

Hallelujah! Rejoicing in God's Abundant Blessings

In her book entitled, *No Other Gospel*, author Carol Ruvalo tells a story from the life of British scholar and military strategist, Thomas Edward Lawrence, better known as Lawrence of Arabia. During WW I, Lawrence had gained the trust of many Arab leaders. Because of this, he was asked to participate in the Paris peace talks following the end of the war. Several Arab leaders accompanied him to Paris, and they all stayed in the same hotel.

Over the time of their stay in Paris, these Arab leaders were introduced to indoor plumbing for the first time in their lives. These men were amazed as they watched enormous amounts of water gushing into bathtubs and sinks at the simple turn of a handle attached to a faucet. Concluding that it was the faucets themselves that produced the water, they found a way to take the handles and faucets from the sinks and bathtubs and put them in their suitcases before checking out of the hotel. It was only later that T.E. Lawrence discovered what they had done and had to explain to them that these handles and faucets were useless when removed from their source of water.

As bizarre as this sounds to 21st century modern, American Christians, we, too, can often be looking in all the wrong places for the “gushing waters” of God’s promised blessings. This illustration has a lot to say to any Christian who believes that we can receive the abundant blessings of Jesus Christ—who is the source of all true blessings—while detaching ourselves from the ways in which we, ordinarily, *receive* God’s abundant blessings. It’s the wisdom and goodness of God that he has determined to pour out the blessings of salvation and sanctification through the ordinary means of word, sacraments, and prayer available, by grace, as we gather for public worship. In his book entitled, *Ordinary*, Westminster Theological Seminary professor and author, Dr. Michael Horton has written these helpful words about the confusion on this issue that’s often in many churches today. He writes:

“American Christianity is a story of perpetual upheavals in churches and individual lives. Starting with the extraordinary conversion experience, our lives are motivated by a constant expectation for The Next Big Thing. We’re growing bored with *the ordinary means of grace*, attending church week in and week out. Doctrines and disciplines that have shaped faithful Christian witness in the past are often marginalized or substituted with newer fashions or methods. The new and improved may dazzle us for a moment, but soon they have become, ‘so [outdated].’”

As we begin our look at Psalm 147 today, let me remind us that this Psalm was sung in the context of the gathered people of God for worship. We should also be reminded of the abundant blessings that 21st century Christians *receive from God* as we gather weekly to *offer* our praise to God through the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Puritan commentator and author, Matthew Henry, writes, “Praising God is work that has its own wages.”

Interwoven throughout this Psalm are themes that speak of God's *wisdom*, his *work* in creation—as well as his work in the lives of his covenant people—and his *word*. In each of the three sections of this Psalm we see contrasts, including contrasts between the wicked and the humble (vs. 6); what God does and *does not* delight in (10-11); and God's special blessings given to his elect only and not to everyone (19-20). We'll look at each of these in turn. Let's begin our look at this Psalm under the heading:

—Praising God for His *Wisdom*

Just as each of the final five Psalms of the Psalter, this Psalm begins and ends with the command to “Praise the LORD!” Verse *one* continues: “For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting.” The word translated “pleasant” carries the idea of something that God's people take great delight in. Although worship of God is commanded—for God's people—this is what *we should want* to do; *we should* look forward to gathering for worship from week to week! It's important to note that this Psalm is set in the context of the children of Judah after their release from captivity in Babylon and was most likely sung—along with other Psalms—at the dedication of the completion of the wall around Jerusalem as recorded for us in Nehemiah 12 (445/444 B.C.).

As we begin this short series from Psalm 147 today, may we be reminded that the “gushing waters” of God's abundant blessings come, not from disconnected faucets, handles, and the trinkets of this world, but they come as we gather with God's people on the Lord's Day under the ministry of word, sacraments, and prayer. May we never get bored with the means of grace, the way in which God *ordinarily* pours out his abundant blessings in the lives of his people.

Rev. Dr. Steve Jones is the pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church PCA in Paxton, Illinois.