

This Is The Day The Lord Has Made

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[0 : 00] Well, if you've got your Bibles in front of you, that would be helpful as we're looking at the Psalm.

And as I said, we're really just going to look at one verse of the Psalm in any great detail today, and it's verse 24, where it says, this is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.

And this is a verse that kind of, it came to me over the last couple of days. I was thinking about what to preach at the beginning of a new year, and as I was thinking and praying about that, my mind went back about 35 years in time to our games hall in Aberdeen, and I used to go to a wee brethren gospel hall on a Sunday afternoon when my dad was studying in Aberdeen, there was no Sunday school in the church that we were in, and I went along to this wee brethren gospel hall, and on a Saturday night they had this thing on where there was games, there was football, there was a tuck shop, that was my two favourite things, football and sweets, and there would be a gospel message, and there was choruses.

And these choruses that we sang 35 years ago, they're all still in my head today. So as I was thinking about a verse for the new year, this chorus was going round in my head, I'm not going to sing it because I haven't got a voice, but it's a chorus that you'll probably have heard.

This is the day that the Lord has made, that the Lord has made, we would rejoice and be gladdened, we would rejoice and gladden it. And this is the day the Lord has made.

[1 : 52] We would rejoice and be gladdened, this is the day, and they'd all shout hey – this is the day that the Lord is made, and that obviously takes us to this Psalm and that particular verse, and this seems to me to be a good verse to step out into the new year with as we consider the fact that this day is a gift that the Lord has fashioned and made and he is determined in his will that he will give it to us. So we're not going to look at the whole Psalm, we'll just focus on the verse and maybe a few connections as we go. But I've got four points hopefully if I get through this in the time. And the first point to note is the urgency of this day, the urgency of this day. And we can perhaps pitch that up against the contrast of how days feel for us in the Christmasing and New Year season. Because when I ask people what what day it is, at this kind of time of year, people have no clue what day it is, because one day seems to drift into the next. You know, in normal times, you have your routine, you're up at six or seven, you're dressed, you're out, you're ready for work, then you're at your desk by eight o'clock or nine o'clock. There's that fixed routine. So there's an awareness about the day and what we have to get done in a day. But in the Christmas holidays, you tend to find people padding around in their slippers at lunchtime. And then by three o'clock in the afternoon, it's getting dark and there's that realising realisation that the day's gone. I haven't even done anything with it. Now this verse, I think places great emphasis on today. There's a force that comes through this verse. There's an impact that we that we feel when we when we read this verse, the psalmist says, the Holy Spirit inspires them, this is the day. Yesterday is past. Last year is past. Tomorrow isn't promised. But we've woken up. And this is the day we've woken up in.

So let's not waste it. I think the psalmist is saying, let's not let this day slip through our fingers. Let's use this day wisely. James in James chapter four and verse 14 says to us, what is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.

Always remember Roddy Morrison, who's probably preached here over the years. And Roddy Morrison would often say, when you put the kettle on and the kettle starts to boil and approaches the boiling point, there's just these few seconds where you see the steam before there's the click and then it just all dissipates. He says, when you see that, you know, remember that's a picture of your life.

We're reminded in Scripture of the the shortness of our days and the longness of eternity.

And we're encouraged through that to take hold of each day, to use this day. I was reading something this week past that that gave an indication of how we use our time when we're in this world. And if we live to 70 years, this article said that it's estimated that in that 70 years, we'll spend 23 years sleeping, 16 years working, six years eating, traveling six years. We can expect illness for about four. And even small things like getting dressed each day, that amounts to two years of our lives. I think for my daughters, it probably amounts to more than that. But for the average person, it's two years of your life. And when you take these things out and you think about these things that we have to do every day, we don't have that much time in this world. We think we have a vast span of time ahead of us. We don't have that much time when we factor all these things in. And so we need to use our time wisely. There's an urgency through this verse about how we will use this day.

[7 : 06] The Apostle Paul in Ephesians 5 16 says, let us redeem the time, not waste it, but redeem it.

Some of us probably got these vouchers over Christmas, a new year time, you know, you get a card and a we voucher on the card, 10 pounds for Amazon or 20 pounds for iTunes or whatever. And these cards, they have value, but the value isn't realized until we redeem it. They can sit in our drawer and have no value. We actually have to go into the shop or go online to this marketplace in order to redeem these things or we lose them. And the psalmist reminds us here, this is the day that we have been given. And this is a day to be redeemed. This is a day that we have been given and we are to use for God's glory. So I wonder how we're going to use today. It's the first thing to think about by way of application. How will we use today? What intentions have we as we step out into a new year? We don't often ask these questions when we get up in the morning. But we're a bit more thoughtful over this new year period. I think perhaps we have a better sense of time and we need to use our time wisely. So first of all, here we have the sense of urgency when we come to this day.

This is the day, says the psalmist. And the second point is we see here the gift of this day. There's the urgency of this day and certainly there's the gift of this day. This is the day that the Lord has made. This is a day that is a gift that has been given to us by God. And the maker of this day, the fashioner, the accomplisher to use the literal term of this day, the one who has shaped and fashioned and crafted this day and determined to hand it over to us is God.

He's made it. He's given us it. And I think it's good for us to have an awareness, to have a remembrance of that. Every time you and I open our eyes in the morning, every time we look at the clock up there and see the second hand moving in our watch, we have a reminder that the Lord is giving us time. And when we know that, when we register that, when we are mindful of the fact that God has given us this time, I think we're a bit more careful about how we use it.

You know, I said a few moments ago to the children, when somebody says they're going to make us a gift and hand it over to us, we're thankful for it and we're careful what we do with it.

[10 : 46] You know, if somebody takes time to choose something for us, then we're going to want to make sure that they see that we're using it well. If we are given something, if the man over there is giving a laptop for his Christmas and he says, thank you very much, closes it, puts it back in the box and never picks it up again, that would be hurtful to his parents or to whoever it was that gave it to him.

And when I don't use it day wisely, in a certain sense, I disappoint God because he's given it to me. So the question I think that we can ask is, how can we, how can we in this day that God is giving us use it in a way that we're pleasing? I think it's Paul that talks about where to live our lives seeking to please God. So how can we use this day in a way that will please God? Well, some people would answer that question and say, well, we need to do more things. We need to be more active for God. We need to need to do more good works. There needs to be more religious activity about my life.

But I don't think that's the answer. So many people have this sense that life is like an exam, it's like an assessment, and we're striving to get high enough mark to procure God's approval and his sense of us have been pleased with us. But we could go to Ephesians 2, 8 and 9 and we're reminded there that we are saved, that God is pleased with us. He's pleased to save us, not through our good works, but through the grace of Jesus.

The thing that pleases God in our lives is faith. Hebrews 11 verse 6 says without faith, it is impossible to please God. So in order for you and I to please God today, in order for us to be saved from sin, in order for us to be saved into a relationship with God, where he is pleased with us, we need faith. It's not about the good works that we resolve to do, as we are prone to do at this time of year. It's about having faith in the perfect finished work that Jesus did for us on the cross. Think about the conversation that is recorded for us in John chapter 6. Jesus has asked the question in verse 28, what must we do to do the works God requires?

How can God be pleased with us? And Jesus answered, the work of God is this, to believe in the one he has sent. In verse 40 of John 6, for my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.

[14 : 30] And even as we look at this Psalm, without going into the detail of it, we can see so clearly, Jesus in the Son. Verse 22, if you just glance at that for a moment, we see that the stone that the builders rejected, who has become the capstone, that's a picture of Jesus.

And then at verse 20, again, we have that key phrase, this is the gate of the Lord. Now, who is the gate? Who is the one who said, I am the gate, whoever enters through me will be saved?

Well, Jesus said that so clearly in John chapter 10 and verse 9. So again, in verse 20 in the Psalm, we see Jesus. So what is the best thing that you and I can do with this day, that the Lord has made and has determined to give us? Well, the best thing we can do is put our faith in Jesus. And I don't know too many of you in the congregation here, but maybe there's somebody who's sat here or who's sat elsewhere for years, maybe there's somebody who's watching online who's commanded the sound of the gospel for decades.

And he has a whole lot of religion in their lives. Yeah, like Nicodemus, there's that sense of something missing. What do you need to do?

Believe in Jesus. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you'll be saved. The best thing, the most pleasing thing that we can do in God's sight with the day that he has given us is to put our faith in Christ. So if there's anyone here or elsewhere who hasn't yet done that, do it today. Do it this day. I can remember sitting in a pew age 10 in the high church in Stornoway and an elder taking the service and saying from Sam 95 it was today, if you hear his voice, don't harden your heart. You might not have tomorrow. And I remember sitting there age 10 thinking I probably do have tomorrow. And then he said you may have many tomorrows, but you may never hear God's voice again. So today, if you hear his voice, if you have that sense of your sin, if you see Jesus and what he did for you on the cross, believe in him. Whether you're very young like those over there or whether we're up in years. This is the day to trust Christ, to believe in him and be saved. So there's the urgency of this day and then there's the gift of this day. And the third thing is there's the priority of this day. And the priority of this day for the psalmist is God. And that actually comes through as we just glance at the structure of the verse. Your minister is far better than me at doing this. If Thomas was here, he'd have a white board out and he'd be showing you with the white board just how this works in terms of the literature.

[18 : 52] But the literal translation of verse 24 reads as follows, this the day has made Yahweh.

We will rejoice and be glad in it. And if you were to write that out and look at the literal translation of that, you see that right in the very centre of that verse is God. So even in the structuring of the words in that verse, the focus, the priority, the central thing is God.

That's the way it is in Hebrew literature. We are told in English literature, you want to make your point, make it at the beginning, make it at the end, and then make your argument in the middle. You want to get the gist of the book, read the first chapter and the last one and you have the main point. But in Hebrew literature, the main point was right in the centre.

And we see in the structure of this verse, right at the centre is God. And in this day that the psalmist is so aware that he has been given, God is at the centre. And the commentators tell us that this psalm was likely written by a king of Israel. And not just the king of Israel, but a king of Israel who was in the eye of the storm. There's a national, there's a political, there's a military crisis in the land. We get a sense of that in the psalm. So this is written, it's composed by a very busy man with a million different demands in this time, a whole series of crisis that he's trying to navigate through. And yet he sees that at the very centre of his day, his first priority was God. Not politics, not his own reputation, not economics, but God. And every other thing that the psalmist is having to deal with in his life will have to give way to God. And I think what the psalmist was aware of back in that day, we needed to be reminded of this day. The reason for today, the reason for every day that you and I wake up on, the reason for life, the reason for our being is God.

And when we don't know God, when we're not trusting in Christ, when we don't have God at the centre of our lives, but we have something else at the centre, whether it's our work, whether it's our leisure, whether it's our self, whether it's another person, life doesn't make proper sense.

[22 : 17] We never get any kind of sense of peace and purpose. And if you want a comment on that, read the book of Ecclesiastes. And think about that verse in Ecclesiastes chapter 1 verse 14, where the writer says, I have seen all the things that are done under the sun. All of them are meaningless. A chasing after the wind. It's a bleak book because it's a book that illustrates what life looks like and feels like if God is not at the centre. It's like chasing after the wind.

And when we live in Carlyway or Harris, we know the futility of chasing after the wind. You know, you open the car door, you lose a bit of important paper. You do a four mile sprint trying to catch the thing. And chasing after the wind is ridiculous. And yet that's the picture that is given for life when God is not at the centre. You know, we chase money. It's never enough. We chase power, but we never have enough. We chase popularity, but we're never satisfied with the levels that we get to.

We chase material things. We chase academic success. We chase career goals. It's never enough. And the reason for that is we were made for God.

We exist. We have been given this day so that we can be in relationship with God. And when we have God at the centre of our lives, when we have a close walk with God, we can enjoy everything else also. Because everything else that God has determined can be added into our lives is put in its proper place. But God must be central.

And we're taught that, I believe, in the structure of this verse. And as we think about this and the challenge of this, we should perhaps ask the question, you know, if we're making resolutions this new year, do the resolutions that we make, do the goals that we set for ourselves, do they reflect the fact that God is at the centre? If somebody was able to analyse our diaries or our bank accounts, or how we use our time and our energy levels, would it illustrate the truth of this verse that God is at the centre of everything?

[25 : 20] Our purpose here, the time that we have been given this day that the Lord has given to us, is a day where he must be at the centre. So the urgency of the day, this is the day, says the psalmist, and then there's the gift of this day, it's the day that the Lord has made and he's given to us. There's the priority of this day. God is central. He's at the centre of everything in that version, and to be at the centre of everything in our lives. And the final thing briefly is our response on this day. I suppose the reality is we're going to respond whether we think we're going to or not. We will respond to this. Supposing you've switched off already, and are just preparing to walk out the door, that's a response. It's not the right one. But all of us will respond.

Nobody will leave here neutral. And the psalmist teaches us here the appropriate response to God on this day. And the response is that we are to rejoice and be glad in this day.

As we look to God. So there's two things here very briefly, we're to praise God together.

That's the first thing. The psalmist says, let us rejoice. He's not just thinking about himself or speaking about himself. He is calling all the people of God to come together and worship.

And that's the appropriate response on this day. We are to come together. Let us rejoice, says the psalmist. God is glorified when we come together to praise him. We are encouraged when we come together to worship. As in us. Let us, says the psalmist.

[27 : 42] Hebrews 10, listen to these four verses from verse 22 to verse 25. The writer says, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our heart sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess for he who promised us faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds. And let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another.

And all the more, as you see the day approaching, we are to come together, underline the us. You know, I think this last year has illustrated how much and how quickly we become discouraged and we lose you and our faithwings when we lose the us. We need each other. That's what we're taught here.

We need the us. God has praised and we are encouraged to keep on keeping on when we praise God together.

So that's to be our response on this day. So what we're doing as we meet at this time, we are praising God together. And the final thing here is we have to praise God joyfully.

[29 : 39] Our worship is to be glad. It's to be joyful worship. And it's interesting just to see the verses, the words that are used to describe that.

The word rejoice, taken back to Aramaic, has the literal meaning of going around about excitedly, which actually would have meant nothing very much to me about three or four years ago before I had a dog. But when I read that verse and thought about this description of rejoicing as going around about excitedly, my mind went to shawrsh our dog. Now, shawrsh our dog, he's interested in life, but he really just lives for a walk. He's desperately looking for a walk. And when I stand up from the chair, his attention is drawn. And when I put a jacket on, now he's really watching.

But when I take the lead and take it off the peg and call him over for a walk, he's in a state of utter joy and gladness and excitement. And how does he express that? He goes round and round in circles, round and round in circles until eventually you can stop him and get the lead on. And it's just his expression of joy and there's actually something of that that should be seen in our worship. We're to be joyful. We're Presbyterians. I know we're probably not all going to start doing circles around the back in the church building, but in our hearts, something of that pure joy and gladness and singular focus on God as our source of joy should be evident. And when we look at the word rejoice in Hebrew, it gives the balance because it means to tremble. So rejoicing should be full and it should be free and it should be real.

And yet it should never be irreverent and casual and flippant because we are coming before the awesome, powerful, holy God.

This is the day the Lord has made. So let us rejoice and be glad in it. And we'll pray.