

Psalm 145

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Preacher: Rev. Chris Ley

[0:00] Let's pray together as we stand. Father, you have spoken to us in your word, and I pray now as we hear your word, that we would see in you your greatness, your goodness, and your faithfulness, and we would extend our praise.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. All right, you can take a seat, and as you take a seat, it'd be good to grab the Bible that's right in front of you. It's either black or blue, and flip back to page 524. There aren't enough Bibles for people here, which means you need to get to know the person next to you, which is just fine. If you've memorized Psalm 145, you don't need to open your Bible, but otherwise you do. This is the final psalm we're looking at this summer, prayer, and it is a prayer that is full of praise. This morning's about praise.

Praise is the outward public expression of love and adoration towards something or someone that is admirable. And humans are hardwired to praise. When we see or discover something that's great, we can't help ourselves but burst into praise.

So during the World Cup, it could have been a player who did this unbelievable move, and you're sitting on your couch thousands of miles away, and you praise them. Oh my goodness, I've never seen that before. It could be a sunset over the Pacific Ocean. You just have to stand there and go, wow. It could be a mountain range. It could be a majestic animal. It could be a work of art.

When we discover something beautiful, something exceptional, something that takes our breath away, our immediate, innate instinct is to say, wow, look at that. All of us worship.

[2:12] All of us are full of praise. And I wonder, as you think back on your summer, what have you been praising? My family just came back from a 4,000 kilometer road trip. A massive loop south to Lake Tahoe, then down to San Francisco, and then back up the West Coast. And on the drive, we saw Crater Lake, we saw 2,000-year-old redwoods. We watched a sunset on top of this colossal boulder that had fallen into the ocean off the California coast. We saw the Golden Gate Bridge. We saw a 200-meter tall waterfall. We saw black bears. We saw horses galloping on an Oregon beach at sunset.

We even watched a forest fire burn down a mountainside toward our highway in Nevada. The trip was full of praise, full of us saying, wow, look at that. It was also full of prayers.

Thank you, God, for creating this for us to enjoy. And there's something deeply, deeply human about that. We are creatures who cannot simply enjoy something wonderful. We're created to praise.

Psalm 145 is a song of praise. It's a personal testimony ascribed to King David as he reflects on God's greatness and overflows in praise. And as the prayer unfolds, this ancient song invites everyone listening to join in and to praise God. The point is praise.

The psalm gives us three reasons why each of us should praise God. Let's begin with the first. Look at verses 1 and 2. It begins, I will extol you, my God and my King. I will bless your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever. And now in verse 3, we're given an explanation for why God deserves praise. Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised and his greatness is unsearchable. So the first reason we praise God is because God is great.

[4:45] C.S. Lewis initially struggled with this biblical command to constantly praise God. To him, it kind of made God seem needy, like he's demanding unending worship from us. But Lewis came to understand that praise is simply the natural result of love and delight. He wrote, quote, I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment. Our delight is incomplete till it is expressed. You ever seen something amazing and had no one around you to tell? That's what he's writing about. Praise does not make God greater.

He's already infinitely great. What praise does is it enlarges our vision of him. Praise trains our eyes to see God. So as we praise, our circumstances may not change. Our problems don't necessarily go away.

But praise lifts our eyes from ourselves and fixes them on the God who is greater. And that makes our problems grow smaller. So the more we praise God for his greatness, the more we see his greatness. The more we praise God for his goodness, the more we will know his goodness. This is what David is doing in the psalm. He's not making God greater by praising him. He is seeing more clearly the greatness that is already there. But what makes God great? What makes our God unique in his greatness? Doesn't every religion say their God is great? The key is found in the name God has given in verse 3. It says, great is the Lord. Notice that Lord is capitalized in the Bible in front of you.

In the original Hebrew, the word here is not Lord. It's God's name, Yahweh. This is the personal covenant name. The name that God has given when he revealed himself to Moses and saved his people from slavery.

[7:12] David uses God's personal name 10 times in this psalm. He is reminding us constantly who God is. This is not a God who is some distant deity who's impersonal, doesn't care about you.

He's a God who has made himself known, revealed himself, and binds himself to his people in covenant love. I've heard of no other God who loves as our God does. And that love is fulfilled perfectly in Jesus Christ. God himself has come close to us in the person of his son, Jesus. Jesus came to us to seek and save the lost. And he gave his life to save ours and make a way for us to dwell with God forever.

This is what reveals the greatness of God. He is a personal God, a God who comes close. The second reason God is worthy of praise is in verses 8 and 9. It says the Lord, Yahweh, is gracious. He's merciful. He's slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

The Lord is good to all. And his mercy is over all that he has made. So not only is God great, secondly, God is also good.

May sound like the same thing, but you can be great without being good. A tyrant can be powerful. A storm can be awesome.

[8:57] We have seen this week, a flood can be great. But greatness does not necessarily mean goodness. We're told here that God is great and God is good.

The God of the Bible is not vindictive. He is not quick-tempered. He's not eager to condemn, but gracious and merciful. In fact, the God of the Bible is none of the things that people who don't know him personally often accuse him of. Rather, he abounds, he overflows in steadfast love.

That word, steadfast love, in Hebrew, hesed, is one of the central descriptions of God's character in the Old Testament. It means loyal, steadfast, covenant love.

And God doesn't just show this love to his people. Look again at verse 9. It says, The Lord is good to all. He has compassion on all that he has made.

God's desire is to bring his goodness and his blessing and his mercy to everyone, not just to the people who believe in him. Jesus reminds us that God causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good.

[10:17] And that means that every meal, every friendship, every happy moment, every beautiful view, every act of kindness, every breath, every heartbeat is evidence of God's goodness to all.

God's goodness is not a private possession of the church. It's poured out over the whole world. So that's the second explanation for why we praise God.

We praise God because God is good. The psalm invites us to pass on the knowledge of God's goodness and greatness to those who come after us. Look at verses 4 and 7, 4 to 7.

It says, One generation shall commend your works to another and shall declare your mighty acts.

On the glorious splendor of your majesty and on your wondrous works I will meditate.

They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds and I will declare your greatness. They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.

[11:21] I was in the Sunday school of this church starting about 35 years ago. And my earliest memories of St. John's were the nursery room in the old building.

Some of you may remember the nursery had this huge wooden playhouse. It was really cool. At four years old, it really sold me on this place.

And from that point in the St. John's nursery, what I know about God, I know because people older than me in this church, some of you in the room right now, taught me.

You commended God's works to me. You declared his mighty acts. You shared the glorious splendor of his majesty. You invited me to meditate on his wondrous works.

And now I get to pass on this knowledge I receive from you to my own children and to their generation. One of the great strengths of this specific church is the relationships we have between generations.

[12 : 29] For 101 years, older Christians have loved and poured into younger generations here. Keep doing this.

Invest in our young people. Give them your time. Share your wisdom. And model to them faithfulness. If you're a parent, or you're a grandparent, or you're someone who wishes you were, become a spiritual father or mother by investing in our young people.

Especially if you're a parent who wishes your children would come to church with you. Invest in the children who are here. Adopt them spiritually. Pass on your faith to the next generation that God has entrusted to us.

Our children's ministry is short of teachers right now. Especially for the youngest ages. That's why they're in that room today. Our youth ministry needs volunteers too.

Especially to help lead Friday night Bible studies. Where there are at least 50 young people who gather in this building to learn of God's mighty works. We also lead a young adult Bible study that meets on Tuesday nights.

[13 : 44] It could use some more leaders. Perhaps God is inviting you today to invest in our young people. To speak to them about God's mighty deeds.

To pour out the fame of God's abundant goodness. To sing aloud of his righteousness. So pray about it. Pray that the Lord of the harvest will send laborers.

And perhaps he may send you. So far we looked at two reasons why God is worthy of praise. God is great. And God is good.

And now here's the final one. Listen to the second half of verse 13. Onwards to verse 20. The Lord is faithful in all his words.

And kind in all his works. The Lord upholds all who are falling. He raises up all who are bowed down. The eyes of all look to you.

[14 : 44] And you give them their food in due season. You open your hand. You satisfy the desire of every living thing. The Lord is righteous in all his ways.

And kind in all his works. The Lord is near to all who call on him. And to all who call on him in truth. He fulfills the desire of those who fear him.

He also hears their cry and saves them. The Lord preserves all who love him. But all the wicked he will destroy. Did you catch at the beginning of verse 13.

The third reason why God is worthy of our worship. It said God is worthy of our praise. Because God is faithful. God is unwaveringly committed to his people.

Though we constantly fail him. He will never fail us. The God who was before the beginning. And after the end. Is faithful to every promise he ever makes.

[15 : 50] And notice in the psalm. What God's faithfulness looks like. He upholds those who are falling. He raises those who are bowed down. He provides for those who are in need.

He draws near to those who call on him. Maybe that's you this morning. Falling. Head bowed low. Hungry. In need.

This psalm assures us. That God is faithful. He has not forgotten you. And he is not ignoring your pain. Listen again.

Verse 17. The Lord is righteous in all his ways. Kind in all his works. He is near to all who call on him. And to all who call on him in truth. He fulfills the desire of those who fear him.

He also hears their cry and saves them. The Lord preserves all who love him. But the wicked. He will destroy. God will not quit on you. He does not quit on humanity.

[16 : 52] Humanity of course quit on God. We learned last month as we read Genesis 3. Humanity turned from God. And continually every day all of us. Attempt to replace God with ourselves.

This is called sin. Sin separates us from God. And his goodness. Sin separates us from God. But despite our sin. God does not give up on his promise to save.

Because God is faithful. So we've seen that God is great. God is good. And God is faithful. But I have one more question before we finish.

Where's the proof? Where do we see today in your life that God is really good and great and faithful? If you look at verses 10 to 12, you see that the psalm points us to the mighty works of God and the glory of his kingdom.

And those mighty works of God, the glory of his kingdom, reaches its climax in Jesus Christ, who is God's chosen king.

[18:02] The life, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus are the ultimate display of God's character. In Jesus, we see how far God will go to save his people and uphold his promises.

God loves us so much that he gave his only son to save us. And now Jesus reigns over all. He is the king of kings and lord of lords.

His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. His dominion endures through all generations. So we know that God is great, God is good, and God is faithful. Because we see those things perfectly revealed in Jesus Christ.

And knowing Jesus further empowers us now to praise God. That's the heart of Psalm 145. Praise God because he is great, because he is good, and because he is faithful.

So in the last minute, as the fall is right before us, and summer is over, how should we respond? At our annual general meeting in March this year, our rector gave us a charge for this year.

[19:22] And you probably don't remember, but the charge was from Psalm 145. And Jordan taught us that there are three movements in the psalm. Praise lifted up.

Praise passed down. Praise spread out. This is what we want this church to be on about this year. We want to be a place where we lift up praise to God, because he is great and good and faithful. We want to be a place that passes that praise down to future generations. And we want to be a church that spreads our praise out to our neighbors and our city, so that more and more people may come to know God.

This God who is great and good and faithful. Praise lifted up. Praise passed down. Praise spread out. That's our charge for this year.

That's the heartbeat of Psalm 145. Praise be to God.