

Psalms 145

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[0 : 00] And turn back to that psalm, Psalm 145. As you do that, let us pray again. Let's pray.

Father in heaven, we pray that you will help us to meditate with David on the glorious splendour of your majesty and on your wondrous works through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen. Now, usually in this church, what we do is take a book of the Bible and sort of work through it sequentially so that God sets the agenda.

But it is good occasionally to take a topic that the Bible teaches and sort of pull together different parts of the Bible on that. And that's what we're going to do a little bit this morning.

This sermon is one of two messages that are prepared on the glory of God. And we'll look at the next one later in the autumn.

[1 : 07] Psalm 145. For many, it's the pinnacle of David's psalms of praise. And four times, you might not notice it in the English, but it has the Hebrew word that we translate glory in this psalm.

David is transfixed by God's glory. God's glory is the theme of this psalm. It is David's obsession. Verse 5. He meditates on the glorious splendour of God's majesty.

But as we listen to these words, as we read them out, we've got to wonder, haven't we, do we share that obsession? Does my heart burst with adoration for this glory?

Because that is what this psalm is. It is not merely David sort of acknowledging his approval for God. Or giving God a compliment. Or just saying God is great and then getting on with his life.

He is expressing an experience of surpassing enjoyment in God. It is a genuine thing. C.S. Lewis.

[2 : 17] We always quote him, don't we? But C.S. Lewis. The most obvious fact about praise.

Whether a God or anything strangely escaped me, he said. I thought of it in terms of compliment, approval, or the giving of honour.

I'd never noticed that all enjoyment overflows into praise. The world rings with praise, he says.

Lovers praising their lovers. Readers praising their favourite poem.

Walkers praising the countryside. Players praising their favourite game. The beautiful game. Praise of weather, wines, dishes, actors, cars, countries, whatever.

I hadn't noticed that just as men spontaneously praise whatever they value, so they spontaneously urge us to join with them in praising.

Isn't she lovely? Wasn't it glorious? Don't you think that it's magnificent? He says, the psalmist, in telling everyone to praise God, are doing what all men do when they speak of what they care about.

[3 : 26] And that is what David is doing here. Do you know, the Christian religion is a religion of praise to God, born of enjoyment and wonder in God.

God. The God of the Bible is a God whose glory is terrifying, and yet it is addictive. Moses said to God please show me your glory and he was brushed by it wasn't he he couldn't get into the tabernacle Moses because the glory of God had filled that little tent when God shows up in the Old Testament it is the same reaction over and over again when people are brushed with the glory of God people fall on their faces and they worship God the glory of God fills the temple and the people they bow down with their faces to the ground and they give thanks to the Lord and they worship him but you know it is no good me just telling you all this is it we can't whip this up you can read some of the Puritans the Christians of the 18th century and around that period you can read somebody like Jonathan Edwards and he gets this doesn't he he says all earthly blessings are but shadows but God is the substance these are but scattered beams but God is the sun these are but streams and God is the ocean but I read Jonathan Edwards and I at least for me

I just think there is a disconnect there between what these great Christian believers know and have seen of God and appreciate what they are saying and what I think I am just so engrossed with other things that when I speak about what I care about and I urge others to praise those things often I am

just speaking of streams when there is an ocean and what I need and what you need is to see something again of the glory of God and for that not just to be a cliché not just something we stick on our fridge not just words that go over our heads but a reality the glory of his character and his being that would transform the goal of everything that we do that would lift burdens off our shoulders and it would give us delight that outweighs the many struggles that we go through and my prayer this morning is that God as he declares himself to us we will be brushed with that glory he is to be enjoyed and glorified three things this morning first of all God's glory is in himself God's glory is in himself and verse 3 of the psalm David says great is the Lord and greatly to be praised and his greatness is unsearchable his majesty he says is glorious now the word glory this word that's in the psalm in the original Hebrew we throw that word around don't we glory we've kind of lost its meaning I think it has the feeling of immense weightiness and of value and all over the Bible is the assertion that God in himself is glorious he is weighty he is the king of glory Psalm 24 he is the God of glory Acts 7 and it's not just like he has glory like a possession you know like you own a house or a car but he is glory and glorious his very essence his very being his nature is glorious imagine a diamond it is like a cut diamond with lots of little facets on it and each of those little facets glimmer with the glory of the one diamond don't they and each of his characteristics each of his attributes his power his infinity his goodness his wisdom they are all like little facets on the one diamond of his glory so the Bible speaks of the glory of his grace or the glory of his might or just the glory of God his glory as one writer puts it is the infinite excellence of the divine essence it's who he is it is the worth and the weightiness and the greatness and the absolute value of God himself in himself it is that in himself

God is absolutely satisfied with himself the Westminster confession says that God has all life glory goodness blessedness in and of himself and is alone in and unto himself all sufficient it is the glory that Jesus spoke of in John chapter 17 the glory that he says the son enjoyed with the father since the creation of the world God for all eternity basking in the rays of the glory of God in himself God beholds a glory that fulfills him forever if you're struggling to sleep at night there is a good book that you can read it's called the International Presbyterian Church Book of Church Order and it's full of different ways of how we do things it's a really important book it's not a real page turner but it does start in a really beautiful way the first line of the IPC

[9 : 38] Book of Church Order it says the overriding objective of the church is to please and glorify the triune God and that opening sentence it mirrors the opening sentence of the Westminster Shorter Catechism many of you know it the chief aim of man is to glorify and enjoy God forever but do you know there is a way of misunderstanding that that great obligation for us to glorify God because we could think couldn't we that it is our job to give something to God that he hasn't already got to give something to God that he isn't already and without us he would be somehow less glorious and if we don't glorify him if we don't bless him then he will be less than he is and if we misunderstand that God is glorious in himself then we will get that wrong won't we and the call to bring him glory will actually have the opposite effect because we will be thinking to ourselves in the back of our minds

I am giving glory to somebody here who is less than what he needs to be unless I give him that glory if the call to glorify forgets that God is glorious in himself then he will be deficient of glory and he won't be worth praising in the first place will he no you see only a God who is who he is without my praise is worth praising Job 22 says can a man be profitable to God it's a great question is it any pleasure to the almighty if you're in the right or is it any gain to him if you make your way blameless you would have thought the answer is obvious wouldn't you and God is pleased with when we live the lives according to his law but you know the point that is being made in Job there is that he doesn't need anything or anyone to make him glorious it doesn't profit him as if he were sort of in the red of the glory bank and we kind of top him up he is he is the author and originator of his own glory glory is not something that we kind of give him from the glory bank that is over here that there is some sort of objective thing over here called glory this place over here away from God that's full of good stuff and we sort of grab that and we go yeah this is good let's give it to God moral goodness and worthiness praiseworthiness that is separate and distinct from God himself God isn't saying to us glorify me because I am running out of glory keep me topped up no it is actually more like isn't it when a child buys his mum or dad a present or her mum and dad a present with the pocket money that the parents have given the child isn't it I'll buy you a nice present mummy yeah from the pocket money I gave you anything we give to God was already his in the first

place the confession it goes on it says he alone is unto himself all sufficient not standing in need of any of his creatures which he's made nor deriving any glory from them there is God in himself apart from anything and apart from anyone apart from you and me father son and holy spirit with a mutual united enjoyment of the glory of the one God in himself he doesn't need us to be who he is and our praise doesn't add anything to him and you know that is why he is worth praising God's glory in himself secondly God's glory outside of himself in creation and David picks up on this God's glory outside of himself David talks about his wondrous works doesn't he and things that creation can see him doing works that he's done verse 10 all your works shall give you thanks O Lord they speak of the glory of your kingdom and part of these works is the work of creation to start off with it is the work of the existence of things outside of God himself verse 16 you open your hand you satisfy the desire of every living thing now given what we've just thought about God the big question is why does anything else apart from God exist at all since God in himself is all he needs there to be full stop if nothing else exists apart from God God is no worse off he's no less happy he is everything he needs in himself and so why are other creatures made made why are we made to seek satisfaction in God in the first place that he might open his hand and feed us God wasn't lonely God wasn't hungry or thirsty God didn't need a universe to play with he wasn't bored he was enamored and satisfied and excited in the glory of his own being but you see his creativity is another facet of his glory this is the point the creation that [15:55] God has made doesn't tell us that many think it's true that God didn't have enough in himself and he needed a creation to play with what it tells us is that God was so overflowing with delight and satisfaction in himself that praise for God burst out into a whole universe Isaiah says that the whole earth is full of your glory David says that the heavens declare your glory he says the heavens proclaim God's righteousness and all his people see his glory Psalm 97 Paul says that the eternal power and divine nature of God are clearly seen where in the creation of the world glory glory glory and it doesn't add anything to him at all but it's the overflow of his glory of who he is in himself just like

Lewis says of man it can be said of God that men spontaneously praise whatever they value so they spontaneously urge others to join them in praising and God has spontaneously urged a creation to join him in praising what he values God his creativity is the overflow of the abundance of his pleasure in himself Jonathan Edwards again he says it is the necessary consequence of God's delighting in the glory of his nature that he delights now these are big words he delights in the emanation and effulgence of it what's that in normal English he says there is something that God delights in so much that he cannot keep quiet about it and he won't keep quiet about it his own glory the weightiness of his essence it is so heavy that it spills out spills outside of himself into the things that he's made and he feels that it's just necessary that I don't keep this to myself and that my glory it overflows and I share it and I display it and I show it off he's doing in the words of Lewis he's doing what he's done all over the world when people speak of something they care about my glory isn't it wonderful isn't it lovely isn't it vast the work of creation it doesn't add glory to him it is made to show his glory it manifests his glory I don't know if you've been watching any of these clips of the moon landings it is amazing isn't it just incredible stuff so on yesterday's date 50 years ago Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin were the first human beings to step on what they call a planetary body apart from the earth the moon now do you know the moon is about 250 thousand miles away from earth and human beings have managed to make that giant leap onto the moon it's a massive achievement isn't it until actually you think about how small that distance is in comparison with the rest of the universe do you know our next planet away from earth is Venus that is 25 million miles away and then what about the furthest planet away from earth well think about this see if you can get your head around this light travels at the speed of 186 thousand miles per second and the furthest known galaxy away from earth is a distance that it would take light 13.3 billion years to get to can't get your head around it can you 250,000 miles one giant leap for mankind really we've hardly moved an inch have we and you could ask couldn't you why is there such a vastness of uninhabited galaxies and planets and black holes and all the rest of it in the universe why so much space of untouched space but with humanity where we've not been apart from this one little tiny dot called planet earth and a little bit of dust a little bit a millimetre away well do you know the reason why it is because this universe was not created to show the importance of humanity it is made and it has been made to give some little inkling of the glory of

God in his delight God bursts out and overflows in praising what he urges us to praise and he says to us my glory isn't it wonderful on the glorious splendour of your majesty and on your wondrous works I will meditate David says God's glory in himself God's glory outside of himself in creation thirdly God's glory in redemption God's glory in redemption redemption is the posh word isn't it for when God rescues and buys his people for himself it's Christian salvation and it's in the work of redemption where his glory really shines God's is there any hint that this God is just full of himself he's a bit of a chauvinist isn't he all this talk about himself and all this praising of God and glory to him alone does that debase humanity you you might look at us this morning if you're visiting and you're coming in you're thinking this is all sounding a little bit demeaning actually where's your self respect all this talk of being miserable sinners and God being so perfect it seems debasing but actually we've got to see that

God has primarily and most significantly united the cause of his glory with the glory of his people in redemption he is going to show off his glory most when he rescues and glorifies his people listen to Edwards again God finds chief delight in his own glory that is in himself but this is not something different from the happy state of his creatures and David picks up on this in the psalm the works that praise him are not just creation but redemption look at verse 10 again all your works shall give thanks to you oh lord and all your saints shall bless you God has decided hasn't he that he will display his glory through having saints and it's the very process of redemption of saving his people where he is showing his glory most he is going to reflect his glory in the mirror of our glory that he is going to give us in

[23 : 47] Christ Paul summarizes the work of redemption in Romans 8 he says that those who are called he justifies those who he justifies he glorified 2 Corinthians 3 we are being transformed into the same image of the Lord Jesus Christ from one degree of glory to another Colossians 3 when Christ with your life appear then you also will appear with him in glory where do people see God's glory most what about in the story of the Bible God's glory shows up most actually when he is doing stuff with and for his people and seeking to rescue and glorify them the glory of God it shows up when he sends the plagues on Egypt doesn't it on those Egyptians who oppress his people the glory shows up in the cloud that looms his people out of slavery the glory shows up when he is present with his people in the temple and all the while the people say glory and they fall on their faces and the whole story of redemption of people of saints is in the words of for the project the grand project of God to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy which he has prepared beforehand for glory that's us you know the all sufficient

God he needs nothing and he has decided that he wants to show his glory and I'm going to do it he says I'm going to manifest my glory in the brightest way I can and I'm going to do that with you wow it speaks volumes of his glory the God who rescues and redeems people not because he needs to but just because he is that kind of God and the creation it looks at God the angels look at God's work of salvation and they think wow now we've seen his glory Peter says concerning this salvation these are things into which the angels long to look that the all sufficient God would even bother and it's not that he bothers actually but how he does it that gives him most glory because in redemption we see a deeper secret of his glory we see the hidden depths of the weight of God's value because when did the cries of glory reach fever pitch in the story of redemption when did that happen it didn't happen did it with displays of impressive power not when

God showed his terrifying presence but the great cries of glory to God came when a little baby was born in a feeding trough and he died at Calvary for his people God chose to show how valuable he is by becoming nothing Luther said it's not sufficient for anyone and it does him no good to recognise God in his glory and majesty unless he recognises him in his humility and in his shame at the cross you the jewel of the crown of God's glory is his humiliation in Jesus Christ who is the radiance of the glory of God we're told and in a way it doesn't add up does it it just doesn't make sense but the opening sections of the gospel are just full of cries of glory there are outbursts of song all over the place aren't they Mary and

Zechariah there are fanfares of the angels who appear praising God before the shepherds Luke tells us that the angels and a great multitude of the heavenly host praised God saying glory to God in the highest and the glory of the Lord shone around them and the sign of this glory to the shepherds a baby wrapped in swaddling cloth lying in a feeding trough the high point of God's glory cry comes at the low point of God's humility in Christ and the angelic throng proclaims God's glory above when there is a child in a stable below and it was the theme of his life and death and

resurrection he prays father glorify your son that your son may glorify you as he goes to his death you see he is most glorious when he lays aside his glory and his glory is most stark and it's most beautiful in its utter bleakness the glory of God at

Golgotha John Piper he said glorify that word doesn't mean make glorious but to see as glorious to savor as glorious to celebrate as glorious and when you think of who God is standing in himself the all sufficient one not deriving any glory from his creatures when our praise cannot add anything to him it is stunning isn't it that a whole world exists with creatures in it let alone that God would come and die on that world for those creatures that is a glory that brushes us in the gospel isn't it and we say wow we look at God in Christ and he is worth seeing and savouring and celebrating when we come back to this subject in a wee while

[30 : 08] I want us to think about why it is and how it is that we glorify God in our lives how does that work but for now behold your God the King and the God of glory let's pray