

# Coach House Church

# BEACONS

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## PRAISE HIM PRAISE HIM

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27TH OCTOBER 2020

We recently opened the church for the first time on a Sunday after the lock-down. At that service we sang "Praise my soul the King of Heaven". This song features the repeated refrain "Praise Him Praise Him" which reminds me that it is really important that as Christians we praise God.

This wonderful and well known song was written around the year 1834 by an Anglican Clergyman called Henry Francis Lyte. Lyte was both a capable scholar and musician. In addition to his skill on the flute he excelled in poetry and spoke at least 4 languages. Born in Kelso in Scotland young Henry had a poor start in life however his father had the foresight to send him away to school. Following this he had drifted into the priesthood without any clear vision of where his life was leading however in 1816, whilst ministering to an old priest who was dying, both he and the priest he was ministering to realised that they had both misunderstood the scriptures. Lyte then started to minister evangelically and commenced a life of serving God.

During his time in Brixham, Devon, he established a Sunday school for up to 1000 children. He also ministered to the fishermen working out of Brixham making sure that each boat had a copy of the Bible and a book of daily devotions. It was in his nature to get up early and pray for 2 hours before breakfast. Then in 1834 he wrote this wonderful song.

Praise my soul the King of Heaven is based on psalm 103 and Psalms and songs have a shared purpose. Throughout all of history songs have been important. For most of this time most people couldn't read so they were a useful way of remembering Gods words. In fact the Psalms themselves were written as songs to help the Israelites to remember God and to praise Him. Praise is central to the Psalms, with some Psalms being specifically called Praise Psalms. The Hebrew word for Psalms literally means "praises" and Psalm 103 is a good example of this.

Today we use still songs to praise God and, although we are now able to read for ourselves, songs still form a useful way of remembering elements of scripture. In fact I would go so far as to say that if a song doesn't praise God or remind us of scripture, then we shouldn't be singing it.

So what is praise? Well praise is defined in the dictionary as "to speak highly of, to commend, to extol or to glorify" Put more simply it is when we speak of someone in such a way as to portray their deeds or character above that of others. When we praise God we are elevating Him above ALL others. In our hearts we are recognising that fact and through our mouths we are communicating that to others.

Now I recently spoke about the following Psalm, 104. It is possible that Psalms 103 and 104 were originally written as one Psalm, or it may be that they were written as a pair, to express two different aspects of God. Both Psalms open and close with the same lines "Let all that I am praise the Lord" but whilst Psalm 104 praises God for what he has done, his creation and all that is in it, Psalm 103 praises God for who He is.

Praise my soul the King of Heaven is not a direct copy from the Psalm but rather is a paraphrase of the words of the Psalm put in a poetic way. Remember that, in their original Hebrew, the Psalms both flowed and rhymed in the same way songs do today. This feature is often lost when they are translated, but here the songwriter has managed to re-introduce that musical flow.

The song opens with the line "Praise my soul the King of Heaven, to his feet thy tribute bring". This reflects verse 1 of the Psalm "Let all that I am praise the Lord, with my whole heart I will praise His holy name" The "tribute" we are bringing is our praise. And this opening reminds us of the opening line of the Lords prayer, "Our Father, who art in heaven". Jesus taught this is the right way to open our conversation with God. It is about recognising exactly who God is. You cannot have a relationship with God without recognising exactly who God is. Henry Francis Lyte had no true relationship with God prior to that conversation with the dying priest back in 1816 but later, when he wrote the song, he knew that recognising who God is has to come before we can truly praise God.

The song continues "ransomed, healed, restored , forgiven, who like thee his praise should sing"

The original words of the Psalm are "may I never forget the good things he does for me, He forgives all my sins, and heals all my diseases, He redeems me from death, and crowns me with love and tender mercies"

Henry Francis Lyte expressed these verses as ransomed, healed, restored and forgiven, now this doesn't just sound good, or even summarise the Psalm, what it really does is to introduce Jesus.

The Psalmist had recognised that there was a problem with sin, in fact in verse 10 he says "He does not punish us for all our sins, He does not deal with us harshly as we deserve", he also knew that there would be someone coming who would deal with that sin, but he did not know who or when or even how. We, however, have an advantage here in that we do know who, and when, and how, we know that the saviour the Psalmist expected was Jesus Christ in 33 AD, on the cross.

Today many people know this as a fact but fail to realise that sin requires that a ransom has to be paid. This ransom must be paid after death and as people don't take their riches with them when they die they couldn't possibly pay the ransom no matter how rich they were. Only a living person can pay the debt but the debt is only due after death. This means that only a person who has died and is now alive can pay. The only person who meets this description is Jesus himself, "the Alpha and Omega, who once was dead but now is alive". Now there is no way that I can pay this ransom however Jesus can and is willing to also pay that ransom for anyone who is willing to worship Him. Jesus said "I am the way the truth and the life. No-one can come to the Father except through me"

Praise is about elevating someone above yourself or others. It is about someone who is better than others, it is about someone who has done something no-one else has done. It is about saying it, telling others about it, enthusiastically and truthfully from the bottom of your heart.

Jesus Christ is the only person to have died and who is now alive, He is the only person to have paid the price of my sin, He is the only person to have died on a cross to save me, he is the only person who can direct my life and make any sense of it, He is the only person who can heal my illnesses, He is the only person truly worthy of my praise and worship.

We have many reasons to praise God, some of which are listed in the Psalm and in the song. It is good to consider these things from time to time and whether you

use the Psalm or the Song to help you doesn't matter as both are full of wonderful reasons to praise God.

From His forgiveness to His healing, from His mercy to His grace, from His faithfulness to His compassion we have so many reasons to praise God.

In our human weakness we cannot help but recognise that God is exactly as described in Psalm 103, verse 3 of the song states;

"Father-like He tends and spares us, well our feeble frame He knows, In His hands He gently bears us, rescues us from all our foes, Praise Him Praise Him, Praise Him Praise Him, widely as His mercy flows"

Amen



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