

Praise the Lord O My Soul

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Preacher: Rev. Jim Salladin

[0 : 00] Let's pray together. Father, Father, Father, Father, when we hear the words that Jesus read in Isaiah, that the Spirit of the Sovereign Lord was upon Him because You had anointed Him to preach good news to the poor, our hearts are filled with joy.

Those of us who know You because we know that we are the poor that You have proclaimed good news to, and we know You're good news, and that good news is the wellspring of joy in our hearts. And I pray, Father, that as we look at Your Word, that You would pour out Your Spirit upon us, that we might hear Your good news, and that joy in our souls might be renewed.

Will You do that as we look at Jesus? And it's in His name that we pray. Amen. You can be seated. Well, tonight, Aaron mentioned earlier, we are beginning a new series.

We are going to walk through the Psalms, not all 150 of them, but we are going to, from now until the end of July, we're going to be looking at the Psalms, and in particular, we're going to be looking at the theme of prayer in the Psalms.

[1 : 41] which fits very nicely, tailing the series that we just completed. We were talking, you remember, since Easter about the Holy Spirit, and now we're going to be looking at prayer.

And one of the key works of the Holy Spirit, one of the key indications that the Holy Spirit's working in your life is that the Holy Spirit will move you to prayer. And one of the key tools that the Spirit uses in teaching us to pray is the Psalms.

There is no book that is more significant in teaching us about prayer. There is no book that is more significant in tutoring us, teaching us, giving us words to pray, than is the Psalms.

And so over the next several weeks, as we go through these Psalms, each week we're going to be looking at a different one. They're going to be vastly different from each other in a lot of ways.

But I want you to expect something. I want you to expect that God is going to take your view of prayer and stretch it and expand it and grow it.

[3 : 03] And the reason I say that is because most of us here have a fairly a fairly little vision of prayer. I hope that's not true, but I'm pretty sure it is for a lot of us.

I think most of us struggle with prayer. Most of us pray little prayers. But when you look at the Psalms and when you look at God's vision for the Psalms, it's just absolutely massive.

It's just absolutely massive. And God wants our experience to catch up to His Word. So that's why I say I want you to expect God to stretch and expand your view of prayer as we walk through the Psalms.

And tonight, the way I believe God is going to begin expanding our view of prayer is by expanding what comes to our mind when we think about praise.

We're looking at Psalm 146, which is the psalm that we read responsibly. And the theme of this psalm is praise the Lord. In Hebrew, it's hallelujah.

[4 : 10] So you'll have recognized that word probably. Now, I don't know what comes to your mind when you think about praise. I think most of us, when we think about the idea of prayer, we tend to think of petition.

Am I right? We tend to think of asking God to do things. You know, dear God, I don't know, help Aunt Penelope find her cat or something like that or help me pass the test I haven't studied for or something like that.

Quite often, when we pray, what comes to our mind is that we're just going to ask God to do things for us. I shouldn't use silly examples because asking God to do things for us is actually critically important.

But when you look at the book of Psalms and when you look at the Bible as a whole, there's one type of prayer that in some respects kind of distinguishes itself from the others.

What do I mean by that? There's one type of prayer. You can see this particularly, you can see this in the Psalms, but you can also see this in the book of Revelation. There's one type of prayer that will occupy our time more than any other type of prayer for all eternity.

[5 : 34] And it's not petition, it's praise. The people of God, if you're a Christian, this is going to be your destiny.

The people of God are going to praise God for all eternity. We will never get tired of it. Praising God is going to be something, is going to be the occupation that fills our hearts with greatest joy and greatest pleasure.

It's never going to get old. It's going to be our highest, highest joy forever and ever and ever. So, given that we're going to spend a lot of time on it, we might as well, you know, spend a little time on it now and try to figure out what it is.

So, we're going to look at Psalm 146 and I'm going to ask three questions. Number one, why is praise important? Number two, what keeps us from praising?

What impedes our life of prayers? And the third question is what releases us to praise God? Okay? So, first of all, why is praise important?

[6 : 49] I don't know how you're going to take this. This may be a strange idea to some of you. Human beings, you know, folks like you and me, human beings are designed to praise.

Dogs are designed to fetch and slobber. Their greatest joy is when they're fetching and slobbering. Cats are designed to be snobby and to look down on dogs.

That's when they're happiest. Humans, humans are designed to praise. Humans are designed to express the joy we experience inwardly, verbally.

Let me give you an example. I will never forget the first time I watched Hockey Night in Canada. I'm probably one of the very few here who remember the first time I watched Hockey Night in Canada. I am not from around here. And when we moved to Vancouver, my wife and I were invited over to this couple's house because they were shocked that we had never watched Hockey Night in Canada.

[8 : 02] So they invited us over to their house to watch the game which we were very happy to do because they were very nice people, very calm people, very rational Canadians.

It was very, very... And then the game started and they went crazy. I mean, these... Crazy, particularly, particularly, frankly, the woman was just ridiculous.

I mean, jumping on the couch, pizza and beer, nearly flying. I was concerned. It was amazing. I mean, screaming, you know, at the...

Every time there's a goal, just going nutty. Now, now here's the thing. Reflected on this a little bit after the fact, that couple loves hockey.

But it's not enough for them to sit down quietly and watch a game and think, hmm, indeed, my, that was a nice game.

[9 : 04] Something, something else is going on. There is something inside them that drives them when there's a goal to scream, did you see that? Yes! Or, or, or when something bad happens, the opposite of praise happens, but that's not what the sermon's about, so we won't go there.

But, but I mean, there is something inside them that drives it. It's part of our human nature. Human beings love to praise whatever we most enjoy.

Okay? And actually, when we experience pleasure, when we experience any kind of pleasure almost, part of the joy is expressing it verbally.

There's a sense to which we don't fully, there's a sense to which we do not fully experience the joy until we praise the thing we're enjoying.

I don't know if you've noticed that. My friend's pleasure, you know, this couple, their pleasure watching the game was not, was not there until they, until they bursted out screaming.

[10 : 13] Now, here's the point. We humans are wired to verbally express our inward joy. And the more joy we take in something, the more we will want to express it through praising something.

Whether it's a hockey game, a good move, whether it's, you know, when my wife walks in the room, there is something inside me that drives me to say, look at my beautiful wife. And it's actually something that I take delight in, to praise her.

Now, if that's true, and if the more joy we take in something, the more we will be driven to praise it, then it makes sense that as Christians, as people of God, our highest joy will be in praising God.

You see why? If it's true that God is infinitely good, if it's true that God is the object of our absolute highest praise, then it makes sense that we are going to experience enormous delight by praising Him, and that praising Him, in some respects, is going to end up being our eternal pastime. It's going to be better than hockey night in Canada. And if you're a Christian, praising God is going to be so joyful, so pleasurable, that it will never get old.

[11 : 35] One of my heroes is a guy called Jonathan Edwards, and he writes this about praising God in heaven. The reason we are so little excited to praise God here on earth is because we know so little of God.

But in heaven, the saints in heaven shall directly behold the Son of Righteousness. They shall look full upon Him, when He is shining in His glory.

When the saints in heaven behold the glorious power of God, they cannot help but praise that power. When they see God's wisdom that is so wonderful and infinitely beyond all created wisdom, they cannot help but continually praise that wisdom.

When they view the infinitely pure and lovely holiness of God, whereby the heavens themselves are not pure in comparison with Him, how can they possibly avoid with an exalted heart to praise that beauty of divine nature when they see the infinite grace of God and see what a boundless ocean of mercy and love He is?

How can the saints in heaven but celebrate that grace with the highest praise? praise? Here's the deal. Why is praise so important?

[12 : 58] The reason it's so important is that when we take joy in God and praise Him, we taste the eternal joy of heaven right now. Okay. So that's why it's important.

What gets in the way? Why do we find it so difficult to praise? Look at verse 3. Psalm 146 verse 3.

The reason we have such a hard time praising is that we trust and we hope in the wrong thing.

Verse 3. Put not your trust in princes and a son of man in whom there is no salvation. When his breath departs, he returns to the earth. And on that very day, his plans perish.

Now verse 3 would have just sent an arrow through the heart of Israel. You know, this poem, this hymn was written in ancient Israel, by ancient Israel, and Israel had had a long history of putting their hope and their trust in their kings and their princes.

But the problem is, Israel had always put their hope and their trust in their kings and their princes, but their kings and their princes always failed them. Most of, if you know the story of the Old Testament, most of the Old Testament kings and princes of Israel were bad.

[14 : 16] They just weren't, they were wicked, they didn't do a good job. And so those guys obviously failed Israel. But even the good ones, even the good ones, even the ones like David and Solomon and Hezekiah and Josiah, even those guys couldn't really deliver.

Israel put their hope and their trust in these princes and yet, even the good ones eventually died.

And even the best ones were usually deeply flawed. And so what would happen is Israel placed their hopes and their trust in princes and kings, but they were continually disappointed.

And so instead of being led to praise God for all His blessings, because they were hoping in kings and princes, they were continually disappointed and they were continually led to despair.

Now I want you to see something here. That is the same pattern that happens in our life. The same thing happens in you and I.

And when it happens in you and me, it kills our joy and it robs us of the ability to praise God. Let me show you what I mean. There's two steps.

[15 : 31] Two steps happens in us. It's the same thing that happened to Israel. The first thing that happens is that we place our hope and our trust in something other than God. And typically, what happens is we, particularly Christians, we place our hope and our trust in something that is really, really good.

Almost always it's a gift from God, but it's just not God. So, a lot of us, you know, it can be all sorts of things.

It can be a leader. It can be an employer. It can be a pastor. It can be our parents. Somebody in authority over us that we just say, as long as that person is in authority over me, everything is going to be great. We put our hope and our trust in that person.

That person is usually a gift from God, but they're not God, and they're unworthy of our ultimate hope and trust. Or sometimes it's a relationship.

You know, somebody we're dating, our spouse. Sometimes it's even the dream of a relationship. Or it can be an occupation.

[16 : 40] It can be our job or marks at school or a sport or something. It's something good that God has given us that becomes the object of our deepest hope and our deepest trust.

As long as that's there, as long as that's sure, then we'll be okay. That's the first step. The second step is that inevitably, just like the kings and the princes of Israel, inevitably these things we trust in fail us.

You know, the leader we love makes a terrible decision or fails us in some way or is no longer there, or your boyfriend and girlfriend breaks up with you, or your marriage crumbles, or your school marks are just never good enough, or whatever it might be, the thing we have trusted in fails us. And here's the thing with false gods, because that's what these things are. They're false gods. False gods, the things we trust in and hope in more than God, they always fail us at the cruelest way.

Do you know what I mean by that? They fail us right when we need them the most, and they inevitably leave us hungry and alone and poor and vulnerable.

[18 : 01] And it absolutely steals our joy, and it steals our ability to praise God. Okay, that's what impedes, that's what undercuts the life of praise in a Christian.

What releases the life of praise? Look at verse 5. It's exactly the opposite. Blessed is he, or happy is the one, joyful is the one, able to praise is the one whose help is in the God of Jacob, and whose hope is in the Lord his God.

Here's the deal. The human heart is released to praise God when he becomes the centerpiece of our hope and our trust. And the rest of the psalm tells us why.

There's a bunch of reasons. Look at verse 6. The first reason that hoping in God releases praise in our lives and joy is that God created everything. Why is that helpful?

Well, think about this for a second. God made everything. Therefore, God is the source of everything.

[19 : 20] Therefore, if God is the source of everything, then everything good that you've ever tasted or experienced or thought about or seen, everything good in this world came originally from God.

God is the source of all goodness. Therefore, hoping in God, God is always better than every other good thing you could possibly imagine in the earth. When you trust in God, you are hoping in the source of all goodness.

When you trust in other things, you're trusting in something that God made. Why trust in the gift of God when you can trust in the source of the gift? When you trust in something that God has created, it fails you and you're left in despair.

When you trust and hope in God alone, all his gifts get thrown in as a package deal, but he never fails us. And that's the second reason why hoping in God always releases praise is because, look at verse 6, he keeps faith forever, the end of verse 6.

And in verse 10, God reigns forever. The key word is forever. Everything else that we ever trust in fails us and leaves us in despair.

[20 : 39] But God doesn't do that. God does not die. God does not disappoint. God does not fail. It's actually the opposite.

The longer you trust in God, the more you see just how reliable he is. And the more you trust in him and see how reliable he is, the more your soul swells with joy and confidence and assurance and certainty and stability.

And after a while, you cannot help but praise the glory of God. Okay. And the text has at least one more reason why hoping in God releases praise.

God shows his goodness to us right at the moment, right at the moment when we are weakest and in our greatest point of need.

Again, can you see how that's the opposite of false gods? False gods, when they fall through and when they fail us, they leave us at our most vulnerable place. But God isn't like that. God's the opposite.

[21 : 46] He actually comes closer to us. He is more reliable at our point of greatest need. Look at the text. Look at verse 7. God executes justice for whom?

The oppressed. The Lord sets who free? The prisoners. The Lord opens which eyes? The eyes of the blind.

The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down, those who are depressed, those who are crushed in soul. That's the one that the Lord lifts up. The Lord loves the righteous.

The Lord watches over the sojourners. Sojourners would have been the most insecure type of person because they didn't have a home. But the Lord watches over them.

The Lord upholds the widow and the fatherless. Do you see? Repetition is for emphasis here. You see, it's only, ultimately, it is only the weak and the needy who ever really get to see God's goodness properly displayed.

[22 : 51] And therefore, and many of us know this here, you know this deep down, it's only the weak and the needy that really know how to praise God. If you've walked with Jesus for a while, you know that's true.

You see, heaven will be filled with the laughter of people who were profoundly needy here. Heaven is filled with the joyful praise of people who were absolutely without any hope other than God here. Because God meets those people here. And you know when you see this attribute of God, all these attributes of God kind of come together most profoundly in Jesus.

That's why I can't go through the second reading that we have, but it's the reason it's there. If you read through the second reading, you can see that Jesus, his very first sermon he ever preached, he says, Israel, you know all the princes, all the kings that you've ever trusted in, they've always failed you.

And the whole tenor of the Old Testament says, trust only in God because he's the one that can meet your needs. Jesus, in a sense, stood up at his first sermon, read the scroll from Isaiah, and was saying, there is now a king that you can trust.

[24 : 15] There's now a prince that you can trust. I am the one on whom the spirit has rested, and I am the one who proclaims liberty to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind.

I am the prince that you've always desired. I am the one you've always been looking for, and I am the one that will never leave you and never forsake you. I am the one who can hold your trust. I am the one in whom you must hope. I am the one who will undo all the despair those false gods wrought upon your life.

And when you see that, when you see that, can't you see how in heaven, can't you see why Revelation says that around the throne of God, thousands and thousands of people are gathered, saints who were so needy in this world, saying, worthy, worthy, worthy, worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive honor and power and blessing because he has ransomed the people from every tribe and nation and tongue for himself.

Can you see why it's not going to get old? Why is praise so important?

[25 : 41] It's important because it's our eternal vocation. It's our great joy. What impedes it? We are foolish. We put our hope on things that don't last and that always fail us.

And the solution, friends, is to hope in Christ alone. And then you will join with the angels and the archangels and all the company of heaven. Okay.

I've got to stop. But I want you to look at that green sheet. Okay? Because we've got to do it. We've got to do this. Okay? It's terribly, terribly important.

We've got to learn how to praise. How do we learn how to praise? Practice, practice, practice. If you look at verse 2 of Psalm 146, it says, I will praise the Lord as long as I live.

Which implies that praising God is actually a choice. It's something we can choose to do. And if we can choose to do it, then that also implies that there is an element of practice here.

[26 : 42] And that green sheet this week is full of exercises for you to do to practice. To practice turning your heart from worthless, false gods.

These gifts that are good, but they're not built for your trust. Psalm 146 tutors you in turning your heart from that and placing it exclusively upon Christ alone, upon God alone.

And there, you will learn how to praise Him. So, read through that. Do that this week. And as you do, the Lord, I believe it, the Lord is going to, by His Spirit, swell your heart with joy and give you a gift of praise.

And you will participate in the joy that will be yours forever in the kingdom of God. I hope that convinces you. Let's pray.

Put not your hope in princes. Put not your hope in things that don't last. That were never meant to fill your deepest need.

[28 : 00] Lord Jesus, we confess that we have placed our hope in things that cannot hold it. Forgive us.

And change us. And fill our hearts and our minds with so much conviction that you alone are worthy of our hope and our trust.

Grant it in such a measure that we would know that exquisite pleasure of praising you. May it be our highest aim.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Good evening. Tonight we're just going to pray together as a community for the things that we've heard in the sermon and other things that are going around locally, nationally, globally in our church community.

And I invite you after I say Lord in your mercy to say here our prayer. So if we could practice that. Lord in your mercy. Lord in your mercy. You guys are experts. we make our beginning in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

[29 : 14] Father God, thank you so much for this wonderful news of a new youth pastor that will be joining us in late August.

Thank you so much for Dave Little. Thank you for everything that he's done in this church already and the relationships he's already formed. Thank you for the committee that faithfully and prayerfully considered all of the applicants.

And we want to thank you as well for the tiresome, dedicated work this year of Ben Short. And thank you, God, that you've given us your servant Ben for this year. And we pray for a smooth transition.

And we also pray that the grade 12s would have a safe houseboat trip and that the youth ministry would just continue in all of its fervent strength. Lord, in your mercy.

God, thank you so much for the Psalms. Thank you for their words of praise, their words of poetry.

[30 : 15] They are just beautiful and they inspire us, God. And we ask that you would help us to have a heart that praises you in an unhindered fashion.

Give us a heart that isn't clouded by the disappointments you've experienced on earth. Give us hearts that look toward the joys of heaven and the rejoicing in the new kingdom.

Help us to see your glory and to put our trust only in you. Lord Jesus, you are the only thing that we can trust fully. And we ask that you would give us eyes and hearts to do that. Lord, in your mercy.

And God, we are reminded of trials around the world that people are facing. And recently we were reminded of a volcano and hurricane that have struck in Central America in Guatemala.

Guatemala, and we pray for the people of Guatemala that you would just be with them, God, and that you would protect them and that you would provide the necessary medical and water and food aid that those people need to recover.

[31 : 22] And we just pray your peace over that place, that your protecting hand would be over that. Lord, in your mercy. And God, we pray that we can take care of your gifts.

Whatever gifts you've given us, God, they are on loan to us. And we pray that you would give us hearts to take care of each other in this community here and to care for the staff, and we give thanks for them as well.

Staff and the clergy and all volunteers of the church, we thank you for them, Lord. Lord, in your mercy. And finally, God, we pray for hearts that are open to sharing your love with other people.

Tonight, God, we heard your servant Jim speak about how everything that we put our trust in except you has the potential to disappoint us. And God, I just pray that you can give us the words to tell our friends and family and co-worker and classmates and loved ones about how trusting in you is 100% reliable.

And I pray that we can live lives that show that trust and live lives that have that trust shining through, that make people ask, why do they have that spirit of joy?

[32 : 50] And God, we know that that spirit comes from you, and we just ask you to pour that out in your congregation here. Lord, in your mercy. Amen. And now we'll pray the prayer that our Savior taught us.

Amen. in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Yours is the kingdom, power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.