

# Keynotes from Matt Hill's am Sermon on 22/11/2020

## Mission Month – “The God who does what He pleases”

### Psalm 115

Matt Hill (EMF Spain)

**Psalm 115** Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness! <sup>2</sup> Why should the nations say, “Where is their God?” <sup>3</sup> Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.

<sup>4</sup> Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. <sup>5</sup> They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. <sup>6</sup> They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. <sup>7</sup> They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat. <sup>8</sup> Those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them. <sup>9</sup> O Israel, trust in the LORD! He is their help and their shield. <sup>10</sup> O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD! He is their help and their shield. <sup>11</sup> You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD! He is their help and their shield. <sup>12</sup> The LORD has remembered us; he will bless us; he will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the house of Aaron; <sup>13</sup> he will bless those who fear the LORD, both the small and the great. <sup>14</sup> May the LORD give you increase, you and your children! <sup>15</sup> May you be blessed by the LORD, who made heaven and earth! <sup>16</sup> The heavens are the LORD's heavens, but the earth he has given to the children of man. <sup>17</sup> The dead do not praise the LORD, nor do any who go down into silence. <sup>18</sup> But we will bless the LORD from this time forth and forevermore. Praise the LORD!

Greetings from the pulpit of the church in Spain!

This message focuses on the first 3 verses of Psalm 115, starting at the question in v2.

#### 1. V2 – The question. Why should the nations say, “Where is their God?”

This is a question so many are asking as we face up to the Covid situation.

Missionaries everywhere have heard this – people asking in different ways what is God doing in all this? It comes from those who have faith and those with no faith at all. Pastors in the UK are being asked this too, and maybe we, as believers, in our witnessing to those we live amongst, have also had to try to answer this question. We may try to speak about the gospel, but often how people respond is along the lines of

'That's all very well, but where is God now that the world is in such a mess. Why doesn't God do something?'

There are some exceptions, where this situation has caused people to seek God, but generally the feeling is 'Where is God when you need him most?' The implied reasoning is that, as God isn't sorting this out, then clearly he doesn't exist, and if he does exist, then he obviously isn't bothered with me so I won't bother with him. Everything centres on one thing – me! Man thinks entirely in concentric circles, all centred on himself, so if God exists, then he must only exist:

- to serve me and my purposes
- to provide for me and all my needs and wants
- to bail me out when I get it wrong

If he exists, then God's role in this world is to put right everything in my life, and to provide me with a bed of roses on which to float through this life on my way towards some notional paradise that God is somehow obliged to welcome me into.

Because we think it's all about us, when we suffer injustice or we don't like what life throws at us and our plans go awry, people lash out at God. Sneeringly, man clenches his fist and cries out to the God he doesn't believe in 'I told you so – if God existed, this is what he should really be doing. God is a phoney, and where is he when you need him most? Why doesn't he put a stop to this – I'm finished with God. Don't talk to me about him'

It doesn't matter whether it's Coronavirus, Mad Cow disease, famine, earthquake, typhoon or tsunami, war or civil unrest, corruption or injustice – as we seek to preach the gospel faithfully, the cry is the same around the world, whether spoken or unspoken:

**Hey you Christians, where is your God now?**

**2. v3 – The reply. Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.**

Take note that the reply (answering two questions) is in the plural (Our God). This is the people of God, the church, addressing the question that the world places before

them and answering it. There is no 'I' in church. Although our faith is individual both by definition and necessity, it is not lived out in isolation.

- God has adopted us into his family
- He has added us to his church
- We belong together as a people in local congregations

Whilst we are thankful for tools such as Zoom and YouTube, church is about being together in person. Staring at a TV screen while we sit at home is not church, even if we are listening to a sermon and some praise songs, because that is an individual activity. Church is about being **together** as a congregation.

a) **Where is God? Our God is in the heavens.** The united response of God's people reminds us firstly that:

- God is not limited by the here and now and cannot be contained in creation
- As a heavenly being he is different to us, far above us and holier than us

**Above all, it is a statement by God's people that our God is exactly where he should be – in the heavens. Where else would you expect him to be, given that he is God?**

**Jesus himself taught us to pray 'Our Father in heaven'**

b) **Who is God?** This is the real question, rather than where is God or even what is he doing? Our God is the Almighty – the God who does what he wants. **He does all that he pleases (v3).**

Our God does everything that he wills to do, not like an uncontrolled child, but as a God with a good and perfect will who is able always to carry out his will to perfection. 'Your will be done' (from the Lord's Prayer) is not just a petition, it is also a declaration – a statement of fact. His will is always done whether it be in hard times or in the face of unbelief. It is carried out by those who know and love him and by those who deny his existence. His will is always done. **None can stop the Lord Almighty** – neither plague nor famine, nor demons or principalities, not unbelief or rebellion.

**Our God is in heaven and does whatever pleases him.**

### 3. A response. v1 - Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!

How do we respond to v2? What is God's will and what pleases God? In v1 we are shown the concepts of love and faithfulness, and given the idea of a glorious God who is always to be glorified. This is who God is, and he does not change, so this remains true when you are in church, when you are at work, or at leisure. It is true in Broadstone or in Spain. It was true before Covid, it will be true after Covid, and is true now, during Covid. The truth that God is a God of love and faithfulness, who is always to be glorified, applies in all places, at all times and in all circumstances. Jesus' last words were of mission, evangelism, of proclamation and preaching. They were words directed to his disciples, to his followers, to his church – go and preach the Gospel. That was his will and remains his will.

What is the Gospel if not the love and faithfulness of God to a people chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, so that men and women, boys and girls might come to know Christ and see him as their Saviour, finding their forgiveness in his blood.

When their eyes are opened to see his love toward them in a saving way, and to see the faithfulness of God to the covenant he made with his Son before the world began, not only are they ransomed, healed, restored forgiven, but, most glorious of all, God is glorified.

When a sinner comes to the foot of the cross, God receives the ultimate glory and honour. Bringing people to know his saving love in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ, is God's will and pleasure and he is glorified through that. Jesus said 'I will build my church' and **none can stop the Lord Almighty**.

**Ephesians 1:3-11** tells us these truths: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, <sup>4</sup> even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us<sup>[b]</sup> for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. <sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, <sup>8</sup> which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight

<sup>9</sup> making known<sup>[c]</sup> to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ <sup>10</sup> as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.<sup>11</sup> In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,

How can we apply what we have read? **Psalm 115** (see the full text at the start) tells us:

- 1) **vv4-8** Remember the world doesn't have an answer. Their solution is to create substitutes for God that are useless in the extreme. Don't be intimidated by the world's questions.
- 2) **vv9-11** Remember to trust in God – he is our help and shield. The Psalmist tells us this three times.
- 3) **v12** Remember that God has not forgotten us. He has not set everything in motion and then left the church to its own devices until he returns at the end of time to take us all to glory. You may not see God at work but you are not forgotten.
- 4) **vv12-15** Remember that God is working for our good. He is never doing nothing. He may be punishing those who reject him and his laws, pruning his church or preparing a worldwide revival in which thousands upon thousands are added to the church, His church. Remember to pray your will be done.
- 5) **v18** Remember to praise God - the Psalm ends where it started. Praise and glorify God in all things and at all times.

**Whether we see God at work or not, whether we understand what he is doing or not, and whether or not we like what God does or allows to happen, none can stop the Lord Almighty.**

**Our God is in the heavens, he does what he pleases.**

**Not to us, O Lord, not to us but to you be the glory.**