

Today is the second in our series looking at Psalms of Praise.

Let’s take a step back for a minute or so and think about what the Psalms are, what they do and what we should do with them.

Tom Wright has some helpful thoughts here.

“The Psalms [are] the great hymnbook at the heart of the Bible, ... the daily lifeblood of Christians.¹

“... a chorus of praise and prayer that has been going on for millennia and across all cultures.²

“The Psalms ... transform ... our ‘worldview’ ... what [we] look *through*, not what [we] look *at*.³

“[They] invite their singers ... to live at the crossroads of *time*, *space* and *matter*.⁴

“When we worship the creator God with our whole, truthful self, we trust – and the Psalms strongly encourage this trust – that we will be remade.”⁵

This morning, we are looking at one of the great Psalms of praise, Psalm 145. In the Authorized (King James) Version of the Bible this Psalm is headed “David’s *Psalm of praise*”. In 73 of the 150 Psalms in the Bible, David is named as the author.

Spurgeon says about Psalm 145, “It is David’s, David’s very own, David’s favourite. It is David’s Praise just as another (Psalm 86) is David’s Prayer. It is altogether praise, and praise pitched in a high key. David had blessed God many a time in other psalms, but this he regarded as his peculiar, his crown jewel of praise.”⁶

It’s actually written in a special way; the first word of each line starts with each letter of the Hebrew alphabet in turn. It’s an acrostic poem.

It’s also worth noting, that each idea is usually presented once, then again in a slightly different way to give us a deeper understanding of what is being said. Actually, this is a common feature of Hebrew poetry. Perhaps the Lord knows that we need repetition for things to penetrate our understanding and stick in our memory.

Let’s look today at this Psalm under four headings:

1. Who do we praise?
2. When do we praise?
3. Why do we praise?
4. How do we praise?

1. Who do we praise?

Psalm 145 starts with

¹ I will exalt you, my God the King;
I will praise your name for ever and ever.

¹ Tom Wright, *Finding God in the Psalms*, p1

² Ibid. p6

³ Ibid. p7

⁴ Ibid. p20

⁵ Ibid. p29

⁶ Psalm 145 by C H Spurgeon, https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/spurgeon_charles/tod/ps145.cfm

This is King David speaking, probably at the height of his reign as a powerful king himself, acknowledging that the Lord God is the “King of Kings”.

David will praise God’s name forever. We remember that the name of someone, in those times, signified who he really was. It is easy to miss the significance of this statement because we live in such a different time and culture. Isaiah expands on the significance of God’s name. The Lord says

⁸ ‘I am the LORD; that is my name!
I will not yield my glory to another
or my praise to idols. Isaiah 42:8

As a society in Australia, who do we praise? Certainly not the Lord! Sports players, sports teams, stars like Taylor Swift ... ?

But, responding to question 1, **who do we praise?** The LORD God, the King of Kings.

Lord, please help us to praise, exalt and value you more than any other.

David goes on to speak of God’s glorious majesty, his power, his abundant goodness, his righteousness, his compassion, that he is trustworthy ...

But I am getting ahead of myself. Let’s look now at our second question.

2. When do we praise?

² Every day I will praise you
and extol your name for ever and ever.

Every day. For ever and ever. That seems OK. But, what about when everything is going wrong?

It’s easy to praise God when things are going well, particularly if God has recently rescued us from a difficult situation. Even then, it is something that we need to practise. Something that we need to remind each other to do.

Remember the ten lepers that Jesus healed. Only one came back to thank Jesus and praise God. Jesus expressed surprise.

¹⁷ Jesus asked, ‘Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? ¹⁸ Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?’ Luke 17:17-18

Lord, help us always to remember to thank and praise you for your goodness to us.

But what about when things go wrong? Is our automatic response to praise the Lord anyway?

In Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians, chapter 5, we read

¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Wow! Is this possible? It must be, because it is in God’s word. But giving thanks and praising God even when life is hard and things are going wrong? Perhaps for years? We know that God is good, and sometimes that is all we have to hang onto.

Let me share a story. This happened in the early 1970s, a time of renewal, where we encouraged each other to put God’s word into practice. One very strong teaching at the time was “praise the Lord in all circumstances”.

My brother-in-law was from a long line of loggers and timber workers. Our nephew, who must have been in his late teens at the time, was delivering a load of timber for us. Arthur was helping unload it when he got his finger mashed between two pieces of timber. Needless to say, it was very painful. He was jumping around the front lawn, holding his finger and shouting, "Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!"

Our nephew went home that night saying, "Do you know what Uncle Arthur said when he got his finger mashed? Praise the Lord!" This was significant in his committing his life to the Lord Jesus. He is now a recently retired Baptist pastor.

It may not have been Arthur's reaction at other times, but at that time, what came out in the heat of the moment was what we had been practising regularly from God's word.

So, answering our second question, **when do we praise?** At all times, in all circumstances, good and bad alike.

Now, let's look at our third question:

3. Why do we praise?

As Christians, praise is supposed to be part of our DNA. It should just ooze from us.

Looking at Psalm 145, we can find many reasons to praise God.

³ Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise;
his greatness no one can fathom.

Or, as it says in The Message translation of the Bible, "GOD is magnificent; he can never be praised enough. There are no boundaries to his greatness."

God is so great that no one can measure or understand the depths of his greatness.

⁸ The LORD is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and rich in love.
⁹ The LORD is good to all;
he has compassion on all he has made.

This echoes God's description of himself as he proclaimed his name to Moses in Exodus 34:6. "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness,"

Remember, whenever we see LORD written in capital letters in the Old Testament, it is the English translation of God's name, Yahweh, which means "I am" or "I will be".⁷

Jesus picked this up with his seven great "I AM" statements in John's Gospel – I am the bread of life. I am the light of the world. ...⁸

Mark recorded in his Gospel, chapter 14 verses 62-64, that when Jesus was before the Sanhedrin, the High Priest asked him if he was the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One.

⁶² 'I am,' said Jesus. 'And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.'⁹

⁶³ The high priest tore his clothes. 'Why do we need any more witnesses?' he asked. ⁶⁴ 'You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?'

They all condemned him as worthy of death.

⁷ For more detail see <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/yhwh-lord/>

⁸ <https://indycrowe.com/2019/02/13/the-7-i-am-statements-of-jesus-ot-background-nt-meaning/>

⁹ See Daniel 7:13

Now back to Psalm 145.

^{13b} The LORD is trustworthy in all he promises
and faithful in all he does.
¹⁴ The LORD upholds all who fall
and lifts up all who are bowed down.

The Lord is trustworthy, faithful and lifts up those who are bowed down by the weight of their troubles.

Colin Buchanan sings about this in his song “Jesus Strong and Kind” and he applies it to Jesus.

Jesus said, if I am weak
I should come to Him
No one else can be my strength
I should come to Him

For the Lord is good and faithful
He will keep us day and night
We can always run to Jesus
Jesus, strong and kind ¹⁰

¹⁵ The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food at the proper time.
¹⁶ You open your hand
and satisfy the desires of every living thing.

God cares for all of creation. He has provided everything that is necessary to sustain us all – food, clean water, fresh air, beauty ... But what have we done with his good creation?

Lord, help us return to you and your ways in our care for creation, also in caring for the poor, the vulnerable, the outcast, the lonely ...

¹⁷ The LORD is righteous in all his ways
and faithful in all he does.
¹⁸ The LORD is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth.

The Lord is righteous. He never makes a mistake. His judgements are always right, he knows our hearts. His character is always pure, he wants only our good.

We aren't like that, but in Christ we can receive his righteousness.¹¹

He is faithful and hears us when we call out to him, no matter how deep our trouble.

¹⁹ He fulfils the desires of those who fear him;
he hears their cry and saves them.
²⁰ The LORD watches over all who love him,
but all the wicked he will destroy.

He watches over us. But he is also a God of justice. Ultimately, those who seem to get away with doing great evil at present will be held to account.

There is a popular Christian song called “10,000 Reasons” (Bless the Lord) that is based on Psalm 103. We won't add 10,000 more reasons to praise the Lord to our list, but here are a few more. The story behind the song tells us that

¹⁰ <https://cityalight.com/song/jesus-strong-and-kind/>

¹¹ 2 Corinthians 5:21 – “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

Psalm 103 gives [many] amazing reasons to praise God, including; He forgives our sins, heals our diseases, redeems our lives from the pit, crowns us with love and compassion, satisfies our desires and gives righteousness and justice. This song reflects the words of this Psalm, along with other reasons to praise God. The point behind the song ["10,000 Reasons"], as writer Matt Redman says, is this; *'If you wake up one morning and you cannot think of a reason to bring God some kind of offering of thanks or praise, then you can be sure there's something wrong at your end of the pipeline, and not his. We live beneath an unceasing flow of goodness, kindness, greatness, and holiness, and every day we're given reason after reason why Jesus is so completely and utterly worthy of our highest and best devotion.'*¹²

So, recapping our thoughts on question 3, **why do we praise?** Because God is great, gracious, compassionate, righteous, faithful, he cares for us and watches over us. The list goes on.

And now our fourth question:

4. How do we praise?

Looking at Psalm 145, verse 4.

⁴ One generation commends your works to another;
they tell of your mighty acts.

⁵ They speak of the glorious splendour of your majesty –
and I will meditate on your wonderful works.

⁶ They tell of the power of your awesome works –
and I will proclaim your great deeds.

⁷ They celebrate your abundant goodness
and joyfully sing of your righteousness.

Well, one thing we can all do is pass on the stories of how God has worked in our lives – to our children, our grandchildren, our nieces and nephews, our younger friends ...

We can talk at the dinner table. We can read Bible stories and pray with them. We can send them cards. We can have Christian music playing. We can encourage and/or facilitate them going to Christian camps. We can bring them to church or kids church each Sunday.

We can celebrate the goodness of God. We can sing his praises.

¹⁰ All your works praise you, LORD;
your faithful people extol you.

Everything God has ever done is good. All that he has made or said is good. All these things show the greatness of the Lord.

¹¹ They tell of the glory of your kingdom
and speak of your might,

¹² so that all people may know of your mighty acts
and the glorious splendour of your kingdom.

All creation shows the glory of God. We can tell of God's works, his creation and his compassion, and he wants **all** people to know of his mighty acts. He doesn't want anyone to be lost.¹³

¹² Story Behind the Song: '10,000 Reasons', <https://oasischurch.com.au/4032-2/>

¹³ Matt 18:12-14, John 3:16, 2 Peter 3:9

“The kingdom of God” was the central message of Jesus’ ministry. He “went about all Galilee ... preaching the gospel of the kingdom.”¹⁴ He said things like, “The kingdom of God is in your midst.”¹⁵ Many of Jesus’ parables were about the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven.

Doing a search for “kingdom of God” in Bible Gateway gave 97 results, 49 of them for what Jesus taught about it.

¹³Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and your dominion endures through all generations.

God’s rule, his kingdom, is without beginning or end.

We see this from the beginning in the creation of the world, the whole universe actually. And we see it in God’s unfolding story of redemption.

From the time we humans rebelled and thought we knew better than God, he has had a plan to rescue us. For the ancient Israelites we read of the exodus, God’s miraculous rescue of his people from slavery in Egypt.

Then, Jesus’ death and resurrection offered this rescue to anyone who would come to him in faith.

But now, Jesus sits at God’s right hand in glory.¹⁶

God’s kingdom is an everlasting kingdom that one day all will see.¹⁷

Even now, in our own lives, we experience glimpses of God’s glory in his love for us and his rescue in our times of need.

So, we can praise him because of who he is, who he has been and who he will be in all eternity.

And, summarising our answer to the fourth question, **how do we praise?** With our lives, with our words, with our love and of course, we can sing.

Psalms 145 is a great Psalm of praise, a song about who God is, what he has done and when and how we should praise him.

²¹My mouth will speak in praise of the LORD.
Let every creature praise his holy name
for ever and ever.

This is the last thing in the Bible that we know that David wrote, his last will and testament if you like. So, let’s honour this great man of God – a man after God’s own heart, a poet, musician, warrior and king, an ancestor of the Lord Jesus – by living this verse. David was also a man who made great mistakes, but he did not try to hide them, he was broken hearted, and confessed them to the Lord.

Let’s remember to praise and thank the Lord for ever and ever, in all circumstances, in good times and bad, because of who he is and what he has done, with our voices and our lives.

There is life, health and wholeness in God’s word. Let’s encourage each other to believe it with our hearts as well as our heads, and live it every day.

Let’s trust God who is good and faithful as we believe his word and put it into practice this week.

Let’s pray. *Our Father, help us today to remember your word to us, to believe it, and to live it. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.*

¹⁴ Matt 4:23

¹⁵ Luke 17:21 ...

¹⁶ Hebrews 1:3, 1 Peter 3:22

¹⁷ Hebrews 1:1-9