

Psalm 47

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The Victory of God

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Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Why are decline narratives so appealing to us? Why is it that not only are we quick to believe stories about cultural and institutional decline, but we almost want to believe them? We see real problems in the world, real problems in the culture, real problems in the church, and for some reason we are quick to assume that those problems will only go from bad to worse. We tend to think that the norm is decline and that any meaningful improvement in the world is an anomaly.

There are real problems in the world, and sometimes institutions really are in decline, and it really is terminal. But why do we so quickly run to decline? And not to solutions and opportunities?

There could be several reasons that that could be the case, but this morning I just want to argue that the Scriptures, while not denying real problems, while acknowledging real difficulties ahead, would have us fix our minds not on decline, but on the *victory of God*.

Throughout the Bible we are told to live in light of God's victory. We're called to remember God's *historic* victories – the Exodus, the conquest of Canaan, the early church expansion, and we could add to that list the Reformation, and the great missionary expansion of the last century.

We're called to live in light of God's *ultimate* victory over sin and death and hell through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We're called to live in light of God's *ongoing* victory. Christ said that he will build his church and that the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

And we're called to live in light of God's future victory. Psalm 46:10, we saw this last week, **"be still and know that I am God, I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."**

Whatever problems face you as an individual, and us as a church, we are called to face them not in light of some inevitable decline, but in light of the comprehensive victory of God.

This is the basic idea of Psalm 47. Psalm 46 sets up the victory of God, promises the victory of God, then Psalm 47 follows that up with a Psalm of praise, showing us the contours of what it means to live in the light of God's victory.

Psalm 47 will give us *three ways to live in light of God's victory*: fear the Lord, praise the Lord, obey the Lord.

Verse 1 more or less sets the stage, it's not the main point, but it sets us up for the Psalm. Then verses 2-4 teach us to fear the Lord. Verses 5-7 teach us to praise the Lord, and verses 8 and 9 to obey the Lord.

[PRAY]

Three ways to live in light of the victory of God: fear, praise, obey.

God's Victory is Good News

Verse 1: **"Clap your hands, all peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of joy!"**

Again, this is setting the stage. Big idea here: the victory of God over the nations is good news for the nations. The victory of God over the world is good news for the world. And to personalize it a bit, the victory of God in your life is good news for you.

We need to note this, because in the last Psalm, we saw that it's "the nations" over which God is victorious. Psalm 46:6, **"The nations rage, the kingdoms totter"** with a reference back to Psalm 2. Then all of a sudden, these nations, these peoples, are called to **"shout to God with loud songs of joy."**

God's victory over the nations is not defeat, death, and slavery for them. God's victory over the nations is victory for them, life, and freedom.

This is important for us to note, because this underlines what is such a common experience in the life of the Christian. Often, I might even say usually, when God is pressing on us, and bringing some new spiritual life into us, it feels like death and defeat until we finally give in, and all of a sudden, we realize it was life and freedom the whole time.

Often, God is convicting you of some sin or convicting you of some immaturity that you need to grow out of, and instead of gladly complying, we resist. We're comfortable in our sin, we're complacent in our immaturity. Repentance seems hard and cold and looks like death and slavery. So, we resist, we fight God, we drag our feet. But when God is finally victorious over you, when you finally repent, finally yield to him, all of a sudden, you realize that he wasn't hunting you down, he was rescuing you. He wasn't trying to chain you up but setting you free.

This happens all the time in bigger or smaller ways in the life of the Christian, but this is often most pronounced when he first brings us to true repentance and conversion. There, it's not some one sin that he is convicting you of, but a comprehensive life of autonomy. You feel like he is trying to take away your freedom, until you finally surrender to Christ and you realize that all along he was taking away your slavery.

So, God conquers you, and you are the first in line in the parade to "shout to God with loud songs of joy."

God's victory over the world is good news for the world, and *through repentance and faith*, Christian, it is good news for you too, *and through repentance and faith*, not-yet-Christian, it could be good news for you too.

The Fear of the Lord

Verses two through four.

The first thing that the gospel does, the first thing that the victory of God does, is it reveals who God really is – it makes you see God clearly for the first time.

The first step, before the gospel becomes good news to you, it makes you see for the first time who God really is. Usually this is the stage of salvation that the Puritans called "coming under conviction." Before this, you're quite comfortable with God. You feel like a good religious person. God is one of many factors in your life. Things are good.

But then all of a sudden, the sheer majesty of God rather rudely, somewhat suddenly, somewhat violently, breaks into your life. This is the fear of the Lord.

The first way to live in light of the victory of God is to live in light of the fear of the Lord.

Verses two through four. **"For the LORD, the Most High, is to be feared, a great king over all the earth.**

³He subdued peoples under us, and nations under our feet. ⁴He chose our heritage for us, the pride of Jacob whom he loves. Selah"

Verse two lays out the principle, the basic idea. He is the Most High. He is to be feared. He is a great king over all the earth. These are the basic facts, the basic assertions.

Then verse three and four lay out the evidence, the supporting facts that support that claim.

Verse three, *He* subdued peoples, *he* subdued nations. The big idea here is that God is the supreme factor. God is the supreme force in the world. God is above every king, every so-called god, God is above every military strategy, every great global event. God is above job markets, and technological advancements. God is above cultural fads, and social movements. God is to be feared, not these things.

All the schemes of the nations, all the glory of kings, all the power of the false gods of the nations, all of it is downstream from the one True God. He, and he alone is the factor, the cause, that conditions everything else. God, and God alone is himself conditioned by nothing outside of himself. In the great chain of cause and effect, there is nothing, absolutely nothing behind God.

Everything else, kings, gods, economies, cultures, all of it, everything else has context, has things that happen before and behind that condition those factors. God alone has no context. There is nothing above, beside, or behind God that conditions his will and actions.

God is not arbitrary. God's absolute will is a perfect expression of his absolute nature. God's will is conditioned, to lisp a little bit, God's will is conditioned by his nature, but outside of his own Triune Infinity, there is nothing at all that conditions, shapes, or directs God. He is supreme.

Verse 4, "he chose our heritage for us." Again, God is the supreme factor. He is the supreme factor for nations and empires and cultures. And God is the supreme factor for you. Acts 17:26, God determined the time and location of your dwelling place. Psalm 139:16, every day of yours was scripted by God before you were born. He chose the family you were born into – rich or poor, functional or dysfunctional, godly or ungodly. He chose the nation and culture you were born into. The personality you developed, the genes you were born with.

God is the supreme factor.

And this is what it means to fear the Lord – to recognize that. To live in light of that. What to you is the ultimate factor? What is that one thing that in your mind conditions everything else?

Here's how you can check, there are two tests. The comfort test, and the offense test.

First, what gives you ultimate comfort? Of all the factors in life – your job or job prospects, your family, your friends, the economy, elections, your health, your bank account, your retirement savings, people's opinions of you, do any of those give you more comfort than peace with God?

Meaning, in a crisis, say you lose your job, or you suddenly get a bad diagnosis, or your daughter gets a bad diagnosis, and someone is trying to comfort you, and they say something like, "Christ has not abandoned you in this, Christ is with you in this." And there is a part of you that goes, "yeah but what does that matter if I can't feed my family?" Or "what does that matter if I die at 50?" Or "what does that matter if she dies at 15?" That shows that Christ is not ultimate to you.

Now, the fear of the Lord means that he is your ultimate comfort. But that doesn't mean that you don't have real comfort in these other good things. And that doesn't mean that you don't really mourn, that it doesn't really sting when you lose these good things.

I'm not giving you the cartoon examples, I'm trying to give you the hard examples. We live in a world of life and death, of triumphant glories and shattering miseries. I'm trying to speak into that world.

In that moment Job is our example. We keep coming back to Job. Job is the example of godly mourning. Lost his wealth, lost his children – ten, in one storm – and he mourns. He tears his robe, he shaves his head, he falls on the ground in weeping worship, and he says, **"The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."**

When we fear the Lord, he is our ultimate comfort.

The second test is this. Whatever you most "fear" (in this sense) is that thing you are least willing to offend.

The Bible often contrasts the fear of the Lord with the fear of man. Forced to choose, who will you offend? Your flesh says do this thing, but God says, don't. Who will you offend. Your friends say, "dress like this," but God says dress with modesty. Who will you offend? Your boss, your family, polite society. Is there anyone for whom you are willing to offend God, rather than offend them?

In both of these, you could think through them like a little bracket. "Here are all the things in my life that give me comfort and joy." Or, "here are all the things and people in my life that I want to please and not offend." Make sure you put God on both lists. Then just run through the bracket. Who wins? My boss or my neighbor? My wife or my mom? My job or my health. Be honest with yourself. I'm speaking hypothetically here, but it might be an interesting exercise for you.

Ok, let's get a little more precise. What does it mean to fear the Lord?

There are two types of fear. There is the fear of bad things and the fear of good things. There is the fear of highway bandits, and the fear of the king. There is the fear of tornadoes, and the fear of the sun. There is the fear of the wicked, and the fear of the righteous.

I don't want to hang out with the wicked because he might steal my wallet. But I don't want to hang out with the righteous because he'll make me feel bad about my inconsistencies.

The fear of the Lord is obviously the second kind. We don't fear the Lord because he's bad or lacking in any way. We fear the Lord because he is righteous and the very fullness of being.

The fear of the Lord can be boiled down to three components: knowledge, respect (or reverence), and trust.

Knowledge: Proverbs 9:10, **"the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight."** If you know your Hebrew parallelism, you know that the second phrase there is an explanatory restatement of the first. The "fear of the Lord" is explained as "knowledge of the Holy One." To fear God is to know him rightly – to understand that he is utterly unique, utterly incomparable with anything in creation.

Respect: Proverbs 14:2, **"whoever walks in uprightness fears the Lord, but he who is devious in his ways despises him."** The opposite of the fear of the Lord is contempt for God, disrespect, disregard. The fear of the Lord makes us pay attention to how we are living.

Trust: Proverbs 14:26, **"In the fear of the Lord one has strong confidence."** Psalm 34:8, **"Fear the Lord, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack."** To fear the Lord means to trust him as the supreme factor. "If God is for me, who can be against me?" His will is unlimited, and his love is unhindered.

The fear of the Lord *knows* God for who he is, *respects* God for who he is, and *trusts* God for who he is.

Ok, one more thing: three aspects of the fear of the Lord. We've seen two tests for the fear of the Lord, three components of the fear of the Lord, now three aspects of the fear of the Lord.

When we first encounter God, when we first start to really see him for who he is, often, one of these three aspects hits us first and hardest. God is Holy. God is the Creator. And God is the center of meaning.

First, God is Holy. This is by far the dominant aspect in the Bible. Often, our first true knowledge of God comes as the sudden and terrible realization that God is Holy and that I am a sinner. The things that I thought were trivial yesterday all of a sudden become millstones hanging around my neck.

The famous example of this in the Old Testament is Isaiah encountering God in the Temple. Isaiah was already a prophet at this point. He was a righteous upstanding guy. He'd delivered God's warnings and rebukes to others. And there's no indication at all that he was in any way a hypocrite. But all of a sudden, without any warning, he encounters God. Isaiah says that he saw the Lord, **"High and lifted up."** And around him flew angels singing **"Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts."** And their singing was so overpowering that the foundations of the temple were shaking. Not the windows. Not the tables. The foundations were shaking just because of the praise of God's entourage.

And Isaiah responds, **"woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips... for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."** So, he sees God, and all of a sudden he is absolutely undone by the sheer holiness of God.

Something similar happens with Peter when he first realizes who Jesus is. Something similar happens with Paul, when Jesus confronts him on the road to Damascus.

Then the second aspect is God as Creator. We kind of miss this idea as moderns simply because of how we tend to think. We tend to think of God as Creator with reference to historic things that he did in the past; as if it's just a title that he has on his resume, not something that defines his relation to creation now. God as Creator certainly describes something he did in the past, but it also describes the utter difference between God and creation. To understand God as Creator is to understand God as that which entirely transcends the system of earthly things. He is not one factor among many in the great cosmic system. He is not even merely the most important factor among many. He is utterly distinct from the cosmic system, and Lord and master over it.

This is the lesson that Job learned. Job starts really strong but moves more and more toward accusing God. When God finally comes to confront Job, he doesn't call him out for his sin, he calls him out for his creatureliness. He doesn't say, "no no Job, you're not perfect, here's when you sinned with your actions, here's

when you sinned with your thoughts...” No, he just cuts to Job’s creatureliness. “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Where were you when I hung the stars?”

Then the third aspect of the fear of the Lord is seeing God as the center of meaning. This is not a major theme in the Bible, but it’s a theme that tends to resonate more in our age and culture. The best place we see this is the book of Ecclesiastes. Solomon, with all of his wealth, all of his wisdom, all of his political power, sets out on a quest to find something meaningful in and of itself. He tries work, he tries pleasure, he tries money, he tries multiplying wives. But in the end, he finds it all empty. None of it has any meaning at all in itself apart from God.

But, he finds that under the blessing of God, the most mundane things in the world are full of meaning when joined with the blessing of God. Food, drink, family, work, friendship – all of it is richly meaningful in the context of the blessing of God.

The fear of the Lord sees that God is absolutely necessary for anything to have meaning. Apart from God, you could cure cancer, become the president, run triathlons, tour with a band, and if we’re all just atoms bouncing around in an empty universe then all of it is empty – and it will feel empty too. But if you have peace with the living God, then the most mundane life you can imagine will be stuffed full of light and beauty and meaning.

Ok, that’s enough on the fear of the Lord. To fear the Lord means that he is the ultimate comfort, and the ultimate judge. To fear the Lord means to know him rightly, as Holy, as Creator, and as the center of meaning. And it means to respect him for who he is, and to trust him for who he is. This is the first way to live in light of the victory of God.

Praise the Lord

Ok next, the second way to live in light of the victory of God is to praise the Lord. Verses five through seven.

Here’s the big idea. The fear of the Lord is basically a statement about God simply as God. The praise of the Lord is a statement about God as YOUR God. The fear of the Lord says, “IF God is for me, who can be against me?” He is ultimate, he is absolute. But the praise of the Lord says, “SINCE God is for me, who can be against me?” He is ultimate *for me*; he is absolute *for me*. The fear of the Lord says, “the Lord is God.” The praise of the Lord says, “The Lord is MY God.”

Verse 5, **“God has gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet.”**

This is the image of a victory parade. He has gone up victoriously into his chariot. The band is playing the national anthem.

Verse 6, **“Sing praises to God, sing praises! Sing praises to our King, sing praises!”** This is interesting. If you look at the Hebrew for “praises” here it has the subtle connotation that YOU SHOULD PRAISE THE LORD.

Some verses in scripture are complicated, or hard to understand how to apply. This is not one of those. Praise the Lord.

I do want you to notice here in verse 6 that he says, “to *our* King.” Again, verse 2 says that God is “*a* great king,” which is true as just a statement about God. But here he emphasizes that God isn’t just *a* king, but *our* king.

Then verse 7, **“For God is the King of all the earth; sing praises with a psalm!”**

God is king over the earth now by his power – he is the ultimate sovereign over every nation. God is king over the earth now by right – the earth belongs to him, for nations to reject him is to live in rebellion against the rightful king. He is not yet the visible king by public recognition – but like Psalm 46:10 says from last week, that day is coming.

So, here’s the point. God isn’t just THE victorious king, he is OUR victorious king, if you belong to him.

That raises the million-dollar question – how does one belong to God? How do I know if I belong to God or not? How do I know if God is my God or not?

Well, the easy answer is baptism. Galatians 3:27, **“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”** In the Great Commission, Jesus tells his church to **“go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing**

them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” ‘Go and make disciples and put my name on them.’

But there’s more to be said than just baptism. Colossians 2:11-12, **“In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹²having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead.”** So, baptism alone won’t do it. Baptism without faith won’t do it.

Through baptism we are publicly and outwardly united to Christ, through faith we are spiritually and really united to Christ. Pastors baptize with water, and that’s important, that’s the name of God being publicly put on you. But much more importantly, Christ himself baptizes with the Holy Spirit through faith.

This week, Heather and I read through 1 John in our Bible reading plan. And that’s such an interesting book. It’s basically a book written to help a local church process a big group of their members breaking off and becoming heretics. The whole book is basically the Apostle John answering the question, “how do we know if we really belong to God or not?”

Obviously, he can’t point to baptism – they have all been baptized in the Triune name, and yet half of them are now heretics. What he keeps coming back to is the question of what you do with Jesus Christ.

1 John 2:23, **“No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.”**

Chapter 4, verses 2 and 3, **“Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God.”**

Chapter 5, verse 1, **“Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God.”**

Five verse 5, **“Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”**

So, faith is the issue. If you believe that Jesus is the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, True God from True God; if you believe that Jesus came in the flesh, born of the virgin, truly man; and if you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the fulfilment of all the Old Testament prophecies about the coming prophet, priest, and king, the one who fulfilled the law in perfect righteousness, and the one who died under the curse of God in your place; if you believe in Jesus Christ then you belong to God. If you have true faith in Jesus Christ, then THE victorious king is YOUR victorious king. Note, true faith, not necessarily sophisticated faith.

Apart from Christ, God’s victory is bad news for us – we are His enemies. In Christ, God’s victory is good news for us.

Apart from Christ, God’s holiness and absoluteness is bad news for us – He is God against us. In Christ, God’s holiness and absoluteness is good news – he is God for us.

The victory of God in the world is good news to you because, first, in Christ he is victorious over sin and death. He died for your sin; he rose for your justification.

And second, the victory of God in the world is good news to you because by the Holy Spirit he has been victorious over your heart through the preaching of his Word.

So, how do we live in light of the victory of God? Sing praises to God.

First, this means actually sing. There is something about singing that shapes you deeply. Singing both expresses and shapes your heart. So, sing in church. Sing like someone who believes it. Sing like these songs actually celebrate the victorious King.

Sing, as a family. Do family worship together and make a point of singing together. Pick a few songs. Pick up a hymnal, download one of our family discipleship guides, find a handful of songs that your family circles back to. Pick five to ten songs and psalms and make them the main songs for your family and work to memorize them.

And especially dads, give your children the blessing of hearing you singing praises to your God. They will be deeply marked by memories of their dad singing hymns and psalms as you get ready to leave for work, or as you

are working on some project around the house. Give your children the gift of that memory as a part of the furniture of their childhood.

And of course, sing on your own. Find a couple psalms or hymns that are really substantive and memorize them. Then make a point of turning off the car's speakers every so often and sing.

So, sing praises literally. But then second, sing praises to the Lord by living a life of Godly joy to the Lord.

John Piper has a line, where he riffs on the first question of the Westminster Shorter Catechism. He says, "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him." That is absolutely true. And this goes back to what I was saying about the fear of the Lord. We're not talking about a thin, trivial cheeriness. But a deep abiding contentment in the Lord.

This is why a grim and self-serious Christianity misses the mark. There's a kind of thin Christianity that will say that you're not allowed to really enjoy anything other than God himself. If something other than God makes you happy, that's idolatry. Or maybe it's more of a quantity thing. It's fine to enjoy things, but not too much, then it becomes idolatry.

And that's just not how it works. Paul tells us that everything made by God is good, and to be received with thanksgiving.¹ Idolatry isn't about how much you enjoy things, but *how* you enjoy things. It's not about the quantity of enjoyment but the *kind* of enjoyment.

If you enjoy your job apart from God and without reference to him, the slightest enjoyment is idolatry. If you enjoy your job with a glad and thankful heart to God, maximal delight is lawful – in fact the more you enjoy it (if you enjoy it with thankfulness) the more you glorify God in it.

There's a grim and sour Christianity that basically sees creation as one big test – full of things that God made lovely that we're not supposed to love. But somehow, God made the world and everything in it good without in any sense taking away from his own goodness. The goodness of creation, to the redeemed and thankful heart, is not a distraction from God's goodness, but is a pointer to and explanation of God's goodness.

The second way to live in light of God's victory is to praise the Lord.

Obey the Lord

Ok, three ways to live in light of the victory of God: fear the Lord, praise the Lord, obey the Lord.

True, God-pleasing obedience flows out of thick joy which flows out of the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord, through the cross, becomes the joy of the Lord. And the joy of the Lord, by the Holy Spirit, becomes God-pleasing obedience.

Verse 8, **"God reigns over the nations; God sits on his holy throne."** This is both a statement of fact, and what's called a prophetic present tense of what will be. God reigns right now, like I said before. God reigns in power, and God reigns by right. But for the time being, the nations still rage. Again, we see this dynamic in the Great Commission. Matthew 28:18-19, Jesus says, **"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me, therefore go and make disciples of all nations."** The nations belong to Jesus; our job is to go and tell them.

Then verse 9, **"The princes of the peoples gather as the people of the God of Abraham. For the shields of the earth belong to God; he is highly exalted."**

This is where the prophetic present tense is most clear. One day, all the princes, of the nations will gather as the people of the God of Abraham, but that hasn't happened yet.

Here's the big idea: to live in light of God's victory is to recognize his kingly prerogative – in other words to *obey* him and to *trust* him as king. He is a king with a kingdom, and to live in light of his victory is to delight to live as one of his subjects.

¹ 1 Timothy, 4:4-5.

Psalm 47 gives us three ways to live in light of the victory of God. Fear the Lord – he is Holy, he is Creator, he is the center of meaning. Praise the Lord – live a life of holy happiness in Christ. And obey the Lord – he is your king; his law is good and right.

Application

Ok, how do we apply all of this? What do we do with this? Let me give you two principles and then four domains to consider.

First principle: get the order right. Fear, praise, obedience. Don't skip conviction. It can be uncomfortable, but that is an important part of the process. If we run right to praise, we end up with a thin praise, and counterintuitively, end up with thin and grim faith. Thick joy only comes through the fear of the Lord.

But, equally important, don't skip right from fear to obedience. Obedience should be built on praise.

Now, I'm not talking chronologically so much as conceptually. As soon as you know God's will, obey. Don't sit around waiting to feel a certain way before obeying. True obedience needs to be built on a foundation of gospel joy, not simply as a means of quieting your conscience before a holy God.

And of course, don't forget obedience. Fear and praise must roll into actual obedience to the will of God. Otherwise, faith becomes Christianized psychotherapy, only really trying to make you feel better about your life.

So, get the order right.

Then, *second principle:* hold them together. Don't leave one behind when you move into the other. Praise doesn't replace fear; it glorifies it. Obedience doesn't replace joy; it makes it fruitful.

Ok, now, four domains. Where should you be applying all of this?

First domain: putting sin to death. Here the difference is really pronounced. You must put sin to death in light of God's victory. If you're living in a decline narrative, then at best you are going to try to manage sin and manage the consequences of sin. But if Jesus has actually triumphed over sin and death, then you should put sin to death with hope and confidence. He has triumphed; you will triumph.

Greed, porn, anger, laziness, gossip, sabbath-breaking, disobedience to parents, discontentment, grumbling, coldness toward your wife, nagging your husband, fretfulness, same-sex attraction. The blood of Christ has the power to forgive you for all of this. And the Spirit of Christ has the power to free you from all of this. Fear God, praise God, obey God.

Second domain: vocation, your work, whether you are paid for it or not, the labor that you do to subdue the earth and cultivate it.

What does it look like to fear God? To praise God? To obey God here? Think about integrity. Certainly, the victory of God means that you work with integrity. Not cutting corners, not slacking off, not fudging the numbers.

Think about contentment in the station he has you right now. It might be temporary; it might be a steppingstone to something else. But today, this week, this is the work he has for you. Are you receiving it with a glad and generous heart?

Again, who are you trying to please? Man? Your boss? Or Christ?

College students, I'll zoom in on you. First, do you realize that your school work is your vocation right now? Everything the Bible says about work (which is a lot) applies to your classes. But second, what will it look like to live in light of God's victory for the next however many years you have left in school? These years are crucial years. These are trajectory setting years for you. Are you thinking about the trajectory that you are setting? Or are you just going with the flow?

Are you going to take God seriously in your life? Now is the time to start. Are you going to put God in the periphery? Life, and joy, and peace, and meaning are offered to you in Christ. What are you going to do with Jesus?

Take faith seriously. For you freshmen – it's time to own it. Maybe you grew up going to church, and you're here today more out of habit than anything else. Will you walk with Jesus for real? Or are you going to just go through the motions?

Talk to someone who brought you or come and talk to me. Tell someone – “I want to take my faith seriously” – or even, “I’m not sure what I believe, but I want to take my life seriously.” Life, and peace, and joy, and heaven, and hell are on the line. Let’s talk.

Third domain: In your family. I’ll only be suggestive here. How should the fear, joy, and obedience of the Lord shape your home life? Do you believe God can work mightily in your home? Do you live in your home in a decline narrative? Or in light of God’s victory? Are you an example to your family of a life lived in light of God’s victory?

Fourth domain: courage and ambition.

The victory of God should shape your entire posture toward life. If everything is in decline, then the best we can hope for is to survive. If we’re all on a sinking ship, then the only thing that matters is getting you and your loved ones off. But what if God’s victory tells us a different story?

What if, when God told us to fill the earth and subdue it, he actually intended for us to do it? What if, when Christ told us to go and make disciples of all nations, he actually intended that we would be successful?

God’s commands for us require courage and ambition. They require vision and energy and zeal and determination and fortitude. Nothing worth doing is easy. When God told Adam to subdue the earth, Adam didn’t even have shoes. He had work to do, hard work, and that even before the fall.

God’s commands for us *require* courage and ambition, and living in light of God’s victory will give us courage and ambition.

First John 4:4, **“Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.”**

First Corinthians 15:58, **“Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.”**

The Lord’s Supper

We will be celebrating the Lord’s Supper today. And, as usual, the Supper is a beautiful picture of what I’ve been talking about today. This Supper, paradoxically, helps us to live in light of God’s victory by remembering Christ’s death.

In these elements we remember the broken body and shed blood not of one who died tragically, but of the one who rose victoriously. The one who died is the one who rose, never to die again.

In it we celebrate the New Covenant in his blood. His death is our victory over death.

And I love this, this is so often missed, but we say it every time we do the Supper. When Paul is describing the Lord’s Supper, he says at the end, **“For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.”**

Every time we take the Supper, we proclaim that the same one who died as a suffering servant is coming back to reign as a glorious king.

So Christian, come, take and eat, and live in light of the victory of Jesus Christ.