

2024-12-29 - What Fuels Our Worship - Psalm 33

Pastor Matt Yamada

Before we begin, why don't we give a round of applause to the worship team? It was a smaller team, but guitar and voice, right? Like, it reminded me of college days where, you know, just play the guitar and people just sing together, and just the at homeness of that. That was wonderful. Thank you so much, Pastor Dan, for that.

Good morning, Cornerstone Church. I hope you had a wonderful Christmas Day last week. For those of you who do not know me, my name is Matt Yamada, and I am the Associate Pastor of this church. I mainly shepherd our Japanese language congregation, which is on the other side of the building. So when you do come, please say "Hi".

In just three days, we will be stepping into the New Year, 2025! A child born at the start of 2000 will be 25 years old next year. Doesn't that make you feel old? And I know this may sound cliché, but man, the year went by so quickly. For me personally, 2024 was a very eventful year. I graduated from Trinity Seminary with my Master's in Divinity, and our second son, Timothy, was born in October this year. I'm really grateful for all of you who prayed for me and my family.

2024, as wonderful as it was, was also a difficult year for us too. My wife got really sick during her pregnancy and she was on bed rest. She couldn't go outside of our house for a couple of months. I was trying to wrap up school around that time and was worried about her and the baby's health too. 2024 was also a year where we had a sudden passing of a dear church member in the Japanese side, and that was tough. Walking through grief together as a community was challenging and very sobering.

So, reflecting on this year, what comes to your mind? What was this year like for you? Perhaps 2024 was filled with highlights, new opportunities, joyful celebrations, or answered prayers. Yet for others, this year may have been filled with heartache, perhaps the loss of a job, strained relationships, sickness, or the passing of loved ones. If that describes your experience, please know that we grieve with you and hold you in our prayers.

Whether it was a year of great joy or a year of enduring trials, through it all, one thing has and will remain constant, and that's the fact that God is faithful. He sustained us this year, and His loving hand will continue to carry us into the New Year. As we stand on the threshold of the New Year, our hearts naturally turn to **Hope**. So, this is what we want to look at today. **Hope** is what fuels us, right? It drives us. It's what keeps us moving forward.

That's why people make New Year's resolutions, right? We're hopeful that the coming year will bring growth, change, or just something better. But here's the thing about **hope**—it needs to be rooted in something reliable and tangible. Take me, for example. My New Year's resolution is to exercise more (chuckles). But do I have a plan? Not yet. When I tried in the past, have I succeeded? By February, I'm like, "It's cold outside. I'll do it tomorrow," and then the next day, "It's the weather's fault," right?

But am I hopeful? Yeah. Or you could probably already prophesy that I'm going to fail. Why? Because my hope is not placed in something reliable or tangible. You know what you call this? It's wishful thinking, right? **Hope** that isn't rooted in something solid is like building a house on sand. It may seem like it works, maybe, but when the pressure hits, it fails. Our **hope** needs to be rooted in something reliable.

Thankfully, as believers in Christ, we have a **hope** that is far more secure than ourselves, our circumstances, or our wishful thinking. It's grounded in the unchanging character of God. This is the **hope** I'm talking about. For those who place their **hope** and trust in God, it's a secure anchor. It's a hope that we will not be disappointed in.

So today, as we turn to Psalm 33, we'll see how the **hope** of God fuels our worship, how **hope** fuels our worship. And we'll explore three powerful aspects of our **hope**.

What Fuels Our Worship?

Hope in a Strong God that made the world through His Word (4-9)
Hope in a sovereign God who controls all things (10-19)
Hope in a loving God whose steadfast love fills the earth (5, 18, 22)

What fuels our worship?

- *What fuels our worship is hope in a strong God who made the world through His word.*
- *What fuels our worship is hope in a sovereign God who controls all things.*
- *And what fuels our worship is hope in a loving God whose steadfast love fills the earth.*

So let's dive into these truths together. I'm very excited for this, and as we do, may our hearts be filled with worship and our hope in God renewed for the year ahead.

Let's begin with a prayer.

*Father, we **hope** in You. Jesus Christ you are our living hope. Lord, help us to see this beautiful hope that we have in the character of God. Lord, let our hearts be open to Your word. Please use me and speak through me. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.*

For the word of the Lord is right, and all his work is trustworthy.
He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the Lord's unfailing love.
The heavens were made by the word of the Lord, and all the stars, by the breath of his mouth.
He gathers the water of the sea into a heap; he puts the depths into storehouses.
Let the whole earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.
For he spoke, and it came into being; he commanded, and it came into existence.
Psalm 33:4-9 CSB

So let us begin by looking at verses 4 through 9. It says:

For the word of the Lord is right, and all his work is trustworthy. He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the Lord's unfailing love. The heavens were made by the word of the Lord, and all the stars, by the breath of his mouth. He gathers the water of the sea into a heap; he puts the depths into storehouses. Let the whole earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spoke, and it came into being; he commanded, and it came into existence.

These verses remind us of the breathtaking power of God's word. Think about it: with just a word, God brought everything into existence. The vastness of the universe, the depth of the sea, the intricacy of animals, human beings. In a technologically advanced world that we live in, we turn on our lights or music by saying, "Hey Alexa" or "Hey Google." It still feels weird doing that, but we live in a technologically advanced world. Yet scientists are still uncovering new wonders in this world, complexities and mysteries that point us back to the infinite creativity and power of our Creator. And all of this, God simply spoke into being.

It would take us forever to make one thing, but with a word, He created it all. How often do we actually stop to think about this? As someone who recently graduated from seminary, I spent years wrestling with deep theological concepts and complex ethical dilemmas. Terms like the transcendence of God or hypostatic union or Providence. I'm always listening to hard theological questions like how do we reconcile the sovereignty of God and human responsibility? How do we think about artificial intelligence from a biblical standpoint? Questions like these are important and enriching, but they can also be overwhelming and draining.

Then I would step away from these thick books and debates and simply look around the world. God reminded me time and again, sometimes through the beauty of the sunset, sometimes through the taste of perfectly crafted sushi (even if you don't care for raw fish, it's good), or simply through the joy of meaningful conversation with a family member or a friend. God uses the simplicity of life to remind us of His strength and presence. These simple moments brought me back to the joy of knowing God, not just as a theological concept, but as a personal Creator.

Why did God give us eyes to see? Why did God give us taste buds to taste? Why did God give us ears to listen to beautiful music? These gifts tell us He cares deeply about us. These things deepen my love for theology, to know more about God, because they remind me of the God behind it all. The same God who crafted the stars and the oceans cares for you and for me and invites us to know Him through His creation and ultimately through His word.

So maybe your 2024 was a busy year. Perhaps the chaos at home or the demands of life at work, school, and other responsibilities left you no time to marvel at those things. If that resonates with you, let this be a gentle invitation to pause. As we end the year, let's take a moment to pause and breathe. Look around. Take a moment to notice the beauty of the world God has created. The beauty of nature, the beauty of relationships. Whether that be a vibrant sky, the sound of children's laughter, or the relationships we've been blessed with.

He gathers the water of the sea into a heap; he puts the depths into storehouses.
Psalm 33:7 CSB

Psalm 33:7 continues. It says: "**He gathers the waters of the sea into a heap; He puts the depths into storehouses.**"

Reading this passage, it reminded me that even the most untamable aspects of creation—the sea, the waves—are ordered and stored by God. What seems so chaotic and overwhelming to us is completely under His control. In the same way, God is present in the midst of our personal chaos. He is actively sustaining and working in your life, even when life feels overwhelming. To pause and ponder this truth is not just good for your soul but necessary. Sometimes we need to stop looking inward—at all the things we need to do, all the things we need to take care of, all the plans—and look outward at God's creation, seeing the world He has made and is sustaining. As we do, we're reminded of an even deeper truth.

Our God not only creates and sustains but also reigns over all things. His sovereignty ensures that nothing in our lives or this world is beyond His control.

What fuels our worship?

Hope in a strong God that made the world through His Word (4-9)
Hope in a sovereign God who controls all things (10-19)

This brings us to our second point: What fuels our worship is hope in a sovereign God who controls all things.

The Lord frustrates the counsel of the nations;
he thwarts the plans of the peoples.
The counsel of the Lord stands forever,
the plans of his heart from generation to generation.
Happy is the nation whose God is the Lord—
the people he has chosen to be his own possession!

Psalm 33:10-12 CSB

Psalm 33:10-12 says: "***The Lord frustrates the counsel of the nations; he thwarts the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of his heart from generation to generation. Happy is the nation whose God is the Lord—the people he has chosen to be his own possession!***

God is a sovereign God. Sovereignty means that all of nature, all of history, all of authority, everything is under His control, and nothing can stand in the way of His will. And His sovereignty is not just a theological concept but an active reality. He is currently working in the fabric of our lives and the fabric of history. It's a simple yet profound truth that God's plan will always prevail.

We see this repeated in the Old Testament. When Moses when leading the tribe of Israel, by the call of God, says to Pharaoh, "Let my people go," Pharaoh says, "I'm not letting your people go." Did that stop God from saving Israel? No. God sent plagues, parted the Red Sea, and delivered Israel, demonstrating that no earthly ruler or power can stop His plan. The ultimate fulfillment of God's plan is seen in the coming of the promised Messiah, which we celebrated last week during Christmas. From the beginning of time, this plan was set, and the birth of Jesus Christ is the clearest example that God's promise cannot be stopped. Human opposition, no Roman Empire, no act of betrayal could prevent God from completing His plan. Through Jesus' life, death on the cross, resurrection, and ascension, God brought His sovereign plan to completion, bringing salvation to you and to me.

I love the connection we see between verses 7 and 10. As God brings order to the chaotic waters of the sea, He also brings order to the disruptive, rebellious times of the nations. He is sovereign over all things. The psalmist continues to say in verses 13-15:

The Lord looks down from heaven;
He observes everyone.
He gazes on all the inhabitants of the earth
From His dwelling place.
He forms the hearts of them all;
He considers all their works.
Psalm 33:13-15 CSB

"The Lord looks down from heaven; He observes everyone. He gazes on all the inhabitants of the earth from His dwelling place. He forms the hearts of them all; He considers all their works.

The sovereign God who controls everything is not a passive God. He is actively involved. He's watching. How many of you have heard your parents say, "Even when I'm not watching, God's watching," right? It might make us laugh, but according to this passage, it's actually true. God is watching. He sees everything. He sees everyone. He sees what you do, what you're going through, your thoughts, your motives, your heart—everything.

Think about the gaze of a parent. To someone who might harm their child, the look is protective and fierce. But to a child, the gaze is loving and warm, full of care and concern. Two very different responses, but one same person. In the same way, God's watchfulness can evoke different reactions. For those who do not know Him, this should inspire fear—knowing that God sees all your hidden deeds, all your evil thoughts, and every action. No sin or wrongdoing goes unnoticed, and all sin will one day be judged.

But for those who do know Him, who put their faith and trust in Him, His gaze should bring, yes, a healthy dose of reverence for the holiness of God, but more so, it should bring a deep sense of comfort. God, who cares and loves His children, is watching you. He cares for you.

But **look**, the Lord keeps his **eye** on those who fear him—
those who depend on his faithful love
to rescue them from death
and to keep them alive in famine.
Psalm 33:18-19 CSB

Verses 18 and 19, look at God. "***The Lord keeps His eye on those who fear Him, those who depend on His faithful love to rescue them from death and to keep them alive in famine.***" He is looking; he knows your struggles. He knows your hurts. He hears and sees your tears and your cry for help, and He is not a Father who sees it and ignores it. He's Emmanuel, God with us. He's the one who's willing to rescue us and keep us alive in times of difficulty. Seeing this...

Why does God's sovereignty matter to you? Why does it matter to us? Here's a question: If you don't believe that God is in control of this world, then what will you do? If God is not in control, what will you do? You have to do it. You have to take care of things. You have to move, and you will inevitably feel the sense to take care of it yourself. That's what the psalmist is pointing out in verses 16 and 17. It says:

A **king** is not saved by a large army;
A **warrior** will not be rescued by great strength.
The **horse** is a false hope for safety;
It provides no escape by its great power.
Psalm 33:16-17 CSB

"A king is not saved by a large army; a warrior will not be rescued by great strength. The horse is a false hope for safety; it provides no escape by its great power."

In ancient times, armies, horses, and warriors were symbols of human power, control, and security. The nations thought, "If we have them, we're fine." For us, that might be money, relationships, success, possessions—how much stuff you have. But just like these armies and horses, we know deep down in our hearts that things will not save us. These modern securities are fleeting and unreliable.

Remember, about 13 years ago, there was an earthquake in Japan that hit and it wiped away houses, buildings, companies, and people's lives. All these things people worked hard for, to build—a house to raise a family—just like that, gone. These things can be taken away from us any minute. These are, as the psalmist says, false hopes for safety.

If you believe that God is sovereign and He is in control, how would your life look differently? Verse 19 reminds us that God not only watches but is able to intervene in our lives. His sovereignty gives us confidence because even when things don't go as we plan or hope, or if things don't go well at all in this life, we still have an eternal hope that cannot be taken away. It's a secure hope.

How are we to respond to that sovereignty? The psalmist says in verses 20 to 22:

We **wait** for the Lord;
he is our help and shield.
For our hearts rejoice in him
because we **trust** in his holy name.
May your faithful love rest on us, Lord,
for we put our **hope** in you.
Psalm 33:20-22 CSB

"We wait for the Lord; He is our help and shield. For our hearts rejoice in Him because we trust in His holy name. May your faithful love rest on us, Lord, for we put our hope in You."

Waiting. Who likes waiting? Probably none of us. Waiting is hard, especially in times of stress, difficulty, or spiritual dryness. It feels like you're stuck, powerless, or like things are out of control. But in God's sovereignty, if we know that God is in control of all things, waiting will not be passive. It will be an active engagement, an active expression of our trust in Him.

Biblical waiting doesn't mean being idle, eating potato chips. No. Waiting on God is a time to lean into His promises with expectation, prayer, and obedience. Active waiting looks like this: continuing to pray even when answers don't come immediately, seeking God through His word, even when it feels like it's just words on a piece of paper. It's taking steps of faith, whether in serving others or making decisions aligned with His will or simply living out his commands daily, even when the future feels uncertain. It's about trusting God's timing and His faithfulness while remaining engaged in the work God has for you.

What it doesn't look like is giving up, rolling over, or trying to manipulate outcomes through our own efforts. Active waiting isn't about striving to fix everything or control what feels out of control. Instead, it's letting go of the need to do it all and resting in the assurance that God is sovereign, good, and at work even when we can't see it.

In this waiting, it's also waiting in gladness. The psalmist says our hearts rejoice in Him because we trust in His holy name. This hope is not rooted in wishful thinking but firmly anchored in God's character. This God, who sees, knows, and acts, is worthy of our trust. That's why we can hope.

My question to you is, do you believe in God's sovereignty? Do you believe that He controls all things? Do you trust that He's watching over you and that He cares deeply about what you're going through? Perhaps what you need isn't a change in circumstance but a change in your heart—a shift from striving to control everything to trusting in God, seeing challenges and problems not as burdens to bear alone, but as opportunities to witness God's faithfulness.

Waiting on God is not wasted time. It's transformative time. It shapes us, deepens our faith, and prepares us to see God's glory revealed in ways we could never imagine. In every battle in our lives, whether it's marriage struggles, raising children, financial concerns, sickness, or spiritual trials, God's sovereignty invites you to stop striving and start trusting. When we place our hope in Him, we don't just endure—we worship with hope.

What Fuels Our Worship?

Hope in a Strong God that made the world through His Word (4-9)

Hope in a sovereign God who controls all things (10-19)

Hope in a loving God whose steadfast love fills the earth (5, 18, 22)

So, what fuels worship? Hope in a loving God whose love is unfailing. In the passage, the Hebrew word **חסד** **hesed** is used three times:

5 He loves righteousness and justice; **the earth is full of the Lord's unfailing love**

18 But look, the Lord keeps his eye on those who fear him— those who depend on his **faithful love**

22 May your **faithful love** rest on us, Lord, for we put our hope in you.

once at the end of verse 5, then in verse 18, and verse 22. This word is profound. The ESV translates it as "steadfast love," the NASB as "lovingkindness," the KJV as "mercy," and here in the CSB, it's translated as "unfailing love" or "faithful love." As you can probably tell, this word is too big for any single English word to fully capture its depth and breadth. But what this word is always tied to is the idea of covenant love—a promise. It's not just a fleeting affection but a commitment to endure, to love for the sake of His people.

It's a royal love that keeps on loving even in our difficulties, even when we sin, even when we fail, even in times of weakness. This is the love that provided for His people in the wilderness, the love that delivered His people from their enemies, and the love that shed His blood on the cross for you and me. Not because of anything we've done, but because of who He is. He is a **hesed** God. It doesn't have anything to do with us, but all to do with who He is.

Let's be honest here. As we went through Christmas, we tend to, you know, feel so familiar with God's compassion, and honestly, we take God's love for granted. I do see that. When was the last time you truly stood in awe of God's love for you? God's love shouldn't just be a concept to be understood. It's a reality to be experienced. We need to move beyond theory—God is love—to actual practice. Write down the ways you've seen God's **hesed** love in your life, or maybe share it with your family or friends as you gather for New Year's. Don't let the familiarity of God's love diminish its wonder.

Christians need to be constantly refreshed on how much God loves us, how much He cares for us, or else we'll become apathetic and dry Christians, constantly serving without joy. Let God's love fuel our worship. When we pause to marvel at His love, we're reminded that our hope is secure, not because of who we are, but because of who He is.

Knowing the hope we have in this great God—the God who made the universe with His word, the God who is sovereign over all things, and the God who loves us deeply—how can we not be moved to worship Him? You might have noticed I started from verse 4. This is not because I forgot about verses 1 through 3, but because verses 4 through 22 are all the reasons and motives to do what we're called to do in verses 1 through 3. So what is the psalmist calling us to do in verses 1 through 3?

Rejoice in the Lord, you righteous ones;
praise from the upright is beautiful.
2 Praise the Lord with the lyre;
make music to him with a ten-stringed harp.
3 Sing a new song to him;
play skillfully on the strings, with a joyful shout.
Psalm 33:1-3 CSB

"Rejoice in the Lord, you righteous ones; praise from the upright is beautiful. Praise the Lord with the lyre; make music to Him with a ten-stringed harp. Sing a new song to Him; play skillfully on the strings, with a joyful shout."

When we know who our God is, we rejoice, we praise, we sing, and we shout. I love seeing different expressions of worship. Some people raise their hands, some people, like me, tend to move around as they worship, and some people just stand still. My roommate back in college he would sit next to me in chapel, he would never sit. During worship, he would just close his eyes and make an agreeing sound. That was his form of worship. In the Japanese congregation that I'm part of, we tend to be very reserved, but I can see their expressions and know that they're worshipping the Lord.

There are many expressions of worship. These are all not to glorify ourselves, but when we see the goodness of God, when we see the character of God, we respond with emotion and passion. The descriptions of worshippers in verse 1—"the righteous ones," "the upright"—refer not to morally perfect people earning favor with God through good deeds, this is

talking about a relational position, people who lean on God's grace, trusting in His faithfulness, and placing their hope in Him.

So, where do you place your hope this new year? Is it in your resolutions? Is it in the grand plan you've set for yourself to be accomplished through your own abilities? The reality is, the same you who struggled this year will be the same you in 2025. But the good news is, this year, God is also not going to change. He is sovereign, powerful, and faithful. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Verse 3 invites us to "sing a new song to Him." This doesn't mean we need to switch up our worship playlist every day. Instead, it's a call to respond afresh to God's ever-renewing mercy. His mercy is new every morning, and we respond to that new mercy. We respond not just with singing—that's one form—but with our lives. Paul says in Philippians 4:6-7, ***"Don't be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."***

Gratitude is another form of worship. The foundation of worship is recognizing what God has done for us and who He is. When we see that, we experience a deep peace that surpasses all understanding, surpassing any chaos or struggles we face. Worship needs to be rooted in a heart filled with thanksgiving. As Romans 12 reminds us, worship is offering ourselves as living sacrifices. It means allowing every part of our lives to reflect God's grace and glory—not just on Sundays, but in every moment.

This might mean trusting God in your daily life, finding joy in small blessings. For teenagers, it might mean thanking God for friendships, and standing firm in your faith, even when the world challenges you. For young adults, worship involves trusting God with decisions about careers, relationships, and priorities, doing so with gratitude and seeking His guidance. Adults can acknowledge God's provision in work, family, and faith in their day-to-day life. For seniors, worship can take the form of faithful prayer (your prayer means so much!), mentoring others, and reflecting God's goodness through their wisdom and presence.

Let's not miss that verses 1 through 3 is a collective call. The words "you righteous ones" and "the upright" are in plural form, which means we are called to worship as a body. When we think about worship, we tend to think individually, but no, this is a collective thought. It's a community call. ***Philippians 2 exhorts us to be like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and one in mind.***

I love the fact that I get to share the Japanese congregation, feeling the support from you all. I feel so much support from the elders on the English side, and I know you guys stop by to say hi, and just the feeling of unity that we have. We get to worship the same God. Yes, our culture is different, our language is different, our skin color is different, yet we get to worship the same God. In this fragmented world, the divided world that we live in today, this is the greatest testimony of who our God is.

We get to worship together in hope and remind each other that we're a part of God's community that ends with victory. As we step into 2025, let us become hopeful worshippers. Not hoping that something good or nice will happen to us, but hoping in a God that is good. Trusting in God's strength, the One who made and sustains the universe. Let us rest in His sovereignty, knowing that no human plans can outlast His. And let us rejoice in His **hesed**, the loyal love which fills the earth. His love is unchanging, and it is a love that we can rely on.

Psalms 33 concludes with a prayer in verse 22:

"May your faithful love rest on us, Lord, for we put our hope in You." Psalm 33:22 CSB

What Fuels Our Worship?

- When life feels uncertain, God is strong.
- When our plans fail, God remains sovereign.
- When hope seems distant, God's love draws near.

Let this be our prayer as we step into the New Year, no matter what lies ahead. May we hold fast to these truths: when life feels uncertain, when our plans fail, God remains sovereign. When hope seems distant, draw near to Him. May we do so with confidence and joy, knowing that our hope in God will never end in despair. Let us worship Him not only for what He has done but for who He is.

Father, we rejoice in the fact that we have such a wonderful God who cares, who is strong enough to change us, save us, and redeem us for Himself. As we look forward to the new year, I pray that our hope will not be set on things of this world but be set on who You are—the God who loves us, cares for us, and is all-powerful and all-knowing. We love You. In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.

Thank you, Pastor Matt. We have a great God. He's done great things for each of us. He is faithful. Amen. Let's all stand and give thanks to God together as a congregation through the hymn "Great Is Thy Faithfulness."

Church, Romans 15:13—the promise of God:

"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you believe, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

Let's go in the hope and the power of the Holy Spirit together as a church. Amen. Go in peace.