

## Psalm 133 “Purpose and Blessing of Community”

1. The experience of the last two years has brought many to conclude that relationships are what matter most in life. Does this resonate with your own thinking and reflecting?

*This is simply an ice-breaker kind of question to get your group reflecting on the nature, quality, and impact of right relating.*

### **Read Psalm 133**

2. David opens this psalm with a glorious affirmation. “How good, how pleasant it is when people dwell in unity. “For some this will resonate with their experience, for others it will stir up the agony of its absence, for still others it will be aspirational. What does this affirmation stir up in you?

*Another icebreaker kind of question. Don’t spend too much time in these questions but allow them to prime the pump of thinking and get everyone talking so that subsequent questions are enlivened with engagement and participation.*

David’s affirmation is related primarily to the relationships that are present within a worshipping community. The unity that he is pointing to is the unity of purpose. In vs. 3 David uses a vivid image to point to the reality that just as oil is used to set apart one for the task of King, or the task of priest, the worshipping community is set apart by God to be a royal priesthood. This may sound incredibly obscure, far removed from your life and reality, but in fact it points to the core of who you were created to be, who we as a church are called to be.

In the sermon Tim referenced that when we were created we were given a royal task. As God’s vice-regents we were set apart to steward the earth for the good of all. We were also set apart as priests, to carry the praises of creation before the living God.

3. In what ways has humanity let go of both the kingly and priestly tasks for which we were created? What is the impact on our world?

*In Romans 1 Paul reflects on the reality that humanity has given up the worship of the creator for the worship of created things. Which of us would argue that we as a culture worship beauty, romantic love, success, money, power...*

*We’ve also given up our royal task. Instead of stewarding creation for the sake of all, we ravage creation for our own sake, to fuel our insatiable consumption, to satisfy our worship of beauty – success – power – sex – comfort – money - and as a result we are in a pretty messed up reality – the world is not as God intended.*

4. N.T. Wright in *The Day the Revolution Began* speaks of how the work of Jesus on the cross restores us to true humanity, that of a royal priesthood. He writes:

“The biblical vision of what it means to be human, the royal priesthood, means standing between heaven and earth, even in the present time, adoring the creator and bringing his purposes into reality on earth, ahead of the time when God completes the task and makes all things new. The royal priesthood is the company of rescued humans who, being part of earth worship the God of heaven and are thereby equipped, with the breath of heaven in their renewed lungs, to work for his kingdom on earth. The cross sets us free to be in-between people, caught up in the rhythm of worship and mission.

Discuss.

5. (vs.3) David closes the psalm by inviting us to reflect on the impact of a worshipping community on the people, the communities, the structures around them. What kind of impact does this image point to?

*The following is the unedited section of the sermon that reflecting upon might help to guide your discussion:*

*In our final verse David anticipates the impact of a worshipping community living out such a purpose – vs. 3 – it is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the parched land.*

*In Israel – in the summer a hot humid air mass would be pushed up the side of Mount Hermon – the highest peak – as the air cooled – the water vapour would condense forming dew that would drop upon the heights – but by the time it came down the other side – there was not the moisture levels to produce rain and so the far side of the mountain was dry – barren – parched.*

*Two of the yearly pilgrimages occurred during the summer - as the pilgrims ascended to Jerusalem – they traversed through that parched landscape knowing that the only fertility in that parched land came by way of the rivers and streams that owed their source to the dew that fell upon Hermon.*

*How good how pleasant it is when people dwell in unity.*

*The worshipping community formed in that rhythm of worship and mission is being invited to see that God’s work in them and through them was meant to bring blessing to the people – the communities – the structures around them.*

*To bring forgiveness where there is bitterness.*

*To bring hope where there is despair.*

*To bring justice where there is injustice.*

*To bring peace where there is conflict.*

*To bring love where there is hate.*

*To bring freedom where there is bondage*

6. What does this psalm invite from us as a worshipping community? In what ways are we formed for those ends?

*In the Sermon Tim used two images that might help to reflect upon to guide the discussion. They are:*

**Image 1:**

*This rhythm of being equipped and empowered in worship to live out our lives in mission – to work for his kingdom on earth - in our families – our work – our communities – what does that look like?*

*Well as I reflect on this – a rather odd image comes to mind – humour me for a moment... Laurie and I really appreciate some of Gordon Ramsey's shows – our favorite being Masterchef – where they seek to find the best home cook in America – they pull in 30 top home cooks and then through different challenges whittle it down to one – the winner gets ¼ million – a cookbook deal – and the notoriety of being America's next masterchef.*

*One the recurrent challenges on the show involves Ramsey cooking one of his signature dishes and he lays it before the chefs giving them an hour to replicate it – and the one who get the closest wins.*

*The chefs gather round – gazing upon this beautiful creation – allowing their nostrils to fill with the aromas – dipping in with spoons to allow their taste buds to discern the ingredients - the balance - the proportion – and then they go back to their stations and set to work.*

*In worship we gather before the Lord – in word – song – liturgy – prayer – we behold a vision of what God intended for his good creation – we hear the promise of his coming to flood the earth with new creation – with his justice – beauty – love – goodness – righteousness – our ears are attuned to hear – our eyes attuned to see – our heart attuned to yearn – the Spirit empowering – and we are sent out to replicate what we have seen and heard – we don't go back to our stations – our families – our workplaces – our communities - to compete with one another – but instead to work together as a worshipping community – utilizing the gifts that God has given each one of us - to seek to replicate what we have beheld – and like the home cooks it will not be an exact replica – that will require Jesus' return and make everything new – but we can point to that new creation – anticipate it – reflect it – draw others to behold it.*

**Image 2:**

*I know that not many of you who come to little T are Anglicans – you have often been formed in other communities in wonderful ways – but the liturgy is new to you.*

*You have been formed to think – the sermon – the music – the communion – well that is the main event – but the liturgy – I mean – its pretty much the same thing every week – couldn't we like shorten the service by pulling some of those elements out – can you tell I hear that often?*

*But the liturgy is in some ways the main event – the liturgy is what forms and shapes us more than anything else – and the means of that formation comes partly because it is the same week in and week out – it forms us in the biblical truths that we see coming to the surface in Psalm 133 – that a worshipping community is formed in the rhythm of worship and mission – is called to a royal priesthood – and equipped by heavenly gifts.*

*How so? Well - we begin our time by being called to worship – to pick up our calling as priests – to breath in the aroma of his love – gaze upon his glory – taste his goodness and justice – through his word we hear the glorious work of God in Jesus making everything new.*

*Then we confess our sin – we turn away from the things we worship other than the living God – and then receive the give for forgiveness and grace flowing down – descending. Then in light of that gift – Orvin will say – the peace of the Lord be always with you – to which the response is given - and also with you.*

*Do you know why that is there?*

*It was meant to be the time where we honestly asked – is there peace in my relationships? - is there any unforgiveness – or discord – or brokenness in my relationships within this community – if the answer was yes – that was the time in the service – where you were meant to get up - go to the person with whom you had broken relationship and make it right before going to the table – having received the gift of God's forgiveness – how can we hold unforgiveness in our heart toward one other – how can we together live into our calling if there is discord between us – go – go make that thing right.*

*How good – how pleasant it is when people dwell in unity.*

*And then in the eucharistic prayer we recall the story we are invited to take our place in – and receive the very life of Jesus in the sacrament to be equipped for our role – and then as we conclude our service we are sent out to live out the new humanity – the royal priesthood – we say it in different ways – in the older BCP service we say - and here we offer and present unto thee O Lord - ourselves our souls and bodies to be a reasonable holy and living sacrifice unto thee - today we will say – may we who have been nourished by holy things live as faithful heirs of your promised kingdom – we are once more picking up our calling as a royal priesthood – sent out to live into that calling in our work places – our families – our communities – reflecting the beauty, justice and love of a new creation.*