to our words. It was "the professionally religious" that Jesus was angry at (the Pharisees). Why? Because they claimed to be like God, but their lives didn't show it. So God wants us to be genuine.
- (3) Finally, God desires that we **call on him**. He is available, and he wants us to cry out to him. It's not just about getting things. God could give us anything, but he doesn't want to raise spoiled brats. But ultimately, he wants to complete his promises in you. Through it all, through suffering and difficulties, we will see God and he will transform our lives.

Ultimately, God desires that we come to him. He is waiting for our response. Every day, God is saying, "I love you," in the world he created, by the death he went to on the cross, and throughout your whole life, from conception to today. The God who reigns is loving and compassionate. God is in control, but he is not controlling. He wants us to grow in genuine participation, through gratitude, authenticity, and petition.

DISCUSSION

Take some time to reflect on what the Spirit is asking you to bring to God. Discuss these questions:

- What can you be grateful for right now? How can we demonstrate that gratitude and love?
- Are you willing to let go of what is “normal” in order to follow God’s will to a better reality? What have you needed to let go of in the past and how has that transformed you?
- Sometimes we believe our circumstances have to be right in order to express gratitude. How can we encourage a habit of thankfulness in ourselves and each other regardless of the circumstances?
- As Christians, what kind of vows have we made to God? What does it mean to be faithful to these promises?
- When has God delivered you in the past? Take a moment to share a story of his deliverance and give glory to him.

POSTURING

“Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.” James 5:16

Confession: (admit, acknowledge, reveal, make known)

- In light of our conversation, is there anything that the Lord is asking you to confess and be made known?

“Praise the Lord! Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever!” Ps 106:1

Thanksgiving: (a prayer expressing gratitude)

- Thank Him for all that He has promised and for His faithfulness upon your life.

EMPOWER

“God will strengthen you with His own great power so that you will not give up when troubles come, but you will be patient. And you will joyfully give thanks to the Father who has made you able to have a share in all that He has prepared for His people in the kingdom of light.” Colossians 1:11,12

- Pray for each other for strength, strategy, wisdom etc.
- Listen in prayer for words of encouragement and edification.
- Spur each other on!