

Walk in his way: The way of praise

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[0 : 00] Let's share our prayer together. Heavenly Father, we humbly bow in your presence.

! May your word be our rule, your spirit our teacher,! and your great glory our supreme concern. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The opposable thumb is one of the wonders of creation. But without an opposable thumb our hands would be entirely different and our lives as humans would have developed in entirely different ways.

God has made us with the ability to hold things, to pick things up, to use our hand in wonderful ways. The human eye is equally wonderful.

An optician told me at one time about all the different things that are involved in the eye. After I fainted and needed a cup of tea, he sat me down in a chair and being interested in these things continued with his explanation.

[1 : 14] All I gathered from it is that there are tiny, tiny, wee bits and lots of them in the eye and they all need to work in the right order so that we can see.

It's an amazing thing that God has made. The air which we breathe is a very precise balance of chemicals and particles.

Our breath is invisible to us, except on those cold mornings. If our breath didn't work just the way it works, our lives would not be sustainable.

The thumb and the hand are for holding, the eye is for seeing. What is our breath really for? Our forefathers in faith, many of them Scots folks, wrote down this question.

What is the chief end of a human? The answer is well known, I hope. The chief end of a human is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

[2 : 25] The purpose of our breath is that we may praise the Lord. The final verse in the whole of the book of Psalms is this.

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Perhaps let every breath praise the Lord.

With every breath, in every breath, through every breath, as we breathe in and out, let us use our breath to praise the Lord. Over these past few weeks, when we've looked at some Psalms, we've noticed that the importance of where a Psalm is placed in the collection of 150 Psalms, which we have in the Bible.

It makes a difference what the neighbors are, what the group is, what the part of the whole collection is. Where we find the Psalm makes a difference to how we hear it and use it and read it and worship with it.

Our Psalm today, Psalm 147, is near the end. It comes in a set of five Psalms, 146 to 150. Each of these Psalms begins and ends with the same two Hebrew words.

[3 : 53] Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah is not a translation of the Hebrew phrase, but a transliteration.

The same sounds in Hebrew become the sounds that we use in English. Hallelujah. If you want to translate it, you could translate it, praise the Lord.

The end of the book of Psalms, not just one Psalm, but five Psalms, beginning and ending with praise the Lord. And our Psalm this morning, right in there.

Psalm 147 calls us to praise. We are to walk in the way of praise. And in the words of the Psalm, we are given two great reasons for praise.

So there's the Psalm. We can see that the Psalm's divided into three sections. One to six, seven to 11, 12 to 20.

[4 : 59] Each of the sections begins with a line or a verse calling us to praise. And then the rest of the section takes up two themes.

We are to praise the creator and praise the redeemer. In at least one part, two parts, the first and the last part, we see these themes of creator and redeemer woven together.

It's not that there's a creator here who is different from the redeemer over here. The two are the same. And we are to praise the creator and praise the redeemer.

These are not the only reasons we can find in the book of Psalms or in Scripture. They are for praise. But they are the reasons given in the Psalm before us this morning.

And perhaps until we figure out praising God for his creative work and his redemptive work, we could stick with that. And once we've got that sorted, move on to other things.

[6 : 06] But I think we've still got a ways to go. Verses one to six, we are to praise his mighty power.

Psalm 147 makes use of words of wonder. There are delightful words all the way through the psalm. Words of loveliness and beauty.

It is good. It is lovely. It is delightful for us as humans to praise the Lord. That is a good thing to do.

To walk in the way of his praise. In verses four to five, we read about the creator who is able not only to count the stars, but to give each one of them a name, and to remember their name, and to call them out by their name night after night, and set them in their place.

Our God is a God of the details. Human eye would teach us that, all on its own.

[7 : 25] The tiny details matter. The stars at night teach us this. God knows and has appointed each one of them.

We don't even have enough numbers for all the stars we can see. Never mind the stars that we know are out there that we can't see.

And God has names for them. All of them. And calls each one its specific name and sets it in its place.

Have you heard of anything that displays as much power as this? In verse 4a, the first line there, the Lord counts the stars.

And in the last line of verse 5, the understanding of the Lord cannot be counted. It's the same words. God can count the stars.

[8 : 26] We are not able to count the extent of his understanding. And his ability to name and set the stars in place.

That's one of the things you can do in poetry is use the same word to reinforce the difference between humanity and God the creator.

At times we are lost for words. We run out of ways to acknowledge his greatness.

To be amazed at his power. I think that's why God has given us psalms. God himself has spoken out words of his praise and given them to us, written them down for us, so that we can use them when we run out of words.

When we stand before him awestruck and we don't know what to say, we can open a psalm and find the words there, which can express our wonder and our praise and our delight in God's creation.

[9 : 47] Sometimes we get discouraged. We think, my words aren't good enough for God.

My words are too poor to describe his power and his greatness. If ever you hear that thought ringing in your head, here's a way to think about God.

Think of God as an encouraging parent who will always be pleased with our words. Think of God as a loving parent who will take hold of our words and pin them on his fridge.

Think of God as a loving parent who will take hold of our eyes and pin them on his face.

Your ability of your words stop you or hold you back from praising God. God has made your words good enough. The same mighty creator God is the mighty redeemer God.

[11 : 20] Here in these few verses, we see that the redeemer God builds a place for his people to be with him. The Redeemer God searches for the scattered people whom he wants to gather into his presence.

He's not waiting for you to find your way to him. He is looking for you to gather you. He heals all our wounds.

All of those wounds that we've carried for years that we thought would never be healed. God binds them up and binds up our broken hearts.

As we walk in the way of his praise, our Redeemer God rushes towards us. And his every move towards us gives us more and more cause to praise him.

He hurries to bless us. Praise the Lord. Praise him for his awesome greatness and his mighty power. But there's more.

[12 : 34] Verses 7 to 11. Sing your praise. Make music to the Lord. Music, we know, lifts us somehow beyond ourselves. The best theorists find it difficult to find words to describe what music does to us.

And we know this well. God has blessed us, giving us musicians who create music for us.

In which and through which we can praise the Lord. Having created all things. The Lord is not stuck separate from his creation.

As though heaven were somewhere far, far away. And he could never get to us. In these verses, in 7 to 11, we see God coming to his people.

Coming to his creation. The mountains are blessed in his coming as the grass grows upon them. The beasts, even the ravens, whom nobody liked now or then, are blessed in his coming.

[13 : 44] Receiving from his gracious hand their food. The God of the Old Testament is a God of grace. Who comes to his creation to bless.

To care for creation. And provide blessing for all. The Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him.

Those who wait for his steadfast love. In the ancient world, there are many texts that tell us that kings and princes took pleasure in strong horses.

They loved their horses. Not so that they could do dressage, hopping around, doing whatever they were doing. But so that they were powerful enough to pull chariots.

They loved their horses and their power and their strength. And they delighted in them. The same texts tell us that these kings and princes took delight in human strength.

[14 : 52] In the muscles of the legs and the shoulders and the arms. So that they could hold swords and go and fight in wars and battles. We too take pleasure in the beauty of a horse.

Galloping and striding and jumping the fences and just being a horse. We marvel at athletes amazed at how gymnasts can bend their bodies into those shapes.

And sometimes it makes us ache just to think of it. But the strength of their muscles and their arms is a delight to us. But God doesn't delight in these things.

The psalm says. He delights in you. You are what makes him smile. You are what makes him excited.

You are what he takes pleasure in. The redeemer delights in us. Whenever we depend upon him.

[16 : 03] Whenever we ask him for help. Whenever we look to him for strength. Whenever we praise him. His smile beams out. He is so happy.

At us. The king of all kings. The lord of all lords. Delights in you. You are the apple of his eye. Submitting to your God.

And walking in his way. And praising him. Brings him pleasure. If you think counting the stars. Is awesome.

Sit with this verse. Verse 11. For a day or two. And ponder anew. Do what it means for the lord. To delight. In you.

Praise the lord. Praise him for his generous care for all. Rejoice in him. Because he is rejoicing in you. And then we go on to the final part of the psalm.

[17 : 07] Listen to these words. From Isaiah chapter 2. Many people will come and say. Come let us go up to the mountain of the lord. To the house of the god of Jacob.

That he may teach us his ways. That we may walk in his paths. For out of Zion. Will go forth the law. And the word of the lord.

From Jerusalem. I love to think. That depending on which way. And I'm not sure which way it goes. Either the psalmist was reading Isaiah 2.

Or Isaiah had the words of the psalmist in his heart. But there's a deep connection. Between the word of the lord. Going out from Jerusalem.

In both these places. Jerusalem. The holy city. Zion. The glorious mountain of the lord. The city of peace. The city of security.

[18 : 03] The city of worship and praise. The pilgrimage destination. Not only for Israel. But for all peoples. Every tribe and tongue and nation.

Jerusalem is the place. From which. The word of the lord. Flows out. To all creation. In our psalm.

In verse 12. Jerusalem and Zion. Are summoned to praise the lord. It's not just people who praise the lord. All of creation.

Praises the lord. But what follows in verses 13 to 20. Is a declaration. Of the word of the lord. Which flows.

From Jerusalem. And Zion. The creative word of the lord. Which directs the weather. Which scatters.

[18 : 58] Frost. And hurls snow and ice. His redeeming word of blessing and peace. The word of justice.

Proclaimed over all peoples. Listen again to verse 15. He sends his word to the earth.

His word runs. Quickly. The lord is not compelled. To speak. There is no force.

So powerful. Anywhere in creation. That could force god. To do anything. When he speaks. It's because he chooses.

To speak. He graciously sends his word. To the earth. Don't you love that. Adverb quickly.

- [19 : 55] Just tossed in at the end of that line. His word is not slow. It's not. Like a teenager in the morning. You know.
- It's still morning. I'm not getting up yet. His word. Is rushing. Towards you.
- Towards all of creation. Pounding. Straining. Like some athlete. Going for the line. Until it reaches. You.
- Again. We see this merciful movement. From heaven to earth. God is not locked up. Somewhere far away. From us. But his word.
- Rushes. Quickly. Towards us. Words. Have power. The kings of Assyria. And Moab. And Judah. And Israel. Inscribed their words.
- [20 : 53] On blocks. Of marble. I'm going to write. To the organizers. Of the Paris Olympics. To complain. About the opening ceremony. But not for the reason. You think. They went through the Louvre.
- And they didn't go past. The Assyria room. With the law code. Of Hammurabi. With the words. Of the great king. Establishing justice. For all the people. It's the best thing. In the whole museum.
- But it's an absolute. Example. Of this. The kings. Understood. That their words. Had power. They inscribed them. In stone. They sent them. Around the empire.
- Here are my words. Written down. For you. That you might know them. These expressions.
- Of their word. However. Proved. Stationary. Once they were inscribed. They were stuck there. Human words. Have been many.
- [21 : 49] We fill. The world. With our words. And they achieve. Nothing. We speak. Of peace. And we do not. Have peace. We speak.
- Of justice. But we do not. Have justice. But God's words. Are different words. God's words. Are more. Than our human words.
- The word of the Lord. Is effective. It achieves. Its purpose. The reason. For which God. Spoke it. Happens. When God.
- Says justice. There is justice. When God. Says peace. There is peace. When God. Says food. For the hungry. There is food. For the hungry. And his word.
- Is not far. From us. God. Has spoken. His word. And caused it. To be written down. In scripture. For us. Do you ever.
- [22 : 45] Find yourself. Thinking. I would love. To hear. God. Speak to me. You ever think that. I really. Would love. To have a word. From the Lord. Open your Bible.
- Any page. And read it. And you will read. God's word. For you. He has written it down. We live in a land.
- Where there are. So many Bibles. There are probably. More Bibles. Than people. It is not difficult. For us. To hear. God's word. His word.
- Is not far. From us. It has come down. From heaven. To earth. The word of the Lord. Became flesh. And shared our life. With us. God.
- With us. His word. With us. Do you long. To hear the word of the Lord. For you. Get to know Jesus. Jesus.
- [23 : 40] Is God's living word. Made flesh and bone. For you. That you might know God. In him. Follow Jesus.
- Serve Jesus. Fix your eyes. On Jesus. As we said earlier. Make way for Jesus. For him to come to you. And you to follow him. And God's word.

Will achieve its purpose. In your life. Praise the Lord. Praise him. For his gracious.
Present word. To us. Praise the Lord.

As we hear. And love. And submit. To his word. For us. Hallelujah. Praise the Lord. We
praise the Lord.

Because we are the people. Who have heard his voice. His voice. Shouting creation
words. Shaping worlds. From nothing. By only his word.

[24 : 36] His voice. Filled with echoes. Of delight. And pleasure. As he looks upon you. His voice.
Which rushes to us. With blessing.

And justice. Jesus. We praise the Lord. Because we are the people. Who have heard his
voice. We hear him inviting us. To praise him. We hear him speaking words.

Of grace. Over us. We hear him calling us. To serve him. As he blesses all people. And so
walk in his way.

Walk in all of his ways. Walk with your God. And join in his praise. As you hear his words
of love. Let him hear your words of praise.

And wonder. Come to the speaking Father. Come through Jesus. The living word of the
Father. Come in the power of the speaking spirit.

[25 : 33] Who announces Jesus. In you. And through you. Give him the glory. Great things. He has
spoken. And done. For you. And your salvation.

To God. Be the glory. Let's pray together. Father. We. We are humbled before you. We
give you praise and thanks.

For your wonders. For your love. For your grace. And your glory. We ask. That as we walk
in your way.

You would make us people of praise. People who in our lives glorify you. And make you
known. Be at work among us.

We ask it in Jesus name. Amen.