

Praise The Lord

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[0 : 00] Let us turn again just for a little to the chapter we read or the section that we read in the Bible in the book of Psalms, and I want us to look at Psalm 111, Psalm 111 in the book of Psalms, and we'll read from the beginning the first four verses.

Praise the Lord. I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation. Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who delight in them.

Full of splendor and majesty is his work, and his righteousness endures forever. He has caused his wondrous works to be remembered. The Lord is gracious and merciful.

One thing we ought to be sure about our lives is that we give praise to God. We can never read the Bible without being shown, both by example and by exhortation, the importance of praising God, both by example and by exhortation. I would ask the question right away, have you consciously praised God today? It's quite a thought. Maybe you have, it might be such a part of your life that you say to yourself, well, it's something I do all the time, well, that's wonderful. But it might be worth asking yourself, have you today consciously praised God? Praised God for who he is in himself.

Praised God for what he has done, for what he has done in the realms of salvation, for what he has done in your life. It is something that God is looking for from us, is praise. Are we people who praise God?

[2 : 14] Well, the psalmist here indicates the way that he praises God, because he says, I will give thanks to the Lord, praise the Lord, he says, I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart.

Nothing half-hearted. You see, even for instance, we talk about our praise, our singing, and it's, you know, it's possible, and I'm sure we're all guilty at one time or another of singing, and we're not really sure what we're singing. If somebody was to ask you afterwards, well, what did you just sing?

You might be saying, well, I'm not too sure. Sometimes we can be so familiar with the words that we just, we can actually sing them and be busy thinking about something else. And here we are in what is one of the most wonderful parts of our worship, where we can collectively sing God's word and praise his name, and sometimes, sometimes we do it, and afterwards we are conscious that we have been singing with our heart, that we have been praising God as we should, but sometimes we have to put our hand on our heart and say, well, my mind was a hundred miles away. And the Lord sees, the Lord reads our hearts. He knows whether we are worshiping him with our heart or whether it is purely with our tongue, and our hearts are far away. Well, the psalmist was a person, and when he was going to worship God, when he was going to praise God, he was going to do so with his whole heart. And that is the kind of praise that the Lord expects. You see, praise is serious business. Then the psalmist goes on, and he says,

I will praise the Lord with my whole heart in the company of the upright in the congregation. Now, this word, the company here, has the idea of just a circle of friends, of a smaller circle.

But he's saying, I will praise the Lord in the company of the upright in the congregation. So, while there's the small group, it isn't confined to the small group. The small group is part of a great assembly of a great group. And so, really what the psalmist is saying is that praise is universal, whether it is individual, whether I'm on my own, or whether I am with a group of friends, or whether I am in a great congregation, whatever the situation, I am to praise the Lord, and I am to praise the Lord with all my heart. So, that's really what the psalmist is saying here.

[4 : 53] Then the psalmist goes on, and really gives us a little idea, maybe, of why or how he's praising God. And he goes on, and he says, Great are the works of the Lord, studied by all who delight in them.

Now, when it says here, Great are the works of the Lord, sometimes, as you might have in verse 6, it says here, He has shown His people the power of His works. Sometimes, works speak about His deeds, about the deeds of God. But often, the works refer to the things that He has made. And I believe that here, that is what has been spoken about. It is the things that He has made. So, what it's really saying is, great are the works, great are the things that God has made, studied by all who delight in them.

I think that's a very, very important verse, because it's highlighting for us that God expects us to look and to view this natural world, this magnificent world, this magnificent universe, to look at the sun, the moon, the planetary system, to look at planet earth that we live on, to study animal life and plant life, bird life, to look at the mountains and the seas, to look at human life, to look at it in all its splendor, in all its glory, in all its intricacy, in all its marvel, and to delight in it, and to delight in the God who made, who planned it, who formed it. Because remember that it is the wisdom of God and the power of God that brought all this into being.

You know, there are some people, even Christians, who say, oh, well, there's no point in looking and bothering about nature. That's nature. We're only concerned about the spiritual. But the spiritual is in the natural. We've got, that's really what it is saying here. When we study, yes, there's the spiritual, but we see the heavens, it tells us in the Psalms, the heavens declare the glory of God.

The skies, His hand was deep. So you see that as we look at these things, and as we study these things, we will come to marvel. In fact, the next verse, full of splendor and majesty is His work.

[7 : 33] When we look at the sun sinking in the west, and we see that red sky in all its different shades of red, and we look at the marble of the grass and all its different shades of green, all the different greens, and we see the wisdom of God. Imagine if God had made the grass red.

It'd be hard on the eyes, wouldn't it? But He hasn't. It's easy, pleasing to the eyes. You see the wisdom of God in everything, in everything. And the more we look at these things, the more we should marvel at the wisdom of God who thought, who planned, who brought all these things into being, and who continues to order and govern and rule over these things.

That's what God expects us to do. And of course, it's only sin that brings the distortion in, like we have in Romans 1, where people take their eye away from the Creator, and they look at the creation, and they begin to worship the created rather than the Creator. God forbid that we should ever do that, but that we would look to Him and give Him the glory, give Him the honor in the marvel and in the wonder of this creation. So remember, my dear friends, that we are not to turn a blind eye to this world, but we are to look at it, and we are to study it. And through our study, it should bring us to praise and to honor and to glorify the God of heaven and earth. But then it goes on to say in verse 4, He has caused His wondrous works to be remembered. The Lord is gracious and merciful. He has caused His wondrous works to be remembered. Now again, memory, as we know, is a great thing. It's a great blessing to have a good memory. I'm afraid it's one of the things today that you will find people complaining about more and more and more. And I suppose it's partly to do with the pace of life, partly to do with the incredible amount of information that we are now storing inside.

But people are frequent, and people younger and younger are beginning to complain about their loss of memory. And I'm sure many of us, I certainly am very guilty of it. Things are just washing over.

You find yourself some things stick, and so many things you're forgetting. And sometimes part, I know it's part of the aging process, but memory is a great blessing. It's a great blessing to have a good memory. But the most important place to have the memory is regarding the things of God.

[10:35] We're told that we can train our memories. Well, one of the ways that we train our memories spiritually is to continue studying the Word of God. And this is what God wants us to remember.

And God is wanting us to remember His works. He has caused His wondrous works to be remembered. God wants us to remember these things. Take, for instance, when Israel had left Egypt.

They'd gone through the wilderness. They'd wandered for 40 years. And then they came into the land of promise. We've preached on this before, but it's worth highlighting. This is the sort of thing the Lord was doing often with His people.

When they had crossed the Jordan and set foot upon the land of promise, what did God order His people to do? Remember that 12 men had to go in and take 12 huge stones out of the riverbed and put these stones up, massive stones, and these stones were to be there as a memorial for generations to come.

So that when children in time to come would say, what are these stones? I suppose in the same way as people will go and they'll look at the Calanish stones and they'll say, what are these stones there for?

[11:58] Who put these stones? Well, again, there's all kinds of debate about the likes of the Calanish stones, but there was no debate about the memorial stones that the Lord had placed at the banks of the Jordan.

They were there so that generation after generation after generation would tell their children, these stones are there because the hand of the Lord is mighty.

And it was an opportunity for parents to teach their children what the Lord had done, how the Lord had delivered Israel, and of how He had taken them through the wilderness and brought them into the land that He had promised.

God wants us to remember. Remember His wonderful works. And there are many things in the Bible the Lord wants us to remember.

He wants, again, when Israel were going to go into the land of promise, God said to them, you're going to go in there, and you're going to have, you're going to become very prosperous because the land is good.

[13:04] And you're going to have lots of cattle, you'll have sheep, and the land will produce, and you'll have lots of corn, and you'll have wine.

And you will have the ability to build really good houses. And your gold and your silver will multiply. In other words, you're going to go into a time of prosperity.

You've just gone through a wilderness experience, but it's going to be a time of great plenty. And the Lord said, Beware that you do not forget.

Don't whatever you do forget. A, where I have taken you through, don't forget, beware that the forget not, that it is the Lord who's done this for you, and that He has given you the ability and the power to accumulate these things and to get these things.

And my dear friends, the Lord is saying the same thing to us today. And I believe He's saying the same thing to us as a nation. We are a nation that have enjoyed tremendous prosperity.

[14:16] Have we acknowledged God? Have we remembered God's hand? Because, as He says in the Bible, He is the one who gives people the power to accumulate wealth.

Because the same God who can give people the ability can take it away in a moment. He can take it away in a moment. And what may appear inconceivable, we wouldn't even imagine could happen.

You know, it could happen. We could be facing famine in five years. Pray the Lord that wouldn't happen. But it could happen. I don't think it needs genius to work out that there could be world famine.

As we look at how things are, it can all be taken away. And God did that to His people many times. You look at the history of Israel. You go through the book of Judges and see when His people forgot the Lord, how quickly their prosperity turned.

And often they ended up facing famine. Years before, they would never have thought it possible. But what had they done? They had forgotten the Lord. They had forgotten that it was God who gave them the wealth and the power to get it.

[15:30] And so there is a clear warning in Scripture to remember. Don't forget. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth. It goes back to... See, Scripture ties everything in. It goes back to reminding us that God created this world.

He created everything about it. We're to remember that. But we're to remember that He rested. And when we have this day, and let us thank the Lord for it.

Has man set this day aside? No. The Lord has. This is not man's invention. It's the Lord. And on this day we have a day of rest for the body and a day for worship for the soul.

In it we are remembering on the Lord's day the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember your Creator. In the days of your youth, you young people in here, remember.

[16:36] Why does the Lord say remember about specific things? Because we're most likely to forget. I believe that whenever we find the Lord saying remember, it is because we're liable to forget.

Remember your Creator, young people, because you're most likely to forget. Remember the Lord's day. Remember the Sabbath day because you're likely to push it aside. Last week we were remembering something else.

We were remembering the Lord's death. And the Lord wants us to remember that. He wants us to keep it in the forefront of our thinking. And remember that every time we take, you may be here today and you're saying to yourself, well, I don't need us a Christian to come to the Lord's table because I can remember the Lord's death.

Well, the Lord is saying, the Lord actually begs to differ with your thought because He is saying, one of the ways you will remember me best of all, this in fact is the way that I have prescribed for you to remember me best of all is by coming and taking this bread and breaking this bread and taking this wine.

You remember me. Do this in remembrance of me. And as often as you eat this bread and drink this wine, you do show forth the Lord's death till He come.

[18:07] Because what are we doing? We're remembering what He has done. We're looking back to the cross. And we're also holding to the forefront of our minds what He has yet to do, that He's coming again.

You do show forth the Lord's death until He come. He's coming again. And every time we come to the table and take the bread and the wine, we are testifying to the coming, the second coming, of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so the Lord wants us to remember His words. That's what He did with Israel, with the Passover. They were to remember.

And it was geared in such a way, just like the memorial stone, the children were going to ask, in years to come, why do you take this? Why do you do this?

And you're to explain to them about the night the Lord delivered you out of Egypt, the Passover and all that was involved. My dear friends, as we remember His great work, let us remember and think about them personally.

[19:18] If you're here today as a believer, remember His great work, His great work, in drawing you to Himself by love.

You are here today, if you're here today as a believer, it's important to stop, to think and reflect, that you are here because of God's drawing love.

A love that loved you, that started to love you when? When you were born? No. How far back?

It tells us, before the world was. I have loved you with an everlasting love. I have loved you before the foundations of this world.

Isn't that extraordinary? Before even this world, this universe was brought into being, the Lord loved you. You may be saying to yourself, I can't get my head around that.

[20:23] Neither can I. But I accept it, and I believe it, and I know it to be true, because the Word of God declares it. And faith lays hold upon it. Faith believes it.

Faith grasps it. Faith rejoices in that great truth. Even although there are things that are too great for us to understand. Such knowledge, the psalmist said, is too high for me, is too great for me, too high to understand.

But you were loved with an everlasting love, and you were irresistibly drawn. The same word that made Matthew get up from the tax desk and go straight off and follow the Lord Jesus.

The same word that brought Zacchaeus out of the tree and brought him down and helped him to follow Jesus is the word that drew you. Isn't that wonderful?

That is something that we should often do, is remember his work in our soul. Do you remember it? Have you thought about it?

[21:33] Have you praised him for what he has done in your life? His great work in forgiving and pardoning sin. It is an extraordinary work.

He doesn't do it easily, though he does it willingly. What do we mean he doesn't do it easily? Do you mean to say the Lord doesn't forgive sin easily?

No. And we mean that because of what was involved. Think about it for a moment. Think about the Father who loves the Son with a love that transcends any love that you or I can understand.

And you look at the Father pouring down his wrath, his judgment upon his dear Son. If you have members of your family, if you're here today as part of a family, you love your family.

Can you imagine pouring your anger and your wrath that is disturbing upon some awful criminal onto a precious member of your family?

[22:56] Well, Jesus was the one who bore upon himself his Father's wrath, the Father who loves him with an eternal, supreme love.

Why? In order that our sins may be forgiven. That's why I say it wasn't done easily. He doesn't do it easily, though he does it willingly. And we ought to be remembering that over and over again.

The cost of forgiveness. And that should make us have a desire to be done more and more and more with sin.

Think of his great work in protecting us and caring for us. Every day, the Lord is watching over us in ways that we don't even think. Even when we're not watching out for ourselves, he's watching out for us.

No parent ever watched their child more carefully, more diligently. The Lord watches far more keenly. And he's working everything for our good.

[24:06] Isn't that wonderful? Everything. The hard things, the difficult things. You know, remember Jacob? Jacob had quite a difficult life. Many great blessings, but he had many sorrows.

And there was a time in Jacob's life, partway through, maybe three quarters through his life, you know, he said, all these things, he said, are against me. That's the way Jacob saw it.

He was feeling that his life was becoming so difficult, so painful. He said, all these things are against me. Before he died, he changed his tune.

Because Jacob lived long enough to see the Lord had been working a beautiful silver, indeed a golden thread, through all that intricate providence that at times was so mysterious, other times so painful, so confusing, but then Jacob lived long enough to see that God was working out a glorious plan, not just for Jacob, not just for Jacob's family, but for the whole nation, and indeed for future generations.

God was at work, and he is in your life and my life as well. Maybe right now you're in the middle of it and you can't see it, but for his people, he's working everything for good.

[25:29] And he has given us an assurance of his love and his desire for communion with us. This is part of his work.

The Lord wants to fellowship with us. The Lord wants to commune with us and fellowship with us even more than we want with him.

Have we grasped that? I think it's important for us to grasp. This is what the Lord wants, and that is why there will come times in your life and in my life where the Lord will allow things in because he says, you know, my people, they're forgetting me, and I don't want them to forget me.

Here is somebody who's going to spend all eternity in my presence, and here he is, she is going through their Christian life, and in the list of priorities, I'm a way, way down.

I must change things in their life, and the Lord does that. We may not understand why, but this is all part of the working everything for good, and part of his great work is preparing this great future.

[26:43] The Lord has a wonderful place, a beautiful place, a glorious place prepared, and in due time, he's going to come, and he's going to take every single one home to be with himself.

This is all part of his wondrous work, and he wants us to think about it and to remember it. My dear friends, if there's anybody in here today who is still outside Christ, I want you to think upon God's great work in giving his Son, and Christ's great work in giving himself, and to thank the Lord that you know about this salvation, that you've heard about it, and more than that, that you've been offered it.

Ask the Lord to help you, to take you, to believe that you would even this very day say, Lord, I need to believe. I want to believe. Please help me.

Give me the faith, because you know, if you truly seek, you will find. The Bible says that. There's nothing debatable about it. Those who seek will find.

That's God's Word. My dear friend, you seek. Seek the Lord as your Savior, and His Word is you will find.

[28:11] Let us pray. O Lord, O God, we ask Thee to bless us and bless the Word that we've been meditating upon, and we pray that we will continue to think about it and continue to remember it.

We pray that these things will not simply fly by and drift by, but that they will become part and partial of our lives, that we will reflect and meditate upon God's greatness and His goodness, His graciousness, His mercy, that He is long-suffering.

O Lord, O God, we ask Thee then to do us good. Bless each one of us. Bless those who are unwell. We commit them to Thee. Guide us and keep us in everything. Have mercy on us and forgive us.

In Jesus' name we ask all. Amen.