

Psalm 145: Praise

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Date: 30 August 2026

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[0:01] We'll be reading from Psalm 145, and you can follow along in your own Bibles, and of course follow along in the Church Bible if you don't have one. If you're following along in the Church Bible, it will be page 491 to 492. Psalm 145.

Hear then God's word to us today. 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 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. The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.

[1:21] 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.

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

The Lord is faithful in all his words, and kind in all his works.

The Lord upholds all who are falling, and rises 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.

[2:24] 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. Let us believe and respond to God's true and living word.

Well, it's great to be with you, and thank you so much for your warm welcome. It's been great to meet a few of you already, and I look forward to meeting more of you later on.

Why don't I open in prayer as we begin? Father, we thank you so much for your living word. Thank you that you speak to us. Please would you strengthen our souls as we look at this psalm together. Please, will you give us thankful hearts that respond to you, to your grace. And we ask all of these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, it's a privilege to be opening up this psalm together, which is all about praising God.

[3:32] But what exactly does it mean to praise the Lord? Why should we praise God? As believers, praise is often associated with music and singing.

And so we sing songs calling us to rejoice and to bless the Lord's holy name. And often it's a real joy to sing, isn't it, as we just did earlier, as we remind each other of God's goodness.

Often it's a foretaste of the new creation almost. I don't know if you've been to a big Christian conference. Perhaps you get a glimpse, a taster of what the new creation will be like.

But sadly, it doesn't always feel like that, doesn't it? Perhaps it's been a tiring week at work.

Perhaps the kids have been up all night. Perhaps you've experienced a great loss recently.

Or perhaps we're simply a glass half empty kind of person. And we just struggle naturally to feel thankful to God. A number of years ago, I was a ministry trainee in the west of England at a small village church.

[4:36] And the minister there was in charge of two parish churches. One of which had about 12 people attending where the average age was about 60 years old. And we sang traditional hymns

accompanied by the organ every week.

And to be honest, often it was a struggle to feel thankful, to feel the words I was singing. I'd been used to going to a big city church with great music and singing.

And now it just felt like the complete opposite. So what does it mean to praise the Lord? Why should we? How can we when we don't feel like it?

Well, our psalm today helps us with all of these questions. As we're near the end of the book of psalms, we come to the last psalm of King David. King David, as he leads his people to meditate on and praise our great God.

If you've got your glasses on, you may have noticed in the footnote that this psalm is what's called an acrostic psalm. Meaning that every line begins with the next letter in the Hebrew alphabet.

[5 : 42] And so this psalm is kind of an A to Z of praise. You might want to call it 10,000 reasons to bless the Lord if you're writing a modern hymn about it. And whilst we're on the fascinating topic of footnotes, you might also have noticed another one for verse 13.

Which says that these two lines are supplied by one Hebrew manuscript, Septuagint and Syriac. Which just means that it's unclear whether that bracketed verse was part of the original psalm or whether it was added in later.

But either way, it doesn't really affect the main meaning of the psalm as it says the same thing to the rest of the psalm. As we work through this psalm, we're going to see an increasing volume of praise.

And increasing reasons to praise the Lord. And so we come to our first point. Praise the Lord. Have a look at verse 1.

Verse 1. 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.

[6 : 47] Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised. And his greatness is unsearchable. I wonder how you felt as you read those words. If you're anything like me, it sounds a bit over the top, doesn't it?

I mean, sure, I can praise the Lord on a Sunday or when I'm feeling okay about life. But every day, forever and ever, it just sounds a bit much, doesn't it?

And overly pious. But David reminds the people of God, God's name in verse 1. Referring to God's personal name, Yahweh.

The one who revealed himself to Moses at the burning bush. And to Israel when he saved them from the Egyptians and led them through the Red Sea.

And so David, even though he is Israel's king, he is also the model Israelite. And he models for the people of God the correct response to God. And so you can imagine an Israelite back then reading this after having been rescued from their exile to Babylon.

[7 : 54] And singing this psalm to praise God for rescuing them. And even Israelite back then could pray this. Well, how much more can we? Because in the Lord Jesus, we do have infinite reasons to praise the Lord.

He is our great God and King who has rescued us from our sin. And so we have all the more reason now to sing verse 3. Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised.

And His greatness is unsearchable. Now you've probably heard a lot of World Cup related illustrations over the summer. So I'm sorry I'm going to use another one. But if you were watching the World Cup over the summer, you may have heard a lot about goats.

Now I'm not talking about the hairy animal. But I'm talking about the acronym which stands for the greatest of all time. Which has become a slightly overused word to describe athletes at the top of their game.

Or even to describe the chicken shop with the best wings. But it's a term which apparently traces back to the boxer Muhammad Ali. Who often called himself the greatest.

[8 : 59] He once said, I am the greatest. I said that even before I knew I was. Which I guess makes him a prophet as well. But that's the way of the world, isn't it?

Greatness is measured in outward success. And beating down your opponents. Whether that's on the pitch, in the boardroom, or in the exam scores. But true greatness according to Jesus looks the complete opposite, doesn't it?

Philippians 2. You'll know that Jesus humbled himself by taking on the form of a human servant. Even to the point of death on a cross. It's absolutely outrageous.

The Son of God, the King of Kings, empties himself. He empties himself of his greatness and willingly stoops to bear our sin. To purchase our freedom and forgiveness.

And therefore God has highly exalted him and given him the name above all names. That is what true greatness looks like. Laying down one's life to serve others.

[10:05] And so of course we give our praise to this great King. And so it's a challenging reminder that actually devotion to God is not just a Sunday thing.

But it's more of a daily instinct. A heart posture. A default mindset that always wants to give thanks to God. Which sounds quite difficult, doesn't it?

And frankly impossible. Often when I'm praying, my tendency is just to bring my requests immediately to God. You know, God help me with this thing.

God help me to love that annoying person at work. Which is of course right to do. God calls us to lay our burdens before him. But this psalm in particular challenges us intentionally to give thanks to God.

Which is hard, right? You can't just force yourself to do it. If I tell you just be thankful. Like it doesn't work, does it? Well thankfully the Lord gives us reasons.

[11:06] And he gives us fuel to give thanks to him. And that's where the psalmist goes next. And so point two, we can praise the Lord because of his steadfast love.

We can praise the Lord because of his steadfast love. Have a look at verse four. Verse four. Well what are these mighty acts, you might ask?

Well have a look at verse eight. 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.

Now if you're an Israelite back then, you would immediately know the back story to these verses.

Because these words are some of the most significant words in the entire Bible.

And it came at a critical point in Israel's history. You may remember the disaster of the golden calf in Exodus 32. God's people have just been rescued out of Egypt.

[12:10] And God has been speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai. Laying out the terms of the covenant relationship he will establish with his people. But after 40 days of Moses going AWOL, the people decide, okay we've had enough.

We're just going to chuck our earrings into the pan and make this golden calf as a stand-in for God. And yet despite this treachery, God still decides to take them back.

And he proclaims these beautiful words. That he is gracious and merciful. Slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. And for the Christian believer, well we have all the more reason to praise God.

Because this steadfast love has been revealed more fully at the cross. As Jesus willingly takes the punishment we deserve. He satisfies the justice of God.

And extends mercy and forgiveness to all of us. And so we can praise the Lord because of his steadfast love. But who does the praising here?

[13:18] And who are they speaking to? Have a look at verse 10. That all your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord. And all your saints shall bless you.

And so here God's works in his creation displays the glory of God. All creation points to the glory of God. And all his people praise the Lord.

And so it's clear who does the praising. But who they are speaking to is quite surprising. While it's verse 10, the saints bless the Lord. But actually the emphasis here seems to be speaking to one another.

To other people. Did you see that in verse 4? One generation shall commend your works to another. And verse 11. 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. And so we are not only to praise the Lord.

[14:18] But we are to declare it to each other. Which is quite a surprising thing. Because when we think about praise. Often we think of it in terms of the vertical dimension.

It's just between me and God. But actually here and elsewhere in the Bible. Often the emphasis is on encouraging each other. Even as we praise God. And so whilst we are called to praise God.

The context here is within the corporate gathering. Encouraging each other as we praise God together. Which is echoed in the New Testament. As we are called to speak the truth in love to each other.

And to teach and admonish each other. Through singing hymns and psalms. At Bible College we have an old chapel. Which we occasionally use for some of our chapel services. It's an old long building. With pews lined up against the wall on either side. And so you are kind of sat there facing other people on the other side.

[15 : 16] A bit like choir stores if you have been to an old Anglican church. Or a bit like the houses of parliament in the UK. But the idea is that you can see each other as you sing. And as you read out the liturgy.

Now I always find it's a bit awkward. When you sing and when you catch the eye of somebody else on the other side. But actually the architecture reflects the theological point here.

We are called to sing to God. But also to each other. As encouragement. Now I'm not advocating that you start looking around the room when you sing.

But it wouldn't be a bad idea. Because there is something quite powerful. About seeing and hearing each other. As we declare God's praises. I remember a guy once.

Who was belting out the song behind me. And he was slightly out of tune. Which actually was all the more encouraging to me. Because it was clear that he was not trying to audition for the X Factor.

But he was trying to encourage his brothers and sisters.

[16 : 20] And of course we can also declare God's greatness to each other when we're not singing. Whether that's sharing with each other after church. This particular truth really encouraged me. Or doing that in small groups during the week.

Or during a one-to-one catch-up. This psalm reminds us that believers are people who speak about God. All throughout the Bible. That is the mark of a genuinely converted believer.

Their tongues are loosened to declare God's greatness. As Peter and John say in the book of Acts. We cannot but speak of what we have heard and seen. And so whether that's encouraging believers.

Or proclaiming the gospel to unbelievers. Let's keep spurring each other to do that. So we've seen we can praise the Lord because of his steadfast love.

But now we come to our second reason. We can praise the Lord because of his kind preservation. We can praise the Lord because of his kind preservation.

[17 : 21] Here comes the loudest point of the psalm. We started off with the psalmist praising God. Who then summons all the saints to praise him. But now the end in verse 21.

The psalmist calls all flesh to bless his holy name forever and ever. And the big reason that all people should praise him is because of his kind preservation.

Have a look at verse 14. Verse 14. 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. These verses here describe a general preservation of the world. God sustains the universe by the word of his power.

And provides for people in a general sense. It doesn't mean that God always provides for every single person at all times. But it does mean that he provides indiscriminately.

[18 : 27] He pours out his common grace on all humanity regardless of gender, class or ethnicity. But the focus of the next few verses homes in on God's people.

Have a look at verse 18. 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. And so God especially preserves his people who humble themselves before God.

Who trust him and fear him. But he does not promise believers a blank check. In the same way that a wise parent does not give in to everything that a child desires.

But God will give us everything we need to sustain our faith. Verse 19. The desires of those who fear him will be desires that please God.

[19 : 32] Desires that align with what God's word teaches. And even if what God gives does not match our desires. We can still trust that he knows what's best for us.

I've been reading the biography of a Scottish missionary called John Payton recently. And honestly it's one of the best Christian biographies I've ever read. In 1858 John Payton travelled all the way from Scotland to the islands of the New Hebrides.

Or what is known as Vanuatu today in the South Pacific Ocean. John faced many threats. Including savage cannibals on the island. Malaria and rampant superstitious beliefs.

And he describes one time when a wild chief was chasing him through the bush for four hours with a loaded gun. And John tries to speak kindly to him. He tries to reason with him. To talk him out of killing him.

And you can see there he says, Looking up in unceasing prayer to our dear Lord Jesus, I left all in his hands and felt immortal till my work was done. Without that abiding consciousness of the presence and power of my dear Lord and Saviour, nothing else in all the world could have preserved me from losing my reason and perishing miserably.

[20 : 50] And that basically defined John Payton's life and ministry. Unceasing prayer and bold faith in God in defiance of all the odds.

And amazingly, God restrained the hands of the wicked many times and preserved John's life. Now the point isn't to say that God will always preserve our lives and rescue us out of every trouble we face.

But it is true that God will preserve and sustain our faith. As long as we keep trusting in him. As long as we keep calling on him.

Verse 18. He promises he will be near to us. John knew the truth of these verses. And so he could praise. Friends, I wonder if you know that.

How do you believe that? How we have a God who has not only saved us in the past. But we have a God who will preserve us till the finish line.

[22 : 02] Perhaps we're going through the valley ourselves. Perhaps it's been a season of trial and testing. And you just don't feel like praising God in any way. And while God sees you.

And he understands. And he calls us to go back to his word. To remember who he is. To remember his steadfast love. To remember that he will preserve us till the end.

One way to keep remembering these things is simply to pray through this psalm. Use it as a spark for your own thanksgiving. I think a couple of weeks back, Kevin mentioned in the sermon that the psalms often encourage us to talk to ourselves.

To speak to our own souls. To rouse our weary souls. Which is what verses 1 to 3 actually does. Have a look at verse 1.

I will extol you, my God and King. When I don't feel like praising God, I need to rouse myself to action. Verse 2. Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever.

[23 : 08] And again, verse 21. My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord. The psalmist is rousing himself. He's determined. Whatever he feels like to praise God.

So why not turn this psalm into your own prayer of thanksgiving this week. Father, thank you so much for your steadfast love towards us in the Lord Jesus. Thank you for your grace and mercy. Thank you that you are slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. Verse 14. Thank you that you uphold all those who are falling. And verse 18.

Thank you so much that you here, you are near to those who call upon you. And actually that's a great habit in general. As we read through the Bible.

Turning every line we read into prayer. George Whitefield, the great evangelist in the 18th century, called this habit reading the Bible on our knees. As we turn every line we read in the Bible into prayers of petition or thanksgiving.

[24 : 08] And as Kevin mentioned earlier, actually another helpful thing is to try journaling. See if you can write down something at the end of the day. A few things that you are thankful to God for.

Whether that's little things or things that the Lord has been teaching you from his word. And as the psalm ends, it lifts our eyes upwards and forwards.

David calls us to bless the Lord's holy name forever and ever. And it's a picture of eternity in a way. It is a picture of the new creation, the new world that God is drawing us towards.

And where the praise will never end. Because the praises of the saints will be the eternal anthem of heaven. We will be forever praising the Lord, praising the Lamb who was slain.

And so our praises now are a dim reflection of this perfected praise in eternity. And that is what we were made for. It is our heart's deepest desire.

[25 : 14] Whether we know it or not, to magnify the Lord, to adore him, to give thanks to him for his mighty works in Jesus. If you're not trusting in Jesus, yes, perhaps this is news to you.

That following Jesus is about knowing him. It is about being in a relationship with him. That is not being good enough. Or being a better person. Jesus does not need us to work for him.

But he simply wants our hearts, our praise, as a grateful response to what he has already done for us. If we are trusting in Jesus here, as we praise God now, during the highs and the lows, individually or corporately, in song or in speech, in prayer or in one another encouragement, let us do that with our hearts fixed on eternity.

One of my favorite hymns has these words, I long to be where the praise is never ending. I yearn to dwell where the glory never fades. Where countless worshippers will share one song.

And cries of worthy will honor the Lamb. What a glorious hope we have, right? And so even as we praise the Lord imperfectly now, let us long and yearn for that final day when our praise will be perfected.

[26 : 36] And as we journey on in our earthly pilgrimage, let us keep opening our mouths in praise because of the Lord's steadfast love and because of his kind preservation.

Verse 8, the Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. And verse 20, 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. Let's pray together.

Father, we thank you so much that you are worthy of all our praise because of your steadfast love towards us in sending your son and because of your kind preservation.

Please would you give us thankful hearts each day, hearts which delight in praising you in song, in prayer, in our words to each other. And help us even when we don't feel like that.

[27 : 37] Draw us back to your word. And please would you energize our hearts and fix our rise on that glorious day when our praise will finally be perfected. And we ask all of these things in Jesus' name.

Amen.