

Psalm 81

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[0 : 00] One of the most important things we can learn in life is when to open our mouth and when to keep it well shut.

Failure to learn this lesson can land us in serious difficulties. How many of you have had occasion to express yourselves in this way?

When or why did I open my mouth? But it's too late. You did open your mouth and you did say what you said and it did cause the difficulty or the offense or the embarrassment or whatever it was that it caused.

Maybe you realized later that what you said wasn't true. You had jumped to a wrong conclusion. You had been too harsh on somebody. But what was said was said.

We open our mouths often too quickly and too unthinkingly. And we don't think before we speak. I imagine that Gordon Brown is wishing he hadn't described the loss of the personal information of 25 million people as inconvenient.

[1 : 25] It wasn't the best choice of words to describe that particular difficulty that he had to confront. But not only do we open our mouths when we should keep them well closed.

We keep them well closed when we should open them. When was the last time you opened your mouth to tell somebody about Jesus?

Think about it. Answer the question in your own mind. We often keep our mouths closed when we should be opening them. I want to think about a commandment that God directs to us this evening that at first sight may appear a little strange or a little peculiar.

The commandment is open wide your mouth. And we find it in verse 10 of the psalm that we have read. Psalm 81.

If you just have your Bibles open there in Psalm 81. Really all that we're going to share this evening is concentrated in really this single verse.

[2 : 34] With just one or two references to following verses. And we'll just read again the verse that we find there in Psalm 81 in verse 10. I am the Lord your God who brought you up out of Egypt.

Open wide your mouth and I will spill it. Open wide your mouth and I will spill it.

Now, we'll be saying a little bit more about this verse and different elements of the verse in a moment. But just for starters, let's note that this verse speaks of a willingness, a disposition, a genuine desire on the part of God to bless us.

And to fill us. To supply generously all our needs. And bear this in mind. God is not only able to fill you.

Fill that void, whatever shape it may be. He wants to. This verse speaks of that willingness of God. Open wide your mouth and I will fill it.

[3 : 47] I think there's four questions that we can pose to the text. Or in any case, we're going to pose to the text and try and answer. And they're the following. I'll just mention what they are and then we'll think about each one in turn.

First of all, the question that we can start with is, who is speaking? Who is making this offer? Who is making this promise? The second question is, who is he speaking to?

Who are his audience as he speaks and makes this promise? Thirdly, what does he command us to do? And then finally, what does he offer to do for us?

Who is speaking? Who is he speaking to? What does he command us to do? And what does he offer to do for us? First of all, then, who is speaking?

Well, the answer is a very straightforward one. Then in verse 10, we read, I am the Lord your God. I am the Lord your God.

[4 : 49] The speaker identifies himself very clearly. I am the Lord your God. I am Jehovah, Yahweh your God. I am the God who has made himself known with this name.

Jehovah, Yahweh, I am that I am. I am the eternal and unchanging God. I am the only living and true God.

And so, just for a moment, consider who is making this spectacular offer. Open wide your mouth and I will fill it.

Because it is important to consider who makes an offer. Who makes a promise. Before we decide if we are going to believe the offer. Believe the promise.

And act upon it. It is crucial and we do it every day. When offers are made. And proposals are made to us. And promises are made. We are constantly evaluating.

[5 : 50] Well, who is making the promise? Who is speaking? Who is making this offer to me? And it is important we do that. Maybe if I could just illustrate with a few examples.

Some possibly very trivial. If Steve McLaren were to offer the SFA to get Scotland to the World Cup in South Africa. Would you believe him?

You see, the offer is a very attractive one. Who wouldn't want to be there? It would be great if Scotland got to the World Cup in South Africa. By the way, I don't know what the draw was this afternoon. In case you are wondering.

But we would like to be there. But if that particular individual. I am sure he is a very nice man. Were to make that offer. We would have reasonable doubts. About whether taking up on the offer.

Or if the chairman of Northern Rock were to say. Put your life savings in my institution. I am going to give you 20% a year interest. 20% a year. That is a tremendous offer.

[6 : 52] It is a very attractive offer. But would you believe him? Would you act on that offer? Would you say, yeah, that is what I am going to do? I think you would think about who was making the offer.

Before deciding on the destination of your life's savings. Or, and maybe these are coming on to more serious issues.

If your boyfriend, or girlfriend. So we don't have gender caricatures. But if your boyfriend offers to love you tenderly. And always, if only you would stop being such a prude.

And have sex with him. Would you believe him? Would you take him up on this offer? Well, it is a great offer to be loved tenderly. And always. Who doesn't want to be loved?

Always. I think you would do well. To consider who is making that offer. Is he or she trustworthy. In making this offer to you.

[7 : 54] And if I could just give you some advice. If you are, made that offer. Turn it down. It's important to consider who is making an offer.

It's easy to make promises. It's much more difficult to keep them. How many pupils were there going to be in classrooms? From primary one to primary three.

Mr. Salmond. You see, the promises are easy to make. But difficult to keep. And we really do have to seriously consider who is making us an offer.

This evening. In this text. The one who promises. To fill your mouth. The one who makes this tremendous promise. That we are going to be considering.

What it actually involves and means in a moment. The one who makes the promise. The one who identifies himself as the Lord your God. The one who cannot lie.

[8 : 53] The one who is absolutely trustworthy. The one who has never left unkempt a single promise. The one who has proved himself time and time again.

In every age. In every nation. And in every circumstance. I can testify. That he has proved himself in my life.

He has never failed. In one promise that he has made to me. And I'm sure many who are here this evening. Can testify in the same way.

He has always been faithful. He has always been true. He has always kept his promises. And so when we come to this promise. This evening. When the Lord comes to us this evening.

And he says. Open wide your mouth. And I will fill it. Rest assured. That he will be true to his promise. If we do what he asks us to do.

[9 : 52] He will fulfill his part. Of that. Rest assured. Of that. Have no doubt. Who is speaking? I am.

The Lord. Your God. God. Now before we move on. To consider the second question. I just want to. Take a little detour.

I suppose. And consider. Another name. That is given. To the one. Who is making this promise. In this psalm. In verse 10. We are limiting ourselves.

To what we find. That at the beginning. I am the Lord. Your God. But. In this psalm. God is given. On two occasions. Another name. That it is worth just. Very briefly. Commenting on.

In verse 1. And in verse 4. He is spoken of. As the God. Of Jacob. The God. Who is offering. To fill your mouth. When you open wide.

[10 : 48] Is. The scribe. Is. Given this name. The God. Of Jacob. And I just want to mention that. Because. It is a mention. Or it is a name.

That really is. Full of hope. Maybe. The name of God. That is. Is. Brimming over with hope. And why do I say that? Because.

When you just think for a moment. Who was Jacob? Who was Jacob? Well Jacob was a. A nasty piece of work. Jacob was a liar. Jacob was a fraud.

Jacob. Was somebody who stole. His brother's birthright. Jacob was somebody who. If in those days. They had. Buses. Wouldn't have thought twice. About throwing his granny.

Off one of them. Maybe he would have thrown his granny. Off a camel. I don't know. But I digress. The point is. That Jacob. Was not. A nice. Person. He was a bad person.

[11 : 43] He. Was somebody. You really want. You wouldn't want. To. Have trusted. He certainly. Wasn't very promising. Material. To be a servant. Of God.

But you see. God. God. Doesn't see people. The way. We see them. When God. Sees Jacob. He sees somebody. Full of potential. He sees somebody. Who can do great things.

For him. And he changes. Jacob. From that. Very. Disagreeable. Person. Into somebody. Who can be useful. In his hands. See. God is an expert.

In. In lost causes. He takes the most. Vile. And the most. Ugly. And useless. Sinner. Somebody like me. And somebody like you. And he can change.

That person. He can convert. That person. Into something. Special. Or somebody. Some person. Special. Beautiful. And useful. And he can do that.

[12 : 37] With you. The one who. Is speaking to us. This evening. The Lord. Your God. Is the God. Of Jacob. The God. Of lost causes. The God. Who is willing.

To. Change. The most. Unlikely. Sinner. Sinner. So that. Answers. Our first question. Who is speaking. I am.

The Lord. Your God. But secondly. We want to consider. Who is speaking. To. Who is he speaking to. Well let's return. To the verse. Verse 10. Of Psalm 81. I am.

The Lord. Your God. Who brought you up. Out of Egypt. He is not. Speaking. To all. Indiscriminately. He describes himself.

In this verse. As the Lord. Your God. He is the God. Of a people. A God. Of a people. Called. Israel. A redeemed people. A people.

[13 : 30] Who had been brought up. Out of Egypt. A people. Who had been saved. Who had been rescued. From slavery. And the words. That we have. In this psalm. Are a deliberate.

Echo. Or perhaps more than an echo. A quote. Of the covenant language. It was found. In the words. Of introduction. To the ten commandments. I am the Lord. Your God.

Who brought you up. Out. Of Egypt. So the offer. Of blessing. Is made. To those. Who are already. Part. Of God's. Redeemed.

People. And as we consider. This. Offer. This evening. The implication. I think. Is clear. God offers. In a special way.

To bless. Those. Who are. Christians. Who by faith. In Jesus. Have been. Welcomed. Into the family. Of God. If we are to enjoy. The paternal.

[14 : 25] Blessing. Of God. If we are to enjoy. Family. Privileges. Then we must be part. Of that family. We must be. His children. God.

Loves all. But he has a special. Covenant. Family. Love. For. His. Children. Children. And so. It is. A good thing.

Just to pause. For a moment. And for me. To ask you. This evening. Where. Do you stand? Are you part. Of that family? Are you a child. Of God? Have you.

By faith. In Jesus Christ. Been brought in. To the family. Of God. In John. Chapter 1. And verse 12. In very. Brief.

Words. We. Have described. What is involved. In becoming. Part of that family. John. Chapter 1. And verse 12. What do we read. In that verse.

[15 : 18] Well. We read. The following. John. Chapter 1. And verse 12. Yet. To all. Who. Received him.

Who received Jesus. To those. Who believed. In his name. He gave the right. To become. Children. Of God. What was involved. Or what is involved. In becoming.

A child of God. And. Having the privilege. Of being blessed. By. Father God. We have to believe. In Jesus. We have to receive. Jesus.

As our Lord. And Savior. And so. I ask you this evening. If that is where you stand. And if. As yet. You have not. Believed in Jesus.

If as yet. You have not. Received Jesus. Well. Now is a good time. Now would be a good time. To open. Your mouth. And for the first time. To receive. What God offers you today.

[16 : 13] Forgiveness. And a new start. And a welcome. Into his. Family. Who is. God speaking to.

He is speaking to his people. And this is important. Some. People say. And I have heard this often. And. But. I pray. And nothing happens. I have folk.

Coming up to me. Well. Especially. I am thinking of through. Because. Well. That is where I am. And they say. Pastor. You know. I pray. And nothing happens. And God does not answer me.

And. If we think of Scotland. If you are going to believe. The opinion falls. Maybe some of you saw this. In the papers. A couple of weeks ago. Was it 70% of people in Britain. Still pray.

In some way or other. I don't know what. They mean by that. Or who they are praying to. But. I read in the paper. Some opinion poll. That had come up with that statistic. I don't know how much credence.

[17 : 08] To give to the statistic. But it is interesting. There seems to be. Certainly some. Concept. Of the transcendent. Some idea. Of. Of praying. And of speaking to God. And of asking for help.

And when. They were asked. What they prayed about. They usually were praying. That God would. Help them in some way. Praying for a family member. Praying for. Something that God would. Would grant them.

Well as. We recognize that truth. It is important to realize. That. If you have not yet. Trusted in Jesus. As your Lord. And Savior.

Then you are not yet. A child of God. And God is under. No obligation. To answer your prayers. You can. Pray. As much as you want. And God. In his grace. May answer your prayers.

But he is under no obligation. To do so. Because you are not part of the family. And the promise. Is to. The family. Is to his children. That is to whom.

[18 : 05] God. Is. Speaking. Here. But what I would say. Is that there is one prayer. That he will always answer. Whoever you are.

And whatever your circumstances. And whatever you stand. Before God. This evening. When you come to him. And you pray. God. Be merciful to me. A sinner. That is a prayer.

That he will always answer. And he will answer it this evening. If you would but pray. That prayer. God. Be merciful to me. A sinner.

And it is a great prayer. For Christians. To pray also. God. Be merciful to me. A sinner. Who is speaking? The Lord. Your God. Who is he speaking to?

He is speaking to his people. His redeemed people. To those who. If we bring it. To our day. To those who. By faith in Jesus Christ. Have been. Made part.

[19 : 00] Of the family of God. But the third question. We want to answer is. What does he command us. To do? What does he command us to do? Well. We have it there. In the verse.

And maybe as we read it. Time and time again. We will know it off by heart. I am. The Lord your God. Who brought you up out of Egypt. Open. Wide. Your mouth. Open.

Wide. Your mouth. And I. Will fill it. What does he command us to do? Open. Wide. Your mouth. It's actually something very simple.

That he is asking us to do. God doesn't present us with a list of prior conditions. Or complex religious duties. To perform in order to be blessed.

In order to be filled. We just have to open our mouth. We just have to believe that he wants to bless us. And to receive that blessing.

[19 : 56] We just have to recognize our great need of the blessing of God. And of being filled by God. And as we do. We open our mouths. Now why don't we do it?

Is it lack of trust perhaps? A fear of losing control of our lives? A fear of an unqualified and unconditional surrender of our lives to him?

It reminds me a little of a child. Who wants to be boss at the dinner table. Now evidently my three boys never wanted to be boss at the dinner table. They are perfectly well behaved.

And would never do any of these things. However, some children. Including my children. Want to be boss at the dinner table. And they don't want to eat what daddy says they have to eat.

They want to decide what they eat and what they don't eat. And when sometimes fathers are forced to go into forced feeding mode.

[21 : 00] It's interesting how strong those jaws can be. If they close well shut. And they just don't want to eat what dad is wanting them to eat.

You see they don't want to lose control. They want to be in charge. And from the earliest age we want to be in charge. We don't like other people being in charge of our lives. And we don't like God being in charge of our lives.

And so we are reluctant to open wide our mouth. Because maybe he'll fill us with something we don't want to be filled with. There's a lack of trust.

There's a desire to hold on to our independence. Or it also makes me think. Or I imagine the scenario at a children's party.

I don't know if you've ever been involved in one of these games. It's really a horrible game really. Well I think it is. Where you have to get blindfolded. And then they put different types of food in your mouth.

[21 : 56] And you've got to guess what it is. I don't know if you've ever played that game. Torture I think rather than game. You see we are very reluctant to do that. Because there is a lack of trust.

We don't know what are they going to put in my mouth. I can't see what's going on. And so we're reluctant to do so. And I wonder if when we come across this great promise of God.

Open wide your mouth. Whether there is sometimes a reluctance to do so. First of all we don't want to lose control. And deep down there is a lack of trust.

An uncertainty about what is going to happen. But the command that God gives us is this. Open wide your mouth.

What does that actually involve? Clearly the language is figurative. It's not literal. It's a picture of the believer asking God for something.

[22 : 56] Asking in accordance with his will. And believing that God will grant the petition that we make. We ask as we pray. We open our mouth wide as we pray to God.

As we make known our petitions to him. We ask for forgiveness. We ask to be filled by his spirit. We ask to be used by God. We ask for the conversion of our loved ones.

We ask for the transformation of our city. We ask for peace where there is war. We ask for justice where there is oppression. We open our mouth. As we pray and as we ask God.

And God commands us to open wide. Open wide your mouth. And in the measure of our faith. We will be filled. And maybe a question that I ask myself.

And I would ask you is just how wide are you opening? Just how wide are you opening? What God commands is that you would open wide your mouth.

[24 : 00] He wants to fill you. He wants your mouth wide open. As you consider what you as a congregation are called to do in this city. He wants you to open wide your mouth.

He doesn't want you to just open it just a little bit. He wants to fill you. You see the wider open your mouth is the more that you can get in there. Open wide your mouth.

That's what He commands us to do. But the next question we want to consider and answer is what does He offer to do for us? Well you know the answer.

Open wide your mouth and I will fill it. He will not leave us unattended. He will not let us down. He will fill us.

What God says is I will fill it. I will fill it. He will fill us with grace and pardon. Fill us with love and tenderness.

[25 : 02] Fill us with direction and purpose. Fill us with gratitude and joy and peace. Fill us with all that is pleasing to Him. If we ask for forgiveness, He will forgive us.

If we ask to be used, we will be used. If we ask for love, He will love us. If we ask that He would bless our church, He will bless our church.

If we ask that this church would become a house of prayer for all nations, it will become a house of prayer for all nations. But we ask that we ask that we have to open wide our mouth.

He is willing to fill. He is ready to fill. He is on the edge of His seat wanting to fill. But you have to open your mouth. If your mouth is closed, He won't fill it.

Open wide your mouth and I will fill it. He will fill. He will answer in accordance with His good and perfect will. We have to open our mouth and He will take care of filling it.

[26 : 09] He won't always give us what we want. He won't always fill us with what we had asked for. There will be times when we open our mouth and He will fill it with a bitter medicine.

But we can be sure that it will be given in love and it will be for our good. What does He offer to do for us?

He offers to fill us. And maybe if I could just direct my words again to those who perhaps have never opened their mouth, even for the first time in coming to Jesus, that you might be forgiven and might be brought in to the family of God.

I would invite you this evening, come to Jesus, confessing your sins. Receive His forgiveness. Believe all that He has done for you, that He came into this world and died on the cross for you, that you might be forgiven.

Come to Him. Confess your sins. Receive His forgiveness. Receive the new life that He wants to give you. Life in all its fullness that only He can give.

[27 : 20] Open your mouth, even if it's for the first time, and come with that prayer that is always answered. God, be merciful to me, a sinner. But there is a final question that I hadn't mentioned at the beginning, but I want to mention now and consider, because it's a rather tragic and solemn question.

And the question is, how did the people respond? On that first occasion when God made this great promise to the people, how did the people respond?

Let's just read verses 11 to 13. These verses immediately follow the offer, the promise that has been made. But what do we read in the words that follow?

But, a tragic, frustrating but. But, my people would not listen to me. Israel would not submit to me.

So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own devices. There can be no more tragic thing than be handed over by God to follow our own devices.

[28 : 26] It always ends in tears. And this is what happens here. And it continues in verse 13. If my people would but listen to me. If Israel would follow my ways, how quickly would I subdue their enemies and turn my hands against their foes?

And then the psalm finishes with these words in verse 16. But you would be fed with the finest of wheat, with honey from the rock. I would satisfy you.

And so the question, how did the people respond? Did they open their mouths? No, they did not. Sadly, tragically, foolishly, they did not open their mouths.

And so, my friend, you are not the only stubborn one. You are not alone in rejecting the love of God. Hearing, but not listening.

Invited, but not responding. Is it not the case that enough is enough? Listen to the Lord in all His tenderness as He addresses Himself even to you this evening.

[29 : 36] If you would but listen to me. If you would but follow my ways. Why don't you do so? Why don't you surrender? It's time. Open your mouth.

Receive the love and the forgiveness that I want to give you. My friend, it is in your hands, even this evening, to gladden the heart of God.

There is rejoicing in heaven. There is rejoicing in the heart of God over one sinner who repents. Or will He say of you, If only, if only, if only, if only He had listened.

If only He had followed my ways. When we come to that great and final and solemn day, will God say of you, If only. If only He had listened.

If only He had repented. If only He had obeyed. If only He had surrendered. But He didn't. If only. If only. And even as we think of ourselves as believers, as we think of our great heritage as believers, and of all the manifold ways in which God wants to bless us and to bless His church, might it be that God is saying of us, If only they would open their mouths.

[31 : 02] Why? If only they would come to me and ask and dream big dreams and ask for great things. If only they would ask, but they don't ask. And if they don't ask, then I'm not going to give.

If only. If only. That God would help us to hear Him speaking to us. I am the Lord your God.

I am trustworthy. I keep my promises. I am good for what I offer. I have saved you. I have redeemed you.

I want to fill you. Open wide your mouth. Open wide your mouth.

And He will fill it. But do it now. Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we come before you and we thank you that you are a trustworthy God.

[32 : 00] We thank you that your promises are true. That you are a reliable God. A faithful God. And forgive us that though we have every reason to trust you.

We have every reason that our faith would be a deep and a great faith. Yet we confess it is so often not so. Lord, we pray that you would help us to open wide our mouths.

That you would fill us. And we do pray. We pray for those who perhaps have never as yet opened their mouths. To receive from you forgiveness.

A new life. And a welcome into the family of God. Lord, we do pray. That even now. By your spirit they would be enabled. To come to you.

Believing and trusting. And opening wide their mouth. And their life. That you would come in. And change and transform. And make something new.

[33 : 01] And special. And beautiful. And useful. You are indeed the God of Jacob. The God of lost causes. The God who transforms the useless. Into something useful.

The ugly into something beautiful. And Lord, we pray that you would do that work. Even now amongst us. And we pray in Jesus name. Amen.