

# Psalm 20

*"In God We Trust?"*

December 10, 2023

## 1. Intro

- a. In 1851, an Anglican priest, named John Mason Neale, gave us the first English translation of the Latin hymn, *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*
  - i. No one knows who initially wrote this hymn, but it's believed that the tune was written as early as the 15<sup>th</sup> century, with the lyrics being written in the early 1700's
    1. As you might have noticed, this hymn has a much different feel than most other Christmas carols
      - a. Most of the carols we sing around this time of year are full of joy and celebration, and stories of angels and mangers and little boys playing drums
      - b. But take a look again at the lyrics to this song in your worship guide
    2. Yes, there is the repeated call to rejoice in the coming Messiah, but it is also tempered by the reality that he has not yet arrived
      - a. And so we sing of mourning in lowly exile
      - b. We sing of Satan's tyranny, and the gloomy clouds of night
      - c. We sing of the path of misery
        - i. This beautiful carol is distinct from so many of the other carols that we sing at Christmas time, because it is REAL... it is honest about the world in which the Israelites lived before Christ
          1. And it is honest about the world in which WE live as we await his return
      3. But what also makes this hymn so wonderful is that, in every stanza, the writer points the lowly and downtrodden back to Christ
        - a. And he (or she) does this by reminding us of all the wonderful names of our Lord Jesus
          - i. In the first stanza, he is Emmanuel who will come and be with us
          - ii. In the second, he is the Rod of Jesse who will strike our enemy down
          - iii. In the third, he is the Dayspring who will put the darkness to flight
          - iv. In the fifth, he is the Key of David who will open the door to our heavenly home
          - v. In the sixth, he is Adonai, the Lord of might, who will come in clouds and majesty and awe
        - b. In later versions of this song, two more names were added to this wonderful list
          - i. He is Wisdom from on high, who shows us the path of knowledge and leads us in her ways
          - ii. And he is the Desire of the Nations, who shall one day end all strife and war and division, and will be to us our King of Peace
        - c. Emmanuel... the Rod of Jesse... the Key of David...
          - i. What the writer of this hymn understood was that the names of Jesus are meant to bring great comfort to those who are in mourning, or in exile, or in the gloomy darkness of night
            1. We can rejoice, Christians, for we know that Emmanuel will come to us once again
    - ii. This is the heart behind our Psalm for this week as well, Psalm 20
      1. Turn with me in your Bibles, and we will look at Psalm 20 together
        - a. There is some speculation as to how we should read the title of this Psalm
          - i. Some commentators believe that it is a Psalm of David, a hymn that David wrote for himself and for the Kings who would follow after him

1. As Matthew Henry wrote, David was a “martial king,” meaning, he spent much of his life as king at war against the nations that surrounded the Kingdom of Israel
2. What King WOULD’N’T long for the prayers of his people??
- ii. Other commentators believe that it is a Psalm FOR David, maybe written by one of the priests or Levites as they called the people to pray for the Lord’s anointed one
  1. Regardless of WHO wrote it, the intent behind this Psalm is clear:
    - a. The Lord’s anointed one is WHOLLY dependent upon the Lord
- iii. So let’s look to this Psalm of prayer for the King...

b. Psalm 20

i. *To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David. <sup>1</sup>May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble! May the name of the God of Jacob protect you! <sup>2</sup>May he send you help from the sanctuary and give you support from Zion! <sup>3</sup>May he remember all your offerings and regard with favor your burnt sacrifices! Selah <sup>4</sup>May he grant you your heart’s desire and fulfill all your plans! <sup>5</sup>May we shout for joy over your salvation, and in the name of our God set up our banners! May the LORD fulfill all your petitions! <sup>6</sup>Now I know that the LORD saves his anointed; he will answer him from his holy heaven with the saving might of his right hand. <sup>7</sup>Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God. <sup>8</sup>They collapse and fall, but we rise and stand upright. <sup>9</sup>O LORD, save the king! May he answer us when we call.*

ii. That is a wonderful petition, isn’t it?

1. Verse after verse, the Psalmist, and eventually the congregation go to the Lord in prayer
  - a. May THE LORD answer you in the day of trouble
  - b. May HIS name protect you
  - c. May HE send help and support from Zion
  - d. May HE remember all your sacrifices
  - e. May THE LORD fulfill all your petitions
  - f. May HE answer US when we call
2. My friends, lets just pause and acknowledge, THIS is how we ought to pray – for ALL things
  - a. Whether we are praying for our leaders, or for the salvation of a loved one, or the healing of a family member or neighbor, or simply for our own provision and well-being
    - i. If we are not going to the Lord with this kind of complete and utter dependence, then we do not truly understand who God is, and who we are
3. Our Lord Jesus would model this full dependence for us many centuries later, when he taught his followers to pray in Matthew 6:9-13...
  - a. Just listen to how the tone of his prayer follows the very same tone of Psalm 20
    - i. *<sup>9</sup>Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be YOUR name. <sup>10</sup>YOUR kingdom come, YOUR will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. <sup>11</sup>Give us this day our daily bread, <sup>12</sup>and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. <sup>13</sup>And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*
  - b. Do you hear the similarities in our Lord’s prayer and the prayer for the King in Psalm 20?
    - i. When we pray, brothers and sisters, we must realize that we are creatures coming before our Great and Awesome Creator
      1. And we are dependent upon Him for EVERYTHING
    - ii. As Spurgeon said so eloquently,
      1. “Prayer girds human weakness with divine strength, turns human folly into heavenly wisdom, and gives to troubled mortals the peace of God. We know not what prayer can do.”

c. So what are we to learn from Psalm 20?

i. I believe there are two main applications for us that come out of this Psalm

1. The first application is we must pray for those who lead us
  2. The second application is that we must ask ourselves, "Who do WE truly trust in?"
2. So first, we must pray for those who lead us
- a. This is clear from the context of the Psalm, isn't it?
    - i. Whether it was David himself who wrote this hymn, or one of the priests or Levites who served under his rule, the clear implication is, "The King needs the prayers of his people!"
      1. If you've spent much time in the Old Testament, especially in the books of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings and 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles, you know that the nation of Israel had a MULTITUDE of kings during the centuries after Joshua and before Jesus
        - a. Especially after the Kingdom split into the northern Kingdom of Israel, and the southern Kingdom of Judah
          - i. King after king after king...
            1. Some of them were good kings
            2. But the vast majority of them were not
          - ii. In fact, the majority of the kings in the northern Kingdom of Israel were downright evil
            1. They were experts in idolatry and disobedience and angering the Lord
          - iii. But even in the southern Kingdom of Judah, which continued to carry the blessing of the covenant between God and the line of David...
            1. Even in Judah, the Kings mostly failed to be fully devoted to the Lord
            2. And even with the GOOD kings, the Bible almost always says that they followed the Lord in such and such, but they failed to remove the high places
      2. This is an interesting statement, isn't it?
        - a. The high places in Judah were places of pagan worship
          - i. Places where the people would go to offer sacrifices to the false gods of the nations surrounding them
          - ii. And the Kings of Israel and Judah repeatedly got a bad rap for not removing these high places – even when they did everything else right
            1. This begs the question, though... Why DIDN'T they remove the high places???
            2. Really the only logical answer we can come to is that THE PEOPLE wanted the high places to remain
              - a. And the Kings gave in to the will of the masses
    3. In other words, the people of Israel had forgotten Psalm 20
  - ii. Like I said, the Kings in Israel's history always get the bad PR, but WHAT IF the people had been praying for the King, as David had taught them in Psalm 20?
    1. How much more encouraged would the good kings have been?
    2. How much more convicted would the bad kings have been?
      - a. If the people, rather than going to the high places to worship, instead went to the house of God and prayed that the God of Jacob would protect their King
      - b. If the people, rather than seeking after false gods and idols, instead went to the Temple and prayed that the Lord would save His anointed
      - c. How different could things have been all those years, if the people, rather than looking to their own wants and desires, instead went to the Lord in Zion and prayed for THE SALVATION of the King???
      - i. What would Israel's history have looked like, if they had PRAYED for their Kings, as David had taught them?
- b. My friends, it is no different for us today, three thousand years later, as we live under the rule of Joe Biden, and the members of the House and the Senate, and the Judicial system, and our state governors, and our local mayors and city councilors

- i. We talked about this on Wednesday night in our study on 1 Peter 2, when Peter said to “Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution,” and to “honor the emperor”
    - 1. That’s hard enough for us to wrap our hearts around
      - a. But Peter wasn’t teaching anything new here...
        - i. Paul had said the very same thing in his letter to the church in Rome, as he wrote in Romans 13:1,
          - 1. *<sup>1</sup>Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.*
        - ii. So WHY should followers of Jesus be subject to ALL governing authorities?
          - 1. Because they were put there by OUR FATHER!
            - a. So Paul goes on to say, don’t just pay your taxes to them, but pay your RESPECT to them
              - i. Pay HONOR to them
            - b. NOT because they are necessarily godly rulers
            - c. NOT because every policy they put forward stands in line with the Scriptures
            - d. NOT because they were the ones we voted for
              - i. But because GOD has ordained that they be our leaders
2. But there’s another reason we honor and pray for those who lead us, in addition to the sovereignty of our God
  - a. Listen to Paul’s counsel to Timothy in 1 Timothy 2:1-4...
    - i. *<sup>1</sup>First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, <sup>2</sup>for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. <sup>3</sup>This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, <sup>4</sup>who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*
  - b. So according to this passage, we don’t just honor those in authority, but we also PRAY for them
    - i. Yes, we pray for them so that WE can live peaceful and quiet lives
      - 1. There’s nothing wrong at all with having that as your motivation
    - ii. But ultimately, we pray for our rulers, SO THAT they will come to a knowledge of the truth
      - 1. SO THAT, they might be saved!
- c. Which brings us right back to Psalm 20, doesn’t it?
  - i. Brothers and sisters, do we give honor and respect to people like Joe Biden and Kamala Harris, understanding that it was GOD who put them in the place of leadership in our country?
  - ii. Do we pray that they would come to a knowledge of the truth, so that the Church in the US might once again come into a season of favor in our nation?
  - iii. Do we pray for our leaders – Democrat, Republican, or Independent – do we pray for them, that they might BE SAVED?
    - 1. According to Paul, THIS is what is GOOD and PLEASING in the sight of God our Savior
    - 2. THIS is the attitude that most aligns with HIS heart!
      - a. So, when you watch the debates over the coming months, or when you turn on the news and see all the political updates, here’s a challenge for all of us
        - i. As you hit that button on your remote control to go to that station, ALSO grab you Bible... and turn it to Psalm 20
          - 1. And PRAY this Psalm over our President
          - 2. PRAY this Psalm over our House and our Senate and our Supreme Court
          - 3. PRAY this Psalm over our governors, and mayors, and city councilors

- a. For this is GOOD, and PLEASING in the sight of God our Savior
    - b. We must PRAY for those who lead us
- 3. Second, however, we must ask ourselves, "Who do WE truly trust in?"
  - a. On March 3<sup>rd</sup> of 1865, Abraham Lincoln signed his last act of Congress prior to his assassination, allowing the director of the US Treasury to place the words, "In God We Trust," on all gold and silver coins
  - b. In 1956, the US Congress passed a resolution making those four simple words the official motto of the United States
    - i. Surprisingly, as recently as 2003, 90% of Americans still supported the idea that this motto should remain on all of our forms of currency
      - 1. There has been an increasing number of attempts by certain groups to have this motto removed, but so far it is still widely accepted as the motto which we uphold
        - a. In God We Trust
    - ii. But we have to be honest here...
      - 1. Is this motto TRUE?
        - a. When we look at the increasing attacks against the ethics and the morals that the Word of God commands, do we see a nation who TRULY trusts in God?
        - b. When we see the rapidly increasing numbers of divorce, and the destruction of the biblical teaching that marriage is to be between one man and one woman, do we see a people who TRULY trust in God?
        - c. When we see the unborn continuing to be murdered in the womb as a celebration of our individual rights and liberties, can we TRULY say that we trust IN GOD?
          - i. We cannot... there is no way around this statement of fact
      - 2. But the problem isn't just "out there," is it?
    - iii. Let's stop for a moment and examine what goes on in our own hearts...
      - 1. I know that pastors aren't supposed to get into particulars when it comes to politics, but I had great hopes that Tim Scott might be our next President
        - a. He seemed to be a godly man, who actually lived by godly principles
          - i. Yes, he faltered in the debates, and fell into the trap of all the political mudslinging
          - ii. But for the most part, in my opinion, he was the most godly candidate in the running
            - 1. And then he dropped out of the race
            - 2. And in my own heart, I said to myself, "Well, that's the end of that, I guess America will continue its downward spiral for the next 4-5 years..."
              - a. Where is the trust in God in that kind of statement?!
      - iv. But it isn't just in the political arena, is it?
        - 1. Sure, we get frustrated and angry when our favorite doesn't get elected, but what happens to our heart when we see dips in the economic stability of our dollars?
          - a. What happens when we look at the number in our retirement plan, and we watch helplessly as they plummet thousands of dollars each month?
            - i. Are we TRULY trusting in God, or are we placing our trust in the strength of our volatile and unpredictable investments?
        - 2. What happens when we go to the doctor, and we're blindsided by the news that we have cancer, or diabetes, or high blood pressure, or any number of other serious physical ailments?
          - a. How does our heart react in those times?

- i. Are we TRULY trusting in God, or are we placing our trust in these earthly tents that MAY have a lifespan of 80 or 90 years?
    - 3. What happens when we turn on the news, and we see the war in Ukraine, and the war in Israel and Gaza, and the recent hurricane in Mexico, or the recent earthquakes in places all across the world?
      - a. What happens to our hearts when we see the devastation brought about by wars and natural disasters?
        - i. In those moments, are we TRULY trusting in God, or are we placing our trust in the false belief that this world is going to continue on forever?
    - v. The reality is, that our hearts get shaken during this life, don't they?
      - 1. Sometimes, they get shaken hard
      - 2. Sometimes, they get shaken often
        - a. And it is in these times where we have to ask ourselves, where does our trust TRULY lay?
  - c. I'm so thankful for Psalm 20, for it gives us great encouragement in this area
    - i. In this Psalm, the people of Israel were challenged to pray for their King – to pray that God would protect him and send him help and support, and that God would fulfill all the King's petitions
      - 1. But then, in verses 7-8, we are given these incredible words...
        - a. *<sup>7</sup>Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but WE trust in the name of the Lord our God. <sup>8</sup>They collapse and fall, but WE rise and stand upright*
      - 2. My friends, it is statements like THIS that will set us apart from EVERYONE ELSE in the world
        - a. Yes, we are called to honor and respect our leaders
        - b. Yes, we are called to pray that they will come to a knowledge of the truth
        - c. Yes and amen, we are most certainly called to pray for their salvation
      - 3. But if our leaders choose to walk the path of wickedness and rebellion against God and His Word, we stand FIRMLY and CONFIDENTLY upon this proclamation:
        - a. Some trust in Presidents and earthly rulers, but WE trust in the name of the Lord our God
        - b. Some trust in the stock market and the financial stability of the dollar, but WE trust in the name of the Lord our God
        - c. Some trust in good health, and a life of wealth and prosperity and ease, but WE trust in the name of the Lord our God
          - i. Friends, ALL of it will eventually collapse and fall, but WE will rise and stand upright
            - 1. Not because we are smarter than our neighbor
            - 2. Not because we are more moral than our neighbor
            - 3. Not because we have figured it all out
          - ii. No, we will rise and stand upright ONLY because our trust is in the name of our great God
  - d. But what does it mean to trust in a name?
    - i. In verse 1, the Psalmist prays, "May the NAME of the God of Jacob protect you"
    - ii. In verse 5, the congregations sings that "in the NAME of our God we will set up our banners"
    - iii. And in verse 7, they say that "we will trust in the NAME of the Lord our God"
      - 1. Why do the Scriptures place such emphasis on the NAME of God?
      - 2. Why did the anonymous writer of *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel* place such emphasis on the NAMES of Jesus?
        - a. I would say that there are a couple of reasons why WE should set up our banners in the NAME of the Lord

- iv. The first is that the various names of God and the names of Jesus all display different attributes of their character
  - 1. We talked this morning about the name that God revealed to Moses, the great I AM
    - a. We talked about how this name reveals to us God's holiness, and His omniscience, and his power and immutability
  - 2. But what about the other names of God that we find in the Scriptures?
    - a. In Psalm 23, we read of Jehovah-Rohi, the Lord My Shepherd
      - i. God leads and protects and provides for His people, like a good shepherd lovingly tending his flocks
    - b. Or in Genesis 22, when Abraham calls God by His name, Jehovah-Jireh, the Lord Shall Provide
      - i. God did indeed provide for His faithful servant on that day, as Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the ram in the thicket that would be the substitutionary sacrifice in place of his son, Isaac
      - ii. And God would indeed provide again, as His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, would be provided FOR US, as the substitutionary sacrifice on OUR behalf
    - c. Or what about in Exodus 15, when the Lord graciously promised to heal the ever-grumbling and ever-complaining people of Israel, as he gave to them His name, Jehovah-Rapha, the Lord Who Heals
    - d. Or in Exodus 17, after the God delivered the Israelites in their battle against the Amalekites, and Moses proclaimed the name of God, Jehovah-Nissi, the Lord is My Banner
  - 3. All of the names of God that we find in the Scriptures are unique revelations of Himself to His people
    - a. And in those revelations, we find attributes of His character
      - i. It is the same for our Lord Jesus
        - 1. He is Emmanuel, God With Us
        - 2. He is the Rod of Jesse, Defeater of Satan
        - 3. He is the Dayspring, Bringer of Light
        - 4. He is the Key of David, Opener of Heaven
        - 5. He is Adonai, Lord of Might
          - a. He is Jesus, the One Who Saves Us From Our Sin
      - b. The names of God, and the names of Jesus, reveal to us different attributes of who they are
- v. But even more importantly, in the name of the Lord there is POWER for those who believe
  - 1. Think about Jesus' words in John 14:12-14, when he said,
    - a. <sup>12</sup>*Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.*  
<sup>13</sup>*Whatever you ask IN MY NAME, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.* <sup>14</sup>*If you ask me anything IN MY NAME, I will do it."*
      - i. Now, we have to be careful here, don't we?
        - 1. The name of Jesus is not some magical incantation that we can proclaim over anything to get whatever we want
          - a. We can't pray, "Lord help me get this promotion at work," and then expect that God is going to give it to us just because we tack on at the end, "in the name of Jesus"
        - 2. In Acts 19, we read of the seven sons of the Jewish high priest, who were going around casting out demons "in the name of Jesus"

- a. And one of these demons turned around and said to them, “Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but WHO ARE YOU?”
      - b. And then he beat them all so badly that they fled out of the room, naked and bloody
    - ii. Jesus is not some magic genie in a bottle who answers our every wish if we just say “in Jesus name”
  - b. But when we pray in the name of Jesus, for things that would bring GLORY to the Father, then God is pleased to answer our prayers – not always in the way that we have in mind, but He answers them nonetheless
    - i. For there is POWER in the name of our Lord
    - ii. And that power is promised for those who truly TRUST in God
- vi. Those who TRUST in the name of the Lord are those who have placed their entire identity in Him
  - 1. That is why, in the Great Commission, Jesus calls us to, “Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them IN THE NAME of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...”
  - 2. When we share the Gospel with others, and when we strive to make disciples of Jesus, we aren’t just looking for a one-time decision
    - a. We are looking and praying and longing to see them place all of their hopes, all of their life, all of their TRUST... in a NAME
      - i. For it is when our trust is in the name of the Lord, that we will TRULY be able to say, “Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. They collapse and fall, but we will rise and stand upright”
- vii. My friends, Psalm 20 is incredibly helpful for us in our day today...
  - 1. We are called to pray for our leaders
    - a. Regardless of what political party they are affiliated with, we are to pray that they might be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth
    - b. This is good and pleasing in the eyes of our God
  - 2. But we don’t put our trust in man
    - a. For men will fail us
    - b. The economy will fail us
    - c. Even our own bodies will fail us
      - i. They will all collapse and fall, but WE will rise and stand upright
      - ii. For WE trust in the NAME of the Lord!