

Our Changless Lord In A Changing Society

Series: Our Changless Lord (1st Message of 5)

by Ron R. Ritchie

I don't know about you, but when I watch the 6 o'clock news, my heart is gripped by fear, anxiety and uneasiness. I want to cry out, "Come quickly, Lord. Come quickly, even before the 7 o'clock news." The world is going mad. I think our national leaders would agree. They just about get one problem all squared away when somebody pokes a hole in their bag and they are back at square one, trying to get the same situation squared again. Folks like you and me are left in a sea of uncertainty day after day.

Life is not a lot of fun right now. All kinds of nations want their own bomb. We have wars and rumors of wars. Terrorism is now an acceptable part of the national and world scene. The world population is expanding and we don't have enough food to go around. We don't know what to do with chemical wastes. They're starting to waste us! In the name of "convenience," we are drowning ourselves in our own garbage.

Then on the national scene, with its incredible pressures and stresses, inflation is eating up our earnings. Work all week, write out your checks, and you're still in a hole. Crime is increasing. Why? Because nobody has any money! And not only is crime increasing, but justice is waning. As if this weren't enough trouble, we read that the Social Security program is going bankrupt. Isn't that great news?

And what about the family? It's being attacked on every hand. Because of inflation, they now predict that by 1990 70% of all married couples will have to work. That means your children go to day-care centers, which creates all kinds of problems and tension at home, eventually ending up in divorce. Then you have a new group of people, called "single parents." When they go to work they have to leave the kids at home alone, and widespread teen-age pregnancy, venereal disease, abortions, and drugs result. And the parent is helpless to stop it all. It is a world going mad. Knowing that these kind of things are happening, I get fearful and a little uneasy; my sense of security gets a little rattled. And I haven't even mentioned yet the personal struggles we each have, all those things going on inside us!

Yet, amidst all this trouble, a quiet voice speaks to my heart, and the quiet voice is the Spirit of God, saying, "Will you relax? God is still on his throne. He is in charge of this world and of all the evil forces of the other world. God is working out his wonderful plan of redemption, which is going to come through his nation Israel and his inheritance called the church (you and I)." And God is going to accomplish, to his honor and glory, everything that he said he would. God said that everything going on will end up in his being praised forever and ever. Then my heart relaxes again.

Usually at those times I run to the Psalms because they deal with the reality in which I live. Psalm 33, which we will be looking at today, is one in a group of psalms (3 through 41) collected by King David to praise the Lord--Yahweh, the God who is, the great I AM Who I AM, the God who appeared in history to Moses and to Gideon and to Daniel and to Elijah, the God who intervenes in this present world and changes history. These psalms were to be sung in the temple, with musical instruments, to the glory and the honor of God, and they were to be sung with joy. This 33rd psalm was to encourage the people of God to sing praises to the Lord with the attitude that they could depend on Yahweh in the midst of "apparent" trouble. What looks like trouble to us is, from God's point of view, his right--on--schedule plan. The psalmist is saying, "I want you to understand that God is here. He has revealed himself, and we can depend on him in a day of trouble."

Yes, our society is changing rapidly, and the changes create a lot of trouble. We can't get our bearings. Nothing is consistent anymore. We can't understand how to deal with all the changes coming down the road to us. We want to be able to smile, but inside we're falling apart in the struggle. We say "yes" when we mean "no," and "no" when we mean "yes."

I was raised on a farm, and one of the characteristics of farm life is consistency. On the east coast you have four real seasons--winter, spring, summer, and fall--and they come and go every year. And when you are on a farm there, you do certain things consistently, day in, day out, come hail, rain or snow. One thing we consistently did was milk cows. We got up at six in the morning and milked 65 cows, put all that milk in the cooling room, and waited for the truck to pick it up. Then off to school, and guess what? 4:30 comes around and those cows were still there, waiting for another milking. For eight years those same cows were there. They were so consistent they'd go in the same stall every time. Do you know what that does to a farm kid? It gives him a lasting impression of consistency; something that runs the same all the time! The corn always comes up at the same time of the year. You harvest it at the same time. You look up, feel the air, look at the calendar, and you do it. Then it's winter and you do something else. But now, in our rapidly changing world, even these basic things seem to be changing. Nothing is consistent anymore.

But the psalmist tells us, "I know the world is changing. I know there are enemies from without and enemies from within. I know there are physical problems, spiritual problems, emotional problems, social problems and economic problems. But in the midst of all the rapid change, the confusion, fear, anxiety, and doubt, I want you to know and I do not want you to ever forget that God does not change." In a changing society we can depend on a changeless God who will be consistent to his nature and to his name. The author of Hebrews says, "He is the same yesterday, today, and forever." I'll put my money in that bank because I like things that I can depend on, things that do not change. And I like the idea of depending on the Lord.

The psalmist begins by calling on the righteous to sing.

Praise The Changeless Lord Because Of His Character

**Sing for joy in the Lord, O you righteous ones;
Praise is becoming to the upright.**

He is saying, "I want you to know who you are: You are righteous." How does one become "righteous"? Well, in the days before the law and before the cross of Jesus Christ, there was a man named Abram who lived in the Babylonian city of Ur, between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The Lord, Yahweh, showed up and said, "Abram, if you will trust me, if you will put your life in my hands I will make you a great name, and give you a great nation and children as countless as the sands of the sea; and through your loins and your nation I will bless the whole world. But the one condition is, 'trust me'." Scripture says that "Abraham believed God," and God found that acceptable; God, "reckoned it unto him as righteousness." Abraham became right again with God, regaining his sense of fellowship, his sense of acceptance, his sense of worth, because the sins that kept him from God were forgiven. The sin of trusting in himself was dealt with. Once he trusted God he was back where he belonged, back home with the Father.

Years later, David, who was under the law, said,

Blessed is the man whose lawless deeds have been forgiven And whose sins have been covered. Blessed is the man whose sins the Lord will not take into account. (Psalm32:1 2)

How does one become righteous today? With the same faith that Abraham and David had, because the great Yahweh who appeared in the Old Testament is the same Yahweh in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ said, " 'Before Abraham was born, I AM.' I am Yahweh I am the God who enters men's lives and invades history. I am the one who met Moses and Gideon. It is I." When men and women place their faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and believe that he came and walked among us, taught us who he was and who his Father was, took all the sins of mankind on that cross, died, and then rose again, this faith in that Yahweh, Jesus, is counted as righteousness. He becomes a righteous man; she becomes a righteous woman; they become righteous children. When you become righteous, you get back into fellowship with God because of God's love and his desire and ability to justify your sins, to put them aside, to never hold them against you again. Can you imagine that? If you watched a movie of your old life you would be ashamed of lots of things in that movie. But when a man or woman or child has faith in Jesus Christ and all that he has done, God destroys the reels and the machinery. There is no accounting, no old tapes. It is finished. That's wonderful news! And that is what it means to be

righteous in God's sight.

That is why the psalmist says, "I want you to sing with your hearts filled with praise because you are righteous. I want you to sing out, you righteous ones." Why? Because it is becoming for the righteous to sing. Some friends of mine came to visit during the last three days and messed the whole place up. My living room and my kitchen have looked like a small disaster area since. I kept saying to my wife, "I don't believe you, woman. I thought that by now you'd be screaming, 'What have you done to my kitchen?'" But she knows there is something better coming, so she just quietly rested. We brushed the dust away and ate in the middle of all the confusion, with people coming in and out of the house, the phone ringing, etc. And do you know what my wife was doing? Singing a song to the Lord! In the middle of all that, she was quietly singing. It was beautiful to hear. The psalmist says, "I want you to 'sing for joy in the Lord, O you righteous ones' " Why? Because it is becoming to the righteous; to sing is the natural result of being righteous.

The psalmist goes on to instruct the people of God to worship God in four ways (verse 2):

**Give thanks to the Lord with the lyre; Sing praises to Him with a harp of ten strings.
Sing to Him a new song Play skillfully with a shout of joy.**

Sing to him a new song, the psalmist tells us, because we are always having new experiences. Many times through the years my neighbor John Fischer has called out to me as I was jogging near his house, "Come on over. I've got a new song." And his song is always one of praise to the Lord. We are to sing to the Lord with the lyre, with a harp of ten strings, and we are to sing skillfully with a shout of joy.

The psalmist tells us that it is natural for the children of God, the righteous ones, to sing for joy to the Lord, our changeless Lord who is with us in a day of apparent trouble, a day of rapid change, our Lord who is 'the same yesterday, today and forever.' He tells us we are to sing about four things. First, about the word of the Lord (verses 6-9); then about the works of the Lord (verses 10-12); then about the righteousness and justice of the Lord (verses 13-19); then about the lovingkindness of the Lord (verses 20-22). So let us look at these four areas.

1 Praise The Lord Because Of His Word (verses 6-9)

By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, And by the breath of His mouth all their host. He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; He lays up the deeps in storehouses.

He says, "When God spoke the world was." I can't wait to see that movie! It's going to make "The Empire Strikes Back" look like Disneyland! "I want a world" . . . and there it was! Then God breathed, and the sun, the moon and the stars came into being. Then he created the sea, the rivers, and the lakes. The psalmist says that men should respond in two ways: We are to respect God and who he is, and we are to stand speechless at his handiwork. These should be the natural responses of righteous men, women and children.

I went with a group of friends to the Snake River in Idaho. We traveled hundreds of miles down those deep canyons, and the whole time one of my friends kept saying, "Wait till you see! Wait till you see!" The river was alive with rapids and fish and beauty, with cliffs and canyon walls getting closer and closer together and still he kept saying, "Wait till you see!" I could hardly absorb all I was seeing, and he was saying, "Wait till you see what's coming!" I went to the back of the boat, weeping inside and praising the Lord for what he had done. I was not worshiping the beauty of what he had created; I was worshiping the Creator. But many men have mistakenly ended up worshiping the creation rather than the Creator. Romans 1 tells us that it is foolishness to forget to honor God and give thanks, and instead worship rocks and stones and water and moons and stars rather than the great Creator.

So the psalmist tells the righteous ones that although the world is changing, we still have a changeless God to whom we are to sing praises because of his word.

The second reason we are to sing praises to God is because of his works, all of which are done in faithfulness.

2 Praise The Lord Because Of His Works (verse. 10-12)

The Lord nullifies the counsel of the nations; He frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the Lord stands forever, The plans of His heart from generation to generation. Blessed is the nation whose Cod is the Lord, The people whom He has chosen for His own inheritance.

The Lord is at work in heaven and earth, and history is his story. He has a plan of redemption for the nations. Men and women who make plans without checking things out with him are wasting their time, because as created beings we are to consult our Creator for his plans for this world. His plans are to bring redemption, not our destroying one another. The psalmist says if we make plans or make counsel without God, he'll nullify everything; he'll just put it aside.

Pharaoh told Moses that the Israelites couldn't leave Egypt. Moses said, "I'm just doing what God said, and God said we're leaving." Pharaoh said, "Well, I'm in charge of this nation. I've talked to all my wizards and wise men and you're not going." Moses said, "Don't take your case to me, take it to God. I'm leaving." And the Israelites left. Pharaoh missed them so much, you'll remember, that he sent his whole army out to bring them home; but the army got caught in that little river and we haven't heard of them since!

The Canaanite nation made plans to wipe out Joshua. Thirty--two kings waited for him, and Joshua attended every one of their funerals because God had another plan.

135,000 Midianites on camels came to take over the land. God said to Gideon, "What are you doing today?" Gideon said, "Nothing. I'm just hiding from the Midianites." God said, "How would you like to have the nation back?" Gideon said, "OK. How do you want to do it?" God said, "Get 300 trumpets, 300 pots, and 300 candles, and you can have it back, but you have to trust me, Gideon, because I'm with you." The Midianites made all kinds of plans, but Gideon did not make any. He just followed Yahweh, and 135,000 Midianites were defeated.

God says he will nullify and cancel all plans that are made without consulting him. This has been so throughout the history of the Scriptures, and throughout secular history. When Hitler was standing right on the shore of the English Channel, ready to invade England with the greatest army in the world, do you know why he didn't go ahead and invade? Because his astrologist told him it was not the right day and he didn't like water! Let's attack Russia instead, he decided, and he ended up in disaster. In contrast, for everyone who checks with the Lord and works with him, the counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of his heart from generation to generation. The key to all this is verse 12, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord." That is where the blessing comes from. Blessed are the people whom he has chosen for his own inheritance. You and I have been so chosen. Can you believe that? It's hard to, but Ephesians I makes this very clear. Cod chose Israel to bless the world, and when they refused, he chose the church of Jesus Christ to bless the world--that is where our allegiance stands. The righteous are to sing for joy to the Lord, not only for his word, but for his works.

The psalmist now gives us the third reason why we should sing to the Lord.

3. Praise The Lord Because He Loves Righteousness And Justice (verses 13-19)

The Lord looks from heaven; He sees all the sons of men; From His dwelling place He looks out On all the inhabitants of the earth, He who fashions the hearts of them all, He who understands all their works The king is not saved by a mighty army; A warrior is not delivered by great strength. A horse is a false hope for victory; Nor does it deliver anyone by its great strength.

He tells us that God's standards of righteousness and justice are absolutely flawless. The words God says, the rewards he gives, and the penalties he inflicts are all righteous and just, and as his children we are to reflect his righteousness and his justice in a corrupt world.

Psalm 37, verses 27-28, says,

**Depart from evil, and do good,
So you will abide forever.
For the Lord loves justice,
And does not forsake His godly ones:
They are preserved forever . . .**

In verses 13-19 of Psalm 33 the psalmist tells us three things about God's righteousness and justice. First of all he says that, "he sees all men and their works," that is, the One who created us, who fashioned us, sees our hearts, our motives. So the first thing we can trust about this righteous Judge is that he will judge us, not by our actions, but by the motives of our hearts. You always have to ask yourself, "What is my motive? Why am I doing this?" If you do not check them, God will.

The second thing the psalmist says is that God overrules self--confidence. He tells the righteous not to put their confidence in kings and armies and warriors and horses because Yahweh is the only One who can deliver us from any enemy, be it physical, emotional, or spiritual. One of my favorite characters in the Old Testament is Hezekiah. Hezekiah was once surrounded by the Assyrian army, led by King Sennacherib. This king wrote a letter to Hezekiah, demanding everything--his gold and silver, his women, his men, and his head. Hezekiah went into the temple of God, and said, "God, read the letter this king sent me." There is a pause while God is reading the letter, and then God says, "Hezekiah, I want you to go out and rest. I will take care of the Assyrian army." The next morning the angel of death went among the camp of the Assyrians and 185,000 woke up dead! Righteous men and women do not place their trust in horses, armies or kings. We place our trust in Yahweh, the One who revealed himself, the One who is always with us, who desires to show his life and justice and righteousness through you and me and the church of Jesus Christ. No one can prevail against this; even hell can't.

The third thing the psalmist says is that God delivers the righteous. Look at verses 18-19:

**Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him. On those who hope for His
lovingkindness, To deliver their soul from death, And to keep them alive in famine.**

The righteous are delivered in two ways in this rapidly changing world. First, God delivers our souls from death. Paul says in 2 Corinthians, "We should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead"--the God who takes the most deadly situation and brings life back into it, whether it is on a physical, an emotional, or a spiritual level. I have seen marriages that, as far as I was concerned, were as dead as a doornail. But when the people involved turned to the God who raises the dead, he put life back into those marriages. So, whether it be on a physical level, where God delivers us from physical death, on an emotional level, where he delivers us from emotional death, or on a spiritual level, God, says the psalmist, is the One who can deliver us. He is our rock and our salvation, the only One we can turn to in this mad, crazy world and we should sing praises to him.

Then the psalmist says that not only can God deliver us from death but also he can keep us alive in famine. Famine was always a problem in Israel, for Abraham and Sarah, for Ruth and Naomi, for Elijah and the widow, for Joseph and Mary. There was always physical famine. Here in California we are experiencing economic famine. My friend Don Miller told me recently that his peaches were almost ripe. He hadn't heard of the Med-fly! He didn't know they were that hungry! (Knowing Don, he would have given them a peach!) But they came and took all of his peaches. That is famine, friend, and a lot of people are getting hurt by that. I asked a carpenter friend yesterday how he was doing. He said, "Well, between you and me, economically it's a difficult time." It is a hard time for carpenters, even for good ones, and he is a good one. A lot of you are feeling economic famine, and you are getting frightened. And you will be if you are thinking your security comes from investments, stocks, Social Security, and insurance policies. That is like depending on the king and the warriors and the horses and the chariots. The psalmist says, "Hold it! Don't get frightened! Put your trust in God. He will take care of you in the famine." Psalm 37 says,

The Lord knows the days of the blameless;

**And their inheritance will be forever . . .
And in the days of famine they will have abundance.**

That is why we are to sing praises to the Lord. We are to sing praises to the Lord not only because of his word, and because of his work, but also because in his righteousness and justice he will take care of his children.

Finally, the psalmist gives us the fourth reason we are to praise the Lord.

4. Praise The Lord Because Of His Lovingkindness (verses 20-22)

He now instructs the righteous in three things he wants them to do in light of what God has done in times of trouble and fear and anxiety. First,

**Our soul waits for the Lord;
He is our help and our shield.**

The first thing we are to do is wait on God--not panic, just wait. The hardest thing to do is wait, but he says wait on God because God is our help, our shield, our protection. He alone can meet our needs: through his people we will all eat; if necessary, the ravens will show up with bread in their mouths. So do not worry.

Second,

**For our heart rejoices in Him,
Because we trust in His holy name.**

As righteous men and women we are responsible not only to wait on the Lord but to trust in his holy name. If we do that our hearts will rejoice. In other words, his holy name reminds us of who he is. Our hearts always respond to a name, according to the character of the person named. When you think of Ron Ritchie, you think of a certain person, and that person keeps coming back to your mind. When you think of Steve Zeisler, you think of a different person. Do you see what I mean? So the psalmist says, "I want you to respond to God in such a way that you reflect on his holy name, and when you reflect on that name, you discover that Yahweh always delivers those who love him.

And last,

**Let thy lovingkindness, O Lord, be upon us,
According as we have hoped in Thee.**

To the extent that we hope in God's mercy, we can expect God's mercy. Mercy is that quality of love that extends itself to those who deserve nothing and can never return it, those who are just the recipients of it.

What a marvelous psalm! The psalmist has told us that the righteous who live in a rapidly--changing world are to turn their hearts to a God who never changes. They are to rest in him and sing praises to him for his words, for his works, for his righteousness and his justice, and for his mercy." What an incredible God we have! Yahweh is never going to change. So don't let this world get to you. Don't worry. God is going to work, delivering us from death and from famine. All we have to do is sing praises to him.

Our Heavenly Father, thank you so much for your love. Thank you for your work. Thank you for your words. Thank you for your righteousness and your justice. Thank you so much for your mercy. I pray, Lord, that you will teach us to wait on you, because you are our help and our shield. Teach us Father, how to trust in your holy name and to wait for your mercy. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Psalm 33
Ron R. Ritchie

[Back to Index Page](#)

Copyright© 1996 [Discovery Publishing](#), a ministry of [Peninsula Bible Church](#). This data file is the sole property of Discovery Publishing, a ministry of Peninsula Bible Church. It may be copied only in its entirety for circulation freely without charge. All copies of this data file must contain the above copyright notice. This data file may not be copied in part, edited, revised, copied for resale or incorporated in any commercial publications, recordings, broadcasts, performances, displays or other products offered for sale, without the written permission of Discovery Publishing. Requests for permission should be made in writing and addressed to Discovery Publishing, 3505 Middlefield Rd. Palo Alto, CA. 94306-3695.