**A PRAYER FOR THE NATIONS**

**Psalm 33:4-12**

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**READ/WATCH:** [**https://www.fbcjc.org/sermon/a-prayer-for-the-nations/**](https://www.fbcjc.org/sermon/a-prayer-for-the-nations/)

When I have a birthday, I try to spend the day counting my blessings, but I also spend some time reflecting on what needs to be better and different—to improve. So Independence Day is always a good time for us to pause and ask how we are doing as a nation. Let’s face it. Our nation is in pain. COVID-19, unemployment, families in crisis, poverty, lack of affordable housings, racial injustice, food insecurity, political strife and a toxic hatred of people not like us.

As we take inventory on our national birthday, what do we use as our measuring stick? The answer is in our text: it is God’s character. “He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the steadfast love of the LORD” (v. 5). The words righteousness and justice are often paired in scripture. They summarize God’s will for the world, for Jefferson City, for your family and for you.

We make a mistake by only connecting “righteousness” to private holiness (I don’t smoke and I don’t chew and I don’t run with girls who do). But both words are about fairness and restoring relationships AND restoring community. This psalm is a solemn warning to never allow empty, private piety be a substitute for God’s kind of righteousness and justice.

I once saw a church sign which read, “Justice is love distributed.” I would add the word “fairly.” The Preamble to our U.S. Constitution is instructive here. “We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union…” The implication is that we are a work in progress. And look what comes next. “We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, *establish* *justice*…” (emphasis added).

But this psalm is not just for Israel, God’s chosen nation. It is a prayer for all the nations. Verse 10 tells us that God is sovereign above all nations. *The Message* translates this verse: “God takes the wind out of our pretensions and shoots down the world’s power schemes.” There is no political scheme, no global pandemic, no social or economic ill, no marching army beyond God’s reach or beyond the power of the Crucified, Risen Lord. God is sovereign above the nations!

The God of our crucified Savior takes our understanding of power and turns it on its head. “The king is not saved by his great army; a warrior is not delivered by his great strength. The war horse is a vain hope for victory, and by its great might it cannot save” (vv. 16-17).

I’ll let you in on a little secret. I keep a stress ball in my desk drawer here at the office. Why would a pastor have any stress in this day and age, right? But it’s there just in case! What I love about this stress ball is that it is a miniature globe. And as I hold it, massage it and ponder it, I realize: He’s got the whole world in His hands! Sovereign, above the nations.