

Psalm 146-147

We are rounding 3rd and headed home concerning the conclusion of the book of psalms. The final 5 psalms are known as “Hallelujah” psalms in that the word “Hallelujah” which translates, “Praise the Lord!” serves as bookends being the opening and closing phrase of each of these last 5 psalms. So as the book of psalms winds down and wraps up the emphasis is to take and turn our attention toward praising the Lord.

Warren Wiersbe said, “These five psalms are a short course in worship, and God’s people today would do well to heed their message. Sanctuaries are turning into religious theaters and ‘worship’ is becoming more and more entertainment. The author of this psalm understood that God was not just a part of life but the heart of life.”¹

As for me I’m all about doing our very best to be culturally relevant. Paul said we’re to become all things to all men that we might win the more to Christ. When David was being made king, you discover when it begins to speak of the various tribes coming to him, giving their allegiance to him that it speaks of the sons of Issachar and it describes them like this: *“of the sons of Issachar who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do, their chiefs were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their command;”*². I love that description of those men, because that’s who we want to be in the day and age in which God has called *us* to live. We want to be men and women who have understanding of the times, to what we need to do. As for our appeal to win people to Christ, if it reaches out or brings people in to remodel the sanctuary, have some cutting edge kind of design to the stage or worship environment, than so be it. None of that really matters to me, it’s all simply a tool, the harvest party is a tool, family day is a tool, everything we do, all that went on here all summer has been as tools to reach out and share with people the love of God and the hope we have in Christ.

¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (2004). *Be exultant* (1st ed.) (213). Colorado Springs, Colo.: Cook Communications Ministries.

² *The New King James Version*. 1982 (1 Ch 12:32). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

What we can never do is compromise the message of the gospel, the teaching of God's word and what it means to worship God. I agree with Mr. Wiersbe that much of what is called "worship" today is in reality nothing more than Christian entertainment. Regardless of what the sanctuary looks like, or what means the worship team may use to facilitate worship what's critical is that we understand that no one is here to entertain anyone else. We're here collectively, as a body to worship the 1 true and living God. Because as was mentioned God isn't to be a *part* of our life, He is the *heart* of our life.

That's what Paul the apostle was talking about when he said, "*For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*" Phil 1:21 Or, "*When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.*" Col 3:4 Christ isn't a part of our life, He is our life, even so worship isn't something we squeeze in here or there, or something that we come to church for to let someone entertain us. Being a worshiper isn't something we do, it's someone we are. The sum total of our lives is set apart to God, so worship isn't defined by what we do, but by who we are.

Vs 1-2

Note the sense of urgency, the exhortation to praise the Lord now, while you have your being. Don't put it off; don't be guilty of procrastinating when it comes to giving God praise. As people we have a tendency to put off a lot of things, we like to wait until the last minute. The psalmist says that when it comes to praising God, don't put it off, now's the time, while you live, while you have your being. The bible is clear (Acts 17:25) that God is the One who gives us life, breath and all things. Therefore it's only appropriate that we use the life and the breath that *He gives us* to praise *Him*.

The psalmist says that he's going to praise God throughout the entirety of his life (while I live, while I have my being). Which tells us that he's purposing to lead a life that's focused *on* God and centered *around* God. To me this is such a key when it comes to leading our lives in a manner that's well pleasing *to* God. Because when you're focused on leading a life that's pleasing *to* the Lord, that's centered *on* the Lord you'll not give heed to the criticism *of* others nor will you complain *about* others. You won't compete *against* others nor will you compare yourself *to* others. You're not worried about being a man pleaser, you're aiming to be well pleasing to your heavenly Father and that's it. So the psalmist is purposed to trust *in* the Lord and give the focus of his heart and his praise continually *to* the Lord.

Why? Because as the psalm highlights, God is all powerful, He's abundantly merciful, and He is eternal (and/or forever faithful).

Vs 3-4

Or another way to understand this: the best of men are at best men. The most powerful of men (princes) will perish and when they do their power, their ability to persuade or help perishes with them.

I don't know why it is but we have such a tendency to place our trust, to place hope in man. That's why we elect a new President every 4 or 8 yrs, we're looking for a man to help our country out of its mess.

Now I'm all for voting, I believe we have a responsibility to make our voice heard and our heart's known as believers. But man will let you down, that's why our new president starts with great stats and about a yr or 2 into it his approval rating falls through the floor. Because our country gets disillusioned, "I guess he can't do it either."

There is no help, no salvation (ultimately/eternally) in man. If you hope in your husband, or your wife, or your church, or your pastor- sooner or later you'll be disappointed. Because man is powerless, how can lasting help come from a frail, faulty human being who will one day return to the dust? We have come *from* the earth and we will return *to* the earth. God however is eternal, all-powerful, therefore He is the One in Whom we hope.

Vs 5-10

You see man's presence upon the earth is temporary, God, however will reign eternally, He aids the downtrodden faithfully therefore we place our hope *in* Him and we give our praise *to* Him.

In Vs 5 we note that God is our *help* and God is our *hope*. Vs 6 begins to elaborate on the omnipotence of God, He made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them. He continues to expound on the fact that God is merciful and that God is faithful. He executes justice for the oppressed, gives food to the hungry, freedom to the prisoners. He opens blind eyes (we spoke about that Sunday morning [Luke 18]), exalts the humble, defends the fatherless and turns the way of the wicked upside down.

Of course it's not too difficult to read this particular portion of this psalm and see how readily it applies to Christ. It's through Jesus that God made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that are in them. The bible declares, "*All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.*" John 1:3

He keeps truth forever, we know that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life, that no one comes to the Father but by Him. Jesus is justice for the oppressed, He fed the hungry, sets free the spiritually bound, He opens blind eyes, exalts the humble, loves the righteous and will subvert the way of the wicked.

He will reign forever and is faithful to all generations, Praise the Lord!

Psalm 147

Vs1

We're going to see this exhortation to praise the Lord surface again and again throughout the remainder of these psalms.

Here the psalmist gives us 3 reasons to praise the Lord. #1 It's good to sing praises to our God. It's good for you, it glorifies the Lord, there's simply not a single negative reason as to why we shouldn't praise our God. Not only is it good for you, #2 it's pleasant for those around you. As we mentioned not only does it glorify God, it edifies the body. Praising God is soothing to our soul. Perhaps you remember that there came a time in King Saul's life where he had a distressing spirit that would trouble him. Anytime this spirit of oppression would begin to come upon him he would call for David (AKA the sweet psalmist of Israel) who would play praise music and as David worshiped and played his guitar (his harp) Saul would be refreshed and renewed. Praise and worship just has a way of lifting up a downcast soul.

Praising God is good for you, it's pleasant (not only to you but those around you) and 3^{rdly} praise looks good on you ☐. Or as it reads here, "Praise is beautiful". The best-dressed people of any age are those who wear the garment of praise. You can have a wardrobe that's worth a small fortune but if your countenance is down or your heart is heavy it won't matter. On the other hand you can have next to nothing in your closet but if you're clothed in the garment of praise there will be a beauty that radiates from you.

Vs 2-4

Vs 4 is one of those Vs that will blow your mind if you let it swim around in there long enough. “He counts the # of the stars; He calls them all by name.” Perhaps you remember a few weeks ago we took a quick survey of the size of the universe. We talked about the Milky way galaxy (which we live in) and the billions and billions of stars that are in it and how we’re just one of billions of galaxies each containing billions of stars. I read that there is on the average between 100 billion and 1 trillion stars in each galaxy and there between 100 billion and 1 trillion galaxies in the universe.

To give you an idea of how large of a # 1 trillion is, if you started counting and you could count nonstop every # in the equation nonstop one # per second it would take you 31,710 yrs to count to 1 trillion. But there’s a problem there because that assumes you can count each # in one second. But you can’t say, “eight hundred thirty two billion, five hundred twenty one million, four hundred thirty two thousand, nine hundred eighty seven” in a single second.

That’s more of a 7 second number. So doing math that’s a little more accurate, the site I visited estimated that it would take approximately, 542,241 yrs to count to 1 trillion.

Now, that accounts for 1 galaxy, what about the other 999 billion galaxies (give or take)? Here’s my point: that’s a lot of stars, and it would take us a long time to count them.

God not only counts the # of the stars, He calls *them all* by name! Now let’s take it one step farther. He doesn’t call the stars, “John”, or “James”, “Bob” or “Ron”. When you read the book of Job as you come to Ch 38 God is questioning Job who had the audacity to question God (as do we all at times). But God says to Job, “*Can you bind the cluster of the Pleiades, Or loose the belt of Orion? Can you bring out Mazzaroth in its season?*”³ God is there referring to these constellations in these intellectual, (scientific) kind of ways. “The Pleiades, Orion, and Mazzaroth”, now, I don’t know all of *your* names, much less the trillions of stars in the sky by technical reference, each person on the planet, the hairs of their head and each time a sparrow falls to the earth! Half the time I call my kids by the wrong name!

It's no wonder we read in the book of Isaiah, "*To whom then will you liken Me, Or to whom shall I be equal?*" says the Holy One. *'Lift up your eyes on high, And see who has created these things, Who brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, By the greatness of His might And the strength of His power; Not one is missing.'*"⁴

Kinda makes Vs 5 go with out saying doesn't it?

Vs 5

Every now and then people want to know if there's anything God *can't* do. The answer to that is, "Yes". One thing God can't do is learn; His understanding is infinite, He knows everything. All the more reason to trust in Him and not lean on our own understanding, my understanding is finite at best, incredibly limited. How much better to lean *on* and trust *in* One whom knows all and understands all? If I don't get it I can rest assured He does.

Now look at Vs 6

Vs 6

with all this might, all this power, (He placed incomprehensible heavenly bodies in place, calls them into submission and knows them by name, created the heaven and the earth, the seas and all that are in them) with all this power at His fingertips this is what He chooses to do. "Lift up the humble". When you and I will humble ourselves, see our insufficiency and acknowledge our need (truly). That's when the hand that hung the stars in their place reaches down to lift you up...

God could do anything He wanted to, and He chooses to use His time caring for broken and bruised people like you and me.

Vs 7-9

Here's the point, God cares for His creation.

Vs 10-11

Military might doesn't impress God, be it the infantry or the cavalry. The pride of our nation doesn't "wow" God at all. What pleases God is one who will reverence Him, who will trust in Him and hope in His mercy.

⁴ *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Is 40:25-26). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Vs 12-20

We note in Vs 15 that God’s word will never return void, “It runs very swiftly”. Isaiah 55, *“For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”*⁵

Again the following Vs declare and display God’s sovereignty over His creation. Then the psalm ends highlighting the grace of God that has been poured out upon Israel. God gave the world His word through Israel and gave the world its Savior (God’s Son) through Israel. He gave us His written word and the Living Word Jesus Christ both of which were the gift of God to this world through the nation of Israel.

“He has not dealt thus with any nation; and as for His judgments, they have not known them. Praise the Lord!”

Prayer Point:

God take our attention and turn it toward praising You! May redeem the time knowing that the days are evil and may our lives be a reflection of Your grace and Your goodness and may we be clothed in the garment of praise. It blows us away to think of the moon and the stars, the works of Your fingers, that you # the stars, know them all by name yet You’re mindful of us. We thank You for Your faithfulness, we praise You for Your mercy. Have Your way in us completely to the glory of Your Name...

⁵ *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Is 55:10–11). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.