

The Harvest Hymn ■ | Psalm 65 ■

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Preacher: Pastor Patrick Dailey

[0:00] Welcome to Ontario Community Church, where we're dedicated to encouraging, equipping, and engaging lives for Christ. Located in Ontario, Oregon, Pastor Patrick Daley preaches insightful sermons from the Word of God, offering practical applications for modern living.

We're delighted to share this sermon with you. Well, good morning, everyone, and happy New Year to all of you. It's great to be with all of you here this morning, the last day of 2023.

We are closely approaching 2024. And I want to put this question up on the screen and something to think about in your notes. You'll see we have a two-pager this time.

We have our notes, and then the other side, the questions, if you'd like to write in a response or a time for reflection.

And so I want to ask you guys to kind of open up with this question, think about it, or feel free to respond when you'd like to. What blessing from God stood out to you this year in 2023?

[1:09] So I want you to take a moment, just think about that real quick. What was it that stuck out to you this year? You don't have to respond, that's all right.

It's just something to think about, because you know what, time is flying by so quickly. I cannot believe my children as quick as they are growing. My son, Aaron, is almost four years old, which means that the boys will be three and the girls will be two, which is just a nice little progression that's happening on here.

And you know what, this New Year's Eve, it is such a fun time for us to stay up late and to ring in the new year. How many of us are gonna stay up and tell the new year?

And I don't see a lot of hands up there, so I know some of us have bedtimes. Look, I know with having five kids, I stay up late anyways. And so I'm probably gonna be ringing in the new year's, putting the children to bed.

But it's definitely a good time for us to watch different celebrations or parties or the ball dropping in New York. And it's just a really great way for us to celebrate the ending of a year and the beginning of the new year.

[2:23] And as we are ending this year 2023 and entering into 2024, our sermon today is going to be based off of Psalm 65, which is known as the Harvest Hymn.

It's the Harvest Hymn of Praise and Thanksgiving, which speaks to all people. This Psalm, it reveals the goodness and the glory of God.

And what a great way for us to end this year with gratitude, with praise and thanksgiving for what God has done for us this year in our lives and the lives of our families or maybe people you know. But before we get any further, I'd actually like for us to let's open in prayer and then we'll get right to it. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, we thank you for giving us this time and this opportunity to gather together here in this place at the end of the year in 2023, here on New Year's Eve.

We thank you for giving us so much, this gift of life, and we are grateful. May we be grateful, may we be thankful. We pray that our hearts are filled with encouragement to believe in you, to love you and to love others as Christ has commanded.

[3:39] We thank you for being with us in the highs and in the lows of this life. We thank you for being a good and a faithful God and we ask that the Holy Spirit is with us today as we go through this message from Psalm 65, the harvest hymn.

May our hearts be opened to love you and may our ears be receptive to hearing the truth from your word and may our eyes be open to you and to your love.

It is in Jesus' name that we pray and we all say together, amen. Amen. All right, so our scripture reading is gonna be here on the screen. It's gonna be Psalm 65. It's gonna be on page 567 to 568. So Psalm 65. Let's go ahead and read together or follow along. Praise is due to you, O God in Zion. And to you shall vows be performed. O you who hear prayer, to you shall all flesh come. When iniquities prevail against me, you atone for our transgressions.

[5:00] Blessed is the one you choose and bring near to dwell in your courts. We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, the holiness of your temple.

By awesome deeds you answer us with righteousness. O God of our salvation, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas.

The one who by his strength established the mountains being girded with might. Who stills the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, the tumult of the peoples, so that those who dwell at the ends of the earth are in awe of your signs.

You make the going out of the morning and the evening to shout for joy. Now this part here is pretty significant here. You visit the earth and water it.

We'll go further into that. You visit the earth and water it. You greatly enrich it. The river of God is full of water. You provide their grain for so you have prepared it.

[6:07] Your water it furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with showers and blessing its growth. You crown the year with your bounty.

Your wagon tracks overflow with abundance. The pastures of the wilderness overflow. The hills gird themselves with joy. The meadows clothe themselves with flocks.

The valleys deck themselves with grain. They shout and sing together for joy. What a beautiful Psalm that is speaking.

It's known, as I said, it's known as the harvest hymn. Or the harvest psalm and for good reason because God is watering the earth. He is cultivating it and he takes care of creation.

And as you have read this verse, I want you to think for yourself this question that it is where has God taken care of you? It's just like our opening question, right?

[7:08] Where can you think of where God has taken care of you? I chose this psalm because the closing of one year and the beginning of another year, we should look back at all of the blessings that God has given to us in the highs and the lows of this life, the good, the bad and even the ugly.

God is there with us and he is for us. The imagery that is used throughout the Psalm, it uses agricultural language that speaks of how God provides and does so in abundance.

And in order for us to understand this Psalm better, we need to break it down into three different categories and you'll find it in your notes. You'll see here approach to God, answer from God and adoration to God.

So we'll start with that first section. Let's put that on the screen. It is approach to God. And this is the idea that we should approach God through our prayers.

We know that God hears our prayers through worship and praise, specifically as the verse is saying, praise is due. And let's put that next part on there.

[8:18] Praise is due. Such an interesting wording that we find in this Psalm. It's speaking of praying to God in silence. The silent prayer is something that is found throughout scripture, just as mentioned in your notes.

And for Samuel chapter one verse 13 and Psalm 139 verse 23, you have Hannah's silent prayer where she is praying with intentionality to the Lord.

She's speaking with her lips and some people are thinking she's drunk when she's doing that, which when I read that, I think that's kind of funny that someone is thinking that, but she's praying to the Lord with such intentionality.

And then on Psalm 139, there's David's invitation for God to search his thoughts. God knows our thoughts and to invite God to know your thoughts is, that's a little bit challenging, I admit.

Do you want God to know your thoughts or have you asked God to search your thoughts? That's certainly a challenge, but we see in that Psalm David's invitation. And just as we sing, we make a joyful noise through worship and praise, through lifting our hands, through singing together, there's also a time for those moments of silence and reverence to our God.

[9:32] And so what I want us to do, I want us to take a moment of silent prayer right now. I want to set a timer right now for one minute. And I want you to think of something or someone that you can pray for.

We'll do this for one minute because how important it is for us to pray together. So let's pray in silence. This can be for your friends or your family.

All right.

That's one minute. And it certainly seems kind of dragged on, doesn't it? We think of times of being silent. You know, for some of us, doing something like this isn't easy, but for others, it can be difficult.

It just kind of depends on where you are at. These things definitely take practice, but there's such an importance of taking time with the Lord in praying in silence.

[11:18] And this week, I invite you to take a moment and take time to pray in silence to the Lord. That can be opening your Bible. That can be maybe calling someone earlier and say, hey, how can I pray for you?

And when you're done with the phone call, then taking time to pray in silence. It takes, it seems certainly harder to do that, you know, with these little things we call phones that we love so much, right?

They can ping and ring and they can do all these things that kind of distract us. And sometimes we need to either turn it off or put it in airplane mode or maybe put it away in the car for a little bit.

I've done that before, but certainly, I invite you sometime this week to take a moment, maybe even if it's just a few minutes, to pray in silence and connect with the Lord.

You'd be surprised how the Lord will speak to you in those silent moments. And when bad occurrences happen to us in our family, in our community, it is God who is the answer.

[12:22] It is God who provides salvation in Jesus Christ. God provides safety. He provides security and quite honestly a better alternative.

When hearing about things that are happening in the world or happening in this country or in the community, I cannot help but think of how there is such messiness, how there is such sin and there's such division in our world.

Just hearing even about what happened here in Ontario, these young teenagers fighting amongst each other. They need to come to the Lord and see that there's a better alternative than fighting amongst each other.

Just think about how important it is to see that God provides a better alternative. And how blessed are we to all be called by God and to draw near to Him.

Because God extends an invitation for all of us to have that relationship with Him. God extends this invitation for us to believe in the Lord.

[13:29] For as Scripture says, believe in the Lord and be saved. And as we believe in Him, as we place our faith and trust in the Lord, it is God who provides for all that we need.

God will put us on a trajectory, a better path, a better alternative, for God is the provider and He is faithful to us.

And although the language in the verse is speaking of the temple, we can see that there's a connection even with spiritual feeding today that we find when we attend church or we attend as a congregation together.

Because God gives us spiritual feeding through His word and that can be through preaching and teaching of the word of God and there's fulfillment that comes to Him. When we come to God, we worship Him in the church.

And I know in the future we worship the Lord in heaven. We will be satisfied with the goodness of God. And this leads us to our second part, which is answer from God.

[14:35] You see, our God is the God of salvation. And like I was saying, He provides the answer with righteousness through Jesus Christ. And God does this through His awesome deeds.

When we were reading in there in Psalm 65, I actually wanna open it real quick. Something that's very interesting in here.

It's in that verse five. By awesome deeds you answer us with righteousness, oh God of salvation, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas.

What's so interesting is that word awesome deeds. I wanna go ahead and put that on the screen here. Awesome deeds, it speaks of the power that God has, right?

You probably think of the song, our God is an awesome God, right? Or how God is awesome in power. What's very interesting about that wording though, is very similar to the fear of the Lord.

[15:45] When we hear the fear of the Lord, some of us think, oh, you need to be afraid of the Lord? Well, be afraid of the Lord if you don't know Him. But when we're talking about the fear of the Lord, it's having that awe and that sense of reverence and respect for who God is.

The awesome attribute of God, it speaks of God's power. It speaks of being in awe, but it's also a reverential fear, right? Being reverent to God, it's very similar to the fear of the Lord.

So when you're reading the awesome deeds of the Lord, think of the power that God has. God's might, God's strength, His ability to create the universe.

Think of that awe-inspiring ability that God has. So His awesome deeds is very powerful. And God gives us hope to all the ends of the earth.

You know that reminds me of? It reminds me of how the message of the gospel is to be proclaimed to all of the world.

[16:44] By awesome deeds, right? That reverential power, you answer us with righteousness and that righteousness is Jesus Christ. Oh, God of salvation, because our God provides salvation, the hope of all the ends of the earth.

And the farthest seas, it stretches to all of the earth. And that's very powerful language here. That the gospel message is to be proclaimed to all of the earth just as Christ commands us to go out into the world and to make disciples and to baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The rest of the verse speaks an ancient language of God making the mountains. And God is so powerful that He can calm the seas. Remember when Jesus said, peace be still when He's out in the boat, right?

That same power from the Lord is manifest in Christ, saying peace be still and that power to calm the seas. It speaks of the depths of God's power.

And this leads us to the third part, which is adoration to God. And because of the hope that God gives to us, we should respond with appreciation, with thanksgiving and with adoration.

[18:02] And what beautiful language it's used to describe God. It says here, okay? Verse nine, you visit the earth and water it.

And I love, let's put that wording on there. When you read that, you visit the earth and water it. The first thing that I think of is like a gardener who has a, what is that called?

Like a little bucket or something, right? They're watering the plants, right? Watering can, okay. So how, when you're going to tend your garden, right? You're gonna use your watering can, little drips are coming out and watering the plant, right?

Well, when you read that on the surface, you're thinking, okay, well, that's how God is taking care of that, but there's much more depth to that. That word that is being used that God waters the earth is speaking how God is cultivating.

How God is taking care of it. So it's much more than just rain that's being, you know, put on the ground, right? How God is in control of the clouds and rains is coming down. It's talking about how God is taking care, cultivating the earth.

[19:08] So it's a much deeper word than that. And I mean, that's, it's a fine translation in our ESV, but it's something that is just very interesting. It's an unusual Hebrew word, God cultivating, providing for enriching the earth, so to speak.

This verse is speaking of how God takes care of the earth and provides for it abundantly. God visits the earth and some translations say, causes it to overflow.

That word waters it is found four times in scripture. And in the other verses, it's talking about an overflowing of abundance. So it's a beautiful imagery of watering it, right?

So it's much more than a watering can for the earth. It's how God is overflowing. He's sharing his love to the earth and taking care of it abundantly. The verse goes further into talking about the river of God being full of water, preparing the grain and preparing the earth.

If you look at, let's see here, the end of verse nine, you provide their grain for so you have prepared it.

[20:19] Now, not to get too much into the Hebrew, it's referencing the earth. It's actually not a repetition of grain, but it's speaking of the earth.

So you prepare or provide their grain and so you have prepared the earth. That's what the it is referring to. Our earth having the ability to have life goes to show God's blessing and provision over the earth.

God crowns the year with his bounty, which speaks of how God continues to give by providing for the earth and for humanity. And I know there are some people out there who believe that God set the earth into motion and just left.

Well, that's not true because God is still there with us, everlasting to everlasting. He is faithful. So God still is there with us just as the verse says, where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them.

God didn't just create the earth and left it, he is still there with us, taking care of the earth and taking care of us.

[21:30] And even though we live in a world where there is sin, there's greed, there's darkness and imperfections, we can still see that God is at work. Year after year, God sees to it that what has been set into motion will be set into completion.

Because of all that God has done for nature, the last two verses speak of how they will sing and shout for joy. And because of the blessings that we receive from God, from nature providing for us and how God has blessed you, I want us to be encouraged to exhibit thankfulness and gratitude for all that God has done for us.

And our closing question for today is, what are ways you can bring the love of Christ to your neighbor and to your community? Because when we're talking about approaching to God with everything that we are, that God responds by providing salvation for us and we continue to worship the Lord.

We continue to be thankful. And I want you to think about that. Because of this saving grace that we receive by believing in Jesus Christ, that should be a call for us to share in our faith with others, to share the gospel message.

It is more critical than ever before for us to share in the good news of the gospel so that people will make a decision for Christ that lives will be transformed and that we love our community through service and through prayer.

[23:01] I'm reminded of how we should pray without ceasing. And like I had mentioned, I chose Psalm 65 as a way to end 2023 and to begin to enter into 2024.

We do not know what the future holds, but one thing is certain, my friends, is that God is with us. This Psalm 65, the harvest hymn or the harvest song, teaches us that God keeps his promises and provides salvation to all who believe in him.

Our Lord invites us into a relationship with him to taste and see his goodness. And sometimes we worry so much about the future. What is my one year plan going to look like?

What am I doing in the first or the second quarter of this year? Or what am I going to wear, right? Whatever it is. I'm reminded of how Christ tells us not to worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will have its own troubles, won't it?

May we place our trust in him as we approach this new year. Certainly, the world that we live in is not perfect. And life has its challenges, it has its highs and its lows, right?

[24:18] It's hills and its valleys. It's good and bad and sometimes it's ugly. Which is why we need to place our faith in that, which is constant.

Put your faith in Jesus Christ. Christ offers eternal security, salvation through belief in him. And it is in this saving grace that we are called as to be disciples, to grow as disciples, and to do good in his name.

I urge us as a church not to be ashamed of the word of God, not to be ashamed of the gospel, but to engage our neighbor and our community through sharing in our faith, our testimony, and through service.

As we have gone over Psalm 65, we have learned that the Lord takes care of the earth much like he takes care of us. God provides for his creation and the animals as well.

You know what's so interesting, kind of a fun fact. Isn't it interesting that the birds and the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the fish of the sea, they know where to go, right? It's almost as though God programmed them, right?

[25:29] Told them where they need to go in the winter or in the spring or the summer. But for us, how common is it for people to not know what they want in life? That is because God gives us the ability to choose him, to have a relationship, to discover him through the word of God.

That we have that free will, so to speak, as opposed to the programming that exists with, I mean, you see the birds that are flying, they're going through their migrational patterns, right?

They know what they're gonna do. Now, I don't know about you, I don't know where the birds go. And every single, what is it, a flock of geese that's flying or the fish in the sea when they're going from one area to the next, it's very profound.

And try doing that without a GPS or try doing that without a map and just knowing your instincts, where you need to go, be rather difficult. I don't think everyone can do that.

I'm sure some people may know how to do that, but it's just thinking about that, that these animals know where to go. But for us as human beings, God gives us this desire to draw near to him, to find more to this life.

[26:34] And for a lot of us that feel a sense of emptiness or we don't feel fulfilled or we feel like something's missing in our life, that void, that emptiness can be fulfilled in Christ.

God set into motion the universe, the stars, the rotation of the earth and the growth of the plants and the animals. When we think of those plants that we're watering, right, that we're taking care of, the end of the day, you can give it all the sunlight and the nutrients you want and sometimes you just have a bad plant.

But it is God who allows that plant to grow and become fruitful. Something for us to keep in mind. 2024 will undoubtedly bring its own challenges.

I don't know what they are gonna be. I don't know the future. But like I said, Christ tells us not to worry about tomorrow. In Matthew chapter six, verses 25 through 34, is where Christ is saying that we should seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all of these things shall be added unto you.

And therefore we should not worry about tomorrow. Today has enough troubles of its own. Look forward to the future and know that it will have its valleys, its hills and its valleys, its highs and its low.

[27:50] I want us to focus on how we can love our neighbor and love our city. And the question that has been on my mind and on my heart, let's put this on the screen.

It's kind of our question to think about for this next year is, how can we share the love of Christ with our neighbors? It's not an easy question to answer because how you may respond to that may differ than the next person.

Your story is different than the person sitting next to you. How you came to the Lord may be different. And how we can share in our faith and love our neighbors, that is the call for us to do. I felt moved by this question that maybe this should be our emphasis for the next year on how we can be present in the community and extend an invitation for people to come through the doors of the church, to come and see the love that Jesus Christ has for them, and to love one another as Christ has loved us.

And this year, we'll be launching a new children's ministry program, and we will be exploring ways that our church can be present in the community to love Ontario.

[29:07] Our goal for this next year is to be a beacon of Christ's light to others, by sharing in the word of God, by sharing in the gospel, sharing in our testimony, and through service.

And in the coming weeks, I will be speaking more about these new programs, these new initiatives that we will be doing to be present, to invite children to come. And I want us to think about our empty pews that we have next to us.

And I want us to imagine who could be sitting there next to us, next week, or in the coming weeks. Imagine children or teenagers. Imagine young people, imagine older people.

Imagine us all coming together, singing praises to our Lord and our God, knowing that we are doing good in the name of the Lord. Now, I have to remind us, we're not saved by what we do.

We're saved by grace through faith, but there's still the call after being saved to do good in the name of the Lord. I want us to be passionate and on fire for the Lord, to have that faith in Christ, to be on fire for the word of God, encouraging people to make a decision for Christ, and about loving one another.

[30:24] Let us find ways this year to share in our testimonies in the word of God, and how we can love our neighbor. And just as God cares for the universe, He gives us the great commission to go into the world and to make disciples.

He calls us to love our neighbors and to serve them. This is our mission and our joy as we step into 2024. Let's pray together.

And Heavenly Father, as we close this year, this 2023, may we learn, may we be grateful and thankful for your love, for your provision, and your cultivation, how you take care of us and the world.

In every high and every low, in every hill and every valley, you are there for us. Your love is everlasting and it is sustaining, and you provide hope in Jesus Christ.

We ask for your guidance as we step into 2024 as a church and for each of us individually. May we carry the lessons of this past year into the future.

[31:29] May we learn to trust in you more deeply and follow you more faithfully. Help us to be beacons of your love in our community, sharing the hope of Christ, the gospel message.

May others see that there is a better way, that there is a better alternative that exists in you. Let us do all of these things in your name. May we be your hands and feet in the world.

May our actions reflect your love and your word of truth. Give us the courage to share our faith, to share it with others, and know that in sharing, it's the planting of seeds to others.

And as we close this service, we ask for your blessing upon us. May your peace that surpasses all understanding guard our minds and our hearts. May your love inspire us to love others, just as you have loved us.

And may your joy be our strength in the days to come. It is in the precious name of Jesus that we pray and we all say together, amen. Thank you for tuning in to the Ontario Community Church sermon podcast.

[32:38] For more about our church and how you can get involved or support our mission, please visit ontariocommunitychurch.org. May God's blessings be with you.