

Prestonwood Connection 2005

#5 Unknown Heroes

Asaph: Discovering the Power of Worship

Psalm 73

Wednesday, May 25, 2005 • Dr. David McKinley

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Well and I don't know about you, but I'm glad that I can sing that song:

*Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it.
Redeemed, by the blood of the lamb.
His child and forever I am.*

And I'm so thankful for what Christ has done for me. I trust that you are celebrating that in your life tonight and a..., I'm so thankful for the...the wonderful leadership a..., that we've had in this evening of worship and of course all through a..., this semester as we've been together here in the Connection Service. And as I was sitting there I was just reminded again of how powerful, of a current, music is in the culture in which we live. You really cannot escape the presence and the prominence of music. Everywhere you go and everything that you do, a..., certainly if you a..., make a call on the telephone you're going to find that if you're put on hold you're probably going to hear music. That certainly happens here at Prestonwood and one of my favorite moments is when I call and I'm being put on hold and all the sudden (yes, I get put on hold too) and a..., I'm...I'm waiting and all the sudden they hit that hold button and Danna is just soaring on that song you know when I get on the a..., on the hold and when I'm waiting; or maybe Leona or one of our other singers are there and it's so great to hear the beautiful and wonderful music that we hear here at Prestonwood. And a..., so that happens certainly when you are on a telephone. It happens when you get on an airplane. You don't have to be on a plane or really travel anywhere very far, very long these days until they hand you a headset and basically say put this on and listen to some music, we want you to chill out, we want you to enjoy this experience. A..., if you go to the grocery store there you meet the current of music in our culture and there's a...a sound and a song and there's a field. And certainly if you go to an arena, a sports arena, if you've ever been to the American Airlines a..., Center you know that that place rocks with the throb and the impact of music. And even at the old ball park there you hear the organ and you pick up baseball music and something that's a part of a..., the wonderful game of baseball. It really doesn't matter what your taste is in music, you really can't get beyond the touch of music and it's something that you hear, it's something that you experience, a..., and it's something that really makes a difference for us all.

In fact within the hour a..., that we're gathered here, the next American Idol is going to be selected. American Idol 2005 and the big question is Bo from Alabama or is it Carry from Oklahoma? And a..., there's a lot of discussion and a lot of debate and there've been a lot of phone calls made in the last a..., a..., the last day or so for people to try to voice in and to weight in on what they think about American Idol. Over 100,000 contestants started in the process and now it's down to the final 2 and if lasts weeks voting is any indication nearly 40,000,000 people voted for American Idol last week and while that certainly can represent multiple phone calls, you can call more than once, it is a pretty staggering figure. In fact tonight we'll probably learn that the selection was made somewhere in the 40 to 50 million range and if you stop and think about the fact that a..., President Bush was elected with a 60 million vote in the United States; we're talking about voters for American Idol that approach the vote for the presidency of the United States. Now I don't know what that says about America, I'm afraid it may say some things that we're not happy to know about our American values, but on the other hand it just says that we all value music. Music plays an incredible role in our lives and it's a prominent current in the culture in which we live. But it's also true that music is of strategic and supreme importance to our faith. Our faith is a faith that sings and our faith is something that drives us to the place and to the point where music begins to give expression to the worship of our hearts and our lives as we respond to God.

In the church, music is far more than audio decoration or accessories. It's not just something we add on. It's not just a prelude to the things that we do, but it is very much a part and particle of the expression and of the reality of worship in all of our lives because our faith is expressed through our song. And that's why I, to add a 3rd word of affirmation, appreciate so much the diligence and the work and the commitment of Rick and the instrumentalists and the praise team and the tech support who are all a part of making this happen a..., here on Wednesday evenings and then of course every weekend when we gather because so much of our expression in mus...in worship is the coordination and the place that we have in music. What a wonderful thing music is. Music can capture the thrill and the joy of the soul and give expression to it and music can carry the heavy and the burden cords of the heart and can release it. Music is such an incredible instrument that God has given to us and God has given ~~to us~~...it to us as His children, in order that we might be able to give expression in our worship.

Now, you know I spend a lot of time a..., coming to you and taking this book, the Bible, and doing everything that I can to try to preach and to teach biblical principles for life. But, you know that this book that I hold in my hand tonight is not only a book of instruction, it is a book of incredible expression of the human heart and of the human life in response to God. It's not only a book in which we find principles for living, it is a book that is filled with songs and songs of the heart and in fact the very middle book, as it were of the Bible, if you take a Bible and open it, more than likely if you go to the middle you're gonna go to the Psalms

and the Psalms are the heart of the Bible and they give expression to the human heart, because the Psalms are the songs of the Bible. It's a song book and just as much as the Bible is a book of instruction, it is a book that is wonderful in its expression of song and we find that in the Psalms and of course the person who is most associated with the Psalms in the Bible is a man by the name of David, King David of Israel. David was a Psalter, he was a shepherd boy as young man, he was a Psalter, he played some form of instrument. We know he played, as though it were, that Psalter, that harp-like instrument in the presence of the first king of Israel, Saul and then ultimately David became the king and the ruler over God's people Israel, but the song that was in his life as a boy never left his heart as an adult and one of the things that mattered very much to David was that he would give expression to his faith and he would give expression to the faith of his people through the sharing and the participation of the songs. And therefore he wrote and provided the book of Psalms. Interestingly enough as David progressed in his leadership over Israel there came a time where he was coming toward the end of his life and in the end of his life he was setting his house in order and he was making appointments for his kingdom. He wanted to be sure that he left a lasting mark and a legacy for the future of his people and one of the things that David did is that he appointed those who would give leadership in worship to the nation of Israel. Now what he really wanted to do is that he wanted to build a temple. David had it in his heart to build a house, a permanent place of worship for the people of Israel and for God Himself. The people had been wandering in the wilderness and they'd been worshipping in the tabernacle, the tent, a temporary dwelling, but he wanted there to be a place at the center of all of the life of the people of Israel there in the heart of Jerusalem where the people would meet God and God would meet the people and the temple would be built to the glory of God. But God said to David, your hands are stained by blood, you are a man of war, and while God saw the heart of this king, God forbid David from building the temple. But David was not without opinion and he was not without a desire for expression to impact what would happen in that temple and so if you take your Bible and open it with me tonight to the book of 1st Chronicles where we have the Chronicles, the history of the kings, we learn something about David in 1st Chronicles chapter 6 that tell us about his opinion, about his expression and about the action that he took to begin to make preparations for worship in the temple. In 1st Chronicles 6, beginning in verse 31 we read:

³¹These are the men David put in charge of the music in the LORD's temple after the ark came to rest there. ³²They ministered with songs in front of the tabernacle, the tent of meeting, until Solomon built the LORD's temple in Jerusalem and they performed their task according to the regulations given to them. ³³And these are the men who served and their sons.

And if you were to read down that list you would find down in verse 39 that there's a man mentioned there, a man by the name of Asaph. A-S-A-P-H, Asaph, and that Asaph was named the chief of the musicians. Let's look again in 1st Chronicles chapter 16 and in chapter 16, beginning in verse 4 we read a follow up. 1st Chronicles 6 we learn that David said I'm going to

appoint those who are going to be the musicians and until the temple's built they're gonna stand outside the tabernacle and when the temple's built they're gonna begin to lead worship there. And then in ~~verse~~ 6...chapter 16 in verse 4 the Bible says:

⁴David appointed some of the Levites to be the ministers of the Ark of the LORD, to celebrate the LORD God of Israel, and to give thanks and praise to Him, ⁵And Asaph was the chief and Zechariah was second to him.

Again we read the emphasis on this man's life, this man by the name of Asaph who was appointed by the king to lead the people in music, celebration and worship. Interestingly enough we go over to the book of Nehemiah, you don't need to turn there but I have the verse here for you and in the book of Nehemiah chapter 12 and verse 46 we read when they were rebuilding the temple after it had been destroyed that the custom of having choir directors to lead the choirs in hymns of praise and thanks to God was restored and it was begun long ago in the days of David and who? Asaph! And so here we see Asaph, this unknown hero of the Bible, a man that God greatly used to be a part of the experience of the worship of the people of God, appointed by King David in order that he might carry forth the faith and the heritage of worship through the use and the tool of music.

There's one other passage that I want you to see in by way of background and that's 1st Chronicles chapter 25, because there once again it tells us something else about this man and about his function, not only that he was appointed as the temple musician and the leader of the temple musicians, but the Bible says in 1st Chronicles 25: [verse 1]

David and the officers of the army also set apart some of the sons of Asaph, Heman, and some other names ~~who were in~~...who were to prophesy accompanied by lyres, harps and cymbals.

They were to prophesy. Now what did the Bible mean by that? What was David's intention that these men would prophesy? Well, what he was saying is that these men in their role as leaders of worship were to give instruction, were to speak truth and were to lift up the truth and the glory of God as revealed in Scripture. Music was not an accessory, music was not just background, music was to be a part of the very testimony of the people of God as they worshipped God and he emphasized the importance of the role of the musician even as he emphasized the role of the priest. Just as it was the responsibility of the priest to go into the very presence of the Holy of Holies and to stand before God and to intercede for the people, so the role of the musician was to be taken and was to be seen as through they were performing a ministry of prophesy and in the Bible when it speaks of prophesy it's not always speaking about foretelling and forth-telling of the future, but it's that idea of proclamation. It's what our pastor does every Sunday when he stands here and preaches, he prophesies, he's not telling us what's going to happen next week or next year. He may tell us about what is to come in the Bible's prophetic message, but what he does is he forth-tells, he speaks

the truth of God and the musicians were to speak the truth of God because the ministry of music matters in the hearts of God's people and so from this man Asaph we learn something about the power of worship. An unknown hero, a common man with a courageous faith teaches us something about the power of worship. Now frankly apart from ~~his list~~...his name being listed in several of these passages of Scripture that I've given to you we have very little by way of description about this man Asaph, we don't have a lot that we know about him. But we do have some significant things that we know about him by his own expression. Because, did you know that Asaph actually was the author, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of 12 Psalms? Did you know that 12 of the Psalms, if you'll look in your Bible are ascribed to this man Asaph? The first one is Psalm 50 and then beginning in Psalm 73 and going through Psalm 83 there are 12 Psalms that are inscribed as being those that were provided by Asaph and so I want you to go over to Psalm 73 and I want us to learn something about the power of worship from this man whose life was committed to worship and who teaches us something of the power of worship in our lives as well. I wanna begin reading in Psalm 73 and verse 1:

¹God is indeed good to Israel, to the pure in heart. ²But as for me, my feet almost slipped; and my steps ~~neatly went astray~~...nearly went astray. ³For I envied the arrogant; I saw the prosperity of the wicked. ⁴They have an easy time until they die, and their bodies are well-fed. ⁵They are not in trouble like others; and they're not afflicted like most people. ⁶Therefore, pride is their necklace, and violence covers them like a garment. ⁷Their eyes bulge out from fatness; their imaginations of their hearts run wild. ⁸They mock, and they speak maliciously; ~~and, they~~...they arrogantly threaten oppression. ⁹They set their mouths against heaven, and their tongues strut across the earth. ¹⁰Therefore His people turn to them and drink in their own overflowing waters. ¹¹And they say, "How can God know? Does the Most High know everything?" ¹²Look at them—the wicked! They are always at ease and they increase their wealth.

It doesn't exactly sound like, what a wonderful world does it? I mean, you say wait a minute this is the song leader of Israel, this guy sounds like he's havin some trouble. This guy isn't celebrating anything. This guy is moaning, he's complaining, he's frankly expressing what some of us feel from time to time when we look at the world around us and it seems like people are...are living high and wide and handsome and they're the beautiful people and the rich people and they're livin this life and, you know, here I am, I'm committed to God and I'm following His Word and I'm seeking to be a faithful follower of the Lord Jesus Christ and it seems that wicked people in the world are being blessed and it seems that my life is constantly the source of struggle. We learn something very important about worship at this point and that is that Asaph **STRUGGLED WITH THE INJUSTICES OF LIFE** and one of the reasons that that's so important is that for you and for me, so many times, the reasons we don't know the power of worship is because what we have done is we have become distracted, we have become disturbed, we've become disappointed by something that's happened to us... **< turn tape >** ...we love in life, we look at the inequities, we look at the injustices and if we're not careful we just become so disillusioned that

we just say what's the use of worshipping...worshipping God? You see this man said, I need to be faithful to God. I need to give expression to something that's bothering me and therefore he began to describe, not some wonderful, good feeling celebration, he started venting and releasing the struggle that he had over the injustices in the world around him. And that's so important because sometimes we seem to have the idea that if I know God and if I love God then everything in my life is just gonna be okay. If I'm a true follower of the Lord then everything's okay. But I look around at me and I think boy everything in this world isn't okay and so I've got a choice to make; the choice is whether I let myself become so overwhelmed by what I see in the world around me that I'm tempted to turn away from God or whether I'm going to bring honestly that struggle and present to God the injustices of life. You see that's where it all has to begin, because true worship has to begin at the point of reality and I have to get real about the world I'm living in. Worship doesn't begin just in the church, it begins as I live my life in the world and I see what the world is like and then I begin to get honest with God about how I need Him and how I need to see Him and how I need to understand His wisdom and His work and His way in my life. By the way, can you identify with Asaph? Have you ever felt like what he felt here? He was envious of the prosperity of the wicked. You ever have somebody blow your doors off on the car goin down the toll road, drivin some super expensive automobile and think man they're livin life? Oh, don't be so pious, I know you've thought that haven't you? Tell me I'm not alone here. You know we...we see things around us and it's easy for us to begin to envy others and if we're not careful that envy can turn us away. But you see in this man's life what it was, was an honest expression. He confessed the struggle that he had with the injustices of life.

And then we move to the second section of his Psalm and that's where he **WRESTLES WITH THE QUESTIONS OF HIS FAITH**. You see, he had a struggle so then he begins to talk about some doubts and worship is a place where we bring out doubts to God. Don't ever get the idea that when we come together to worship that everybody here's got all the answers. We don't have answers many times we bring out doubts and our weaknesses to God. That's certainly how this man began to worship the Lord. Look again in Psalm 73 beginning in verse 13:

¹³Did I purify my heart and wash my hands in innocence for nothing? ¹⁴For I am afflicted all day long, and punished every morning. ¹⁵If I had decided to say these things aloud, I would have betrayed Your people. ¹⁶When I tried to understand this, it seemed hopeless, ¹⁷until I entered God's sanctuary. And then I understood their destiny.

You see the second aspect of worship was not only the fact that he dealt with the re...raw reality of life as he saw it around him, he had an authenticity with God. He talked about what was going on in his heart and he brought the struggles and the doubts and the uncertainties of his life before the Lord and quietly he said God I've got some things that are bothering me and Lord I come to You in my weakness and I come to You in my doubt and I come to You in my need. He didn't have a wonderful feeling and

I wanna be sure you understand that true worship is not simply the movement of feeling of the emotions.

I heard it years ago, but it's so true; God doesn't do His deepest work in the shallowest part of our being. And if you think that because you went to church and you got goose bumps that you've worshiped, that doesn't necessarily mean that you have. You can have good feelings, you have bad feelings, but you see the reality is I have to get authentic before God and I have to realize that I need to release those feelings to God and then I have to ask God to begin to move in my heart and where my feelings are in cross purposes with who He is and what He does then I need God to work in me and to change me and that's where worship encounters my life with the truth of God. So Asaph struggled with the injustices of life, Asaph wrestled with some questions of his faith, but here's what happened; in the place of worship, when he got his eyes off of just what was happening out there and his eyes up from all of the dejection that he felt in here then let's read what happened in Psalm 73 and he begins to speak again in verse 17:

¹⁷when I entered the sanctuary of God I understood their destiny. ¹⁸Indeed You put them in slippery places; You make them fall into ruin. ¹⁹How suddenly they come to desolation! They come to an end, swept away by terrors. ²⁰Like one waking from a dream, Lord, when arising, You will despise their image. ²¹When I became embittered and my innermost being was wounded, ²²I was a fool and I didn't understand; I was an unthinking animal toward You. ²³Yet I'm always with You; You hold my right hand. ²⁴You guide me with Your counsel, and afterwards You take me up to glory.

And then he says it.

²⁶Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You I desire nothing on earth. ²⁶Though my flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my life and He is my portion forever more.

Do you sense something's changing in this guy's life? Do you sense there's a change of heart and mind and perspective? Sure there is! Because what happened is that he brought the struggles of the injustices of life and he brought the questions and the issues of his faith to God and he turned his eyes from himself and he put his eyes on God and when he did Asaph began to **FOCUS ON THE WONDER AND THE POWER OF GOD** and that is when you discover the power of worship. Worship isn't what you feel. Worship isn't just what you think. Worship isn't just where you are and what you experience. Worship is the moment that your eyes are transformed from living horizontally at the life around you or inwardly and you get your eyes on God and who He is and in that moment when you begin to be captivated by the wonder and the power of God then worship begins to transform you and worship becomes the most powerful force in your being.

J. I. Packer said it this way:

"It (that is worship) is the deliberate lifting of one's eyes from man and

his mistakes to contemplate God and His glory. That's where worship occurs."

And it begins with the reality of the world around us, the authenticity of what's going on within me, but ultimately worship takes me to the glory of God. And it was in that place as Asaph got his eyes on God that he began to get caught up in the glory of God and worship became powerful in his life. And just as it happened to a man several thousand years ago it needs to happen in the hearts and the lives of men and women in Dallas, Texas tonight. We need to discover the power of worship and it happens for us as it did for Asaph when we get our eyes and our minds and our hearts in the right place and on the right person. What is the power of worship in my life and your life? What walk-away lesson can we gain from Asaph tonight about the power of worship? Can I give you several?

#1 Worship **REFOCUSES MY PRIORITIES**. You see what happen in life for Asaph is he lost sight of what was really important. He got so distracted, he got his eyes on something that was so secondary and ultimately something that was so temporal that he began to loose his faith in God. It's what our friend Zig Ziglar calls "stinkin, thinkin" he was just livin with a lot of "stinkin, thinkin" he was musing and living and expressing just life as he saw it and he was becoming very disillusioned by life. And I want you to know if you just live life and look at life, life is disillusioning, but God gives vision and purpose to the disillusionment of life. And when I begin to worship God, worship refocuses my life's priorities. That's why so often when I walk into a place of worship the simple prayer of my heart is this, open the eyes of my heart. God help me to see with Your eyes, help me to quit just living by sight and just start living by faith. When I live by sight I live on the horizontal plan; I'm not worshipping God I'm just living and existing, but when I look to God and His glory then that refocuses the priorities of my life and I begin to see as He saw, the instability, the emptiness, the sudden tragedy of a life that is lived, no matter how good it is if that life is lived without God and so worship for him and for you and me refocuses our priorities.

Next it **RENEWS MY HEART**. I love the fact that he says there in verse a..., 21 and following that there's something going on inside of him, but ultimately though his flesh and his heart fail, God is the strength of his heart. You know it's so easy to loose heart. Our word courage comes from a French word that means heart. I've always thought it was interesting that it came from the French. But anyway it comes from a word that means heart, courage, but when we're discouraged it means that we loose heart and it's so easy for us to loose heart. That's what was happening to Asaph, he was loosing heart, he was discouraged and yet it was when he began to worship that he said you know what? God is the strength of my heart and something began to recharge deep within his soul and instead of walking around frustrated and dejected and angry and embittered he was filled with the joy and the strength of the Lord in his life. That's what worship will do to you. That's the power of worship. Work will renew your heart.

And then, worship will restore...it will **RESTORE AND REBUILD YOUR**

BROKENNESS. We do stumble in life. Our steps are near slipping and there're days in life where though what we know about God may be true, what we live and live out in our lives do not reflect the truth of what we believe about God. And so when we come to worship, worship calls us to a place of seeing the smallness of our lives and our thinking, the weakness and the vulnerability of our lives because of sin, the need that we have to call out to God in dependency and to ask Him to restore the brokenness of our lives. One of the most amazing things that I see happen in worship is when we stand in this place and preach the Word of God and sing and give praise to God there are people who begin to flow from these aisles and flow into these aisles with tears flowing down their faces and the brokenness that they bring to God is rebuilt through the power of worship and witness to the glory of God. It's an amazing thing, it's the power of worship. We have people all the time that walk in here, who have no intention of making any kind of a religious decision or have a religious experience but they meet God in worship and it changes their lives and they're never the same, because worship rebuilds my brokenness.

And then finally worship **RELEASES MY PRAISE.** You know what's so beautiful at the end of this Psalm is that this man is praising God. He says in verse 28:

But as for me, God's presence is my good. And I've made the Lord God my refuge, that I may declare His wonderful works.

He started pouting, but he walked away shouting. He was shouting to the glory of God because of what worship had done in his life and worship gives expression and releases my praise. God keeps His word. God fulfills His promises. God can be trusted, I'm ready to hit the door, I'm ready to go back and to live my life believing God and honoring Him and giving glory to Him day after day after day. I love Warren Wiersbe's definition of worship. I believe it's here for you on the screen. He says:

"Worship is the believer's response of all that his is, mind, will and emotions to all that God is and says."

That's worship and the power of worship occurs in my life and your life when we come, all that we are, mind, will and emotions and we begin to respond to God, who He is and what He is and when we do and that encounter if it occurs in that moment where my heart is open and my eyes are focused in worship upon the Lord then I begin to discover the power of that worship in my life and that worship makes me able to live like Asaph and to say, the Lord is the strength of my life. There's no strength in this world. There's no strength in anything that this world can give. It doesn't matter how much anyone has, anything they've got that's security can be taken away in a moment by disease or by death, but God is the strength of our hearts. And I hope tonight that you discover something about that strength and that power through this unknown hero, a man named Asaph.