

# Psalm 145

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[ 0 : 00 ] We are doing a double song today. Psalm 1 was this morning, and I think the rest of you were there for that. But let me say a little bit about it again.

I mentioned it's the gateway to the psalm. So if we're going to look at any other psalm, then we might as well look back at that. The first psalm orients us to all the psalms.

Puts us on one of two paths in life, with God and without God. And it says the source of life are the instructions of God, the law of the Lord.

What we receive as the scriptures from God. Precepts. One form of that instruction, then, is the psalms.

And so it sort of has to win our appetite for the rest of the psalms. Prepare us for reading and singing the psalms themselves. They were originally sung. It is Israel's hymn book.

[ 0 : 59 ] It has been called correctly. As we meditate on them, like Psalm 145, we can expect to grow in Christian maturity.

And to benefit those around us. Right? So the tree, the person, the blessed person, like this tree, bears fruit. That benefits the community may provide shade, comfort, stability.

This is why the letters of the Colossians again can say, let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. Teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom. Singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

With thankfulness in your hearts to God. It seems strange. How am I teaching and admonishing other people and then I break into song and help them out? But the idea is really that we sing songs properly together.

And it is a way of ministering to one another. We might know someone across the room who's going through a hard time. And we think, wow, those words and that was in life. Must really be something special today.

[ 2 : 03 ] And so on. And we rejoice with those who rejoice. And we mourn with those who mourn. This is the fundamental perspective on living life together.

We have these two ways. We feed on God's instruction. And with God, we proceed to life. Life everlasting. It's perspective. As we see in Psalm 145 tonight, a lot of what the Psalms wish to do is put our life in perspective.

Put our life in perspective. One group of people that I think has a good perspective on life, at least in a certain way, are soldiers. I actually have a lot of admiration for military veterans.

I'm not just talking about or necessarily talking about the fighting part. But I'm talking about everyday life. How a soldier lives his or her life. Because once they've left the military and reentered civilian life, they have a particular perspective on the world.

They've dealt with extreme situations. By that I mean they've signed up for a profession that requires you to live, one, without a lot of life's comforts, where you're treated harshly, where discipline is among probably the top three virtues.

[ 3 : 25 ] And many of these people have seen combat or life and death scenarios. A mission, for example, may be important than some of the very life or survival.

And there's a lot of tough love in the military. It's thanks to all of these things that soldiers and veterans have a particular perspective on life. A heavy workload.

Angry colleagues. Take these as a few examples. An anxious partner. Difficult students. These are just not so serious or difficult for soldiers, in my experience at least.

They're abnormally calm, unfazed by difficulties. I don't know if that's your experience, but this is the perspective that I'm referring to. The threshold for what bothers military people is much higher than the average person's.

I think this is by and large because of what they've dealt with and experienced and how they've been trained. Most of the psalms, and certainly Psalm 145, are trying to put your life in perspective. [ 4 : 34 ] And the psalms do so by orienting us towards the greatest thing in life. Psalm 1 declares it a blessed thing to delight in the law of the Lord and meditate it on it day and night.

Psalm 4 expresses confidence in the fact that God will answer those who call to him. Psalm 8 puts humankind in the perspective of God's majesty. Psalm 13 proclaims trust in God despite and in the midst of his apparent absence.

You get the idea that psalms are life in perspective. Particularly in God's perspective. What Psalm 145 wants us to see and to believe and to feel, the psalms are all about feeling, orienting our desires towards godly emotion, is this, great is the Lord.

That's the psalm, great is the Lord. Let's have a look at the first few verses. 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.

[ 5 : 54 ] The psalmist is crazy about God. He not only believes that the Lord is great, he is impressed by God, awed by God, commends him daily, thinks about him daily, values God endlessly, tells others about him, promotes God, and passes God on to his children.

If you read the whole of the psalm, that's what the psalmist is doing. Unrestrained admiration and full satisfaction. The idea of God as king, the first verse says, I will extol you, my God and King. This is a familiar idea, but the exact word, likening God to a king, I think only occurs twice in the psalms. Now God, of course, governs and rules and acts like a king, but to call him a king doesn't happen that often.

The other place is Psalm 98, with trumpets and the sound of the horn that make a joyful noise before the king, the Lord. The idea here is that God is great, and that he does great things, and that he's deserving of great praise, and a king would or should be.

I'm going to say something that I think I remember correctly. I read a book, but I haven't been able to find it. And so I think this is what the author was saying. The part of this book was about what it meant to bow before a king, a symbolization of bowing, a special falling on your face before a king, which would have been done all over the ancient world, but it is still done in some places today.

[ 7 : 34 ] Egyptian kings, Assyrian kings, Greek kings, biblical kings, any senior figure really would have people bow down before them. This shows respect and deference, obviously.

But this author thought that it could symbolize something else. Death. He said the person would bow and fall before the king, who would then tell them to stand, or rise.

And that was showing that the king granted life. that the king had been ruled over life itself. And that it was symbolically dying before this person and coming up to life.

Even if, and the author is very awful, even if it's not entirely correct, that the idea could even be put forward and passed around as a real possibility, so it's just how much it meant to be king.

I will praise you, I will extol you, my lord and king. The very life of those in the king's presence was sustained by the king.

[ 8 : 44 ] And that's just an earthly king he was talking about. Surely King David's greatness was searchable, quantifiable, understandable. But the greatness of the lord who made the heavens and the earth who formed many complex and wonderful things in creation.

His greatness is unsurgical, as the psalmist puts it. The psalm leans into this.

It's a recognition of greatness. One way this happens, to extol God as king like that, to recognize His greatness, is by imbibing God.

There's really no other way to put it, kind of feasting on the lord. If we have a look at verse 5, on the glorious splendor of your majesty and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.

This is that word again from this morning, to meditate. The psalmist is in that verse and the surrounding notes. He's taken in God's works. He's taken in the splendor of God's majesty.

[ 9 : 49 ] And he's taken in the lord's kindness and goodness. And as much as he takes all of this in, the whole point really is that he gives it back out.

It's input and output. Things that come in about God, we must give out. Or almost have to give out. Teenage boys, particularly, love new phrases.

Multiply month, week by week, year by year. The teenage population is regularly processing catchphrases and slang. I was recently walking with a young guy who had recently taken his

theology GCSE exams.

How was it? I asked. Sir, it was large. It was large, he said. I said, the theology exam was large. I took it to mean that it was daunting, that it was exhilarating. Perhaps it was impressive. I'm still not quite sure, but I get the sense that slang for things excellent and superior is really never in me.

[11:02] Now, the boy, this boy had done well on the exam and proceeded to tell me his score. And I might say that he was then flexing. He was showing off.

He didn't know how to celebrate by eating pizza, but we wouldn't eat pizza, we would smash it. We didn't smash it. We're going to smash that pizza tonight. It's probably enough of that, but I should say that the adults actually enjoy new phrases too.

Last week, I was in Los Angeles visiting a family where we were actually and heard some new phrases like chill vibes, which was familiar, but the slang that's really going now is talking about energy.

That's positive energy or even college guy energy or Polish energy. I'm not sure if I'll reuse that. Right, we might not be into these sorts of things, but we do repeat jokes, we repeat mannerisms, we repeat these things, but they come in and they come out. Double to the law of life.

[12:14] We take air in and it has to come out. We drink coffee and find his way and we speak about those we love to future generations and the deceased, we tell stories about them. We even bring it back to life by expressing our memories.

Many of the things in life that we take in, we also give out. You give the idea. The question that the psalmist has for us is whether or not we speak of God.

And if we don't, then it seems that we haven't really taken God in. As we saw in Psalm 1, to meditate means to turn over in one's thoughts, to ponder, using the memory and considering all kinds of material or experiences.

It requires focus and it expects an outcome. The first five says, on your wondrous works, I will meditate. And I'll read Psalm 143 again as I did this morning.

I remember the days of old. I meditate on all that you have done. I ponder the work of your hands. I stretch out my hands to you. My soul thirsts for you like a partial lamb.

[13:28] I remember, I meditate, I ponder what you've done. God, because I need you and I expect you to satisfy my soul. Meditating is like punching one's thirst.

It's taking God in. But again, Psalm 145 is clear that by taking God in, we also are and need to be giving God out.

We can think about this as breathing. There are several different passages that deal with taking God in and giving God out. God breathes into Adam the breath of life and Adam rules on God's behalf. Jesus says, I am the bread of life.

And unless you eat the flesh of a son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Paul says, Be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, as God and Christ forgave you.

We take God in and give God out. We find this all over the New Testament and it becomes imperative for Christians. It's not just that we give out what we take in, but there are certain things we should take in and therefore should give out.

[14:41] Let's talk a little bit about forgiveness. Some of you will know Matthew 18. Peter is talking to Jesus. How many times should I forgive my brother? He's just received Jesus' teaching about forgiveness, which really puts the expectation through the roof.

So Peter says, How many times do I need to do that? Seven times? The total number is definitely better than the three that the Jews were naming.

About three times, seven times, Jesus. Jesus says, 77 times. He then tells a parable about a king and two servants. The king forgives or hardens the debt of one of his servants.

Now this servant owed 10,000 talents. And we think that a talent was about 20 years wages for a labor. 20 years wages.

So we're talking 200,000 years worth of accumulated debt. It's an unpayable amount. It's meant to be unrealistic. And so the servant begs the king to let him try to pay it off nonetheless.

[15:46] And the king says, You know what? The debt is forgiven. The debt is forgiven. And what does that servant do? Well, he goes and finds one of his own workers.

And this man owes him 100 denarii. Now a denarii is about a day's wage. Right? So he's got a few months of back bills.

Right? Completely, I'd say, fairly realistic for some amount of time. And he could say, Let me work this off. Okay? And what does the senior servant do?

He doesn't just deny it. He chokes him. He chokes the man and demands repayment. But this servant, too, says, Have patience. He begs for forgiveness or pardon.

Well, not even that. He begs for a chance to pay him back. I'll pay. But the servant's thrown into jail. There's no forgiveness. There's no pardon. Now if you think that that's harsh and unreasonable way to treat this man who owes him 100 denarii, then you'd be right.

[16:54] You'd be exactly right. Even if that was some sort of within the law, it was the custom and so on. What really bothers us about that story is that it's mean and cruel and ungrateful in light of the fact that that servant has been forgiven and has been forgiven so much.

And the king in the story thinks that it's also not okay. And he also thinks that the senior servant hasn't understood forgiveness correctly, that he hasn't taken it in, that he hasn't fully taken it on board, taken it apart, and he's right.

Forgiveness may be the greatest gift of God, but it shouldn't be taken lightly. We should take care to absorb the blessings and the greatness of God and have those things God in our life.

Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God and Christ forgave you. Christ is the pattern for our lives. And his forgiveness is one of the principal parts.

The psalmist spends a great deal of time giving God out, extolling God, praising him for his wondrous works, naming some of his mercies, and so on. He's talking about God, he's telling us who God is, and so on.

[18:20] But you can already tell that something else underlies these words. He's not just saying them. He's talking based on something. I think something is an encounter.

It's an encounter with God. If we have a look at verse 8, 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. Note some of these words, his mercy is over all that he has made. Verse 11, the saint shall speak of the glory of your kingdom and tell of your power to make known to the children of men your mighty deeds and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.

I think the psalms and those who are saying this song, and even many of us here will have a reference point for these sorts of things. The mercy, the glory, the power, the splendor, the mighty deeds of God.

Even, or maybe most of all, God's kingdom. If you read on through the final third of the psalm, the last few verses, the list only gets longer. God's generosity, his responses, his presence, his protection.

[19:34] You satisfy the desire of every living thing. 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 them cry and saves them.

The Lord preserves all who love him. These words are about an encounter with God because words, even words in the Bible, are not God themselves.

Now, I know around here and I think we rightly have a close identification with the Bible, with God's words and with God himself. They can't really be separated because they came from God.

But we can study the Bible and not know God. And so there's some difference going on. And what the Bible should be doing is drawing us nearer to God, the person, God the Lord.

They point us to God. They tell us about God. They draw us nearer and closer to him. They even make demands with God. But we must encounter the person of God. It refers to the opposite as the dead letter.

[20:38] The dead letter. Let me finish with a few of the primary encounters from the Bible. In the Old Testament, the main encounter for the people of God was the Exodus.

We cite the Ten Commandments here right in the middle. And they begin with this. I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt. It's almost like a tagline.

That's how God names himself. Dozens of times this phrase occurs. Who took you out of the land of Egypt? The Lord who brought you up out of Egypt. And so on.

It's cited in all sorts of contexts. In preparation for battle, I'm the Lord who took you out of the land of Egypt. Now therefore, go and fight. It's cited as the meaning or significance of festivals.

Remember your time in Egypt, out of which I brought you. It's a justification for loss. It's the basis of confidence that God will act now again.

[ 21 : 39 ] It's a definitive historical reference point through which people can understand their past. It's an identifier for the Lord himself. It's like an extension of his name.

And it serves as a contrast to the lack of people's faithfulness. God had been so faithful to them, yet they are so unfaithful. To him. The Exodus, God taking the people, delivering them out of Egypt, is the definitive mercy that the Lord showed in the Old Testament, in the Old Testament.

For the New Testament, it's really the whole of salvation in Christ. That's the primary event. But I think we can say particularly, and in parallel with the Exodus, it's a rescue from sin, deliverance from the power of sin.

In Matthew, we are told that she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.

Or the words in John, behold, the Lamb of God, John's looking at Jesus, behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. In Hebrews, Jesus was offered once to bear the sins of many.

[ 22 : 57 ] Now this could go on and on. Liberated from bondage to Egypt. Then goes from liberation from sin. This is so much of Christ's encounters with people, how he deals with sin.

Sometimes he outright forgives people. Sometimes he reverses the consequences of sin. And sometimes he just invades people's lives and gives them a little taste of what life would be like without all the power of sin.

That's always pushing on against us. You will have your own experience with this. Amen. And we'll never know anyone greater than Christ who takes away the sin of the world.

Psalms 145 wants us to have a bona fide encounter with the triune God and it does its part by telling us great is the Lord. And we'll have a collection of ways to do so.

Mercy, generosity, response, presence, protection, power, and splendor. One of the greatest things is the forgiveness of sin and new life in Christ.

[ 24 : 13 ] God is delighted for us to live a life of perspective. A life of full heart and praise. A life overwhelmed with God's majesty and goodness. That kind of response comes from an encounter with God himself, especially his mercies.

And so we take whatever harm, despair, sin we bring, even tonight, and all the consequences of sin. These are opportunities to call out for the mercies of God.

To behold God and everything is called the perspective. Let us pray.