

The Reason To Worship God

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- [0 : 00] Thanks, Justy. Well, keep that psalm open and we're going to follow it through together. Again, if there's any questions at any time through what we look at on a Sunday morning, then please feel free to chat with me afterwards or raise anything that you want to. Well, let's pray and ask for God's help. Our Father God, we thank you that you are indeed great. And we ask that you would help us to better understand your greatness, but not just to know it in our heads, but also to experience it in our hearts and in our lives day by day. And for that to happen, we need your spirit to be at work in us. And we pray that he would be at work in our lives even now as we read and as we listen.
- [1 : 17] And as we think through what your word is saying. So we ask for your help in this, in Jesus' name. Amen. A few years ago, the author Christopher Hitchens, who's a leading atheist, he's since died, but his book is still very influential. He wrote a book called God is Not Great. His argument was simply this. Rather than being the great hope of the world, God, or the very idea of God, is the reason why the world is in such a mess. In other words, if we can get rid of God, then the world wouldn't have all the problems. Listen to what he says. This is a quote from his book. This is what he says about God. He doesn't have a lot of time for God.
- [2 : 42] Now that's not an uncommon thought. Many people today believe that. You might even think it. People who you work with and socialize with will believe it. They simply think that God is not great. In fact, people see God as being a problem. And if we can remove God, then things would be better. In contrast to that, though, is the author of Psalm 103. Here the writer claims that God is great and that we should worship him. So look how it says, So look how it starts in verse 1. He says, Praise the Lord, O my soul, all my inmost being, praise his holy name. And then look how it finishes, the very last line. Praise the Lord, O my soul. So the whole psalm from beginning right to the very end is a reason for why we should worship God.
- [3 : 49] In fact, he claims that everyone and everything should praise and worship God because he is great. So look at verse 21. He says, Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts. You his servants who do his will. Praise the Lord, all his works. Everywhere. There's nothing excluded. Everywhere in his dominion. Praise the Lord, O my soul. Now that's a big claim. When increasingly people are becoming more and more anti-God. People will say, Well, why should I worship God? What has he ever done for me?

Why should I give my devotion to God? What makes God better than anybody else? So the question we want to ask is, Is God great?

[4 : 48] Or is God not great? Well, you can draw your own conclusions as we look through this psalm together.

Is God great? Or is he not great? Well, as we look through this psalm, we're going to look at four pairings that help us to capture what I think is the greatness of God and why we should worship him.

Four pairings that capture the greatness of God. First, forgiving and forgetting. I wonder as you listen, can you remember anything that you have said or done that you know is wrong?

Can you think of anything that you've said or done that you know is wrong? We don't have to think very long, do we? It's quite easy. Because we all have things that we regret.

Oh, wish I wish I hadn't done that or said that. And no matter how hard we try, there are some things we can just never forget.

[5 : 59] Even as we sit right now, there are those things from the past that just keep on haunting us and come back to us time and time again. It seems we have an inability to forget our past and to forget our sin.

In contrast to that, God not only forgives, but he also forgets our sin. Look at verse 2.

Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your sins. Do you know what? There's nothing too big and there's nothing too great.

He will forgive the past, he will forgive your present, and he will forgive your future. Nothing is too big.

But that's not all. Look at the rest of verse 3. He tells us there that he heals all our diseases. Now the difference there between sin, forgiving all our sins, and healing all our sickness, is what we might say is timing.

[7 : 11] When we confess our sin to God, he immediately forgives. Straight away, we can know his forgiveness.

When we ask God for his healing, it is usually future. Not always, but usually future. That is, not until we are in heaven will we know his complete and full healing.

So God forgives us now, that's the teaching of the Bible, and God will fully and completely heal in time. But he forgives immediately.

But he doesn't just only forgive, he also forgets. Look down at verse 11. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him.

You know when we try to measure, or if you try to measure, God's love towards us, we find that his love is immeasurable. We live in a galaxy that's called the Milky Way.

[8 : 23] Our next closest galaxy to us is called Andromeda. It's 2.5 million light-years away.

One light-year is 6 trillion miles. So you can do the maths, okay? 2.5 million light-years away. One light-year is 6 trillion miles.

That's just the next galaxy. And what does it say there in verse 11? What does it say about God's love? For as far as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love.

It's immeasurable. It's beyond comprehension. It's so vast. It's so great. And as an expression of his great love towards us, what has he done?

Look at verse 12. As far as the east is from the west, so far as he removed our transgressions from us. Just as God's love is immeasurable, so God's removing of our sin, or the way I phrase it here, forgetting it, it doesn't mean that he ignores it.

- [9 : 41] It means that when he forgives us, he no longer holds it against us. He removes our sin from us. And that gap is immeasurable.
- It's infinite. It's like God has a record on computer of all the things that we've ever said, or thought, or done wrong.
- All there on file. And when we confess, he clicks select all. And then he clicks delete.
- There's no undo button. It's irretrievable. It's gone. It's wiped out. Never to be known or held against us again.
- This is the greatness of God in contrast to our inability to be able to forgive each other or to be able to forget our past.
- [10 : 42] That is why we should worship God. No one else can do what God can do for us. So he forgives and he forgets.
- Second pairing. He redeems and he renews. I know some of you yesterday were walking up the mountains. Well, when we were younger, our family used to go for long walks up the Cumberah Mountains.
- And on one of those walks, my elder brother, Philip, was running away out ahead of us all. And then all of a sudden, he just disappeared. Just vanished. Didn't know where he'd gone until we got up to as far as we had last seen him.
- And there he was, ten feet down in this great big bog pit at the bottom. And he couldn't get out. And the only way that he could get out was for my dad to actually reach down, climb down, and pull him out.
- Well, look what it says about us in verse 4. We are described as being in a pit. Verse 4. He redeems your life from the pit.
- [12 : 01] Now, what happened to my brother was extremely funny to all of us looking on. We thought it was hilarious. But for us being in this pit, it's being in a state where we are beyond self-redemption.
- We can't rescue ourselves. We can't do anything about it. And it isn't funny. In fact, the pit, as the Bible describes it the whole way through, is like we are on our way.
- It's a path that leads to hell, which is eternal separation from God and from all that is good. But God has redeemed us.
- That means he has reached down to us through his son, Jesus Christ, and he has pulled us up out of that pit. He's rescued us.
- He's delivered us. And instead of hell hanging over us, look what we have in place. Look at the rest of verse 4. He redeems your life from the pit and now crowns you with love and compassion.
- [13 : 11] What a contrast. No longer treated as a rebellious enemy, but now treasured as his own child.
- But he not only redeems, he renews us. Verse 5. He satisfies our desires with good things so that our youth is renewed like the eagles.
- It's a picture of just reversing our whole life. He fills us and he satisfies us like nothing and no one else can. It's like he's giving us a complete fresh start from the pit to a crown of life to a fresh start so that, look at the end of verse 5, your youth is renewed like the eagles.
- Well, maybe you don't feel like an eagle this morning. Maybe you don't feel very young and youthful. But this is picture language.
- And it's all picture language about resting in God's strength and God's abilities. And I'm sure we've all seen the nature programs, whether it's... Oh, his name's gone from me now.

[14 : 24] David Attenborough, thank you. Any of those kind of nature programs. And we see the eagles flying effortlessly over the mountains. And what they do is they catch the warm thermals and it lifts them up and they just travel from mile after mile.

Well, as God renews our life, as he redeems us from the pit, crowns us with love and compassion, it's as if we are carried along daily by the wind of grace.

His strength bringing us through life as we face every kind of trial and circumstance. This is the greatness of God in contrast to our inability to change or to do anything about our own circumstances.

This is why we should worship God. Nobody else can do what God can do. The third pairing.

Unfailing love and undeserved mercy. Look at verse 6. The Lord works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed.

[15 : 40] God always does what is right and he always does what is good. His ways are just. They're perfect. He never gets anything wrong. And what follows is an example of his rightness in the way he deals with people.

Look at verse 7. He made known his ways to Moses and his deeds to the people of Israel. And what follows in this psalm is referring back to a time when God intervened into his people's lives with his love and mercy.

And we want to go back to look at that. It's found in Exodus 32. Ralph actually picked up on it earlier on just before we were singing. So go back keep your finger in Psalm 103 and go back to Exodus chapter 32.

So Psalm 103 verse 7 says he made known his ways to Moses his deeds to the people of Israel. And this illustrates what God did.

So we're going to pick it up in Exodus 32. And remember the context here is that God's people have been rescued from slavery in Egypt.

[17 : 01] God has defeated their enemies he's led them through the Red Sea he's brought them into a new land to a new home they have all the possessions that they need and now Moses their leader has gone to talk to God on the mountain and look what happens chapter 32 verse 7 Then the Lord said to Moses go down because your people whom you bought up out of Egypt have become corrupt.

They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said these are your gods O Israel who bought you up out of Egypt.

So quickly they have turned their backs on God after all that he has done for them and God is rightfully angry and look how God responds in verse 9 He says I have seen these people the Lord said to Moses they are stiff-necked people in other words they're just stubborn now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them then I will make you into a great nation.

That's what they deserve but Moses appeals to God's character to his unfailing love and his undeserved mercy and look what he says verse 11 Moses sought the favour of the Lord his God O Lord he said why should your anger burn against your people whom you bought out of Egypt with great power and a mighty hand look at the end of verse 12 turn from your fierce anger relent and do not bring disaster on your people and what does God do?

look at verse 14 then the Lord relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened that is unfailing love that is undeserved mercy in fact God renews his relationship with his people even though they'd turned their backs on him God commits himself to his people again and this is what he says in Exodus 34 verses 6 through 7 Exodus 34 verse 6 through 7 this is the completion of this whole story and God passed in front of Moses proclaiming the Lord the Lord the compassionate and gracious God slow to anger abounding in love and faithfulness maintaining love to thousands forgiving wickedness rebellion and sin back to

[20 : 21] Psalm 103 you see that's what we have quoted in Psalm 103 verse 8 this is what God made known to his people verse 8 the Lord is compassionate and gracious slow to anger and abounding in love now let's just reflect for a minute how has God intervened into our lives what has he done for us forgiven us removed or forgotten our sin redeemed us and renewed us and how many times have we turned our back on him being stubborn lived our own way and how does God respond look at Psalm 103 verse 9 he will not always accuse nor will he harbor his anger forever he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities that is the greatness of God in contrast to our continued failure and disobedience this is how God is towards us that is why we should worship

God the fourth pairing compassionate father and continuous love I know we have lots of little babies here in the family of this church and I'm always amazed at the size of a newborn baby so tiny so delicate so fragile totally helpless they can't feed themselves they can't fend themselves in response mum and dad has to provide them with everything that they need well in the same way God sees us as delicate and totally helpless oh yeah we like to play tough we like to think of ourselves as being independent and don't need anyone or anything but look how God sees us verse 14 for he knows how we are formed and he remembers that we are dust we'll die one day and we will be just dust but look how he responds to us knowing what we are like in verse 13 as a father has compassion on his children so the

Lord has compassion on those who fear him because he knows how we are formed he knows that we're dust compassion is seeing the helplessness and the inability of somebody else and reaching out to them and doing something for them and helping them and so that's what God has done he provides us with all that we have he cares for us intimately he has compassion I know that some of you are gardeners and some of your gardens are probably looking very well at this time of year lots of flowers out the variety of colours that there are but you know yourself that within a few weeks those flowers will be a heap at the bottom of the compost rotting away that's how we are described so very fragile here one moment and then gone look at verse 15 as for man his days are like grass he flourishes like the flower in the field the wind blows over it and it is gone and its place remembers it no more we're here and then we're gone

I was only reminded of that just last week me and Kirsty went for a cycle ride and on our way back we came to the traffic lights to the pedestrian lights and we pressed it it went green and Kirsty was just on her way out onto the road and a car just went straight past one more second and a life would have gone one second we're here and we're gone but in contrast to our momentary and fragile life God's love is continuous and everlasting look at verse 17 from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him and his righteousness with their children's children our life may end but the

Bible tells us that before the creation of the world God loved us it goes on to expand that neither death nor life neither the present nor the future nor any powers or anything in all creation is able to separate us from God's love God's love is continuous and constant not even our own sin not even Satan not even sickness can separate us from God's everlasting and continuous love that is the greatness of God in contrast to our weak delicate and frail lives that is why we should worship God no one else can do what God says he can do now before we wrap up there is one critical question to ask and it's simply this how do

[27 : 04] I experience the greatness of God how do I take what's on the screen how do I take what's written in my Bible these words how do I know his forgiveness in here his redemption his compassion how can I sense it how can I know it for real in my own life every day well God's greatness is always true and it can always be experienced right here right now and here's how look at the end of verse 11 so great is his love for who for those who fear him look at verse 13 as a father has compassion on his children so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him verse 17 from everlasting to everlasting the

Lord's love is with those who fear him God's greatness is always true it's never changing but it only becomes a reality in our own lives when we fear God now fear kind of seems a harsh word doesn't it we don't like the idea of fear what does it mean well it does not mean being scared and shaking in the corner as if you were cowering from some kind of vindictive bully that's what Christopher Hitchens and others would want us to believe that God is just mean and a bully and he makes you scared but fear in the Bible is different fear in the Bible means a deep awe and humble respect I think the best illustration for this is in the lion the witch in the wardrobe when Lucy is with the badgers and she's getting ready to meet

Aslan the lion and this comes from a quote from the book the joy of fearing God and he quotes it this is what he says or this is what Lucy says is he quite safe I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion that you will dearie and no mistake said Mrs Bieber if there's anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking they're either braver than most or just plain silly then he isn't safe said Lucy safe said Mr Beaver don't you hear what Mrs Beaver tells you who said anything about safe of course he isn't safe but he's good he's the king I tell you to come before God with fear is like Lucy as she came to Aslan there's this humble awe this deep respect and if we are to experience the goodness and the greatness of

God if we are going to know his forgiveness his redemption his compassion his unfailing love we must come before him with fear and if we don't know and we don't experience the forgiveness of God in our lives or his compassion well it's simply because we do not worship God because to worship God is this fear of submitting to him and making him king of your life and living under his rule and authority look at verse 19 the Lord has established his throne in heaven and his kingdom rules over all he wants to rule over every area of your life there is not one part of your life that is outside of his rule or authority and this is what worship is it's to come before God in fear before a great king to bow in humility to serve him with joy to delight in his love and as we worship him with fear then we begin to know and experience and enjoy his forgiveness of all of our sin we come to appreciate his redemption in our lives and crowning us with love and compassion and we experience that deep unending everlasting love and his compassion that reaches down to frail people like us

God is great and we should worship him in fear and we will know and enjoy him as a great God let's pray together our father god you have shown yourself to be great you have made this universe and you have made us the very breath that we breathe right now is something you have given to us you sustain us you keep us our very life from beginning to end is held in your hands and yet our life is so weak so fragile so delicate thank you that you have shown your greatness to us and that we can come to you and find that forgiveness and that you would no longer hold our sin against us through

[33 : 57] Jesus we thank you and it's our desire that we would know and experience your love and compassion your redemption and your renewing in our lives your mercy every day so help us to bow before you as king acknowledge your lordship and your authority over every area of our life we thank you that you are a great God in Jesus name amen well we're going to sing a song that really tried