

The Center of it All
Psalm 118
Pastor Mark Matson

In 2020, Charles Billingsley released an album, "I Was Made for This." On the album is the song, "Center of it All," which I heard for the first time, this past October at the Celebrator's Conference in Pigeon Forge, TN. The chorus goes like this.

"We will praise You in the center,
Praise You in the center of it all,
Every valley ever victory,
You are with us in the center of it all."

The lyrics and message of this song have driven me in scripture to Psalm 118.

What is a definition of "center"?

- a. the middle part of something
- b. closely involved in things that are happening

What are associations with the word "center"?

- a. Center of the Earth and Universe
- b. Centre Court @ Wimbledon
- c. Center of an Egg
- d. Center of Attention
- e. Center of the Heart
- f. Center of a Room and Wall
- g. Center on a football, basketball, or baseball team
- h. Center Stage
- i. Center of God's Will
- j. Center of a Tornado or Hurricane
- k. Center of the Bible

According to the way most people count, the center of the Bible is Psalm 118. A few interesting tidbits/trivia related to Psalm 118. It follows the shortest chapter in the Bible - Psalm 117 (2 verses) and immediately precedes the longest chapter in the Bible - Psalm 119 (176 verses).

There are 594 chapters before Psalm 118 and 594 chapters after Psalm 118 for a total of 1,188 chapters. Many equate that number with the center verse being Psalm 118:8.

Again, according to most accounting, there are 31,174 verses in the Bible, which is an even number. Therefore, the center verse of the Bible will come as a combination of the 15,587th verse and the 15,588th verse. Can you guess where those land? You got it - Psalm 118:8 and Psalm 118:9. Both of these verses say the same thing.

What does this teach us today and how are we to apply these two verses to our daily lives?

"Are you centered in your trust in God?" It is a particular verse that reminds Christians to trust in God over trusting in themselves or other people. As Christ-followers understand, God consistently provides for us and His grace is given to us freely. In Psalm 118, Lord or God is referenced some 29 times.

Even in the most difficult times, we should center ourselves by trusting in God. He is there making us strong, giving us joy, and carrying us when life weighs heavily on us.

Let's go back to the great song of Charles Billingsley and its lyrics:

"There's a different kind of peace,
In the middle of the storm...
There's a different kind of strength,
When the weakness makes us strong.
There's a different kind of healing,
That cures the longing in our soul.
And it's a different kind of hope,
More than we see,
it's who we know..."

Reading and looking closer at this chapter in Psalms, I recall no less than 4-5 hymns, choruses, and/or praise songs that have encouraged me in the faith.

One we find at the beginning of the chapter in verse 1 as well as at the end in verse 29, "His Love Endures Forever." Another is verse 24 where we read "This is the Day." When I sing this great chorus, and it is often, I am reminded of the greatness and goodness that is our God and this creation that He has allowed me to experience.

So many in our world today, some may be here today, wake up each day and are defeated in their spirit before their feet hit the floor. They are so unfunctional due to depression, anxiety, sin, and lack of self-worth that they can't acknowledge the Creator God for who He is and what He provides us in the breath of life each day.

Today and each day of life is the day the Lord has Made; I and we will REJOICE and be GLAD in it! For all our praise and blessings are to Him!

There is a sign, in the Matson home, above the door leading from our kitchen to our garage that is a constant reminder of this very concept. Many of you perhaps have it in your home, but it reads: "Today is a Good Day, for a Good Day" and I always add that "the Lord has made, I will rejoice and be glad in it."

Let's dig into this chapter to see that every day is the day of God's love, help, and Son...

First, **EVERYDAY** is the Day of God's Love (vv. 1-4)

1 Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his love endures forever.

2 Let Israel say:

"His love endures forever."

3 Let the house of Aaron say:

"His love endures forever."

4 Let those who fear the LORD say:

"His love endures forever."

The first four verses are a preamble in which the Psalmist, most likely David, begins by calling upon all those around him to give to God the glory of His Goodness. We are all to sing in verse 1. Israel in verse 2. House of Aaron in verse 3. And those who fear the Lord in verse 4.

This is a Call to Celebration. What does that look like in your own words? Maybe something like, His love never leaves me, His love is as close as my beating heart, His love never runs out, or His love keeps me going. This reminds me of yet another great hymn that sings,

"There's within my heart a melody;
Jesus whispers sweet and low;
Fear not, I am with thee, peace be still,
In all of life's ebb and flow.
Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, sweetest name I know,
Fills my every longing, Keeps me singing as I go!"

David was a man after God's own heart, and here, his heart is full of God's goodness. God was on his mind, heart, and tongue daily and he wanted others also to be comforted by God's love.

Second, **EVERYDAY** is the Day of God's Help (vv. 5-18).

5 When hard pressed, I cried to the LORD;
he brought me into a spacious place.

6 The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid.
What can mere mortals do to me?

7 The LORD is with me; he is my helper.
I look in triumph on my enemies.

8 It is better to take refuge in the LORD
than to trust in humans.

9 It is better to take refuge in the LORD
than to trust in princes.

10 All the nations surrounded me,

but in the name of the LORD I cut them down.
11 They surrounded me on every side,
but in the name of the LORD I cut them down.
12 They swarmed around me like bees,
but they were consumed as quickly as burning thorns;
in the name of the LORD I cut them down.
13 I was pushed back and about to fall,
but the LORD helped me.
14 The LORD is my strength and my defense;
he has become my salvation.
15 Shouts of joy and victory
resound in the tents of the righteous:
"The LORD's right hand has done mighty things!
16 The LORD's right hand is lifted high;
the LORD's right hand has done mighty things!"
17 I will not die but live,
and will proclaim what the LORD has done.
18 The LORD has chastened me severely,
but he has not given me over to death.

In this next series of verses, David paints a picture for us and describes what he himself had been going through. David had suffered much anguish, verse 5. He had been at war. His nation had been overrun and his land invaded.

There were many people who hated him and wanted to harm him. The Philistines, Syrians, Moabites, and others were all over the place, as we see in verses 10,11,12.

Problems swarmed around him like hornets; he was pushed back and nearly defeated, verse 13; but through it all, his God and Lord protected and helped him in all occurrences.

Likewise, our Great God protects and helps those who trust in Him and call upon His name. When trials and tribulations seem difficult and overwhelming, and we start to believe that we cannot survive or overcome them; the Lord our God is with us. We don't need to feel hopeless, defeated, and insecure because today is the day the Lord has made and we will rejoice and be glad in it!

Finally, **EVERDAY** is the Day of God's Son (vv. 19-29)

19 Open for me the gates of the righteous;
I will enter and give thanks to the LORD.
20 This is the gate of the LORD
through which the righteous may enter.
21 I will give you thanks, for you answered me;
you have become my salvation.
22 The stone the builders rejected

has become the cornerstone;
23 the LORD has done this,
and it is marvelous in our eyes.
24 The LORD has done it this very day;
let us rejoice today and be glad.
25 LORD, save us!
LORD, grant us success!
26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD.
From the house of the LORD we bless you.
27 The LORD is God,
and he has made his light shine on us.
With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession
up to the horns of the altar.
28 You are my God, and I will praise you;
you are my God, and I will exalt you.
29 Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his love endures forever.

These verses that close out this chapter of Psalms indicate that David had proclaimed a day of national worship. He prays for God to open the gates of the righteous so that he may enter and give thanks to the Lord.

What are these gates of righteousness? In the old days, to enter a city, you must enter through the gates, many being in the City Center. The city can be referencing heaven or the new Jerusalem. This city is where God dwells, and where there is no death, toil, anxiety, depression, hatred, or pain. God is King of this city and all who abide there rejoice and are glad in the glory and majesty of our Lord and Creator.

In verse 21, David mentions a salvation that has come, who wipes away every tear; who makes us white as snow, and allows us admittance into the city gate.

In verses 22 and 23 David prophesies about the Savior. This savior, Jesus, would be humiliated, despised, denied, ridiculed, beaten, and rejected by the builders. He would be the stone, the precious stone for the foundation of the church. Even when rejected, he would be exalted and become the chief cornerstone in the foundation, where both Jew and Gentile are united under His name. So when this stone entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, the crowds proclaimed, announced, and shouted Hosanna!! For that day was the day the Lord had made and they rejoiced and were made glad in it.

As we consider our Takeaways for this morning, may we consider:

The Father's Love As:

1. Good----v.1
2. A Helper----v. 6,7
3. Strength and Protection----v.10,11,14
4. Tender----v.18

5. Cleansing----v. 21
6. Enough----v. 29

As we reflect on Father's Day 2022, may we consider:

A Father's Love As:

1. Corrective - "He who ignores discipline despises himself, but whoever heeds correction gains understanding." Proverbs 15:32
2. Forgiving - "He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy." Proverbs 28:13
3. Expressive - "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love." Ephesians 4:2
4. Compassionate - "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him." Luke 15:20
5. Engaging - "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it." Proverbs 22:6
6. Absolutely Necessary - "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." Ephesians 6:4

For Everyone, Everyday!!

1. Jesus wants to be closely involved in all things happening in your life!
2. Jesus wants to be the Center of your life!