

Psalm 65

1 Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion;
to you that answer prayer shall vows be paid.
2 To you shall all flesh come to confess their sins;
when our misdeeds prevail against us,
you will purge them away.
3 Happy are they whom you choose
and draw to your courts to dwell there.
We shall be satisfied with the blessings of your house,
even of your holy temple.
4 With wonders you will answer us in your righteousness,
O God of our salvation,
O hope of all the ends of the earth
and of the farthest seas.
5 In your strength you set fast the mountains
and are girded about with might.
6 You still the raging of the seas,
the roaring of their waves
and the clamour of the peoples.
7 Those who dwell at the ends of the earth
tremble at your marvels;
the gates of the morning and evening sing your praise.
8 You visit the earth and water it;
you make it very plenteous.
9 The river of God is full of water;
you prepare grain for your people,
for so you provide for the earth.
10 You drench the furrows and smooth out the ridges;
you soften the ground with showers and bless its increase.
11 You crown the year with your goodness,
and your paths overflow with plenty.
12 May the pastures of the wilderness flow with goodness
and the hills be girded with joy.
13 May the meadows be clothed with flocks of sheep
and the valleys stand so thick with corn
that they shall laugh and sing.

What a picture of God. Verse 1 - the God that answer prayer is the one that we should follow (vows be paid).

A god who forgives all our sins - verse 2. Yes, long before Jesus, here is the talk of confessing and being cleansed (purged).

Now wonder we shall be happy - verse 3 - we are blessed, we have the temple (a place to meet God), indeed we are drawn to it, and to the lovely presence of God there. And we see wonders - verse 4 - that you save us, and even to the ends of the earth, hope in the farthest part of the seas.

What a God! - Verse 5 and 6 - he sets the mountains, he stills the raging seas, and silences the people. This is referring to creation, like the waters of creation in Genesis 1, and this could be read as the cries of the people are answered.

Verse 7 - so even though by Jesus day the Israelites had become inward looking and it was not just that they were God's chosen people, it was a bit like no-one else counted - you can see that even back here, in 600 BCE or earlier, God is a god for the whole earth - they tremble at what he can do.

What an image - the gates of morning and evening sing your praise. Every sunrise and sunset - beautiful poetry.

Verse 8 - more water. For a land like Israel, water is life, and here it is seen to come from God, to be a sign of blessing from God. Verse 9 - there is a common image of water in the old testament

meaning the spirit, the presence of God - and that might be referred to here, or it might be just God's endless provision and supply.

Verse 10 is very meaningful to anyone who has dug their vegetable patch! Again the rain is a sign and symbol of God's blessing on us and the land.

And verses 11 and 12 talk of such abundant harvest, and even the wilderness shall be full - and I see that in the hedgerows of blackberries, and wildlife that flourishes without our help. The image of the hills wearing a belt of joy clashes with our scientific and detached modern view, it is too sentimental and anthropomorphic - yet somehow it moves me more and gives me more hope. This is why to read the bible is to immerse yourself in a different view of the world, with different language and values and ideas.

Finally, Verse 13 - the meadows are literally wearing a woolly jumper! That's how abundant God's provision is. You can't even see the grass, there are so many sheep. And the corn is so thick that what? is it the people who laugh and sing when they see it, or the corn itself shall seem to dance and sing as the wind blows through it? Who knows? But it is a picture of the joy, the abundance, the sheer over-provision and delight in all creation at their amazing God who has done all this.

We would do well to remember that when we "bless the lord" we do so alongside all the rest of his creation, no more, no less. When we are finding it hard to praise God, it is good to listen our for creation's voice, it can help to get us started.