

Abundant Goodness

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[0 : 00] Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we ask that you would open our eyes, that we would see wonderful things in your word tonight.

We ask that you would satisfy our hearts with your abundant goodness. And we ask, oh Lord, that you would open our lips, that our mouths may proclaim your praise.

And we ask these things through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. You may be seated. I wish Fleur was up here. I would like to tell her that she did a great job.

If I were to summarize Psalm 145 in one sentence, it would be this. The King's abundant goodness embraces all creation. The King's abundant goodness embraces all creation.

I'm going to spend most of my time up here unpacking that one sentence. But before we do, I want to talk about Psalm 145 a little bit, introductory-wise.

[1 : 09] Psalm 145 is a song of David, and it's the last song that's directly attributed to David's actual name. The first psalm in the book of Psalms was Psalm 3, and it was a lament psalm.

David was crying out in lament. And here in Psalm 145, and here in Psalm 145, David is crying out in praise. It's as if by the time David gets to the end of his life, which has been full of many sins, many hardships, and many enemies, and many, many reasons to lament, he is so overwhelmed by God's goodness that has seen him through every moment that he cannot help but cry out in praise. So David sings in praise. And if you were to read this poem, this song in Hebrew, you would recognize something very stylistic about it right away, that every verse begins with a new letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

So it is literally the ABCs of praise. David is grasping for every single resource of the human language that he knows to express the praise that he feels has to be expressed to God for his great goodness.

The king's abundant goodness embraces all creation. Now I must say that I've been very excited to share this psalm with you this morning.

[2 : 33] This is one of my personal favorite psalms. It has been for me for quite some time. When I was 19 years old, I sensed God leading me to go into pastoral ministry. And I asked my pastor what I should do, and he's like, well, you gotta study theology.

That's first things first. So I signed up for my first systematic theology course. And this course was taught by a guy named Dr. Eric Tonnis, who was an ex-football player turned theologian.

So you can imagine how interesting that course was. He taught it a bit like a football coach. And on the first day of class, the first thing he tells us are the two assignments that we have to do within the next two weeks.

The first assignment, we have to memorize the first half of Psalm 145. So that was my first experience of theology. Memorize first half of Psalm 145.

And I remember by that time, I would go over and over and over hundreds of times, and I'd always get caught up on verse three. Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised.

[3 : 36] And his greatness is unsearchable. It was like I was being told at the very beginning of my studies, you will never master this subject. You'll never master it.

God's greatness is too deep and his goodness too immense. So the journey you're about to embark on is an everlasting journey of discovery and delight. So I memorized away.

And the second assignment he gave us was to read a little book by a man named A.W. Tozer. A little book called *The Knowledge of the Holy*.

Now this little book absolutely blew my categories. I mean seriously, I could only handle one chapter a day because it was so astounding. And every chapter is only four to six pages.

And the first day, I only, I didn't get past the first sentence. Listen to what the first sentence says. Tozer begins his whole book this way. One more time.

[4 : 45] What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. What we say with, what comes out of our mouths is absolutely important.

What we do with our time and our monies, our money and our gifts are absolutely important. How we relate to people absolutely important. But above all else, what comes to our minds when we think of the living God is the most important thing about us.

Indeed, because what comes into our minds when we think about God is what shapes every other aspect of our lives. Old Testament regent scholar Ian Proven wrote this in his most recent book. When we forget who God truly is, the biblical authors propose, it is but a short step from forgetting who we are, who our neighbor is, and what the world is.

All right knowledge, and I would even say all right living, depends on right knowledge and worship of the living God. What comes to our minds when we think about God determines what we will love, what we will do, what we will say, and how we will relate.

[5 : 58] So no wonder A.W. Tozer begins his book on theology by saying what comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. Now surprisingly, no one understands this better than Satan himself.

Satan's great game plan throughout all of history has been to get human beings to believe that God is not good and therefore God should not be trusted. Flip back to Genesis chapter 3 with me for a second.

Genesis chapter 3. The crafty serpent launches his attack on the first human beings by distorting their understanding of who God is.

Look at verse 1. He begins with a deceptive question. Did God really say you shall not eat of any tree in the garden? I mean, I realize the serpent was actually the first theologian in the Bible.

Things didn't get off to a very good start. But God didn't actually say that, did he? Look back at Genesis chapter 2 verses 16 to 17. God said, you may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge and good and evil you shall not eat for in that day that you eat of it you will surely die.

[7 : 22] So what does God say? He says, you can eat of everything except for this one and you can't eat of this one because when you eat of this one it's going to be bad for you and you're going to die. But what does the serpent do in Genesis 3?

He twists God's words to make it seem like God is a suspect character. It says, if the serpent is saying to the humans whispering in their ear, God is not really good, is he?

God is not really generous. God does not really want you to flourish. In fact, it actually seems like he's holding out on you. It seems like you do a whole lot better on your own so why don't you just take things into your own hands quite literally.

And so the primary temptation of Genesis 3 and I would argue all throughout the Bible and all throughout our lives is to believe that God is not good and God is not generous.

And once human beings believe that, everything goes downhill. If God is not good, then he shouldn't be trusted. And if he can't be trusted, then we should most definitely take things into our own hands.

[8 : 28] And the second humanity starts to take things into their own hands, the very fabric of our lives begins to unravel. What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.

So we desperately need Psalm 145. Because what Psalm 145 does is it starts to recalibrate our minds and what we actually think and believe about God.

And as it does that, it recalibrates the whole orientation of our lives. Psalm 145 paints a very different picture of who God is. Whereas the serpent said God is not good and God is not generous, Psalm 145 says God is good and he is abundantly so.

Because the king's abundant goodness embraces every square inch of creation. First, the king. Notice where David begins, verse 1. I will extol you, my God and king, and I will bless your name forever and ever. In the original, it literally reads, I will extol you, my God, the king.

[9 : 40] There's no and, but a definite article. My God, the king. Now, that is to say, David recognizes that this is my God. This is his personal God.

But this is not simply his personal deity. God is intimately related to him, but God is much more than his personal God. God is the king.

God is the king of the whole world, he says. Look at verses 10 to 13. All your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord, and all your saints shall bless you.

They shall speak of the power of your kingdom and tell of your, the glory of your kingdom and tell of your power to make known to the children of man your mighty deeds and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.

Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and your dominion endures through all generations.

Because David's God is the king of the whole world, then David's God can extend his abundant goodness to the whole world.

[10:43] The king's blessings aren't just for David. They're for all people. So that leads us to the second point. The king's abundant goodness. His abundant goodness.

Look at verses 8 and 9. This is the clearest description of God's abundant goodness. The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

The Lord is good to all and his mercy is over all that he has made. This description of the king's abundant goodness is not David simply having kind of an arbitrary personal musing.

It's not taken from his personal diary. Actually, this is a direct quote from Exodus chapter 34. God himself revealed himself to be this sort of God in Exodus chapter 34, verse 6.

Let me give you a bit of the context. Israel had just built a golden calf. They had just been delivered from Egypt. They had just built a golden calf and they were bowing down and worshiping it, thus rejecting God's saving goodness.

[11:54] And in the aftermath of that big kerfuffle, Moses asks God quite a daring question. He says, God, please show me your glory. Even after all this.

And God responds by saying this. He says, I will make all my goodness, note that word, my goodness, pass before you and I will proclaim before you my name, the Lord.

And then in Exodus chapter 34, verse 6, God does exactly what he says he will do. He makes his glory pass before Moses and he proclaims his goodness and he says, the Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

This statement of God's goodness became so phenomenal that it became a major creed throughout the Old Testament. It's repeated throughout the Old Testament about nine or ten different times.

It's actually even used in the Gospel of John. Many of these aspects of God's character are used and applied to Jesus Christ as if to say that this description describes the very essence of God's character.

[13:07] So it's worth us taking the time to look at it. The Lord is gracious, he says first, meaning that the Lord is determined to bless sinners.

The Lord is gracious, meaning he is determined to bless sinners. sinners. Friends, that's why you have a Bible in your hands that is over a thousand pages long. God is so determined to bless sinners who are attacked by evil from the outside and attacked by evil from the inside that we have over a thousand pages of history of God being determined to bless sinners.

In fact, the Apostle Paul was so astounded by this that in his book to the Ephesians he starts by saying, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

Because he knows that the Lord is gracious, meaning he is determined to bless sinners. Second, the Lord is merciful, it says. Meaning, he has compassion on those who are broken.

The Hebrew word for mercy is often translated elsewhere, a lot of other places in the Old Testament as compassionate. God feels compassion for those who are broken.

[14:29] And nothing depicts this better than the parable of the prodigal son in Luke chapter 15.

You know the story. The son asks for the father's inheritance thereby shaming his father and basically treating him as if he was dead.

In the ancient world you don't get your inheritance until your father dies. So to ask for it early is to say, Father, you're as good as dead to me and to shame him. The father gives the son his portion of the inheritance and the son gladly leaves home.

He goes into a far country where he squanders his inheritance until eventually he's left destitute. And in his great desperation the son figures I'm going to die here.

So he swallows the little pride he may have left and decides to go back home and beg his father for mercy. And as Jesus tells the story right here is where the major twist comes in.

This is completely unexpected in the ancient world. Jesus says while the son was still a long way off his father saw him and felt compassion and he ran and he embraced him and he kissed him.

[15 : 35] The father shames himself. A father's never supposed to do that in order to show his son mercy who shamed him earlier. Brothers and sisters God is merciful and some of you are a long way off just like the prodigal son.

You have indulged in sin and it's left you destitute. At least I hope you know it's left you destitute. You are desperate and in need and you may be a long way off but the reality is that God sees you and he's merciful and he feels compassion for you and if you would humble yourself before him he would love to run and embrace you because the Lord is merciful and he loves to have compassion on those who are broken.

Next, the Lord is slow to anger meaning he is patient with rebellious people. Oh, thank the Lord for that. He is patient with rebellious people like me.

He gives them time to repent and turn to him. Charles Spurgeon put it this way. A 19th century preacher. God is greatly patient and he's anxious that the sinner may live.

He's anxious that the sinner may live. And some of you here tonight believe that God is quick to anger. That God's looking for any reason to condemn you.

[17 : 11] And when you believe this about yourself it's just a short step for you to start believing that about other people. And so when you're critical of yourself you start to be critical of other people. And so not only do you condemn yourself but you judge and condemn other people.

And what you need to know tonight is that the Lord is slow to anger. He's not against you. He's for you. And he's not against your neighbor. He's for your neighbor. Because he is greatly patient and anxious that the sinner may live.

And the Bible character that had the toughest time learning this lesson was actually Jonah. Jonah had to learn this lesson the hard way. God wanted Jonah to go preach to the city of Nineveh.

A bunch of pagan sinners thought Jonah. So Jonah didn't want to go. So God let Jonah spend a few days in a fish to be carried to his destination and basically forced him to go to Nineveh.

So Jonah begrudgingly goes to Nineveh. He preaches the message God wants him to preach and all of a sudden thousands in the city repent and turn to God including their leader the king.

[18 : 18] Go figure. And Jonah was not happy. He was absolutely furious. Jonah in his anger in Jonah chapter 4 verse 2 cries out to God and says God I'm angry because I knew that you are a gracious and merciful God.

Slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. Jonah could not believe that God would want to be slow to anger with rebellious sinners and he was so angered by the fact that God is slow to anger. Do you see the irony? But God is slow to anger because he wants to give rebellious sinners time to repent. Brothers and sisters if that's you tonight would you repent?

God's patience is his kindness towards you. Next the Lord is abounding in steadfast love meaning he is relentlessly faithful to those who are unfaithful.

The word used here is chesed. This is the word used most often in the Old Testament of God's character. You've heard it before. Chesed is what causes God to never forsake his bride even when his bride commits adultery.

[19 : 34] Chesed is what causes God to seek and save the lost sheep even when the lost sheep continually wander. Chesed is what causes God to become a man even in the person Jesus Christ and die for humanity's sins even while people insist on being his enemies.

Chesed is what causes God to never leave his creation alone until sin and death and suffering is finally eradicated and the knowledge of the glory of God once again covers the whole face of the earth.

The Lord is abounding in this chesed and no doubt there's many of you here tonight who need to hear that. Maybe you've been deeply unfaithful to God in your life.

Maybe even recently you've decided that you want to take your own life into your own hands and you've indulged in sinful desires and you've made everything about you and you've squandered all the good gifts that God has given you.

Maybe you're wondering if God wants anything to do with you now and the answer is a resounding yes. Yes he does. It's exactly. It's exactly what he wants.

[20 : 47] He is abounding in steadfast love which means he is relentlessly faithful to those who are unfaithful and he wants everything to do with you if you would come to him. The Lord is gracious and merciful says verse 8 slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

This is the king's goodness. His abundant goodness and in fact it is so abundant that he goes on in verse 9 to say the Lord is good to all and his mercy is over all that he has made.

And that leads us to our final point. The king's abundant goodness embraces all creation. All creation. We see this fleshed out for us in verses 14 to 20.

And I love verses 14 to 20 because it doesn't leave God's goodness as just airy-fairy abstract. David describes how God's goodness is experienced on the ground. How it's experienced in the concrete realities of our lives.

Look at verse 14. The king's abundant goodness embraces all who are burdened. David says the Lord upholds all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down.

[21 : 59] I'm deeply aware that when I stand up here and talk about God's goodness to you I'm in deep danger of it sounding extremely trite and ringing extremely hollow in your ears.

We speak of God's goodness not to belittle the genuine pain and suffering that we are experiencing in this life. That's why I love this verse.

Because it says that we don't have to turn a blind eye to suffering and evil in order to speak of God's goodness because God's goodness embraces people who are right in the midst of suffering. It embraces those who are hurting and afflicted and oppressed. That is to say God's goodness gets in the trenches. Notice. Note the imagery of verse 14. It describes those who cannot stand up under the weight of their burdens.

They're falling and they're bowed down. And I know there are many of you who could identify with this or maybe you know people who can identify with this right now. Maybe you feel the burden of a broken relationship.

[23 : 06] Maybe a marriage is tearing at the seams. Or you feel the burden of a struggling child. Maybe you feel the burden of a hurting friend or a dying relative.

Maybe you feel the burden of a doubting mind or a depressed spirit. Maybe you feel the burden of past sins or present temptations or future uncertainties.

According to verse 14, the king's abundant goodness embraces you right in that place. And sometimes we don't know how it embraces us. Sometimes we can't feel the fact that it's embracing us. Sometimes the darkness does seem a whole lot more intense than the light.

And yet we are told it is the Lord who holds up those who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down. Second, the king's abundant goodness embraces all who are hungry.

Look at verses 15 and 16. Before I read them, I want to say a side note. David is not meditating on poverty and starvation in these verses. He's just meditating upon the fact that God supplies a whole lot of food for a whole lot of creatures.

[24 : 23] Look at verses 15 to 16. The eyes of all look to you and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand and you satisfy the desire of every living thing.

Note those last three words. Every living thing. This means plants and animals and humans. God gives all creatures the food they need.

All creatures. So every time the rain falls, which it does a lot here from the sky, and then every time we have a day like today where the sun pierces the clouds and plants have what they need to grow and flourish, God is opening his hand.

Every time those little seeds start to germinate and then they grow into plants that bear fruit and veggies so that animals and humans can eat them, God is opening his hand.

And every time we go to the grocery store to buy some meat and milk and produce and flour and oil and eggs and herbs, God is opening his hand. And every time you or I sit down at a table alone or with somebody else and we have a plate of food before us, God is opening his hands.

[25 : 39] That is to say that the king's abundant goodness embraces every aspect of our lives. From the farmer's fields to the dinner table, from the smallest insect to the largest elephant in Africa, from the trees of the Amazon forest to the flowers of our backyard gardens, it is all grace.

And what we need to realize and what David wants us to realize is that we are surrounded by a whole lot more grace and goodness than we could ever, ever imagine.

Our lives are bathed in it. The eyes of all look to you, says David, and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand and you satisfy the desire of every living thing.

And this is the final point, I promise. The king's abundant goodness embraces all who love him and call out to him. Look at verses 18 to 20.

The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. He fulfills the desires of those who fear him and he also hears their cry and saves them.

[26 : 52] The Lord preserves all who love him but all the wicked he will destroy. See that, friends? The Lord is near to all who call on him. No matter what situation, when you call on the Lord, he's near.

It's not like you have to wait for him to be near, it says here. It's not like you have to beg and beg to try to get him to come near to you. It says you call and he's near to you. But the Lord is not just near, thank the Lord, he saves as well.

Elsewhere, David puts it this way. He says the Lord is near to the broken hearted and saves the crushed in spirit. That is to say, God's not just near to be present but God is near to be present in a redeeming and healing and saving way.

To do something. The Lord not only saves but he also preserves, says verse 20. So that is to say that God's goodness is intended to see people through all the times of lament in their lives.

All the times when they feel like they need to cry out to the Lord, God is near to them and he saves them and he preserves them so that one day the words of lament will not be the final words on their lips rather the words of praise because one day we will know the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[28 : 19] Psalm 145, the king's abundant goodness embraces all creation. And that is why David ends the psalm exactly where he began with praise.

Look at verse 21. My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord and let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever.

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.