

Psalm 145 - The Next Generation

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Preacher: Will Spink

[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

You know, sometimes when we forget the content that is behind words that we hear a lot, we need to be reminded of why they're so important.

It can be easy to lose a sense of that, can't it? When you forget the content behind something you hear over and over, you need to be reminded what it really means, why it's so important.

And that's why I thought it would be helpful for us here at the beginning of a new year to talk about some of our core commitments as a church, to look at God's Word together and remember what these things mean, why they're priorities for us as God's people.

Remember from last week, it's not about memorizing the words. It's not about just memorizing the words that go along with these things that's so important, but rather recognizing the beauty of the song, getting excited about being a part of what God is doing through His church.

[1 : 09] So we talked last week about our vision to advance the kingdom of God, to see the rule and the reign of King Jesus made evident everywhere.

The challenge of pursuing the kingdom of King Jesus ahead of our own kingdoms, right? The joy of seeing His rule move forward both in word and in deed.

That anyone who gets near us is both to hear of King Jesus and to feel the reality of the kingdom, to experience that, to have winter thawing, as it were, in their lives.

That gracious kingdom advances through our mission as we experience God's grace to us, as we for ourselves experience God's grace, having our constant needs constantly met in Christ.

We experience grace. And then as we join God in seeing everyone, it's His mission that everyone would experience His grace. So we join Him in expressing grace to others, to everyone we come in contact with, that they would experience the reality of the kingdom of God, the gracious reign of King Jesus.

[2 : 25] Notice down at the bottom of the screen those three things. How are we as a church focusing? What are we focusing on as we serve together as a church in order to see the gracious kingdom of King Jesus advance?

These are not the only three areas that are good things for a church to do, but they're areas that God has called Southwood particularly to focus and invest for the sake of His kingdom.

And we talked a little last week about serving in our community and community development, holistically seeing the kingdom of God address needs around us so that people experience the reality of it.

This morning I want to build on what we've been celebrating already and what we've seen modeled for us in Nancy McWright and talk about student ministry.

That's our term here for crib to college. This is about the next generation. Turn with me if you will to Psalm 145. Psalm 145 is a beautiful psalm where we're going to focus in on just a few verses that speak of the next generation, but I'm going to read the whole thing and you'll notice as I do some of these other themes of the gracious kingdom of God in here as well.

[3 : 39] Let's give our attention to the holy and inerrant word of God. Psalm 145. I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever.

Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever. Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised, and His greatness is unsearchable. 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 will 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.

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.

All your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord, and all your saints shall bless you. They shall speak of 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.

[4 : 48] Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations. The Lord upholds all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down.

The eyes of all look to you, 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, 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.

My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord, and let all flesh bless His holy name forever and ever. Amen. Pray with me. Our Father, that's our desire this morning, that Your name would be praised. That we would exalt You. That we would find our hope in You. We desire that for ourselves and for all that we know, and especially this morning for the next generation.

[5 : 58] That they would know of You. That they would make much of You. Father, would You be the one who does that this morning as we look to Your Word. As we praise Your name, would You change our hearts, and would You make us those who make much of You for ourselves and for those who come after us.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Don't you love Psalm 145? Isn't that a beautiful psalm of praise? Over and over, praising God. We're going to focus in on verses 4 through 7 this morning, talking about the next generation. But before we get there, just notice the context of those comments that David makes in this psalm.

What's the context? What's the psalm about? Line after line after line of praise to God, right? Look at the verbs he uses. One verb after another, praise, bless, extol, speak of, make known, give thanks.

David's desire to make much of God, that God's name would be great. That's what this psalm is about. He praises God for who He is, for His unparalleled character, the great King, the eternal ruler, majestic, gracious, merciful, slow to anger, faithful, glorious, powerful, righteous, good.

[7 : 30] All of those things He is. There's no one like Him. No one like this God, is there? And David praises God also for what He has done, for His unmatched deeds, particularly when he talks about those, most of them are referring to God's great works of salvation, His deliverance, His rescue, where He raises up the lowly, upholding the falling, providing for the needy, protecting His children.

God is and does all of these things. Indeed, verse 3 is right. His greatness is unsearchable. I can read lists of adjectives and nouns and verbs to you this morning, and we will never plumb the depths of His greatness.

I'd ask you this morning, have you slowed down recently to consider who God is, what He's done for you? Meditating on the glorious splendor of His majesty and His wondrous works.

You know what it does, David says? It leads to praise. Have you been there recently? Thinking of who He is and what He's done for you, and you just can't help but praise Him for all that He is and has done for you.

That's what we were made for, isn't it? That's why we were created, that we might bring glory to Him, that we might know Him and praise Him because of how great He is.

[8 : 58] Verse 21 sums up the conclusion of all of these verses, these reasons to praise God. It says, let all flesh bless His holy name forever and ever.

And so often we miss the benefit to us of stopping and slowing down and realizing who God is and what He's done for us. We miss the blessing of having our hearts moved to praise of God's glorious greatness.

Theologian Stephen Charnock writes, We conclude many things about God that we do not practically suck the comfort of for lack of deep thoughts of it and frequent inspection of it.

He says there's a lot of things we say about God, but we don't slow down to suck the comfort out of it. The praise that it draws out of our hearts, the comfort it gives us to stop and consider who God actually is.

David here in considering who God is and what he has done is moved to make much of God, isn't he? Over and over and over. And that's important at the basic level of who we were created to be as people, who God made us to be, people who praise His name.

[10:14] But that's also important when we look at the next generation here in this passage because those behind us tend to make much of what we make much of. Did you know that?

Those who come behind us tend to make much of, tend to think great things about things that we think much of, things that are important to us. After spending New Year's in South Carolina this year, we decided to make the trip back through Clemson.

It seemed like a good idea and Nancy would have appreciated it. So, yeah, we're Clemson fans. So, our family drove through Clemson and we wanted to show our girls where mom and dad lived, right?

Where we met for the first time. This is where we lived on campus. This is the place where we went in that stadium and cheered on the Tigers and had lots of fun times here and there.

And we want to show you because y'all have never seen it before. They were so excited. They couldn't wait to go to Clemson. Now, listen, Clemson's special, but there's a lot of places that could be like that.

[11:16] It was special for our girls because they'd heard us talk about it, right? Because they knew it was something in our past that they hadn't been a part of. And they were so excited to be there. Our children tend to praise what we praise, don't they?

They tend to cheer for what we cheer for. They tend to make much of what we make much of. What they've seen us in front of them being excited about.

And this is where I have to ask myself some hard questions because I wonder what my kids pick up for me. Charles Swindoll once said, I think that fits with what Psalm 145 is saying.

Not only does David want himself to make much of God, to exalt God throughout the Psalm, but look back at what he wants to pass on to the next generation. Verse 4. 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.

[12:34] Do you hear what's important? David says one generation is to give the next generation an exalted view of God, of his greatness, his glory and his goodness.

What's important to pass along? What does this say? Your works, your mighty acts, your majesty, your wondrous works, the might of your awesome deeds, your greatness, the fame of your abundant goodness, your righteousness, an exalted view of God, isn't it?

Wow. I'm so committed to my kids having an exalted view of me. I want them to like me and think I'm amazing. I want them to have an exalted view of me.

It's important. It's important. I want them to have a moral country to live in. A place that seems safe. A comfortable lifestyle. I want that for my kids. An exalted view of God. God. Is that what they pick up from me?

[13:43] They may hear it. I know. I know I say those things. But they know well what's really important to me, don't they? Have you ever noticed how you don't have to teach your kids to cheer for Clemson?

Or anybody else? You don't have to teach them how to do that. You don't sit them down and have lessons on how this is going to go if you just do it enough.

I'll be honest. In my parenting, my success rate at getting my kids to do what I tell them to do is much lower than my rate of getting my kids to make much of what I make much of in front of them. It's just simply much more successful that way. Of course, that involves telling them. It does involve teaching them. But it involves showing them too.

And this pattern of passing along an exalted view of God, of who he is and what he has done, is all through the scripture. It's God's design for the extension of his kingdom that one generation passes along who he is and what he has done to the next generation.

[14:48] Just look at the Psalms, for example. I've just picked a few. But Psalm 78. We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord and his might and the wonders that he's done.

God established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel. For what purpose? What's this testimony, this law set up for? Which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children that the next generation might know them.

The children yet unborn and arise and tell them to their children. So that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments. Do you hear the pattern that God set up for his people?

Generation after generation, passing along who he is and what he's done. Psalm 89. I will sing of the steadfast love of the Lord forever. With my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations.

Psalm 45. I will cause your name to be remembered in all generations. Therefore nations will praise you forever and ever. What's God's plan? How's God's glory going to fill the earth?

[15:54] How are the nations going to know who he is? That one generation after another, his name is to be remembered and it goes forth to all nations. I love this last one.

Psalm 71. So even to old age and gray hairs, oh God, do not forsake me. Why? Why? There's just, there's something I need to do, God.

Don't leave me yet in my old age until I proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come. The purpose for which I still live and breathe.

God, give me one more breath, not for me, God, but so that I can tell all those to come of your might, of how great you are. That's why I'm still alive, the psalmist says.

That they would know your might and your greatness. What's the goal again in Psalm 145? Look at verse 7. They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness and sing aloud of your righteousness.

[17:00] Pouring forth the fame of God's abundant goodness. That means you can't say too much about it. You could never praise him too much. One generation tells the next of how great God is and they could never possibly exaggerate it.

They can't praise him too highly. They can't say it too much. Charles Spurgeon calls it a tradition of praise. I like that. Tradition of praise.

Generation after generation, a tradition of praise of God. What traditions did you pick up from your parents? How about passing on a tradition of praise?

An exalted view of God to the next generation? It's the reason why an exodus God institutes the Passover feast.

It's not just Psalms. This is how God's people have always functioned. God gives them this feast to mark their deliverance from Egypt, right? Here would be one of the prime examples in the Old Testament of God's mighty deeds.

[18:05] His deliverance of people from slavery. And God says celebrate it every year. Have this feast. And here's what's going to happen when you celebrate it. Your children are going to say to you, what do you mean by this service?

This is kind of silly. Mom, Dad, why are we doing this again? I remember doing this last year. And you shall say, it is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover.

For he passed over the houses of the people of Israel and Egypt when he struck the Egyptians, but spared our houses. What's the story you're going to tell them when they ask?

What's it about time after time? Is it the story of my dad stronger than your dad? My dad painted the blood on the doorpost just beautifully, more beautifully than anybody else, and so we were saved? Aren't we wonderful? Is that the story? No, the story you're telling is of a God who spared your people because of the blood of the Lamb.

[19:06] Because the blood of the Lamb was on our doorposts, God passed over when he struck down the firstborn of Egypt. The story is of our God being stronger than the gods of Egypt.

And as the generations come, you need to know, children, stronger than the gods and the idols of the nations around you that you're going to be tempted to wander after. You should worship Yahweh.

You should follow him. And I'm going to tell you to worship him, but I'm also going to show you why. Because he delivered me. I walked out behind his strong arm.

I experienced his greatness. It was here in this house or on this campus. Or when we crossed this sea. And God's praise continues.

The tradition of praise goes on. God's designed way to pass his glory one generation after the other. As one generation commends his works to the next.

[20 : 08] So there's a pretty decent reason biblically why we've made student ministry such a priority here. It's what God has always done. It's the way he set things up to work, isn't it?

Certainly all this applies to parents in some obvious ways. But what we're reading about here, when you think about the Psalms in particular, is the corporate worship of God's people.

The patterns of daily life of God's people, of the church now. It's actually more about us corporately. If we're going to be about the advance of God's kingdom.

If that's our vision and we say that's what we want to see is God's kingdom go forward in every possible way. Psalm 145 says a focus on God and his glory and his greatness leads us to care about others.

About people. In this case, particularly about the next generation. Jesus said the kingdom of God is made up of children, didn't he? Of children and of people who have faith like little children.

[21 : 13] The next generation is a kingdom priority. In some ways you could say our children are this church's greatest mission field.

That God has laid before us and said, Here's what your job is, Southwood. Here they are. Pass it on to them. We must commend the works of God to the next generation.

It's a big part of why God has us here. I think at Southwood that's especially true. You know for the last few years the part of this building that's been the most crowded? Anybody know?

Nursery. You all whispered it. The nursery. How exciting is that? What an exciting opportunity for the gospel to have a nursery that's full. What a healthy reality in a congregation.

If you haven't been down to the nursery in a while, I think you got a pretty good visual of it this morning. When some of the kids a little bit older sat on these steps. Did you know over a hundred junior and senior high students come through the lodge every week to hear God's word?

[22 : 19] Every week over a hundred. Last year alone we baptized 21 infants. That's almost one baby every other week.

Yeah, you were here. You felt like it was a lot, didn't you? It was almost every other week that we were baptizing one. We take vows when they're baptized to assist their parents in the Christian nurture of their children.

But do we truly stop and realize the kingdom opportunity placed before us as a church? We pray that they would never know a day that they don't know the love of God for them in Jesus.

We do that because that's the pattern God has designed. He set it up to work that way. But do we keep praying for it? And do we jump in ourselves so that they hear of God's love from us?

This is what it means to be God's covenant people. That I care about my kids. That I care about your kids. That I care about the kids of Huntsville.

[23 : 17] Because God has never blessed his people except for the purpose of them being a blessing to everyone. So all three of those, my kids, your kids, the kids of this community, are part of the next generation.

We're to bless. Did you know that the single greatest predictor for a child who grows up in the church actually coming back to church as an adult? Do you know what it is? Recent studies have shown that the single best way you can predict is that child going to come back to church in adulthood?

Is does that child have a relationship with another adult in the church outside of his parents? Knowing someone else from a generation ahead of him.

A relationship gives an opportunity for doing what Psalm 145 lays out. One generation commending God's works to another. And we said in the Old Testament context here of this Psalm, those works we're commending would have been God's works of deliverance, right?

Mostly we're talking about the glory of God's acts in saving his people, for instance, from slavery in Egypt. How he provided manna in the wilderness and so on.

[24 : 31] What does that look like now? Now it's not Passover every year, but the Lord's Supper. Time after time. Mom, Dad, why do we come and sing and listen to that nerdy guy talk and walk up to those tables to get bread and juice?

Why do we do that all the time? Now we tell them of the glory of God's act of deliverance on the cross. How he saved his people from slavery to sin.

How he continues to provide for our needs day by day. So commending the works of God to the next generation involves knowing them enough to tell them of your sin and how Jesus saved you. Of your needs and how God has provided for them. Parents, do you share your weaknesses and your needs with your kids? Do they know why you take communion?

Can you answer them when they ask those questions? Small group leaders, do they know why Jesus is so precious to you? Grandparents, they think you're perfect.

[25 : 43] But do they know how they can pray for you because you need God too? Have you told them about that? Let me make a brief application to two sets of people here before we close.

And before I do one more thing. How exciting is it to be a part of a church where I can say, let me apply it to the older people and the younger people. What a gift to be part of a multi-generational body of Christ.

Where you can say, I've got these people around me. I don't have to go figure out where they would be. Praise God for that. Let's start with the younger crowd. Any of us who could still be considered the next generation.

Maybe you're like me and you have actually a generation ahead of you and behind you in this church. I tell you, our tendency is pretty much the same whether we're five or 35, isn't it?

It's to go our own way. To assume we know better than those who are 30 years ahead of us. To think we'll do it better than our parents, right?

[26 : 46] Isn't that what we think? We'll do it better than they do. To think we'll figure life out on our own because we're smart and successful and competent. Are you putting yourself in places where you can learn of God from those further down the road?

Kids, God gave you parents because He loves you. Why do I have to keep talking about kids this morning? God loves you so much that He put parents in your life to show them, to show you how much He loves you.

He put people like Miss Nancy in your life so that you would know how much He loves you. So that you could trust them, so that you could listen to them and learn from them.

You need to listen to them as they tell you about God's love. That's God's design for His church.

There's a reason in the New Testament God directs the older men in the church to instruct the younger men.

And the older women to teach the younger women. It's because it's God's design for passing along the knowledge of Him one generation to the next. Are you seeking that out for yourself?

[27 : 55] For your kids? Some of you are struggling with your faith in God and His provision. Don't isolate yourself from the body God has put you in.

Sit down with dear people who've been walking with Jesus longer than you've been alive. Let their testimony of God's care for them strengthen your faith. I'll be honest younger adults like me.

It's usually not our busy schedules that keep that conversation from happening. It's usually not their busy schedules that keep that conversation from happening. We're the ones who are too busy to make time for it.

What are your priorities for your kids? Is it them liking you so that you can live at peace? Or do you pray and plan to see them embrace an exalted view of God?

Parents, your kids will know what's important to you. What you make much of. Have you put your own oxygen mask on first? I invite you this morning, put it on.

[28 : 58] Breathe deeply of Jesus for yourself. And then you can give one to your kids too. Finally, for those of us who are older.

Who are looking at the generation behind us and wondering what kind of lessons and legacy we're going to leave for them. Is your passion the one of the psalmists that we read about earlier?

Is that what drives you? Is that what excites you? God, that you would give me breath to tell those coming behind me of your might and your greatness.

Is that what makes you excited? God, I want to pass along to the next generation the testimony of your greatness and might. Is that your priority for the generation after you?

Listen, I know it is much easier to sit back and to bemoan the faults of the next generation. And say, oh my word, the ways they act, the ways they raise their kids, the songs they sing.

[29 : 58] Look what this church or this culture is coming to. It's easier to do that than to walk alongside them in the midst of it. I know it. Thank you for not leaving.

Thank you for not leaving and going to a church where everybody's your age and likes exactly what you like. Thank you for being here. We need you. Let me speak as a younger person right now. We need you. We need your wisdom. We need your experience. We need you to tell us of God's greatness and how you've seen it in your life. It's the way God has built his church that you would pour his praise to overflowing in the next generation so that by the time you do have your last breath, they're all carrying on in your place.

That's God's design. That's why our students are a huge priority for us here at Southwood. There are many ways you can formally engage with our children and youth.

Nursery, Sunday school, VBS, small group leaders. Go cook on a youth retreat and between meals talk about Jesus with a high schooler. Come up with your own ideas.

[31 : 12] Babysit while their parents go on a date. Share your parenting struggles and lessons with their parents. Sit next to one of them and worship and sing.

Sing loudly. Adopt a grandchild to pray for and tell them you're doing it. But however you do it, I don't care what you come up with.

Commend the works of God to the next generation. Don't leave without being a part of that. Don't have your last breath without it being spent and poured out that those who stay behind will know of the greatness of God from you.

Commend the works of God to the next generation. However God allows you. Give them an exalted view of God. I want to tell you about one man who did that for me as I closed this morning.

His name was Roy Norville. We addressed him as Mr. Roy. But all of the kids at the church that I grew up in knew him as the candy man. Mr. Roy came every Sunday with a little black shaving kit full of candy.

[32 : 22] So there was one man at church every week that no kid was going home without talking to. We made a beeline for Mr. Roy after the service. I probably got candy from Mr. Roy all the way through high school.

I think I was a special fan. He gave me more than candy though. He used to write us notes. Short notes that for a while I had to get my parents to read to me because of the scrawly cursive handwriting I couldn't make out.

They were personal and they talked about God and they were always signed, Your Friend, Roy Norville. When I graduated high school, he gave me one of these notes along with a little book, very small, Andrew Murray's Abide in Christ.

Tell you what he wrote me. I hope you enjoy this book. I did. Abiding in Christ is really the best security you will ever have.

What God is like, we learn from Christ. I hope to be writing to you during your college years and praying God will bless you and guide you in all you do. Your friend, Roy Norville.

[33 : 37] I got lots of books for graduation. Guess which one I made a point to read? Yeah, this little thing. It was short enough.

And this book, Abide in Christ, ended up having a huge impact on me and my understanding of the gospel, of who Jesus was and the fact that I could trust and rest in Him.

It had an influence on me all the way through college and as I grew up into adulthood. All because one man with candy made much of God and he commended God's works to my generation.

Would that God would do so many things like that here and we could rejoice in them for generations to come. Pray with me. God, the praise and the glory is yours.

And we know that. And we need you to make us those who remember that not just on Sunday morning, but every moment of every day. As those who are younger than we are, look to us to know what's really important.

[34 : 55] What should really get them upset or excited. Father, would our hearts long for your kingdom and for your name to be exalted above all other things.

Would you show us where you would allow us to be a part of advancing your kingdom and passing along your works and your glory to the next generation.

Father, every breath that you give us, would it be for your glory and those behind us knowing how great you are. Do that work in us, we ask in Jesus' name.

Amen. For more information, visit us online at southwood.org.