

God Speaks

Psalm 50

Rev. John Pennylegion

July 27, 2025

Good morning.

Welcome to Christ the King. If we haven't met, my name is Penny, and I'm the senior pastor here, and it is great to be with you. If you are a guest or visitor, welcome. We're glad that you're here, and you're joining us as we're in the midst of a sermon series in the book of Psalms. We're doing this just for the summer, and this morning we're looking at Psalm 50. So if you have a Bible, you can turn to Psalm 50. So believe it or not, we only have a couple more weeks in the Psalms. I know summer is beyond just a couple weeks, like there's more to summer. But this week we'll do Psalm 50.

For the next two weeks, we'll do two other Psalms, and then we're going to start our series that will take us through the fall, which we'll be looking at the Sermon on the Mount. So for those of you who like to plan and read ahead, which I know that's a lot of you, because you tell me, that you can start to plan ahead for that. But this morning we're going to look at Psalm 50. And if you remember from last week, I mentioned that one of the things that we want to think about as we're coming to the Psalms is how is this Psalm seeking to shape us? How is it seeking to form us? How is it renewing us? Those are questions that we should be thinking about as we come to the Psalms. But really, those aren't just questions for the Psalms. Those are questions that we should be bringing to the Scripture, all of the Scriptures.

In fact, that's one of the reasons why we come here each and every Sunday, is because we are confronted by all sorts of things in this world, in our minds, in our hearts, all these things that are vying for our affections and our attention. And we are needing to be reshaped and reformed by God's Word. And that's what God's Word does. It shapes us into what it means to be the people of God and to follow after Jesus. And that's what this Psalm is going to help us with.

Now, before we get into the Psalm, it's been our habit that with every Psalm, we go ahead and give a little bit of background, specifically with genre. And with this particular Psalm, the genre is actually really hard to pin down. So, commentators think that maybe it was a hymn, so it was simply a song. Others think it was a prophetic Psalm. Some think it was covenant renewal. And others, various other genres. And there are good reasons for thinking that it could be any one of these. But I think that this is probably a prophetic or oracle Psalm. Now, when I say prophetic, in our minds, we might think about the aspect of the prophets that foretell the future, right? So, we think about prophecy oftentimes in that way. That's our default. That a prophet is talking about a future event that's going to occur. So, think about Isaiah and the prophecy of the virgin birth. This is something that will take place in the future. That's how we often think about prophets. They're foretelling. But the Old Testament prophets are also forthtelling.

So, they don't simply talk about future events, but oftentimes the prophets come as the mouthpiece of God, speaking directly to God's people and calling them to live in a particular way. So, the prophets might come and they might bring a word of judgment or a word of warning or a word of hope. We see this throughout the Old Testament prophets and that's

actually what this psalm is very much like. So, that's why I think it's an oracle or a prophetic psalm. Because the psalmist is coming as the mouthpiece of God, speaking to God's people. So, with that in mind, let's read Psalm 50.

“A Psalm of Asaph.

The Mighty One, God the LORD, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth. Our God comes; he does not keep silence; before him is a devouring fire, around him a mighty tempest. He calls to the heavens above and to the earth, that he may judge his people: “Gather to me my faithful ones, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!” The heavens declare his righteousness, for God himself is judge! Selah

“Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, I will testify against you. I am God, your God. Not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you; your burnt offerings are continually before me. I will not accept a bull from your house or goats from your folds. For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine.

“If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine. Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats? Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and perform your vows to the Most High, and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.”

But to the wicked God says: “What right have you to recite my statutes or take my covenant on your lips? For you hate discipline, and you cast my words behind you. If you see a thief, you are pleased with him, and you keep company with adulterers.

“You give your mouth free rein for evil, and your tongue frames deceit. You sit and speak against your brother; you slander your own mother’s son. These things you have done, and I have been silent; you thought that I was one like yourself. But now I rebuke you and lay the charge before you.

“Mark this, then, you who forget God, lest I tear you apart, and there be none to deliver! The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me; to one who orders his way rightly I will show the salvation of God!” (ESV)

Friends, this is the word of the Lord. Let me pray for us.

Heavenly Father, we thank you. We thank you that we can come to your word and we ask that you would help us now as we come to it so that we would see your glory, we would marvel at your salvation, and that you would shape us and form us into the image of Christ. And so we pray, Father, open our eyes, unplug our ears, and soften our hearts, that we may behold your glory. We pray this in Christ's name, Amen.

So I'm sure that many of you will remember long before there was the internet and streaming networks and ways that we could just pause our shows mid-show and come back to them later, that there was once only a few networks on television and we were all like focused on particular shows and everyone was watching the same thing. And so maybe it was a Thursday evening or Wednesday night and we were watching “Who's the Boss” or “Growing Pains” or

“Cheers.” That is like old school, right? We'd be watching these shows and the show would be maybe three-fourths of the way over.

It's coming to its climactic finality, right? And we can't wait to see it. And all of a sudden the screen would go blank and we would hear the siren, boop, boop, boop. And then a voice would come on. It wasn't Tony Danza, right? But a voice would come on and say, “we interrupt your regularly scheduled broadcast to bring you a special message.” Do y'all remember these days? I remember as a kid thinking like, this better be really important, right? Because we can't go back and re-watch it, right? There was no TiVo, there was no rewinding. It was like, who's the boss? We don't know because we didn't get to the end. But sure enough, when we had these interruptions, it was always for an important word, right? Because when we would hear that phrase, we interrupt your regularly scheduled broadcast to bring you an important message, we would then see a news anchor behind a desk, or we would see the president coming to the podium because there was something so significant, so important that they had to interrupt our evening to ensure that as many people as possible would hear it. And so we listened. And we watched. And we hung on the words that were going to be spoken because this was so important. They had to interrupt us. We needed to listen to what was going to be said. And something of like that is happening in Psalm 50.

Words of Opposition

You see, we're accustomed as we've been going through the Psalms, we're accustomed to actually hearing the psalmist speaking to God, or the psalmist singing to the Lord, or the psalmist offering up prayers of worship to God. But here, what we have is God interrupting that pattern and speaking directly to us. He's speaking directly to his people. You see, verses one through four is kind of like the we interrupt this to bring you a special message. And the special message isn't from Asaph. It's not from the sons of Korah. It's not even David. It is actually the Lord. Asaph is the Lord's mouthpiece, and God speaks.

And what do we hear? “The mighty one. God the Lord speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth. Our God comes. He does not keep silence. Before him is a devouring fire. Around him a mighty tempest. He calls to the heavens above and to the earth.” So did you hear who it is that he's summoning? The earth from the rising of the sun to its setting. He calls to the heavens above and to the earth. He wants everyone and everything and all of his people to listen, to hear him. And what does he say? He speaks a word of opposition. That's what he does. There are two groups that he speaks to, and he speaks words opposing these two groups.

a) Living in License

The first group I want us to look at actually comes at the end of our psalm. It's those who are living in license. When God speaks, he has a word for those living in license. We see this group in verses 16 through 21. And in verse 16, he calls them the wicked. Now, I imagine that when most of us hear that language, the wicked, we think, okay, this is God having a word for all the nations. All those people outside of Israel, outside of the people of God, who are giving themselves to false religions, to false gods, who are living counter to the way that God has called them to. Now, at times, God does call those outside of Israel wicked. However, here I think that he is talking to his people still. And in fact, every commentator I consulted believes that this language here is for a subsection of Israel. It's for a group of Israel who is living within the people of God. And the reason for that is verses 4 and 7 make

it clear he's talking to Israel and not to the nations. And when he goes on and he introduces this group in verse 16, what does he say about them? He says, "yes, you have taken my covenant on your mouth. You have recited my law," verse 16. But verse 17, "you have cast my word aside." Verse 18, "you're pleased with the thief and approving of the adulterer." Verse 19, "you don't control your words and are full of lies." Verse 20, "you slander and speak against one another."

Now, listen, this isn't God's people living in the world amongst their neighbors, right, amongst the thief, amongst the sexually immoral, amongst those who slander and gossip. It's not them living in the world and trying to call the world to repentance. That's not what's happening here. It's God's people approving of these things, affirming them. And then verse 21, we're told that they think that God is like them. Voltaire once wrote, "if God has made us in his own image, we have returned him the favor." You see, they're not looking to be formed or to be shaped by God in his ways. Instead, they're wanting God to be like them and to approve what they do. And they have no regard for his commands.

You see, this is a group within Israel who had prayed the prayer, who had gone to Sunday school, who had given their tithe, who claimed the name of God's people, but they live however they want. And what does God say to this? Verse 21, "I have been silent," but don't mistake his silence for approval. "I have been silent, but now I rebuke you and lay a charge before you." You see, God is opposing their license, and the charge that he lays against them is that they are guilty.

b) Living by Works

But it's not just those living in license that God opposes. He also opposes those who are living by their works. We see this in verses 7 through 13. This is where this group appears. And in verse 8, God sets the stage. We hear him say, "not for sacrifices do I rebuke you. Your burnt offerings are continually before me." So, we see this group of people. They're not disregarding God's law like those who embrace license. These are those who are keeping the law. And they're offering sacrifices. And they're bringing the bulls and the offerings. They're doing all the things they're supposed to do. But in verse 9, God says to them, "I will not accept a bull from your house or goats from your fold." Okay, so why not? I mean, that doesn't make sense. They're doing what they're supposed to do. They're coming to the temple. They're offering sacrifices. They're bringing the animals. They're bringing the offerings. But God won't accept them. Why not? What's the problem?

Well, verses 12 through 13 help us to understand what the problem is. There, God says, "if I were hungry, I would not tell you. For the world and its fullness are mine. Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats?" Now, at first reading, that might not seem like it helps us much, right? It seems almost tangential until we remember the cultural context that is surrounding Israel. The religious context around Israel is that the other religions outside of Israel in the nations, that the adherents of these religions would bring food to their gods to feed their gods in order to win favor from their gods. So they would bring this to God, expecting God to now show them favor. And that's what Israel was doing. They were coming to God to have God serve them, to manipulate God. But God doesn't need to be fed by them, right? I love what he says, right? He's like, you can bring these things, but they're already mine, right? The bees, the cattle, the birds, all that moves, they belong to him. You're not bringing me anything that I don't already have. And so what we see is that they're actually using their religious works as a way to bribe and gain God's favor.

It reminds me of the story of the farmer who comes to his king. This is a farmer who has labored away in his fields. And he comes to the king and he says, "oh great king, I am one of your loyal subjects, a lowly farmer, and I bring you the first carrot of my harvest. I've labored on it, I've tilled the soil, I've watered it, I have labored to bring forth this carrot, and I give it to you, for you are a good and just king." And the king, seeing the love that the farmer has for him, the king doubles the farmer's land. Now observing this as a wealthy man, and the wealthy man thinks, well, "if you can get some more land with just a carrot, then I wonder what I could get." And so the next day, the wealthy man comes to the king, and he says, "oh great king, I'm one of your loyal subjects, a man of great wealth, and I have the best horses in all the land, and here I bring you the greatest of them all." And the king takes the horse and puts it in his stable, says thank you, and looks to his servant and says, "what's next?" And the wealthy man becomes confused and a little annoyed and mildly angry. And the king senses this, rebukes the wealthy man and says, "the farmer gave me the carrot for me, but you gave me the horse for you."

And y'all, that's what Israel was doing. They were bringing their sacrifices and their offerings, but they were doing it to get something from God, not for God. So what about us? What about us? If God were to testify against us, what would he say? Would he say that we have disregarded his word and desire to live any way that we want? Would he say that we have trusted in our spiritual and religious and pious works? Would he say that we're simply going through the motions? Would he say that we're more concerned with outward appearances, quiet children in church, faithful attendance, theological precision? Are we more concerned with outward appearances than loving him? Would he have a charge to bring against us? Y'all, don't let that pass by, right? Like, it would be very easy for us to go, well, you know, maybe them, right? But not me, because I'm here and I'm here. I was here last week and I'll be here next week and I faithfully start right this camp, but y'all, Israel was there and they were doing all the right things. And Jesus says in Matthew chapter 7, "not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day, many will say to me, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and cast out demons in your name and do many mighty works in your name? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you. Depart from me, you workers of lawlessness."

You see, it's not our good works, our good deeds, our pious actions, or our religious adherence that God ultimately wants. Because God opposes those who live by license, but he also opposes those who live by their works. And so, God speaks a word of opposition, but that's not the only thing God speaks. And we can be very thankful for that, because God not only speaks a word of opposition, in our passage, he speaks a word of encouragement. Because look at this, this is the beauty of God's grace.

Words of Encouragement

After he rebukes them for their religiosity, in verses 14 through 15, he says this, "offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving and perform your vows to the Most High and call upon me in the day of trouble. I will deliver you and you shall glorify me." Okay, so what's the difference here? Because God just said, "I don't want your bowls, I don't want your offerings," but then he says, "bring me an offering, make a vow." So what's God looking for? Well, it's clear, isn't it? He's wanting not just their adherence, not just an outward work, he's wanting their hearts.

He's wanting their whole lives. A sacrifice of thanksgiving, vows to the Most High, calling on him in trouble.

You see, the difference between these and what they were doing is the difference between a sacrifice to get something from God and the one who brings a sacrifice for God. I mean, think about thanksgiving. Thanksgiving, right, that is something that wells up within us and pours out of us because of what God has done, because of who God is. That's an act of worship, calling out to him. It's depending upon him, relying on him, trusting in him. You see, God is encouraging us to come with worship, but to come with all of our being, our hearts and our minds. And he's calling us to do this because he's the one who delivers, right? That's what he said. I will deliver you. He will deliver us from our damnable good works as well as our licentiousness.

I mean, look at the last two verses of our passage. God says, "mark this, then you who forget God, lest I tear you apart and there be none to deliver." He's warning them, be careful how you're living, how you've disregarded my word. If you turn from God, if you forget, there will be none to deliver. But then what does he said? He says, "but the one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me. To one who orders his way rightly, I will show the salvation of God." So what does it mean to order our way rightly, to offer sacrifices that glorify God? Well, our next Psalm, Psalm 51 actually tells us. David says, "the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart." And that's what God desires of his people. All of your life, all of your heart. And we give it to him because he's the one who delivers us. He says, "I will show you the salvation of God."

And friends he has, he has, because we see his salvation clearly in the cross. Because on the cross, Jesus gave his life so that salvation would come. Salvation for those who have been living for themselves by disregarding God's law. And salvation for those who have been living for themselves by trying to earn God's favor, by keeping his law. God saves. That is the word of encouragement. That we give all of our heart, all of our mind, all of our body, and all of our souls to him. Because he has shown us salvation. So friends, we need not trust in our works. And we need not disregard his law. No, instead we come offering him a thanks, an offering of thanksgiving. A sacrifice of praise. Because he has revealed to us his salvation. Amen. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, we do thank you. We thank you that you have revealed to us the salvation that comes through Jesus. And so because of that, because we have seen that salvation, we pray that you would help us to not depend on our works, to not look to ourselves, to not forego your law or to cast it aside, but instead that we would come before you with thanksgiving, following after you, because you are the one who's delivered us. And so I pray, Father, fix our gaze upon Jesus. Let us follow after you with all of our heart, and all of our souls, and all of our minds, so that we would give you the glory you deserve. And we pray all this in Christ's name, and God's people said together, Amen.