

God is Great - Rev. David Parker

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Preacher: Rev. David Parker

[0:00] If you could turn with me then back to Psalm 145. We did part one in the first Sunday and part two in the second Sunday.

So this evening we're in another psalm and this time it's not a psalm to do with suffering and mortality. It's a psalm to do with praise.

There are so many things that we praise as human beings, do we not? Like passing exams, success in a job interview, the skill and accomplishments of athletes, the kindness of people, the characters of certain people.

Praise is an ingredient in the experience of our lived lives. And as I say, our theme tonight is praise. The book of Psalms captures the entire human story of suffering and trials at one end and praise and joy at the other end and everything in between.

[1:44] Yes, the last two Sundays, as I was saying, we focused on our story of suffering and mortality, while this psalm tonight will be looking at our experience of praise.

It's a psalm, Psalm 145, by ancient Israel's most famous king, David. It's his final psalm, King David's final psalm in the book of Psalms, of the 73 psalms he offered.

And Psalm 105 is one of the last six psalms of the book of Psalms, which all begin and end with praise.

It's as if the book of Psalms, having looked at the human story, wants to finish with this great note on praising God.

And so it ends in a crescendo and appeal of praise offered to God. The psalm essentially praises God for two things.

[3:07] One, the greatness of his being. And two, the greatness of his works. And that's what we're going to try and dip into.

It's what's called an acrostic psalm, meaning that the poet, in structuring it, has made every Hebrew line to begin with a letter of the alphabet.

It's almost as if he feels, I need to use all the language available to me. To give him the praise that he deserves.

Before we look at that first reason for praising God, God's great being, we'll just look at the opening of the psalm of David.

And he says, I will extol you, my God and King. He begins this psalm with an affirmation, with his own I.

[4:26] I, with a determination, I will extol you, no matter what. But, as I tell you what's going through my head just now, sometimes when my wife and I are talking and certain words are given, it triggers a song in my head.

And you'll maybe hear a wee bit more why that is later on in my testimony. But there was a group that said, no matter what.

A song that said, no matter what. I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever. And then he repeats it.

Every day I will bless you. With even a bit more emphasis. Every day I will bless you. And praise your name forever and ever.

Notice he uses three different words for praise in these opening verses of this psalm. Notice he uses extol. Notice he uses bless.

[5:37] Notice he uses praise. Here is someone that wants to find as much as he can out of the depths of his being and his mind, with his whole person, to praise God.

And note also, he has this at the very, very beginning of this psalm of praise. My God and King. If the Lord's people would not praise him, the very stones would cry out in protest, would they not?

This is a, by David in his final psalm, this is a personal confession of his faith. I will extol you, my God and King.

And you know that although this is by David, and we know that David lived in something like 1000 BC, and we know that they went into exile Israel in 587, this psalm is probably placed where it is in the book of Psalms for those exiles.

[6 : 59] And he's probably wanting them to show that determination wherever and whatever their circumstances are, I will extol you, my God and King.

How come then that he has this determination? I mean, we can ask ourselves, do we have that determination?

And of course, praise isn't simply words. It's a life. That's a life of praise to God. Well, it tells us really why it is proper to have that determination to praise God in verse 3 there.

Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised.

Greatly to be praised. Now, you can read that and sort of quickly go to the next bit, but it's important not to do that.

[8 : 28] Because he uses the word Lord in block capitals. And indeed, in this psalm, he uses the word Lord in block capitals ten times.

And that word Lord is the deep, intimate, personal name of the everlasting God.

Great is the Lord. And because his being is great, because it is infinite, because it is majestic, because it is holy, because it is a God of righteousness and a God of love and a God of mercy, and everything that he has revealed himself to be, I will extol you.

Notice something about this psalm, the absence of petition. I will extol you.

And notice then what he goes on to say, and his greatness is unsearchable. Sometimes, sometimes I listen to preachers, and sometimes I wonder, am I getting an impression that they feel that they, how shall I put it, they're on top of God, they've got him sorted.

[10 : 23] David reminds us, his greatness is unsearchable.

Yes, he has revealed himself, he has disclosed himself, and we'll come to that in a moment or two, about his disclosure. He has made himself known, he has shown himself, and of course, most graphically, in Jesus Christ.

But, the regions of his being are unsearchable. And, this is so important, I think, for true religion, and for true piety, to use an older word.

There must, we must never lose, a focus, on the greatness of God, and how unsearchable his being is.

Of course, there is, what shall I call it, a tension, between, our Father, and hallowed be your name.

[11 : 55] And it's a tension, that, one might say, we need, God himself, to help us manage.

Because, in theory, if not in reality, one can, over-emphasize, or under-emphasize, one of those poles.

And these poles, they need to be, or polarities, they need to be sustained, and balanced, the tension, between our Father, and hallowed be your name, the tension, between, God's transcendence, and his otherness, and his nearness, to us.

And he couldn't have come nearer, would you not think, than the incarnation, when he dawned, flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone.

He certainly could have come, couldn't have come, nearer than that. There is an impulse, I think, in, if not all human beings, most human beings, to desire something, bigger, than themselves, to idolize, to worship, to experience, all.

And what does that tell us? Why do people feel, a need for that? Whether it's a football game, whether it's, some of the musical stars, or the film stars, there is no doubt, in my mind, that we live, in a very, religious, society, where, by the tens of thousands, football teams, and footballers, I love football, by the way, are worshipped, and adored.

[14 : 05] Because, people need, to feel, that there's, something, transcending, us, puny, human beings, that are gone, in a, in a hair's breadth, if you like.

We were thinking about that, in Psalm 39. Let us look now, at part of, how God, has revealed him, his greatness, in relation, to us, as a human race.

And, we find that, in verse 8. The Lord, is gracious. See, notice, that word, is, when you see, that little word, is, that's us, telling us, something, about, God.

It's not just, that he, offers grace. It's not, just, that he will, answer, somebody, who asks, for grace.

Give me your grace, to help me, go on, or something. It's, that he is, gracious. This is, something, about God, himself.

[15 : 32] and, you know, and the same, when he says, listen, and, merciful. Do you know, that kind of revelation, should bring, tears, or a smile, or a, a hurrah.

It means, we've got hope. slow to anger, and I love that last one as well, and abounding, in steadfast love.

Oh, love that will not let me go, I rest my weary head, on thee, said the hymn writer. And, all of these, qualities, that God has, told us about, himself, is the reason, that we would, dare to come in, before him, and ask for mercy.

And, this goes back, you see, to, Exodus, chapter 34. And, indeed, it's scattered, throughout, this, revelation of God, about being gracious, and merciful, and steadfast in love.

For example, it's in Psalm 103, as well. Psalm 103, verse 8. The Lord is merciful, and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding, in steadfast love.

[17 : 19] This is the, they might not have had, systematic volumes, of theology, but this was the creed, of ancient Israel.

Why? Because, back in Exodus, God revealed, that he was this kind of God, to Moses. here is the heart, of God's self-disclosure, in terms of his attitude, towards a fallen world.

He reveals himself, as a God, that wants to, share himself, that wants to, embrace us. we saw that, didn't we, when we were looking, at the parable, of the prodigal son, in, in the telling, of the story, Jesus, tells us, that the father, ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

I, I was reading, recently, I can't remember, where, or what, what the article, was about, but I do get, the little eye paper, and, this person, was talking about, the value of a hug.

God, this great God, wants to, embrace us, with his love, and his grace, and his mercy.

[18 : 56] He wants to, share himself, with us, and he promises us, steadfast love, a love, that will never, let us go, a love, that will never, fail us, a love, that will, has no, boundary line, what follows, of these, great, statements, this, graciousness, of God, is part, of the, meaning, of God, and grace, happens, because of, who God is, John, spoke, the apostle, John, of the fullness, of the grace, that came with, Jesus Christ, we, we have that, in, at the very beginning, of John's gospel, probably, is worth, just, having a look at it, and, and seeing, what is said here, it says, that, the word became flesh, and we've seen his glory, the glory, of the only son, from the father, full, of grace, and truth, and then, he goes on, to say, from, his fullness, we have all received, grace, upon grace, in other words, this, graciousness, of God, it's not measuring, out, just a certain, portion, and saying, on you go, it's, lavish, where, sin, abounded, says,

Paul, grace, super, abounded, is, merciful, and, slow, to anger, his anger, in, any event, is not like, ours, is, anger, anger, in, in one place, it's said, is his strange work, but, nonetheless, his anger, is his holy, and just reaction, to all wrong, all evil, and everything, that is bad, what kind, of God, would he be, if he was indifferent, to, for example, an awful lot, of the stuff, that's happening, in our world, right now, what kind, of God, wouldn't care, less, it's because, of who he is, that he has, the holy, anger, and antagonism, against, all that is evil, all that is wrong, and all that is sinful, and, you know, that was unleashed, on Jesus Christ, on the cross, the German, reformer,

Luther, once said, that Jesus, was like, the greatest sinner, ever, on the cross, my sin, oh, the bliss, of this glorious, thought, said the hymn writer, my sin, not in part, but the whole, is nailed, to his cross, and I bear it, no more, it is well, with my soul, it was unleashed, on Jesus Christ, abounding, in steadfast love, he that spared, not his only son, but gave him up, for us, what that meant, to the father, who can tell, what that meant, for the son, to experience, the forsakenness, of God, who can tell, does not a God, like this, evoke, for you, as it did with David, a willingness, even a determination, to praise him, and have him, as your God, you see, it's because, this is God, that this is the kind, of being, he has shown himself, to be, that we can have hope, had he not been, like he has declared, himself to be, where would our hope be, it's the qualities, that leads,

God, and enables him, to so love the world, that he gave, his only begotten son, that whoever believes, should not perish, but have, everlasting life, those, qualities, qualities of God, that I've been talking about, that these, aspects of his greatness, that relate, to the redemption, of humanity, that relate, to us, to you and me, especially, are most, graphically seen, are they not, in Jesus Christ, you see, you see the depth, of that statement, of Jesus, when he answered, Philip, I think it was, in this very, in John's gospel, in chapter 14, he said to Philip,

[26 : 40] David alternates, all the time, he goes back, and forward, it's a difficult, Sam, to, sort of, do a, a linear, kind of thing, because he's going, back, and forwards, but David, just wants, to speak also, about his, great works, verses, four to seven, listen to this, now, one generation, shall commend, your works, to another, and shall declare, your mighty acts, we, tonight, are no exception, what legacy, are we going, to leave, the generations, that will still be here, when we go away, one generation, one generation, says David, shall commend, your works, to another, but, but listen to this, next line, and shall declare, your mighty acts, and, look at, verse six, there, they shall speak, the generation, the current generation, the current generation, with its, with its, mandate, for mission, they shall speak, of the might, of your awesome deeds, and, could there be, any more awesome deeds, than the incarnation, could there be, any more awesome deeds, than the Christ of God, mystery, of mysteries, dying on a cross, and notice, what David, puts his own little, oar in there, when he's talking about, that, this would be, the normative thing, that the people of God, would commend, and they would tell, he says, and I will declare, your greatness, there are people out there, in this island of Lewis, that know, next to nothing, about God, they don't, they don't even know, much about Jesus, sometimes, if you speak to someone, and you say to them, you know that Jesus said, such and such, they cannot believe it, that's how ignorant they are,

I'm nearly finished, we must not, wrap our faith, in our great God, up in a napkin, we need to be, part of the great, generations, that tell, of his mighty acts, we are no exception, we need to go, and tell Scotland, about his mighty acts, may I ask you, David, as we read, didn't he, he said, I will declare, your greatness, are we ready, to say with David, I will declare, your greatness, do we have, David's desire, to praise God, and can we say, with David, I will extol you, my God, and King, may the Lord, bless these thoughts, to each one of us, for his glory, and, for our, eternal good, we're going to, conclude our service, by singing, in Psalm, 130, from the,

If you our sins report, but yet forgiveness is with you, that we may fear you, Lord.

Lord, that the watchman waits for the Lord, my soul waits for the Lord.

O Israel, but your hope is hard, for mercy is with Him, and for redemption from their sins, His people will redeem.

[37 : 16] Amen. May the love of God, our Father, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore.

Amen. Amen. Amen.