

“Creation’s Praise”
Psalm 148
(Preached at Trinity, January 19, 2014)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. We are in the midst of the final five psalms of the Psalter. They have a unifying theme. “Praise ye the LORD.” They begin and end with the exclamation, Hallelujah! They are praise songs. Each one has a particular focus of praise but all direct our eyes to the God who alone is worthy of praise. God alone is the Creator, sustainer of all the earth. God alone is the Redeemer of His people. Each of these psalms shout this singular truth – God alone is worthy of praise. **Isaiah 42:8 KJV** - “I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.”
2. While these psalms are glorious in subject matter they present an expository challenge for preaching. These psalms do not divide easily. They begin and end with praise and everything in between directs our hearts to the praise of God. Dividing these psalms for preaching is a challenge. **Psalm 148** is no different. Charles Spurgeon wrote of this psalm: “It seems almost impossible to expound it in detail, for a living poem is not to be dissected verse by verse. It is a song of nature and of grace. As a flash of lightning flames through space, and enwraps both heaven and earth in one vestment of glory, so doth the adoration of the Lord in this Psalm light up all the universe, and cause it to glow with a radiance of praise. The song begins in the heavens, sweeps downward to dragons and all deeps, and then ascends again, till the people near unto Jehovah take up the strain. For its exposition the chief requisite is a heart on fire with reverent love to the Lord over all, who is to be blessed for ever.”
3. While these psalms do not divide easily nor lend themselves to a verse-by-verse exposition we *can* see a general flow. **Psalm 148** is a creation psalm. I title it “Creation’s Praise.” Thirteen times we find the invitation to praise God. It begins in the heavens and concludes upon the earth. We’ll follow this progression tonight.
 - I. **Verses 1-6** direct our eyes above to the heavens – praise from on high
 - II. **Verses 7-10** direct our attention to God’s creation upon the earth – praise from the earth.
 - III. **Verses 11-14** direct our attention to the praise of men

I. **Verses 1-6** direct our eyes above to the heavens – praise from on high
Hallelujah from the heavens!

- A. As **Psalm 148** opens our eyes are directed beyond our own existence.
V.1 - "Praise ye the LORD from the heavens: praise him in the heights."
 1. As fallen human beings we tend to think very narrowly. We really can't comprehend anything beyond our present existence
 2. We think of the here and now. Most people despise history, evidenced by how little people know about history. And most cannot imagine life beyond the present.
 3. We think of our own abode. Most know very little about different people of different cultures. Americans are probably the most guilty.
 4. We are earthly bound with thoughts limited to the material. For most their entire existence involves the pleasures of the moment. We are like children surrounding ourselves with toys we soon forget.
- B. **Psalm 148** lifts us beyond ourselves. It reminds us that God's creation extends beyond the earthly physical realm.
Psalm 148:1-2 KJV - "Praise ye the LORD from the heavens: praise him in the heights. ² Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts."
 1. Much of God's creation is completely unknown to the human eye. It was not created for us. It was created for God—to declare His glory, to display the excellence of His Divine being.
 2. When you mention praise to many Christians today their thoughts immediately turn to music. Churches have praise bands and praise leaders to lead in praise songs. Praise *can* accompany music but it above music. Praise is an exaltation of God. It is a declaration of His excellence. This is what it means to praise God.
 3. God has created beings who have no other purpose than to praise God.
Isaiah 6:1-3 KJV - "I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. ² Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. ³ And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD of hosts: the whole earth *is* full of his glory."
 4. Within this unseen spiritual realm there are myriads of angels. The NT has much to say about angels. The word ἄγγελος is found over 170 times. That's more than the word ἀγάπη
 5. Some of the angels in ages past fell into corruption and are reserved unto eternal fire. But there are multitudes of holy angels. Paul refers to them as the elect angels in **1 Tim. 5**. Jesus referred to them as holy angels. Each of them exists in an unceasing spirit of praise.
- C. These verses also remind us of physical heavens that are immense in scope
Psalm 148:3-4 KJV - "Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light. ⁴ Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that *be* above the heavens."

1. There are billions and billions of stars. Each of them exist without thought and without language and yet offer unceasing praise to God
Psalm 19:1-3 KJV - "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. ² Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. ³ *There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.*"
2. There are stars light-years away completely beyond our sight. They have a single purpose. They exist to the praise of the Creator
3. The point is all of God's heavenly creation, both animate and inanimate praise God.

II. **Verses 7-10** direct our attention to God's creation upon the earth – Hallelujah from the earth.

- A. From the heights above and worlds unseen the Psalmist moves to the things below
 1. Derik Kidner writes – “Starting with the angelic host, and descending through the skies to the varied forms and creatures of earth, then summoning the family of man and finally the chosen people, the call to praise unites the whole creation.”
 2. **Verse 7** - He begins with the deep things – Sea monsters and deep places Our own Gulf of Mexico contains the Sigsbee Deep reported to be over 14,000 feet deep – over 2 3/4 miles! The Mariana Trench in the Pacific Ocean is over 36,000 feet – almost 7 miles down. Creatures living under great pressure and in absolute darkness. Some look like they are straight out of a sci-fi movie. All to the praise of God.
 3. Once again, the focus is upon things unseen – all praise God. All move at God's command. Jonah's whale moved at God's command
Jonah 1:17 KJV - "Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah."
- B. Our attention is drawn to those things inanimate – **Verses 8-10**
 1. Fire, hail, snow, wind, mountains and hills, trees – All of these things are inanimate without thought like the stars above. They are void of language but all praise God.
 2. In our generation men worship creation. It is good to be good stewards of the earth that God has placed under our care. Man has been wickedly careless in polluting the earth and abusing its resources. But today the environment has become a god to many. They worship the earth but they will not worship God. The thing they worship was created to glorify the one true God.
 3. The psalmist displays the earth as a worshipper of God.

- III. **Verses 11-14** direct our attention to the praise of men
- A. Human beings are the grand climax of God's creation
Genesis 1:26 KJV - "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness"
1. Human beings were created to reflect God's glory
 2. We are rational creatures with the capacity of knowing God
- B. All human beings have the duty to praise God. Our attention is directed to many classes of men
1. **Verse 11** - Kings and the mighty of the earth are to worship God
 - a. None today praise God. All have rebelled against God. They are swallowed up by the intoxication of their own power.
Psalm 2:2-3 KJV - "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, *saying*,³ Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us."
 - b. The glitter of gold and the lust for power consumes them.
 Nebuchadnezzar
Daniel 4:30 NAU - "The king reflected and said, 'Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?'"
 - c. Our own politicians are thirsty for power and glory
 Few recognize that we owe our very being to God. He raises up and brings down. He makes strong and He makes weak. God alone is worthy of our worship.
 2. The young and the old are to worship God. Neither seek Him. All make excuse.
 - a. The young are too busy planning for the future. The flesh is powerful and the heart seeks earthly things more than God
 - b. Middle aged people are seeking to maintain their status. The world has thoroughly captivated their heart.
 - c. The aged have become so hardened towards God they will not consider His glory
 3. **Verse 13** gives the charge – Let all praise Him! Male and female, young and old, rich and poor.
Psalm 148:13 KJV - "Let them praise the name of the LORD: for his name alone is excellent"
 4. Sadly, their hearts are not prepared for worship.
 Thomas Watson – "As all do not have the skill to play the lute, so not everyone can sound forth the harmonious praises of God. Wicked men are bound to praise God, but they are not fit to praise Him. None but a living Christian can tune God's praise. Wicked men are dead in sin; how can they who are dead lift up God's praises?"

- B. Our attention is directed to the grand climax – only the saints of God worship Him upon the earth – **Verse 14**
1. They are lifted up with power. This is the meaning of the word “horn.” Their hearts are filled with praise.
 2. **Verse 14** describes them as the saints of God, the Israel of God, a people near to Him. These are the worshippers of God
 3. Only God’s people are equipped to worship Him
Watson again: “Praise is not comely for any but the godly. How uncomely it is for anyone to praise God if his whole life dishonors God! It is as indecent for a wicked man to praise God as it is for the devil to quote Scripture. The godly alone are fit to be choristers in God’s praises.”
- C. As God’s people our hearts have been filled with the wonder of Christ
Psalm 148:13 KJV - "Let them praise the name of the LORD: for his name alone is excellent"
1. God’s people have hearts shaped to praise God.
Psalm 9:1 KJV - "I will praise *thee*, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will shew forth all thy marvellous works."
Psalm 111:1 KJV - "Praise ye the LORD. I will praise the LORD with *my* whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and *in* the congregation."
 2. John Flavel from his book, *The Fountain of Life* wrote:
“After I have well weighed the case, turned it round, viewed it exactly on every side, balanced all advantages and disadvantages, pondered all things, that are fit to come into consideration about it; this is the result and final determination, that all other knowledge, how profitable, how pleasant soever, is not worthy to be named in the same day with the knowledge of Jesus Christ.”
 3. His name is the highest of all names. He is the greatest of all treasures. He shines with blinding radiance. He fills our hearts with all praise
Psalm 8:9 – “O LORD our Lord, how excellent *is* thy name in all the earth!”

Conclusion:

1. God reigns over all of creation
Daniel 4:35 KJV - "And all the inhabitants of the earth *are* reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and *among* the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"
2. He is worthy of praise from all. And He receives praise from all except the wicked.
 - A. The time is coming soon when all wickedness in the universe will be forever removed from the presence of God. He has prepared a place of outer darkness; a place of torment; a place with the shrieks of agony will not be heard. It is a place of desolation.
Proverbs 21:12-13 KJV - "The righteous *man* wisely considereth the house of the wicked: *but* God overthroweth the wicked for *their* wickedness. ¹³ Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard."
 - B. He has also prepared a place of everlasting praise.
3. How glorious it is to join with the great choir of the righteous in praising God. This psalm was the motivation of St. Francis of Assisi in the great hymn:
 All creatures of our God and King
 Lift up your voice and with us sing
 Oh, praise Him
 Alleluia
 Thou burning sun with golden beam
 Thou silver moon with softer gleam
 Oh, praise Him
 Oh, praise Him
 Alleluia
 Alleluia
 Alleluia