

"The Righteous One for the Unrighteous People"

Psalm 143

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Date: 26 July 2026

[0:00] I'm reading Psalm 135, 1-12, and 19-21. The Lord is above all gods.

Whatever the Lord pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all the depths. He it is who makes the clouds rise at the end of the earth, who makes lightning for the rain and brings forth the wind from his storehouses.

He it was who struck down the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and of beast, who in your midst of Egypt sent signs and wonders against Pharaoh and all his servants, who struck down many nations and killed mighty kings, Sion king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan, and gave their land as a heritage, a heritage to his people Israel.

In verse 19, O house of Israel, bless the Lord. O house of Aaron, bless the Lord. O house of Levi, bless the Lord. You who fear the Lord, bless the Lord.

Blessed be the Lord from Zion, for he who dwells in Jerusalem. Praise the Lord. This past week, I went on a walk with a friend of mine, just down the Trans-Canada Trail, just by the school, actually.

[1:41] It was a great walk. It was an even better talk. My friend talked about how his son, who is seven, said to his dad, Dad, I want to be rich.

I want to be really super rich. And my friend says, what does it mean to be rich? Oh, to have a lot of money. He's like, okay, and what's the money for?

So that I can be rich. And the conversation continued on like this, and my friend continued to ask his son, in good Socratic style, questions after question.

And eventually, he recognized that what his son really wanted wasn't oodles of cash. He wanted a trophy. He wanted to be recognized.

He wanted to be worthy. He wanted to be praised. My friend's a good dad. He wants his son to grow up to be an upright man and understand that money is a wonderful tool, but a terrible master.

[2:44] So, you know, it was, we had a good laugh at the absurdity of children. But here's the thing with children. They are incredibly enlightening because they see the world with a sobriety.

And they communicate needs with a clarity that sometimes we lack as adults. We want to seem upright and thereby can hide similar comments that my friend's son made.

We also have this desire to be praised and to be recognized, have trophies, to have worth, to maybe even be worshipped. So I'm not suggesting that all of us secretly are hoping that somebody would make for us a statue in the likeness of what we look like so that people can gather around and burn incense to and to drop down and worship.

But we have this desire to be recognized and celebrated by others. It is very much the impetus for many of our pursuits.

And this impetus gets both something very right and very wrong. We rightly recognize that praise is actually a key part of the human experience. But we wrongly make ourselves the object of that praise rather than point that praise to the Lord.

[4:20] And I would humbly suggest that this is the root of all of humanity's evils. So, we're going to walk towards this issue of praise and worship.

And we're going to ask how can we have proper worship and proper praise in our lives? And why is it a worthwhile pursuit? In fact, why is it the most worthwhile pursuit?

So we're into our summer series in the last section of the Psalter. We'll be reading starting this week, Psalm 135. And we won't cover all of the rest of the Psalms up to 150, but a good portion of them.

And we'll look at the topic of praise and worship this morning. And we'll ask some questions here. The first question, why we should worship? Why?

What's the point? Why should we worship? The second, how should we worship? And then finally, what happens when we, in fact, do worship? So if you have a Bible, you can turn with me to Psalm 135.

[5:23] It's a larger Psalm, so we'll probably move a bit quicker than we normally do. But look with me at verses 1, 2, 3. And this is what it says. Psalm 135, starting in verse 1.

Praise the Lord, praise the name of the Lord. Give praise, O servants of the Lord, who stand in the house of the Lord, in the courts of the house of our God. Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good. Sing to his name, for it is pleasant. Why praise God? Why sing to his name? Verse 3, what does it say here? Praise the Lord, for the Lord is good.

Sing to his name, for it is pleasant. Other translations say beautiful or lovely. Lovely. It may sound somewhat quaint to say we should praise the Lord because he is good and lovely, or good and pleasant.

Maybe a bit anticlimactic as well. Why not begin with God's incredible acts? The Bible, it's full of the incredible miracles or incredible acts that God performs to his people, performs in this world.

[6:33] Or maybe his benefits. But first and foremost, the psalmist here, he says, actually we should, before we do all of that, and it will come, we should praise God for who he is because he is worthy of praise.

He is good and he is pleasant. Normally, we judge something as good or bad in relation to something else. I can say a certain food is good not only because I enjoy its taste, but because compared with other foods that aren't very good for me, it's anything cooked banana.

Okay? Disgusting. This one is good. But it's good, but it's also good because it's not like that. All right? It's not like that nasty cooked banana.

The same goes for something pleasant. I'm enjoying a beautiful afternoon. The humidity is not bad. The mosquitoes aren't buzzing around me. I'm with friends. I have a cold beverage. This is a very pleasant, lovely afternoon.

But I, all of that is true, but I also say it's a pleasant afternoon because it's also in comparison with an unpleasant afternoon. Again, a muggy, nasty day, or can I talk about like minus 20 right now?

[7:52] We just got over it. But nevertheless, like minus 20 and we're not doing something fun outside. We're just homebound. You know, we compare something and we judge something deeming it good, of course, because it's good, but also in relation to what it is not.

So, the psalmist here is calling God good and pleasant, good and lovely, good and beautiful, but in relation to what? What could possibly compare, what could we possibly compare God to?

You see, the scriptures, it speaks of God as the maker of all things. Nothing that was made was made apart from God. He is the only being in all of creation that has ever existed that has not himself been created.

He is the uncreated one. When God made all things, he called them good and made humanity calling us very good, the very pinnacle of creation.

But even we are an unworthy comparison to God in Romans later on in the book, Paul will say, it's like a pot comparing itself to the potter.

[9:08] It's categorically different. We can't actually compare. So, even the very pinnacle of creation itself is a very feeble and futile comparison to God.

And yet, here we have the psalmist calling God good and pleasant. But again, in relation to what? This is a very important thing to consider for us.

God is completely self-referential. He is perfect and without need. He is incomparable. Okay? He is completely incomparable.

That means that when he created, he did so not because he was obliged to. He created not because he was compelled to.

So, in the end, he creates out of pure act because he willed it. He creates out of pure love because it is not contingent love.

[10:11] It's not a love that he has to show because somebody first showed him love. he creates out of perfect love and pure act. So, it is not something we can compare in any of creation to.

God is completely unique in and of himself. He is pleasant and lovely not because there is a comparison of something that is lovely and good but just because he is.

So, the question then is how can we understand God's goodness and pleasantness? Why then would the psalm include this in these opening verses in Psalm 135 if there is nothing in the world to

create to compare God to?

I think the short answer is simply that we cannot fully understand who God is. That's a key aspect of who God is. Is that he is unknowable in an exhaustive sense.

if we could somehow be exposed to the fullness of who God is the scriptures say we would be undone. I mean consider this if staring without special sunglasses at an eclipse will blind us okay don't try this at home it will blind you how much more with unveiled face to gaze upon the one who created that son we can't know the fullness of who God is yet even to talk of this is an act of creation because we are understanding the goodness of God his greatness to hopefully the maximum extent that our finite minds can possibly imagine so God is worthy of praise because he is simply put because he is and yet and yet

[12:08] God again completely uncompelled to do so reveals himself to us he expresses his goodness and pleasantness to humanity in an act again of sheer love and pure will because look at verse 4 what does it say for the Lord has chosen Jacob for himself Israel as his own possession he's chosen a people for himself Israel in Deuteronomy chapter 7 God will speak of why he chose Israel and he simply says not because you are great not because you are wonderful just because I chose you there was nothing in you that compelled me to choose you I chose you and so it is to all them that God chooses that God extends his grace and favor to he chooses because he delights to reveal himself to us the truly unknowable infinite God he expresses his love and will his goodness and pleasantness and loveliness beauty to finite and fallible people and he does so he does so just because this is who he is and what does he call us those that he calls to be his own the second part of verse four he calls

Israel his own possession which carries with it this idea of something that's deeply treasured something of high value he treasures us those that he reveals himself to why should we worship God because he is worthy to be worshipped in and of himself if this is who God is then I guess the next question would be how are we to express our love and affection to him in response to his goodness and loveliness and this brings us to our second point how we should worship and there's two ways that the psalmist is going to draw our attention to look with me at verses five to seven and we'll find out this first way this is what it says for I know that the Lord is great and that our Lord is above all gods whatever the Lord pleases he does in heaven and on earth and the seas and all deeps he it is who makes the clouds rise at the ends of the earth who makes lightnings for the rain and brings forth the wind from his storehouses the first way we ought to worship

God is to remember and embrace the truth that God is the creator of all things now I alluded to this in the previous point but we need to think about these things and meditate upon it God created everything not out of a storehouse of existing!

raw materials but out of nothing! in fact the opening chapters of Genesis speak of him speaking he speaks creation and there it is I mean it really is you meditate upon this and it does not compute it's very hard to grasp and yet the psalmist is saying listen meditate upon this think about this that God is the one who creates out of nothing and again he creates not because he is compelled to create because it is his very will to create and he creates out of love why because the triune God Father Son and Holy Spirit is has always existed and it is the very source of love itself so that love always has an object that it places itself on so what do I mean God loves the Son God the Father doesn't just love God the Father God the Father loves God the Son God the

Son loves God the Father and the Holy Spirit is described as the very power and expression of that love amongst the Godhead and then when God creates what does he do he extends that love into creation so God is the creator of all things creating out of nothing creating uncompelled creating out of love the psalmist is drawing our attention to this reality and not only that but this means that the the Lord is master over everything that there is no part of the ocean that is by and large unexplored okay that he doesn't know about no part of the cosmos the galaxy that he hasn't considered or surprised him he made it all considering all of this should be something that helps us to have a bigger vision of this God so we recognize who he is if you guys followed the

[16:55] Artemis mission when the astronauts returned Reed Wiseman one of the four astronauts himself a self-confessed not really a religious guy he's getting interviewed just about a week after they landed and he said he had seeing outer space going around the moon it shook him and he didn't have the ability to contemplate it and when they came back to earth and they were on a navy vessel the very unreligious man asked for a chaplain to come in and the chaplain came in and he saw the cross lapel pin and he said he started to cry he would say quote humanity has not yet

evolved enough to comprehend what we just experienced I mean I was telling Christine just this morning you couldn't pay me to go to the moon

I love terra firma I love this earth I don't like flying but if I could somehow see what they saw I wouldn't come back and puff up myself thinking how grand I was nobody that goes to Canmore or visit the Rockies whatever you know mountain traversing climbing spending a day gets up there and thinks man I am so fantastic they're awestruck at what they see this is the God we serve we consider that he has created all things so that whether you are somebody inside or outside the Christian faith whether you're struggling with doubt you feel your faith is rock solid the imperative is still the same meditate upon God as creator think about the vastness of this created world and think about how he spoke it into existence the

Lord who is the creator of all things worthy of our praise he is the one we are to worship but the psalmist continues because it's not just that hey you need to remember God as a creator linked to God being the creator is also God the redeemer look with me at verses 8 to 14 he it was who struck down the firstborn of Egypt both of man and of beast who in your midst o Egypt sent signs and wonders against Pharaoh and all his servants who struck down many nations and killed many kings Sihon king of the Amorites and Og king of Bashan and all the kingdoms of Canaan and gave their land as a heritage a heritage to his people Israel your name O Lord endures forever your renown O Lord throughout all the ages for the Lord will vindicate his people and have compassion on his servants God's redemptive acts follow from his power in creation he is the strongest force in the universe therefore anything that opposes him or his people he will oppose himself the psalmist points out two acts of redemption towards the people of

Israel the first is the exodus if you are familiar with the Bible or if you watch the prince of Egypt it's a story where Israel is 400 years a slave not 12 years a slave 400 years a slave and what does God do he hears their cry he rescues them out of Egypt there's 10 plagues and Egypt is struck down it culminates with them going through the Red Sea and the Red Sea crashing down defeating Pharaoh and his army forever it is such an important story to understand the entire biblical story itself what is the point of drawing our attention to this the Lord takes very seriously the redemption of his people freedom is something that he is very much in favor of God who sees and hears his people oppressed in a very very inhospitable way he will show them hospitality by rescuing them and redeeming them and bringing them into a land flowing with milk and honey a land that he promised to their forefathers

Abraham a land where they can till the field and enjoy the fruit of their labor not somebody else's field for somebody else's table but for their own but then he uses another the psalmist then uses another example to speak of God's redemption and this redemption has to do with that land and how as Israel came out of the desert they got to the land of Canaan which is now the land of Israel and dispossessed it from the nations that existed here but here's the thing this is what it says God verse 10 who struck down many nations and killed many kings Sihon king of the Amorites Og king of Bashan and all the kingdoms of Canaan and gave their land as a heritage a heritage to his people Israel for us maybe this is a bit of a difficult thing to celebrate okay the people today that wish for the complete annihilation of a people group they are they're not people to to worship okay they're not people to hold up in esteem

[22 : 46] I would push back on anybody who said listen we need to just have a day celebrating the Ayatollahs or Boko Haram in northern Nigeria or any of the communist states that still push hard against freedom and oppress their people we don't celebrate those people here in Canada I'll just say this and by the way if anybody wants to talk to me about this afterwards I'm not going to go into a great deal of apologetics around this but just to say that God is not a genocidal God sometimes the surface reading can seem that that God is about wiping out entire nations at a very surface level reading but I'll just say to you without proving it right now but again come up to me afterwards and we'll talk that God is not a genocidal God he's a God of justice and love and mercy nevertheless what we see here is that God is seeing the enemies of

God's people the injustice that's in the land and he is saying to them listen you've lost the right to this land my people are the people that have been promised this and what God does when he dispossesses the land of Canaan is that he remembers his promise to Abraham and he gives the land that was promised to them which is to say that he brings them into a place of peace into a place of love into a place that is their own a place where oppression ought not to flourish and where slavery should be an abomination again we find that God is worthy of our praise and worship for he

communicates his love and intention to bless through his good and lovely acts of redemption so we know why we should worship God because he is God and we know how to worship him thinking and dwelling and praising him for creation and his redemption and then the question is what will happen to us as we worship will it change us and if so how will it change us there's two ways that the psalmist will draw our attention to read with me verses 15 to 18 15 to 18 the idols of the nations are silver and gold the work of human hands they have mouths but do not speak they have eyes but do not see they have ears but do not hear nor is there any breath in their mouths those who make them become like them so do all who trust in them the first way that worship will change us is it is the means by which God fashions us to be like him now as we begin to look at this section it's very clear this is an indictment on false gods if you remember verses 5 to 7 God the creator of heaven and earth it's

I guess if you have to compare it to God to something it is the false gods of whatever age that we find ourselves in they are utterly useless they are futile they're actually not gods at all but in this case we seem to find something very clarifying about this section verses 15 to 18 about what is and is not God the psalmist he holds up the triune God utterly different from and greater than any so-called gods of the nation the truth of the one true God will come always into conflict with false gods they will be seen as what they truly are as nothing that the idols we fashion and look for look to for redemption and salvation they will fall utterly short okay so as we come into contact with true worship we will find that our own idols that we have that we have crafted they are nothing we ought to turn away from them you know in our attempts to find purpose and praise we worship things that promise we give to things and worship things that promise what we desire always we find that they over promise and to huge amounts under deliver they never deliver in fact and it's not just that they never deliver what they promise is that they do the opposite of what we want they don't make us humans that have greater joy and greater capacity to love they don't make us more generous because it is an act of kindness to show generosity instead they force us to look in at ourselves and we don't become less human okay but they do dehumanize us to a degree in fact verse 18 says something very remarkable those who make them

I would put forward to those who worship them become like them so do all who trust in them so we see a bit of a principle here we become what we worship we become what we worship so it makes sense then that as we worship the one true God we turn from false idols false hopes false trusts and we turn towards the one true God we will become like him you know our propensity is to is to seek worship for ourself and to craft something in our image but God says no no no worship me and I'll craft you into my image I will help you to live out godly goodness and godly pleasantness or beauty or loveliness how God is described in those opening three verses that he will fashion us he is the potter we are the clay it says in scripture when we turn to

God in worship that clay becomes awfully soft and he begins to fashion and to sculpt and to make us like him we desire to bless others because there is great joy in blessing not because we will get kudos we will want to see others succeed and take joy in it we will extend love okay and learn to extend it to people that are unlovely because we can also for being honest with ourselves and that's another quality it'll help us to be honest that we at times can be unlovely people but all of a sudden as we turn to worship true worship we will start to have the mind of God not become God but his residue so to speak will rub off on us it's a wonderful thing and this fashioning will also lead to gladness look with me at verses 19 20 and 21 oh house of

[30 : 16] Israel bless the Lord oh house of Aaron bless the Lord oh house of Levi bless the Lord you who fear the Lord bless the Lord blessed be the Lord from Zion he who dwells in Jerusalem praise the Lord you see the heart that is glad and happy and takes joy in who God is again remember is fashioned after God's own heart and what is God's own heart we saw I mentioned a bit of this when I talked about creation it's a heart of love that seeks to include and to push love to every aspect of the created order that love is constantly seeking out an object to love and when we know the love of God we want to extend that love and friends basically it boils down to this is evangelism 101 okay evangelism 101 isn't share the gospel or else or lead somebody to Christ notch in the belt it is behold the uncreated creator who redeems heaven and earth who is goodness who is loveliness behold him and then proclaim his goodness okay proclaim his goodness consider this again you know the opening of 135 it is praising

God praise the Lord praise God praise the Lord it ends the same way except the praising is to the Lord but it is also out extended to the world around praise the name of the Lord verse!

20 you who fear the Lord bless the Lord blessed are blessed be the Lord from Zion he who dwells in Jerusalem praise the Lord is it a call to worship and it's not to say that every moment we're going to have this excitement and zeal but when we truly meditate and consider who this God is that we are worshipping how he has rescued us not from a physical type of slavery but a slavery of our heart a slavery of our mind a slavery that will pour into eternity he has rescued us and we truly can grasp this again by his help he needs to help us then the reality the result the response will be what thank you God praise your name it becomes the very thing by which your life revolves around you will orbit God and how will you do that through praising him and proclaiming his goodness

I'll close with this John Calvin 500 years ago was spot on when he said the human heart is an idol factory we want to make God in our image but like I said God wants to make us in his image how does he do this by becoming like us interestingly Jesus Christ fully man fully God in the person of Jesus God takes into himself humanity and lives a perfect life worships the father completely perfectly and completely without blemish he is 100% righteous in everything he does 100% good and lovely in everything he does he fulfills all the requirements of love so much so that to the end he dies sacrificially so that in him

God what does he do he recreates humanity he redeems us to himself he rescues us from slavery to sin and death he brings us to this ultimate promised land the eternal Jerusalem where our worth is never in question and our praise is properly directed what if going back to my friend his very insightful son what if the key to belonging and value and worth is to praise the one who is of infinite value and worth and who says to those who trust in him that you are my treasured possessions this is why the Lord is the only one worthy of praise friends will you worship him with me this morning will you worship him as you go home as you as you live this life will you be reminded of how good and gracious he is this creator

[34 : 56] God who created it of love who redeems because he desires to bless