

PSALM 113:1-9

THE JOYOUS MOTHER OF CHILDREN

“Praise the LORD!
Praise, O servants of the LORD,
praise the name of the LORD!

“Blessed be the name of the LORD
from this time forth and forevermore!
From the rising of the sun to its setting,
the name of the LORD is to be praised!

“The LORD is high above all nations,
and his glory above the heavens!
Who is like the LORD our God,
who is seated on high,
who looks far down
on the heavens and the earth?
He raises the poor from the dust
and lifts the needy from the ash heap,
to make them sit with princes,
with the princes of his people.
He gives the barren woman a home,
making her the joyous mother of children.
Praise the LORD!”¹

In our Tuesday evening Bible study, we have spent time in the Minor Prophets during these spring months. We just completed a review of Micah and we are now focused on Zephaniah. As I prepare these studies, I am astounded at how quickly God moved when He judged His people. He gave multiplied warnings that the people must not presume against grace. As you know, they did presume against grace and suddenly God would do what He had warned He would do if they did not repent.

When judgement comes, I find myself weeping at the thoroughness of God’s judgement. As I read the history of the nation leading up to judgement, I find myself marvelling at how obtuse the people were, how callused they became because judgement didn’t come on their schedule, how arrogant the nation became because they depended on their history. I find myself wanting to yell out a warning, knowing that it is too late.

As I read Zephaniah this past week, reviewing the history of the nation when God finally said, “Enough,” I could barely catch my breath. I read again contemporary accounts of the sack of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans. Remembering Jeremiah’s Lament, “We have sinned” [LAMENTATIONS 3:42 HCSB], I grieve with the God’s warning concerning what is coming that was delivered by the mouth of Zephaniah:

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible: English Standard Version**. Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers, 2001. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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“I will bring distress on mankind,
so that they shall walk like the blind,
because they have sinned against the LORD.”

[ZEPHANIAH 1:17]

Paul would say to the Corinthian Christians, “[The events recorded in the Old Covenant] took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, ‘The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.’ We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come” [1 CORINTHIANS 10:6-11].

I understand that a message that begins by speaking of judgement seems a strange message to deliver on a day set aside to honour mothers. I realise that modern Christians do not enjoy being confronted with sinful behaviour, even when the behaviour is witnessed as a part of contemporary culture. Neither do we appreciate being made to feel uncomfortable through receiving warnings concerning divine judgement. Nevertheless, there is a message that needs to be declared; it is needed more today than at any point in the history of our nation. Undoubtedly, Mothers’ Day will continue to be observed for the foreseeable future. So long as children continue to be born there will be an observance in which fathers teach their children to honour their mothers; there will always be children who hold their mothers in esteem. I am concerned, however, that there may well be drastic changes in the observance we know as Mother’s Day.

FOUNDATIONAL TRUTHS —

“Praise the LORD!
Praise, O servants of the LORD,
praise the name of the LORD!

“Blessed be the name of the LORD
from this time forth and forevermore!
From the rising of the sun to its setting,
the name of the LORD is to be praised!

“The LORD is high above all nations,
and his glory above the heavens!
Who is like the LORD our God,
who is seated on high,
who looks far down
on the heavens and the earth?
He raises the poor from the dust
and lifts the needy from the ash heap,
to make them sit with princes,
with the princes of his people.”

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In order to present an appropriate Mother's Day message, it is necessary to understand why we should even have such a day. Mother's Day has roots extending deeply into ancient history. The ancient Egyptians held an annual festival in honour of the goddess Isis. The Phrygian goddess Cybele and the Greek mother goddess Rhea were similarly honoured, merging until they were virtually indistinguishable. The Romans adopted these goddesses into the Roman pantheon as the Magna Mater, ordering an annual festival known as Megalesia. Megalesia was hosted near the time of the Vernal Equinox and the festival of Hilaria.

This Roman festival of Hilaria continued in Europe until the Sixteenth Century when it was adopted as part of the Laetare Sunday (the fourth Sunday of Lent) among the Catholic churches. The day was set apart to honour the Virgin Mary and the church in which individual Christians were baptised (their mother church).

A clerical decree in England during the Seventeenth Century expanded this day to include honouring real mothers, and the day became known as Mothering Day. Mothering Day became a day of some significance in England as it provided a reprieve from the Lenten fasting. Servants and trade workers were allowed to travel back to their homes in order to visit their families. Mothers were presented with cakes and flowers, and distant children came home to visit their mothers.

Mothering Day was forgotten on the frontier of North America, perhaps because the settlers were so busy trying to stay alive. However, in the late Nineteenth Century, Julia Ward Howe, author of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," began to advocate for an International Mother's Day that would celebrate peace and motherhood. In 1870, Howe proclaimed Mother's Day. Her purpose was primarily to call mothers together to protest their sons killing the sons of other mothers in war.

Though Howe's insistence for a Mother's Day failed to capture the popular imagination, it did generate some interest in a few isolated areas. Anna M. Jarvis promoted a Mother's Friendship Day in West Virginia. Her purpose was to reunite families and neighbours that had been divided between the Union and the Confederate sides of the American Civil War. In 1908, Anna petitioned the superintendent of the Andrew's Methodist Church in Grafton, West Virginia, where her mother had taught Sunday School for twenty years, and a church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Her request was honoured, and the first Mother's Day was observed in West Virginia on May 10, 1908.

That same year, at the request of the Young Men's Christian Association, Elmer Burkett, a U.S. Senator from Nebraska, proposed making Mother's Day a national holiday. His proposal was defeated; but by 1909 forty-six states were holding Mother's Day services as well as parts of Canada and Mexico. Anna Jarvis quit working, devoting herself fulltime to the creation of Mother's Day, petitioning state governments, business leaders, women groups, churches and other institutions. She convinced the World's Sunday School Association to back her in this effort. In 1912, West Virginia became the first state to give official recognition to Mother's Day; and in 1914 Woodrow Wilson signed Mother's Day into national observance, declaring the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day.²

Canada preceded the United States in formal recognition of this observance, declaring Mother's Day to be a national holiday in 1909. Mother's Day in Canada is much like the observance in the United States with the added emphasis on doing chores and cooking for mothers on that particular day. Let the men of the church take note.

² "Mother's Day History," <http://www.mothersdaycentral.com/about-mothersday/history/>, accessed 8 May 2014

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With this brief history of the day, I am making no pronouncement as to whether Christians should observe or ignore this particular holiday. I do note that the current observance is more of a civil holiday than a religious holiday, though the day did have roots reflecting a valid religious theme. However, as with all holidays, Christians must ask whether a particular observance will honour God or whether it will disgrace His Name. Because an observance is honoured among the faithful does not mean that every activity is blessed by God.

In the text, the Psalmist begins by calling on the servants of the LORD to praise His Name. God is to be praised because of who He is. He is sovereign. He reigns over the affairs of men and of nations. He metes justice and holds mankind accountable for their acts. All mankind is responsible to acknowledge the Lord God, to honour Him as God and to glorify His Name. Tragically, the most of mankind does not honour God as God. Jesus spoke of the path of the most of mankind when He warned, “Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few” [MATTHEW 7:13, 14].

Quoting the Prophet Isaiah, Paul has testified, “As I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow to me, and every tongue will give praise to God” [ROMANS 14:11]. This citation anticipates the truth that is revealed in his Letter to the Church in Philippi, “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” [PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11].

Christ Jesus is “seated ... at [the Father’s] right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.” Moreover, God “put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all” [EPHESIANS 1:20-23]. Jesus the Son of God is worthy of praise because He “has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him” [1 PETER 3:22].

GOD’S GIFT —

“He gives the barren woman a home,
making her the joyous mother of children.”

Because God is God, He does what is good; and He gives good gifts to mankind. James presents a significant truth when he writes, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change” [JAMES 1:17]. This is nothing less than an iteration of the testimony of the Psalmist, “The LORD will give what is good” [PSALM 85:12a]. In turn, that was akin to the testimony the Sons of Korah gave elsewhere. “No good thing does [the LORD God] withhold” [PSALM 84:11b].

God gives what is good; and in the text, God gives the barren woman a home, making her the joyous mother of children. We need to take time to weigh what has just been said. It is a concise statement of the worth of children; an anticipation of the **127th PSALM**.

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“Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD,
the fruit of the womb a reward.
Like arrows in the hand of a warrior
are the children of one’s youth.
Blessed is the man
who fills his quiver with them!”

[PSALM 127:3-5a]

I am not trying to speak so broadly that I miss the significance of what is said either in these strophes or in the final strophe of the text. Children are given to bless women and men. It is always an astonishment to witness the disparity between the ancient view of women concerning children and that of contemporary women.

When our First Parents fell, God pronounced a curse on them. Lightweight theologians have concluded that children are a curse. However, God did not say that children are a curse; He said that childbirth would be a painful reminder of the fall. “To the woman [God] said,

‘I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing;
in pain you shall bring forth children.’”

[GENESIS 3:16]

The impression is that childbearing was a possibility prior to the Fall. However, just as work was not associated with drudgery prior to the Fall, so childbearing before the Fall would not have been a painful event.

What is clear is that children were esteemed. I understand that modern social engineers have rationalised the desire for children to grace the home in past generations by arguing that people needed lots of children to ensure that their genes were passed on. The argument goes that so many children died in childhood that large families were necessary to ensure there would be an adequate number to care for the parents in their final years. The argument fails, however, when you realise that throughout the Bible, the families did not appear to experience large numbers of deaths during childhood.

Clearly, the Bible presents women as longing for children. It would be abnormal, even twisted, should a woman despise children. Think of a few notable instances of women longing for a child. Rachel, though loved deeply by Jacob, could bear no children. Her sister, also wed to Jacob through the ruse perpetuated on Jacob by her father, was bearing multiple children. In desperation, Rachel pleaded with Jacob, “Give me children, or I shall die” [GENESIS 30:1b]! She was so desperate that she was willing to insist that her husband sleep with her handmaid in hopes of impregnating her so that Rachel could adopt the child as her own [see GENESIS 30:3-6]. Ultimately, we are told, “God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb” [GENESIS 30:22]. The child, Joseph, was evidence of God’s blessing.

Another instance of the longing for children is witnessed in Hannah, mother of Samuel. The Word informs us that “Hannah had no children” [1 SAMUEL 1:2b]. She was taunted mercilessly by Elkanah’s other wife, Peninnah. Elkanah attempted to console her, assuring her that she was loved, but Hannah was inconsolable. In desperation, she pleaded with God, vowing that she would dedicate her son to the LORD for His service as a Nazirite from birth. God heard her plea and granted her request, giving her Samuel [1 SAMUEL 1:1-28].

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Among others who saw the birth of a child as evidence of divine blessing is included Samson's mother. It is not at all evident that the angel of God appeared by serendipity to announce the birth of Samson. It seems apparent that the LORD granted her a child in response to her plea for a child [see **JUDGES 13:1 ff.**]. Naomi was overjoyed, as is true for all grandparents, at the birth of Obed [see **RUTH 4:13-17**]. However, her joy arose more from the idea that the child was counted as her own child rather than that she was a grandparent. It is obvious that bearing a child was more than mere insurance against old age for Hannah, just as the presence of a child was much more than mere insurance against old age for Naomi. In either case, the presence of the child was validation of God's blessing on the life of the parents.

What is important for our study today is that in each instance, children were seen as a divine blessing rather than a burden. I fear our culture imagines itself to be so intellectually superior to these ancient peoples, and to our own forebears, that we actually believe we understand what they could have never known. Let me caution all who hear me at this time—***The acquisition of facts does not ensure understanding.*** Stated another way—***Facts cannot be equated with wisdom.*** We imagine that because we can speak with some knowledge of the physiology of birth that we are now in control of life.

The attitude that treats children as a burden, a situation that steals joy and creates grief for a woman, is a continual source of dismay to me. For all the trials I have experienced with my children, each is a joy. The blessings outweigh the challenges and I am grateful that God blessed our home with these children. There is something twisted in the soul of a woman who holds her own child and can express disappointment in the child. A man who doesn't have the desire to protect a child reveals the depth of his own depravity. What I would stress to the people of God is that each child is a gift from God.

God had warned His people not to offer their children as sacrifices. "You shall not give any of your children to offer them to Molech, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD" [**LEVITICUS 18:21**].

This act was equated to sorcery and divination in the second iteration of the Mosaic Law. "There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD. And because of these abominations the LORD your God is driving them out before you. You shall be blameless before the LORD your God" [**DEUTERONOMY 18:10-13**].

When a child is slaughtered *in utero*, the act differs only in degree from sacrificing children by burning them in the arms of Molech. God speaks quite pointedly through the prophets in condemning those who despised His divine gift of children. Listen to a couple of instances of God's condemnation and the reason for His anger.

"[Jerusalem] has aroused my anger and wrath, from the day it was built to this day, so that I will remove it from my sight because of all the evil of the children of Israel and the children of Judah that they did to provoke me to anger—their kings and their officials, their priests and their prophets, the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. They have turned to me their back and not their face. And though I have taught them persistently, they have not listened to receive instruction. They set up their abominations in the house that is called by my name, to defile it. They built the high places of Baal in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to offer up their sons and daughters to Molech, though I did not command them, nor did it enter into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin" [**JEREMIAH 32:31-35**].

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Similarly, Ezekiel expressed God's wrath because the children were being slaughtered. "Were your whorings so small a matter that you slaughtered my children and delivered them up as an offering by fire to them" [EZEKIEL 16:20b, 21].

This was the same rationale for why the Northern Kingdom had been judged and conquered. "I defiled them through their very gifts in their offering up all their firstborn, that I might devastate them. I did it that they might know that I am the LORD" [EZEKIEL 20:26]. Ezekiel continued by stating, "When you present your gifts and offer up your children in fire, you defile yourselves with all your idols to this day. And shall I be inquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I will not be inquired of by you" [EZEKIEL 20:31].³

Let me iterate that sacrificing a child on the altar of a hideous idol differs only in degree from ripping the child from the womb with surgical instruments. The woman who destroys the gift of life through hiring some individual to tear it apart in the uterus or who destroys the child through injecting saline into the amniotic fluid or through chemical induction of premature labour, sacrifices that child to her own convenience. Though courts may find that women have control over their own bodies, those who choose to destroy life must realise that they cannot justify their actions—they have destroyed that which God gives.

Recently, a young woman filmed her abortion. Her desire was to provide what she said was "a positive abortion story." A flurry of articles was published, including her own apologia for her actions.⁴ One of her statements caught my attention, in part because she revealed that she was acting with full knowledge of what she was doing. Emily was quoted as saying, "I don't feel like a bad person. I don't feel sad. I feel in awe of the fact that I can make a baby. I can make a life. I knew that what I was going to do was right because it was right for me."⁵ This young woman clearly recognised that she had shared in making a life; therefore, she justified her action in taking that life. The entire account speaks of sacrifice for personal convenience. Can it truly be said that such a choice is not idolatry?

I use this illustration, not to condemn this young woman or any woman who makes such a choice. It must be said that she is blameworthy, but it is not my place or your place to assail her. The reaction of people, both those identifying themselves as pro-choice and those identifying as pro-life, is more negative than it is positive. Let me say quite clearly that though no Christian can justify her actions, we are to reflect the love of God rather than condemnation. Though she must give an answer to God, it is enough to caution that she must give an answer.

³ See, also, EZEKIEL 23:36, 27; 2 KINGS 16:3; 17:17; 21:6; 23:10; 2 CHRONICLES 33:6

⁴ Heather Wood Rudolph, "Why I Filmed My Own Abortion," *Cosmopolitan*, May 5, 2014, <http://www.cosmopolitan.com/advice/health/why-i-filmed-my-abortion?click=smart&kw=ist&src=smart&mag=COS&link=http://www.cosmopolitan.com/advice/health/why-i-filmed-my-abortion-SMT-COS>, accessed 10 May 2014; Dina Rickman, "Young woman films her own abortion: even pro-choicers are appalled," *The Telegraph*, 7 May 2014, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-life/10814223/Emily-Letts-abortion-video-even-pro-choicers-are-appalled.html>, accessed 7 May 2014; Zosia Bielski, "Is 'Emily's Abortion Video' an accurate depiction of what it's like to have an abortion?," *Wednesday*, May 7, 2014, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/health-and-fitness/health/is-emilys-abortion-video-an-accurate-depiction-of-what-its-like-to-have-an-abortion/article18542096/?cmpid=rss1>, accessed 8 May 2014; Natasha Bird, "Abortion Controversy: Emily Letts Films Own Abortion to Soothe Other Women," *Yahoo! UK and Ireland*, Wed., May 7, 2014, <https://uk.lifestyle.yahoo.com/abortion-controversy-emily-letts-films-own-abortion-to-soothe-other-women-094101895.html>, accessed 8 May 2014; Joel Landau, SEE IT: New Jersey abortion counselor films her own procedure for online film," *Daily News*, Tuesday, May 6, 2014, <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/abortion-counselor-films-operation-article-1.1781689>, accessed 10 May 2014

⁵ Joel Landau, *op. cit.*

MAN'S RESPONSE TO GOD'S GIFT —

“Praise the LORD!”

The appropriate response to the Lord is praise. The common response is studied ignorance. Increasingly is this true when speaking of children. We have schooled two generations in the wicked art of self-worship. Of course, when we worship “self,” we ignore God and we despise His gifts. I’m painting with a proper brush when I make that statement. Man is never neutral; either he worships the Creator or he worships what is created. There can be no neutrality in worship.

Focus on just one facet of “self” worship as exemplified in a young woman named Josie Cunningham. Josie is determined to become famous. She was to appear on Big Brother UK where she announced that she had breast augmentation at a cost of £4,800, thanks to British tax payers. Then she announced that she was eighteen weeks pregnant. She thought the father could be either a client of the escort agency for which she works or a Premier League footballer. In either case, she was pleased because both are rich.

However, there was a problem for Josie, a child would get in the way of her reaching for the brass ring—she couldn’t pursue fame as a glamour model if she had a child. Moreover, the producers of the show planned to kick her off the program since they couldn’t have her appearing if she was pregnant. Therefore, she announced she would have an abortion (again at tax payer expense) so she could pursue her plan to become famous. Said Josie, “I’m finally on the verge of becoming famous and I’m not going to ruin it now. An abortion will further my career. This time next year I won’t have a baby. Instead, I’ll be famous, driving a bright pink Range Rover and buying a big house. Nothing will get in my way.

“I’ve also had loads of other offers to further my career—and I’m not willing to give them up because I’m pregnant.”⁶

The Twitterverse and social media exploded in rage. People were horrified and enraged. Josie was vilified in print and on almost every possible medium, much of it in reaction to a quote attributed to Josie, “An abortion will further my career. This time next year I won’t have a baby. Instead, I’ll be famous, driving a bright pink Range Rover and buying a big house.”⁷

Let me respond by noting that this young woman is doing nothing less than exemplifying what an entire generation has been schooled to believe. She is special. She is the centre of her universe. She deserves it all. Her desire supersedes all responsibility.

I am somewhat astounded that the vast majority of people commenting in the various media were angry and appalled at her choices. She was doing what the vast majority of people do almost by rote. Her choice doesn’t truly differ from that of the professing Christian who says, “I’m not worshipping today. It is a perfect day for four-wheeling; and I want some ‘Me’ time.” Josie’s choice is really not that much different than the church member who demands ministries and then fails to support those ministries by her own presence. Ms. Cunningham’s choice really is not all that different from the professing Christian who claims to love God and then donates a pittance of his goods to advance the cause of Christ.

⁶ Victor, “Josie Cunningham Will Get an Abortion to be on Big Brother,” <http://theblemish.com/2014/04/josie-cunningham-will-get-abortion-big-brother/#!KVx9g>, accessed 8 May 2013

⁷ Martin Robbins, “Why we must defend Josie Cunningham’s right to an abortion,” <http://www.theguardian.com/science/the-lay-scientist/2014/apr/23/1>, accessed 8 May 2013

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On one occasion Jesus confronted a mob of angry religionists, “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her” [JOHN 8:7]. The professing Christian who promotes his own desire over glorifying God is as much an idolater as is the young woman who sacrifices her child to convenience or personal desire. The professing Christian who lives her life as though it consists of blessing as her due is as much an idolater as is the young woman who succumbs to the siren song that croons the refrain, “My body; my choice.”

In fairness to Josie Cunningham, I believe it appropriate to provide the present status of her decision. It is now reported that Josie has decided to have the baby. She is quoted as saying, “I lost control and I wanted to be famous so badly I lost sight of what matters. I’m disgusted with myself and I’m sorry—not to the haters but to the child I’m going to have. Now I’ve made this decision I am determined to be a good mother just like I am to my other children.” Josie says she has now stopped drinking and is planning to have hypnotherapy to get off cigarettes.^{8,9}

Josie Cunningham is growing up; for that, she is to be commended. Those who verbally assaulted her, saying horrendous things about her and threatening her with harm were unable to sway her from her decision. Knowing that she was carrying a child—a child for which she bore responsibility—is changing her mind. Motherhood is transformative.

The response to God’s goodness for which most of contemporary society is schooled is rejection. Perhaps His goodness will be received, but then the recipient will pretend that it was her own ability to obtain what she wanted. God warned Israel, and He thereby warns us as well, against presuming against Him when He said, “Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’ You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day. And if you forget the LORD your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish” [DEUTERONOMY 8:17-19]. Just as we must not presume against God by imagining that we have done anything by our own power or ability, so we must not despise His gifts; and especially must we not despise the gift of life that He gives to families.

The appropriate response to God’s gift is praise. In the text, the Psalmist concludes by praising God. He began by praising the LORD; he concludes by praising the LORD. The two great reasons for which the Psalmist praises God in our text is His mercy toward the poor and the needy, and His gracious gift to women. God exalts the humble and gives rich gifts to all. The birth of a child is cause for exultation and joy. It was appropriate that the people of Israel would go to the Temple to offer a sacrifice at the birth of a child. Just so, it is appropriate for the people of God in this day to rejoice at the birth of a child, giving praise to God who gives good gifts. The people of God should desire children, rejoice in the presence of children, praise God for children.

⁸ Gemma Aldridge, See Josie Cunningham interview on her abortion u-turn: “{I felt baby kick and couldn’t go through with it,” Apr 26, 2014, <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/josie-cunningham-abortion-felt-baby-3464103>, Accessed 9 May 2014

⁹ For further information concerning Josie Cunningham and her choices: Kingbingo, “Josie Cunningham – The Abortion Debate,” April 26, 2014, <http://annaraccoon.com/2014/04/26/josie-cunningham-the-abortion-debate/>, accessed 9 May 2014; Catherine Scott, “Josie Cunningham abortion row reveals hypocrisy over ‘pro-choice’ movement,” <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-health/10782100/Josie-Cunningham-abortion-row-reveals-hypocrisy-over-pro-choice-movement.html>, accessed 9 May 2014; Sarah Ditung, “Josie Cunningham and the Big Brother abortion: why do some women volunteer for a witch-burning?” <http://www.newstatesman.com/media/2014/04/josie-cunningham-and-big-brother-abortion-why-do-some-women-volunteer-witch-burning>, Accessed 9 May 2014

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Let me take a moment longer to speak specifically about the gift of children. The congregation should do all that is possible to accommodate families with children. Families should be welcomed. It is normal for mothers and fathers to be uncomfortable if their little ones wiggle or make noise; they should not be made more uncomfortable through glaring looks or rude comments from God's people when their children move about. I am not suggesting that disruptive children should be endured; I am suggesting that normal, childish activity should be expected and welcomed.

Christians should be cautious about making jokes that denigrate children or mock large families. Large families are a mark of God's blessing; and whether the family so blessed is fully aware of God's rich blessing or whether they are unaware of that blessing, they should be honoured as those to whom God has entrusted His most precious gifts—children.

The hour is late and the message is nearly finished. I've addressed a serious problem in this day—the lack of gratitude to God for His mercies. Paul warned of judgement on the world in which he lived when he wrote, “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools” **[ROMANS 1:18-22]**.

Divine censure begins with failure to be thankful. Thus it is that today, when we are so richly blessed by God, we have enthroned our own desires. Therefore, we school our children to reject God's goodness and His glorious gifts, exalting our own perishing desires above that which He seeks to give. As a society, we invite the wrath of God. I fear for our world. I fear for our nation. If you will heed the Word of God, I would urge you to flee the coming wrath. Even now, I would urge any who are merely religious to receive the life offered in Christ the Lord.

God sent His Son to provide a perfect sacrifice for the sin of mankind. Jesus, the Son of God, gave His life because of your sin. He was buried. However, He conquered death, being raised from the dead. He has now ascended into Heaven where He is seated at the right hand of the Father. Therefore, the Word of God invites all who are willing to come to Him, “If you openly agree with God, ‘Jesus is Master,’ being convinced in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be set free. It is with the heart that one believes and is made right before God, and with the mouth that one agrees with Him and is set free.”¹⁰ The Word of God calls each one in these words, “Everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord shall be saved” **[ROMANS 10:13]**. Be saved today. Believe this message and rejoice in the freedom God offers. Amen.

¹⁰ Free translation of **ROMANS 10:9, 10**.