

Hard Providences have Kingdom Purposes

by Mack Tomilson

This sermon emphasizes the importance of maintaining a Kingdom perspective and worldview in the midst of hard providences, highlighting the need for believers to trust in God's sovereignty and have faith that He is perfectly in control of every event. The message encourages a focus on God's glorious works and purposes, even in the face of trials and uncertainties, reminding listeners to worship and praise Him regardless of external circumstances.

Scripture: Psalms 66:1, Psalms 66:5, Psalms 66:9, Psalms 27:1, Romans 8:31

Topics: "Kingdom Perspective", "Trust in God's Sovereignty"

Description

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Transcript

The message this morning is on this. Hard providences have kingdom purposes. Every hard providence, internationally, nationally, at the state level, local level, city level, family level, church level, and individual level, hard providences have kingdom purposes.

Psalms 66, we'll read the first 12 verses. The Lord help us hear His voice this morning. Make a joyful shout to God, all the earth.

Sing out the honor of His name. Make His praise glorious. Say to God, how awesome are Your works.

Through the greatness of Your power, Your enemies shall submit themselves to You. All the earth shall worship You and sing praises to You. They shall sing praises to Your name.

Selah. Come and see the works of God. He is awesome in His doing toward the sons of men.

He turned the sea into dry land. They went through the river on foot. There we will rejoice in Him.

He rules by His power forever. His eyes observe the nations. Do not let the rebellious exalt themselves.

Selah. Oh, bless our God, you peoples, and make the voice of His praise to be heard. Who keeps our soul among the living and does not allow our feet to be moved.

For you, O God, have tested us. You have refined us as silver is refined. You brought us into the net.

You laid affliction on our backs. You have caused men to ride over our heads. We went through fire and through water.

But You brought us out to rich fulfillment. Let's pray again and ask the Holy Spirit to honor His Word. Our Father, we are utterly in need of You to speak.

The words of any man are insufficient, inadequate, imperfect, and will always fall short unless You speak. So speak to each of us. Come, blessed Spirit, and take Your Word and feed us.

In spite of me, beyond me, Lord, give us food and bread from Heaven that will change us and cause us to see this morning what we truly need to see. We trust You. This time is Yours.

Let Your hand be upon us. In Jesus' name and for His sake, Amen. These verses are verses of rejoicing and worship in the midst of the psalmist saying that God had just brought them through very difficult days.

We don't know what all it was fully in the context of this psalm, but the truth is, the psalmist here is saying that hard providences should not rob the people of God from worship, nor from praise, nor from ultimately a heavenly perspective, a biblical mindset, a regenerate worldview. Hard providences have kingdom purposes. Now I think for many of us this past year and coming into this year, and Lee's absolutely right, the calendar means nothing.

Nothing's changed. I like the beginning of a new year. I always have, but nothing has changed.

And the fact is, the hard providences may continue in different ways. New things will come. New news, if you will.

Different news. Changing policies. And the nations of the earth will continue in all likelihood to be rattled and shaken.

And so we realize that these things will continue because Jesus told us they would continue. But here's the reality. The Christian must cultivate and have through God's words developed in their mind and in their conscience and in their spirit and their hearts' affections a kingdom perspective about all of it.

If not, every believer that doesn't have a kingdom perspective about what's going on will be shaken, fearful, struggling, discouraged, and will compromise their faith and their walk probably. So my goal this morning is for all of us to say, Lord, Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Father, give me the mind of Christ about what's going on at the macro and micro level. At the international level, right down to my life and the choice that I'm making daily. And how I lead my family.

And how I worship. Am I going to let the circumstances or a virus or anything compromise my worship? Are we as a church going to let that happen? Hard providences are always coming. They always will come.

But we must cultivate and maintain and rejoice in a kingdom mindset. And Psalm 66 in a measure gives us that. Difficult days and circumstances.

A difficult world increasingly. And I heard someone pray something along the lines of this morning that this world is bad. It's bad out there.

Evil days. Scary things. And Jesus said men's hearts will fail them with what? Fear.

Because of fear. A changing, unstable world. So therefore, how are we to think and navigate forward? Because the kingdom of God is not about earthly and peaceful ease.

It's not. But we Americans think about America that way. We think about our beautiful neighborhoods and our comfortable homes and the peaceful towns we live in.

We want a peaceful and earthly kind of ease. But that kind of has been shaken, hasn't it? Too little? And some of us have been through the COVID and by God's grace have come out of it. But listen, if we have this mindset, now, the whole COVID thing has disturbed my schedule and my routine and my traveling and my holidays and good times.

Think how self-centered that is. Rather, the mindset should be through whatever is happening, what is God doing? Have you thought more in an earthly way about 2020 than a heavenly way? What is God doing? He's working. What's He up to? I don't know, but I trust Him.

Lord, how do You want us to maneuver? God's sovereignty, absolute, unconditional sovereignty, practically applied, lets us say and believe my Father is absolutely in control from the hairs of my head, so maybe there's more counting on that, to who and how and when someone gets the virus, if they die from it or if they live through it, and the nations in tumult and anger and confusion and darkness, He's in charge of it all. And do we think this way? God, You're at work. So equip me to pray better and to live better, to have a kingdom mindset, to be a light to those who right now around me are all open.

Lord, help me to be a kingdom person and to live that way in and through hard times. Now Psalm 66, let's just stroll through this for a few minutes and see the psalmist's call to uncompromised worship and praise and rejoicing, even though they've been through what they have gone through. Verses 1-4 is a call to worship.

We always have one. He gives one here. Now remember, God had brought them through difficult things.

We're going to see that in a moment. But here the psalmist says, make a joyful shout to God. Does your translation say shout? So, when do you ever shout to God? In the bathroom, in the shower, on a walk, driving your car? Now, do you ever shout to God? Early in the morning sometimes when I'm outside, I'll go out and the stars are shining.

All the neighbors' lights in their house are out. I'll work up the nerve. Lord, You made these stars.

Glory to Your name. I'm awake again. It's a new day.

Hallelujah! And I'll echo it in the neighborhood. Make a joyful shout to God. All the earth.

Are you not free to shout? Sing out the honor of His name. We'll do that in a few minutes. And when we sing, you and I should sing out the honor of His name, Rob.

He's worthy of it. Make His praise glorious. How do we meagerly little creatures, how do we make His praise glorious? With our hearts and our minds and our words and our songs and our prayers and our praise, we offer Him that.

We are to make His praise a glorious reality. Verse 3, we're to say to Him, Lord, how awesome are Your works. Listen, this year, it's totally viewed as a bad year.

But God says through the whole year, My works have been awesome. I know what I'm doing. You children of Mine, get on track.

Get my mind set. Let this mind be in you. God's work has been glorious.

It's been far more glorious than that glorious wedding last night. God's works are always glorious no matter what's happening in the earth. How awesome are Your works.

And here's the truth. Verse 3, through the greatness of Your power, Your enemies will submit themselves to You. That's going to happen.

Every enemy of Christ in the earth, every one of them, is going to bow and submit themselves to His authority. And verse 4 says, all the earth shall worship You. And it is, and it's going to continue, and it will.

They shall sing praises to Your name. Now, we're called to worship that way irrespective of what's happening around us. Do the circumstances and the fearful things outside these walls shape and control or compromise Your rejoicing heart and Your worship? And then verse 5 shifts to an invitation.

An invitation. God says, come and see. Come and see.

Come and see what? The works of God. That means we draw near. We come and we contemplate and we meditate and we view and we take in the works of God.

Lift your eyes from the earth into history through the Bible. We spiritualize and see the works of God. That's what will encourage you.

Nothing down in this earth except the kingdom and the saints and the Gospel and the Word of God and fellowship, nothing in this world is going to encourage you. Your eyes are set there. You're only going to be weighed down or distracted.

Come and see the works of God. In other words, really, come and see God because it says He is awesome in His doing toward the sons of men. And then the psalmist in verse 6 begins to focus on God's sovereign control and working.

A right view of God's sovereignty. Having it in our affections and in our thinking and in our views and in our emotions and returning to it in our perspective when our eyes are down. A full view of God's absolute sovereignty brings the comfort and the stability.

Look at verse 6. He turned the sea into dry land and they went through on foot. There we were rejoicing in Him. He rules by His power forever.

That's an absolute, unconditional, eternal statement. Christ rules by His power forever. If our eyes are focused on that, if we believe that and we appropriate that, we will not sink down into discouragement.

His eyes this morning are observing the nations. And He tells you rebellious ones in the earth, don't exalt yourself. But verse 9, then He begins to move into what is personally applicable to us.

Look at verse 9. He moves from the nations to us individually who keeps our soul among the living. We do not keep ourselves. It's wise and right to maintain our health and to observe in these days what's truly best.

And we are all endeavoring to do that. That's not contradictory to faith. But we must always remember who it is that's keeping us.

It's not our doctor. It's not our vitamins. It's not our health regimen.

It's not how good we are. The living God Himself, our Father, keeps our soul. Do you believe that? Do you rejoice in that? He keeps our soul among the living and does not allow our feet to be moved.

Now look, I've had two friends of mine die from the COVID in the last month. One in Abilene and one in Denton. And this verse is not nullified because God took them to be with Him in glory.

No, it doesn't deny that. Scripture must interpret Scripture. God kept their feet.

And it was His sovereign, perfect time to take them to be with Him. Verse 10 though begins this great theme. And this is where we're going this morning.

Look at 10. For God, You have tested us. The church has been tested throughout the world.

Cities tested, etc. But God has brought the pestilence. God is doing the testing.

He's tested us, tried us. And as a result of that, verse 10 says, He's refined us. Has your faith and your serious-mindedness about the Kingdom been refined and improved by this past year? I would say for every Christian it has been.

We have been awakened to the reality that God's at work. And though we feel all kinds of things, we're pushed by the testing to trust Him. We are forced by very nature of it to feel our need of Him more desperately.

And we're driven to dependence and serious-mindedness. And thus, we are refined. Refinement comes from the testing.

Verse 11, Lord, You brought us into the net. You laid affliction on our backs. You've caused men to write over our heads.

We went through fire and through water. Alright, pause. Pause.

Through these months, has Your perspective been centered on God Himself and You've viewed the COVID and the chaos through the lens of looking at Him? Lord, You're doing this. How do You want me to view it? Lord, You're in charge. Father, what do You want of it? You're always looking through prayer and the truth.

You're looking through the lens of what's on the earth. Through the lens of looking at God and Christ. And that alone keeps perspective right.

Don't look at the earth and then once in a while glance at Him. Looking unto Jesus through Him, we see with kingdom eyes and a kingdom perspective. Fear must not control us.

Fear must not produce compromise. Fear must not produce carnal reaction. God has done this.

But look at the end of verse 12. Here's the goal and purpose. You brought us out to rich fulfillment.

Other translations may use abundance. But here's the purpose. Kingdom purposes with hard providences for the believer only are meant to bring us into more faith, more dependence, more detachment from this world and attachment to Christ.

Spiritual riches are what God intends through any hard providence for His people. So, have this mind in yourself. Do we believe this? Can we say with the psalmist, Lord, You're awesome through all of it.

You are ruling by Your power. You keep my soul in all of our souls. Yes, You've tested us in how we're responding, how we're trusting You.

But You have refined us and You are refining us. You've brought all this about. But Father, You have for us and for every child of God rich fulfillment, rich experience to go deeper with You.

Does this govern us and shape us and control us in our views, our emotions, our hearts, and our choices? Why should it? Because God's work is perfect. And I'm afraid we often, at least I can say, I haven't often kept that in mind day in and day out. I haven't always responded in faith.

But it's because my mind wasn't renewed in those moments, back to the truth that God really is in charge. So let me just briefly give us some takeaways. And I would encourage you to go back later in Psalm 66 and meditate through this and pray through it.

Because it's so rich and wonderful. What are our takeaways? Number one, we need and must have a Kingdom perspective and worldview. We need and must have a Kingdom perspective and worldview.

Believers who are fearful, trapped in discouragement, whose mind has been distracted, overwhelmed, if that's where we live, fear will drive us and peace will leave us. And compromise of our faith in little ways and bigger ways will set in and unbelief takes over and we will be weak-minded. If we do not have a Kingdom perspective and a worldview, we will sink down into earthly-mindedness and that will control our responses.

Earthly-mindedness will control our choices rather than Christ-mindedness and Kingdom-mindedness. And listen, brethren, as things get harder in this world, and they will, judgments, disasters, pestilence regularly, nations going crazy, governments controlling and power-playing, men's hearts will be failing them for fear all around us. And it will increase and get worse.

Paul the Apostle said that it would. So when that happens, when the next wave of whatever comes, when the next hard things come, if a family member of yours got COVID and died, how are you going to live? What perspective and mindset will govern and drive your conduct no matter how hard it gets? The Bible mindset and hard things. Psalm 27, David.

The Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life. Of whom or what shall I be afraid? When the wicked come against me, though an army camps around me, my heart shall not fear.

You know, you can choose and you can say to your soul and to the Lord, my heart will not fear, Lord, no matter what comes. I didn't fear COVID before I got it. I didn't fear it while I had it.

And I don't fear it now. You know, the one thing I struggle with fearing and I'm trying to conquer it, leaving my children and grandchildren in this world without me, as if I could do a lot for them. I mean, that's really dumb, isn't it? But that's a fear I battle and I'm facing it.

But look, the war rises against me, David said. In this will I be confident. One thing have I desired and I will seek after God.

And look, He suffered a lot harder things than we all have. That's for sure. What mindset, Daniel's three friends facing the furnace.

They said, you know, whether God delivers us or not, we ain't bowing. And that's not in the Hebrew, but that's what they said. Our decision is made.

We're not bowing. Habakkuk. Though there is no provision and we're in famine and the enemy's coming, yet I will rejoice in God my Savior.

Mindset, brethren, in the midst of hard things. Mindset. Perspective must rule.

In the Bible, context means everything and it must rule. In the believer's mind, let this mind be in you, which was in Christ Jesus. Mindset, perspective is everything in the Christian life, because it controls your emotions, feelings, choices, and discouragements.

The Apostle Paul. If God is for us, who or what can be against us? Nothing is against the Christian because all is working for him. Nothing, Paul says, tribulation, not trials, distress, persecution, famine, dangers, neither death, life, demons, present things, future things, or any created thing can separate us from the love of God.

So why would you fear anything? Why would you set your mind on things below and let that govern your perspective? It will rob you and destroy you. Brethren, pray for and read for and live for a kingdom perspective, not a self-centered one. That's the first takeaway.

Number two, God is perfectly in control. Every event, the timing of everything, the changing world, men's evil actions, our perspective must be our God reigns. There is nothing to fear.

But there's a God who is our Father to trust and obey and walk with Him. Even if the mountains all around me come into the sea and everything around me is unstable, I have no need to fear. I will not fear.

God is gloriously at work. We ought to go away today and have this as the beginning motto of our new year. My God is gloriously at work.

Because it's absolutely true. In and through it all, on His schedule, with His plan, listen, our God and our Father has unknown, glorious, mysterious kingdom purposes that He's working. And we don't see it all.

We see still through a glass darkly. And we cannot interpret it. But He has kingdom purposes so wonderful and majestic and Christ-honoring and kingdom-advancing purposes of judgment and mercy in every part of it.

And it's not about... He's not doing anything about our comfort, our ease, our routine, our schedule, and what we prefer. He doesn't care about that. Honestly.

He loves us. He cares for us. He provides.

He gives what's needed. How often in history in the Bible has God ripped away every comfort, every creature comfort, health, possessions, money, and believers were alone suffering and they had God. He doesn't protect your comfort zone.

And if it's ripped away and removed any time through any reason, will you trust Him? And will you be able to say, my God is gloriously at work. I worship You, Lord. He is moving all things in time and history to His appointed end.

So don't make your response about how this is affecting you. It affects all of us. But believers have a higher mindset.

Let Christ make you more fit for heaven and more useful on earth. Lord, make us all more fit for heaven and more useful on earth. Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Now, I was thinking about what Paul said to the Corinthians. Every enemy will be made his footstool.

Then comes the end when Christ delivers the Kingdom to the Father and God is glorified all in all. Our end is good and glorious and wonderful. And if He's with us, we truly have nothing to fear.

But let's get our minds right with Kingdom perspective.

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