

Extraordinary Praise to the Extraordinary God (Psalm 47)

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[0 : 00] Today we are taking a bit of a detour from Genesis to Psalm 47, and so Pastor Albert will be preaching. So before that, let's just have a look at it. Psalm 47, and we'll just read it first.

Clap your hands, all you nations. Shout to God with cries of joy. For the Lord Most High is awesome, the great King over all the earth. He subdued nations under us, peoples under our feet. He chose our inheritance for us, the pride of Jacob, whom he loved. God has ascended among shouts of joy. The Lord admit the sounding of trumpets.

Sing praises to God, sing praises. Sing praises to our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth. Sing to Him a psalm of praise.

God reigns over the nations. God is seated on His holy throne. The nobles of the nations assemble as the people of the God of Abraham. For the kings of the earth belong to God. He is greatly exalted.

[1 : 11] Thank you, Pastor Albert. Thank you. Hi, Church. I've actually preached this in the beginning of the year for Saturday and Sunday morning.

But two months down the road, things changed so much. There wasn't a war there then. It wasn't that. It was 20,000 cases each day then.

Yeah. So, but I like to share that as, even now with what's going on at the moment, I think we are kind of in time and space.

As we've been studying Genesis, right? Genesis reminds us that God is outside time and space because He created time and space. But we are one of the creatures that He has created.

And we're inside time and space. And we are very much limited in a sense, right? That's why we need to look beyond our circumstances, the time and the space that we are within, and look towards God.

[2 : 26] I mean, if we are in that kind of situation, are we willing to praise? You know, what Gary shared, you know, this past week has been so discouraging.

Actually, I was isolating last week this time. Actually, I was so tired. I was actually in bed. And I was kind of half asleep and half awake. And I said, oh, English service is actually praising now.

And I'm in bed, you know. And I kind of felt a little bit guilty. And I tested. I was waiting for the result. And the next day, somebody kindly gave me a rat.

And I tested and it was negative. And the PCR came the next evening and it was double negative. So that's fine. It was not positive. Double negative was not positive. Yeah.

So I was, oh, all right. That was good. But as I reflected why I was so tired, you know, and I just kind of felt that it could have been a lot of these things that kind of build up in the past.

[3 : 26] It was so stressful. As I think Pastor William would have kind of experienced that as well. I think everybody of us would experience that. You know, so much things change.

And the government keeps bringing out new faces, you know. And how are we going to deal with them? And, yeah, it's just that it gets too much sometimes.

But we still, I think the more the uncertainty, the more of the changes in our lives, the more we need to look upon God and keep praising Him.

All right. The psalm, you know, it was, my title was kind of extraordinary praises to the extraordinary God. And sometimes we feel that, oh, I, you know, God is great.

God is extraordinary. God is almighty. God is almighty. But most of the time, I don't feel it. I feel I'm under this strain, you know, in time and space.

[4 : 29] I don't really feel the extraordinariness of God, you know. How do I praise? It's okay to sit in a church, you know, with good bands and good music and I feel good.

And we go dinner afterwards and I'm not, you know, tested positive with COVID. All right, I'll praise God, you know. But if I head into troubles like these, our brothers and sisters in Ukraine, you know, tomorrow maybe a bomb will come straight into my home.

Am I still able to pray, to praise? The answer is, for the psalmist, yes, of course, because our God is great. Yeah.

So the psalm, actually, it was kind of a, it was composed and as a song. But later on, it was kind of edited into a setting of a worship setting.

But the original composition of the psalm, the psalmist was actually commanding all the people, okay, everyone, not just Israelites, but all kinds, all people in the world to offer extravagant, exuberant, exuberant praises to God.

[5 : 45] Because he is the ruler of the world and he actually had the compassion to choose Israel. That's quite amazing.

The almighty God, awesome God, who would actually would choose one single ethnic people. But it was Israel.

It was Israel. It was Israel. And we thought, why not Chinese, you know? But God has his purpose. And we don't know. We don't know. But as we read the psalm today, I pray, I pray that the Holy Spirit to really remind us and teach us and inspire us.

Our God is an awesome God. We know that song. We sing, our God is an awesome God. But how much do we really believe our God is that awesome God and who is sovereign enough that we need to, whether I like it or not, whether we feel it or not, that we offer our utmost praises anytime, anywhere, despite my feeling and my circumstances.

I pray that by the end of this message, that we will somehow ask God to take us to another level.

[7 : 07] And we think, I think, I'm pretty good at praising God already. There is no end. There is no limit. We all need to learn.

You know, when we get to heaven, we're going to praise him all the time, right? We better learn better. How do we praise him now? Right? And don't learn to over there, you know. No one will teach you there.

We'll learn it here. Okay? So, the Psalm actually, 47, a lot of Bible commentators says it's actually connected to 46.

And 46, we know that verse, be still and know that I am God. I am God. God is my refuge, my help, you know. And so, the context of these two Psalms were actually, it was a war and conflict.

And somehow, in 47, it actually celebrated the king has actually won that war, that battle. All right? But during the course, it was nothing, it was nothing calm.

[8 : 11] You know, we think, be still and know that I am God. It's for our devotion, you know. Be still and just sit there and listen to the quiet voice of God. No, actually, that verse, it was saying God was commanding all these people, all these nations, all these kings, was trying to invade Israel.

God said to them, be still, stop every one of you and know that I am God. I'm the God of Israel. Be still, stop everything you're doing. It's that greatness and the awesomeness of God.

All people, all nations to be stood before him, to stand in awe before the awesome God. So, it was in that kind of context, Psalm 46 and 47, when the people of God, the Israelites, they know that God is our help.

When the nations and the king were coming up before the cities and trying to invade them, they know God is with them. God is their awesome God.

I think this Psalm has a lot to say to us. It's not just when we are in troubles, in all sorts of circumstances, all sorts of encounters we have in life, we have that assurance.

[9 : 35] God is with us. God is with us. But that God is an awesome God. Now, there were several types of Psalms, okay? Well, I think we shared it before, okay? I won't go into detail, but this particular Psalm, oops, it's actually called the Enthronman Psalms.

What did it mean? It means it was actually in a, what they call the cultic worship of Israelites.

Like the New Year's, there was various festivals in New Jerusalem, okay? All these people, they have to come, come to worship the Lord once a year or at least once of their lifetime.

They come to worship, and in Jerusalem there was all very spectacular worship practices, and there was priests, there were singers, there was all kind of worship setting.

And it was very extravagant and very, yeah, not like us. They will have processions, they will, you know, bands of people running or circling around the city of Jerusalem and come into the city gate and say, Who is coming?

[10:47] The King of glory is coming. Lift up your head, you know, lift up your gates. And it was, you know, very exciting stuff, you know, compared to what we are offering today, okay? I'm not saying that we need to copy, but I think it's that kind of attitude we need to come before him.

And that kind of enthronement, it was like God was kind of being enthroned as a king. Of course, God is king, but somehow it was in them, it was this kind of symbolic actions to enthrone God as the king of kings and the lord of the lords.

Okay? And this kind of psalm was stressing the sovereignty of God. Okay? And the structure of this Psalm 47 is very simple, very simple.

It kind of has two parts. The first, verse 1, was commanding the people to shout, to clap their hands. And the verses 2 to 4, to give the reasons. And the 6, verse 6, and commanded the people to sing praises.

And in 7 and 9, to give the reasons. And the climax of the Psalm is verse 5, that is the ascension of God. God ascended.

[11:59] Okay? A very simple structure of the Psalm, but a very, very, a very fantastic kind of a message in there. And I believe that if we truly understand, appreciate what the Psalm has said to us, we will follow suit in praising our Lord.

Okay? So, the first part is we're saying that our God is very extraordinary. Okay? How extraordinary? Firstly, our God is an awesome God.

God is an awesome God. In verse 2. When the Psalm was commanding the people to clap their hands, to shout. Okay? Give them the reason. The reason was, our God is an awesome God.

How awesome is our God? I think sometimes we kind of overuse this word awesome, you know? And somebody gives you a drink, oh, awesome! Yeah. When you feel hot and somebody, you know, you take, you know, you're in an air con room and you say, oh, awesome, it's cool.

You know? No. Awesome is not like that. Awesome. Really, really understand the word awesome. Our God is an awesome God. That means our God is extraordinary, beyond my comprehension.

[13:19] I think our words cannot limit the awesomeness of God. In Exodus, in Exodus, I was reading this year's Bible plan now.

Okay? When God has led the Israelites out of Egypt, okay, and into, as before they went into the Promised Land, they, the Lord deliberately asked them to encamp behind, I mean, before the Red Sea.

And when they were encamping there, and the Egyptian soldiers were coming at them, right? And God did a miracle, right?

And took them to the cross to the other side in dry land, and just swamped all the Egyptian soldiers with the water coming in.

And they all died. And after that, Moses composed that song. And here it was, one verse, it was there. Exodus 15, verse 11.

[14:39] Who among the God is like you, Lord? Who is like you? Majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders.

This is our God. This is our God. And in Isaiah chapter 6, we all know that.

When Isaiah, Isaiah, the priest, was offering sacrifices to God, and suddenly he saw the angels of the Lord. And he knew there was God before him.

Holy, holy, holy. And he said, woe to me. I'm dead meat. I'm ruined. Because I saw the king. Now, here is the example of the awesomeness of God.

How do we see when we come to worship? Do we come, if we come to worship the awesome God, what kind of attitude I have?

[15:53] What kind of attitude you have as we come? Yes, this is PCBC. This is, you know, we've been here for the last 30 years. We've been worshipping here.

It's nothing, you know, sort of holy in a sense. But somehow, we know God is here. We come to worship the awesome God.

What kind of attitude do we come? How do we dress? Are we, how do we, how do we use our time? Are we here early enough preparing ourselves?

What kind of mentality as we come? Who is leading worship? Oh, okay, I like him leading worship. I'll sing. I don't like him. I don't like her. I will join in singing.

We come to worship the awesome God. I think we need a lot of reminders for ourselves, including myself too. He's a great king.

[16:53] He's a sovereign God. He's almighty. Now, remember, this, the psalmist was commanding everybody in the world, not just Israelites, but everyone.

Everyone, everyone that has breath. I remember, Isaac preached Psalm 150 last year, right? Everyone, everything that has breath.

Praise the Lord. So everybody, we are to come because our God is the God of the whole world, okay? And he, he is the great king amongst all, all the earth.

So this, this, in Roman psalm, it was symbolic for God's reign in the whole world. And, and in verse 9, he says, the shield or the kings of the world, of the earth belong to God.

Everything. It's not, it's not just the God of Israelites. He's God of the whole world. He's a sovereign God. He's an almighty God. So, how do we come as we come to worship the almighty God?

[18:01] He knows you and me. He's, he's got everything in his hand. He's, nothing would surprise him. Nothing would, out of his expectation.

Oh, suddenly, I didn't, oh, I just didn't know Putin would actually fire his missiles. Oh, I, I, I just forgotten about it. No, he knew everything. Everything in his hand.

So, if we come to worship this almighty God, we will have this faith and trust. And the assurance.

Yes, we, I, as a human, I would have my doubts and I would have my fear. And I would have my worry.

Because I'm inside time and space. But my God is a great king. He reigns. He's the almighty God. Nothing surprises him.

[19:01] Right? And thirdly, and he is an affectionate God. He's, he's a God, he would like to build relationship with people.

I don't know why he chose Israelites, didn't choose Chinese. I don't know. That's his amazing, his sovereign will. Okay? But he chose a very small, tiny, small nation.

Even today, tiny little nation. But it impacts the whole world. Right? And he chose Jacob, whom he loved in verse 3 and 4.

And this, this name Yahweh, is a name that is very special to Israelites. It's a covenantal name. Alright?

Yahweh is, it's not a name actually. It's only four consonants in the Hebrew letters. It really doesn't mean much at all. But it's a name that they don't even pronounce. They just say the Lord.

[20:02] Adonai. Okay? But when, when this was written, Yahweh, it was a name that they all know. They all very affectionate because they know that God has chosen them.

It's a name. It's only them. God and his people. So, God is the God who really wants to establish his relationship with his people.

And, and, and with this relationship, he has a purpose. Through this people, not just blessing this nation, but through this nation, will bless the whole world.

Okay? So, God is an awesome God. God is an almighty God. God is an affectionate God. God is an awesome God. God is an extremely wonderful God. God is an extraordinary God.

God is an extraordinary God. And because of this extraordinariness of God, awesome, almighty, affectionate, He is, He has a plan to achieve.

[21:04] Okay? Now, I don't know German. Okay. Pastor William studying his PhD, he has to study German. Because, you have to, right?

Yeah, because why? Because a lot of theologians actually was from Germany. Actually, Germany was very rich in the theological thinking and tradition.

Because Martin Luther, all right? It was a Protestant theology. It was very, very rich in Germany. And a lot of the studies were through the German theologian.

Now, this word, I don't know. So, I checked with Pastor William. It was something like that. Now, what is it?

What is it? It really only means the history of salvation. Okay? Now, what does it mean? It actually is very important when you read the Bible from the first book of Genesis to the last book of Revelation.

[22 : 12] Because that is the history of salvation. Okay? Now, this, Pastor William has translated for me. Okay? I don't want to go into detail.

But you know, from Genesis, okay? To Revelation, the new heaven and the earth. God had a purpose.

All right? Even though man have fell in the Garden of Eden. All right? But God had a purpose. In 315, the 315 we have just read for this month, the Bible verse for this month, that was the first proclamation of salvation in human history.

Okay? Genesis 315. Okay? And God had a purpose to achieve His salvation for all mankind until one day Jesus returns.

Okay? And obviously, Jesus, the cross of Jesus is a very important, very crucial point for humankind. Okay? And this is what we call salvation history.

[23 : 26] Okay? That German word. Okay? God chose Israelites. And out of Israelites, out of Israel, Jesus, the Messiah, was from the Jews.

It was a Jew. Okay? So that, the whole process, was God's purpose to bringing salvation and completion of the salvation when Jesus returned. That is the salvation history.

Eos Christa. Now, why do I say that? If God was not awesome, if God was not almighty, if God was not affectionate, the salvation history cannot be accomplished.

If anything less than those three things about God, if even God was affectionate, it was not powerful, He couldn't have achieved that.

But God was almighty, awesome, but He was not affectionate. He was just used other means.

Right? So, because God is awesome, almighty, and affectionate, He has a purpose in choosing Israelites.

[24 : 36] And today, we, as the people of Christ, the church, we are the new Israelites. We are the new Israel.

We have the obligation to fulfill His plan in our lives. That's why Jesus said, go make disciples of all nations.

And telling them, and baptizing, teaching them. This is the salvation history of God. And we have been chosen to participate in it. But God is powerful.

I mean, God is awesome, almighty, and affectionate. And we have this God with us as we continue to follow Him. So, we have this extraordinary God.

What do we do? So, we offer our extraordinary praises. How? Firstly, with a heart. A joyful and a fervent heart. To clap your hands, to shout with joy.

[25 : 40] I mean, we're pretty reserved, aren't we? What are we Chinese? Well, I mean, you're not Chinese. You're kind of assimilated Kiwis. You know, when you go to All Blacks games in Eden Park, would you just sit there when somebody, you know, score a try?

And you say, oh, yeah, very good. You don't do that. You would shout and scream, yeah, whoa, yeah. You know, I remember there was when All Blacks, when we were playing the World Cup, World Cup was the final year, a couple of times, right?

I remember, were you there? Were you here? Yeah. Even you were, you were about that age. But I remember, I never shouted that much in my, in my, I would never shout that much during worship.

Yeah. But, you know, wow. We're applauding, we're shouting for God, who is awesome, who is almighty, and who is affectionate to me.

But it's not just the outward thing. If we don't have the heart, all these outward actions was just false, made up.

[26 : 54] Okay? Okay? But if we truly have that heart, the heart will drive our outward actions. Do we, do we have the heart to respond to this extraordinary God?

Of course, I mean, next week, suddenly, I don't expect, yay, who is leading worship? Ho, amen, brother! I don't expect that kind of thing.

Because we are us, all right? We don't need to copy and paste other behaviors. But would we actually break through some of our practices or patterns?

I don't, I don't, I'm not used to this. I'm not used to lift my, lift up my hands. I'm not used to clap, you know. Maybe if, if God really inspired me, really I'm touched by God, I could actually kneel down and praise Him.

I think we can break through a little bit in our expression to God. I don't think Pastor William would mind. What is our heart as we come to offer our praises to God?

[28 : 14] And sound, that's even worse, you know. Loud noise, you know. Sound of horns. They were blowing those animals, the horns of the rams.

You know, they were blowing. And it was kind of, it was like, they were blowing that. And some churches do that. And we feel, well, it's kind of weird.

But it's very biblical, actually. So I think it's like Psalm 150, when Isaac was preaching. All kind of instruments, all kinds of things, with the utmost, with the utmost expression, we offer to our extraordinary God.

Maybe God will challenge us this coming year. Maybe we want to just go a little bit more to expressing our thanksgiving, our gratitude, our praises, our worship.

And somehow, we need to have this, I think music is a gift, okay.

[29 : 45] But that, that, we don't just shout with, you know, with no rhythm, right? We just shout anything, anything we want. But when we shout, and we offer the music, and songs, that is beautifully composed.

And you know, in the temple worship, there were specialists. There were people, was really, there were instrumentalists, there were singers.

They offer, they practice and practice, and offer the best to God. So, I think when we offer, our praises to God, we need to have a heart, and we need to, yeah, we need to make loud noises, but also with art.

You know, we come, that's why we need to practice. We need to, people really good in instruments. You know, you ask me to play, but you won't even worship.

But, you know, you need people, you know, good and gifted, and talented in this, offer all these things to God. And God is pleased. Because He's an extraordinary God.

[30 : 53] That's why, offer the best that we have. Extraordinary praises to God. So, so I challenge you. English service, Sunday service, well, they have their, they have their limitations, because they are, you know, they have, they have so much use to their, their kind of pattern, and their, you know, and they've been, that kind of stage in their lives.

It's okay. I think, it's, it's, it's the heart that matters. it's not just what, what we do, how we express outside. But I believe, young people, you know, like you, we still can be shaped, and transformed, by God's, goodness, and help, and helping us to, to really worship, and, and, and praising him, you know, with a little bit more freedom.

I do pray that, the Lord will, will lead us, in the, in, in his way, to, to worship him. Because our God is good, our God is great, and that's why, we come, to worship him.

Now, I like to play a song. A song that was actually, composed by a friend of mine. I, actually, you know her, she's been in, in New Zealand. It was a, a shared hymn, you know, you know, you know, you know, you know, it was, what I call it, Dan Ching.

And she composed that song, The Greatest Blessing. She composed it in Hong Kong, never knew, it was sung in Ukraine. Alright? It was sung by, a bunch of, what they call it, Dai Si Ming, Great Commission Church, in Ukraine.

[32 : 36] It was through, a Chinese pastor, who taught them that song. It was sung in Mandarin, you know, for Ukraine people, to sing in Mandarin. Of course, they know nothing, a single word of it, just, just pronounce the, the wordings.

But, praising God, takes effort. And they were willing to learn. And, and the second verse, they sing, they sing that in, in Ukrainian.

And that, that for me, it was quite touching. So let's, let's, let's have a, have a, have a look at this song, and, and praise God. You know, we can go extra mile, to praise Him.

Alright? Let's, let's, let's have a look at this. Let's, let's have a look at this.

eat it. I'm going to, sing, and Thank you.

[34 : 40] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[37 : 46] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. to him. He is worthy of all praise. Let's pray. Father, I just want to thank you. Thank you for the psalm. You are the king of kings. You are the sovereign God. You are the almighty God.

You are the awesome God and you are the affectionate God. Lord, it's beyond our words, beyond any songs they're described, beyond anything we could feel, we know.
But Lord, you are the great king above all gods. So help us, Lord, because we're created to worship you. And every breath, because our breath are given by you.
And whoever, every breath that we have, we are to worship and praise you. So help us, Holy Spirit. Help us to offer our praises and worship to you, as to you and to you alone. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.
[38 : 58] Amen. Amen. Amen.