

# Coach House Church

# BEACONS

---

## MADNESS

---

15 APRIL 2021

It's mad. Praise is given to God because people experience God in the florid colours of everyday life. So I have a question for you.

What experience of life do you think led the Psalmist to say this? (in Psalm 34):

- 8 Taste and see that the Lord is good;  
blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.
- 9 Fear the Lord, you his holy people,  
for those who fear him lack nothing.
- 10 The lions may grow weak and hungry,  
but those who seek the Lord lack no good thing.

A priest offering a sacrifice? A king celebrating a battle victory? A prophet exhorting the crowd? You'd be giving good guesses but it doesn't even come close.

Let's look at the substance of these verses and then see how it was composed, before we look ahead to consider why:

In verse 8: The psalmist thinks of God like food to be tasted. You can't taste food just by looking at it, however beautiful it is. You can't just smell it, however good it smells. To properly experience food, you must actually eat it. Moreover, as someone who's tasted a gorgeous meal and offered their friend a spoon to try it, so the Psalmist insists that we must experience God to fully grasp his goodness.

Before we even reach verse 9, God is now a refuge – a fortress or place of safety which you would enter. Somewhere, or someone, with who you experience safety.

Verse 9 moves us on to fear. Why should we fear God? Well, those who approach God lack nothing. He is powerful and authentically awesome and can provide for all needs so that we lack nothing. He is worthy of our respect.

Verse 10 switches spices and adds in the action of seeking in it's second half. Not only those who fear God lack nothing, but those who seek him out. He is awesome, but he is also to be known.

Taste God, fear God, seek God lack nothing and experience goodness. That is the flavour of the passage. So what situation caused it to be written? What amazing circumstances led to its production?

Madness. King David wrote this Psalm, but at this time, he wasn't yet king. In fact, he was on the run for his life from Saul (the previous king) who wanted him dead. That would be a fitting context for the words above, but the setting is even more specific.

The preamble to Psalm 34 reads this: "Of David. When he pretended to be insane before Abimelek (/or Achish), who drove him away, and he left." The story behind this is in 1 Samuel 21:10-15 which gives a fuller picture of events.

Here it is:

10 That day David fled from Saul and went to Achish king of Gath. 11 But the servants of Achish said to him, "Isn't this David, the king of the land? Isn't he the one they sing about in their dances:

"Saul has slain his thousands,  
and David his tens of thousands'?"

12 David took these words to heart and was very much afraid of Achish king of Gath. 13 So he pretended to be insane in their presence; and while

he was in their hands he acted like a madman, making marks on the doors of the gate and letting saliva run down his beard.

14 Achish said to his servants, "Look at the man! He is insane! Why bring him to me? 15 Am I so short of madmen that you have to bring this fellow here to carry on like this in front of me? Must this man come into my house?"

Imagine basing your Psalm of praise on that, but it fits perfectly. David was on the run. He runs to Saul's enemies to hide out (a bad idea), gets found out, deceives them into thinking he's mad, and is able to escape them at the beginning of the next chapter. When we take this together with all of Psalm 34 we can see this as an episode when God miraculously delivers David.

So what can we learn from the origins and content of this Psalm?

### **1. God is bigger than our blunders**

Psalm 34 emphasises God's deliverance, and as we saw, the value of fearing God and living his way so that our lives are blessed. However in 1 Samuel 21, we can see that David's fear of Achish and Saul, not God, motivated him to pretend insanity. Secondly, he explicitly says that one aspect of a godly life is to "keep your tongue from evil and your lips from telling lies" In Psalm 34:13 – but... he lied and deceived Achish (or Abimhelech as he is also known), and pretended to be mad.

In the heat of the moment we make big mistakes. However, as we see from David's experience, God kindly rescued him anyway despite him lying and despite his fear of what others might do to him. This should turn our eyes to the grace and goodness of God who rescues us, through Jesus, despite all the wrong we have done.

### **2. The benefits of 'tasting and seeing'**

David wants us to grasp hold of God and his goodness at all times. He uses the language of tasting, fearing, seeking, taking refuge to emphasise this. When David reflects on this very strange incident, he sees it as a prime example where God was kind to him and rescued him. No doubt as he looked back on this event, and many others in his life, he could see

God rescuing him time and time again. If we trust in God, good will ultimately always come of it.

***3. Don't stand at the sidelines, jump right in!***

The goodness of God is there to be experienced, so don't miss out. David got things wrong in trusting God, and so will you. However, God's goodness is there to be experienced for all people. This Psalm points us forwards to the ultimate act of God's goodness to us: sending Jesus to earth so that we could know God and have a restored relationship with him. The point of Jesus coming to earth was so that he could save sinners like you and me. Through him we can taste the goodness of God in all circumstances, no matter how trying. It's mad, but God wants to know us and show his goodness to us.

***I hope you experience this goodness too.***



---

## JONNY KNIGHT



*Coach House Church*

leadership@coachhousechurch.org // 0161 432 5604

the coach house church, 222 wellington road north, stockport sk4 2qn