

PRAISE FROM ALL IN HEAVEN AND EARTH

(SUNDAY, JULY 14, 2019)

Scripture Reading: Phil. 2:5-11; Psalm 148

INTRODUCTION

The word **worship** has been in the English language for about 1000 years, coming from words in Old and Middle English.

How do you define worship?

You can define worship as the respect and reverence, the thanksgiving and praise that we rightfully must give to our God and creator.

Worship properly belongs to God alone!

As I will mention later, when we don't worship God as He deserves and calls us to do, we will end up worshipping other aspects of His creation.

There is a sense where the biggest worship services today are in stadiums and concert venues.

God's Word shows us that true worship is the result of God's work of grace, otherwise we can easily go through the motions of worship with hearts that are far from God.

Is. 29:13 Therefore the Lord said:

“Inasmuch as **these people** draw near with their mouths

And honor Me with their lips,

But have removed their hearts far from Me,

And their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men,

True worship of God begins with God's work of grace such that we come to an understanding of God and who we are apart from His grace.

This proper understanding should lead to humility and reverence that is expressed in praise and thanksgiving coming from our lips and acts of love and service for the sake of Jesus Christ.¹

¹ Modifying a definition by John Piper.

Hebrews 13:15 Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of *our* lips, giving thanks to His name. **16** But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

It is common in modern church settings to say that worship is the singing part of a service.

In reality the entire time we are gathered is part of our worship.

We are to worship God in song, prayer, reading, in listening, watching, and receiving the sacraments.

And by God's grace, this worship should continue in our love and service to God after we are dismissed with God's blessing.

We know that the 150 Psalms are rich in their diversity.

There are lots of issues in life, but the central issue should be worshipping the one and only true God.

We see this in the book of Psalms that each of the five books ends with a word of praise.

Book 5 ends with 5 Psalms that all begin and end with the Hebrew word Hallelujah, praise the LORD.

Charles Spurgeon said that Psalm 148 is a living poem that should not be dissected verse by verse.

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.²

I hope to not dissect this living poem of praise, but rather to help us consider its beauty and truth and to show how it directs us in praise.

There is an order to this Psalm.

It begins and ends with a call to praise: Praise the LORD.

And then notice in verse 1 there is a call that God be praised from the heavens.

And then look at the start of verse 7, Praise the LORD from the earth.

So appropriately we begin with heaven and we move down to the earth.

² Charles Spurgeon, *Treasury of David*, s.v. Psalm 148.

What is the central lesson of Psalm 148?

All of creation is to praise of God, but especially those who have been redeemed by sovereign grace must be filled with praise to our Lord.

We will look at this Psalm in two parts: verses 1-6 and verses 7-14.

1. PRAISE THE LORD FROM THE HEAVENS, VV. 1-6

James Boice in his commentary on the Psalms quotes several times from a pastor in Cambridge, England named Roy Clements.

Roy Clements observed that there are three words that are understood in every language on earth: amen, hallelujah, and Coca Cola.³

Unfortunately, the first two words are often misused though they are recognizable.

In Hebrew, the word praise is *halal*.

Sometimes the name translated as LORD or Yahweh is shortened to *jah*.

So, the command Praise the LORD in Hebrew is: **Hallelujah**.

It is a perversion of this precious command when it is used in commercials or in common speech as a throw away phrase.

The verb **praise** is used 72 times in the book of Psalms. In just the last 5 chapters the verb praise is used 35 times.

Appropriately this Psalm begins with a call that the one true and triune God be praised from the heavens.

What does the word heavens refer to?

Is it speaking of the universe or the place where God's presence is manifested to His angels and redeemed creatures?

The answer at least in this Psalm is both.

When referring to the physical creation the word can speak of what we call the universe.

When referring to God's angels it can speak of the place where God's special presence is made known.

³ Boice, 1258.

It is amazing to think of the vastness of what God has made.

The earth currently is inhabited by over 7.5 billion people.

And we don't believe it is overcrowded just not always used properly.

Now the earth is from our perspective very large, and yet we know that in comparison to heavenly bodies it is very small.

The sun's radius is 100 times the earth's radius, so the volume of the sun is 1,000,000 larger than the earth's volume.

And then we consider how the sun, though a very special star, is but just one star that God has made.

How many stars are there?

Only an estimate can be given. Astronomers today estimate that there are 1 trillion-trillion stars.

If you could somehow count 1 trillion stars, you would have to do that 1 trillion times to count all the stars that God has created.

I looked up these statistics using a program called Wolfram Alpha.

It states that it is not known if the size of the universe is finite or infinite.

But from what is observed the universe is 93 billion light years in diameter.

The earth is about 93 million miles from the sun.

So, the universe is about 6 million billion times larger than the distance from the earth to the sun.

David did not know these exact numbers, but David guided by the Holy Spirit and his own observation could well recognize how small we are in comparison to the vastness of what God has made.

Psalm 8:3 When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,

The moon and the stars, which You have ordained,

4 What is man that You are mindful of him,

And the son of man that You visit him?

Verse 2 calls for angels to praise the LORD.

There is a connection in Scripture between stars and angels.

The word host in verse 2 in some places refers to stars and in other place to angels.

God has created a vast number of stars and we believe also a vast number of angels, some of which now are fallen and in rebellion, but the unfallen angels serve and praise God without ceasing.

Listen to Rev. 5:11-12.

Rev. 5:11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, **12** saying with a loud voice:

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain
To receive power and riches and wisdom,
And strength and honor and glory and blessing!”

We can more easily understand how angels give praise to God.

But how do we understand the sun, moon, and stars and other aspects of creation being called to praise the LORD?

Consider two things that Dr. Boice suggested.

First, these magnificent aspects of God’s creation worship or glorify God by their mere existence.

It is when we study what God has made that we are directed to realize anew the awesome power and wisdom of God.

Second, these aspects of God’s creation bring forth their worship in a way that is always visible and unceasing.

It is this unending witness that is to both direct humanity in doing the same and also convicts all of humanity because we don’t do this as we should.⁴

Further, a related point that I mentioned earlier is that these aspects of God’s creation are called to praise God such that we will not worship them but worship the God who made them.

As you study the history, you find repeatedly cultures that worship creation rather than the Creator.

⁴ Boice, 1274.

Just about everything in this Psalm that has been called to praise God has in man's rebellion been worshipped from the sun, moon, and stars, to the animals and other aspects of God's creation on the earth.

Finally under this point, we consider verses 5 and 6.

The parts of creation in verses 1-4 are called to praise the LORD for two reasons.

First, God spoke all of these things into existence just by His powerful Word.

Second, God continues by His Providence to uphold the vastness of what He has made.

And these two points should direct us always to be in praise of our great God.

Let us move to verses 7-14.

2. PRAISE THE LORD FROM THE EARTH, VV. 7-14

It is fascinating that this Psalm moves from the heavens above to the earth and the sea creatures that inhabit the depths of the oceans.

We go from the highest of heavens to the lowest places on the earth.

The phrase "great sea creatures" comes from a Hebrew word found first in Genesis 1:21.

"So God created great sea creatures..."

This is the word that in the KJV is translated as dragons and other versions read sea monsters.

From everything that scientists have been able to discover past and present, the greatest creature in terms of size is the mighty blue whale.

These largest of earth's creatures are some of the most difficult to find because they inhabit the depths of the ocean so often.

Growing up to 110 ten feet and weighing up to 420,000 pounds, you might think they should be easier to spot.

Other ocean creatures that could be consider great would have to include other whales and perhaps even the giant and colossal squids, which are known to have epic battles with sperm whales and other creatures in the depths.

We move from the depths of creation on earth to the things which often make us complain - fire or lightning and hail, snow and clouds, and stormy winds.

In these aspects of creation, we are also confronted with God's power and in verse 8 we are again reminded that God sovereignly oversees the weather.

What we might consider the more beautiful aspects of God's creation – mountains, hills, trees, and cedars also are part of God's chorus of praise.

And in verse 10 we have the animal kingdom described in terms of living creatures, cattle which include all domesticated animals, creeping things, and birds.

My Sunday School lesson shared some of the same facts that I am sharing now.

Scientists today have classified 307,674 species of living plants and 1.37 million species in the animal kingdom.

The insect kingdom includes by far the largest number of species.

It is estimated that there 370,000 beetle species.

Charles Spurgeon wrote:

True devotion not only hears the praises of God in the sweet song of feathered minstrels, but even discovers it in the croaking from the marsh, or in the buzz of "the blue fly which singeth in the window pane." More base than reptiles, more insignificant than insects, are songless men.⁵

We finally get to humans in verses 11 and 12.

With man we also start from the top in terms of social power – kings.

As I mentioned before often creation is worshipped and certainly this is true of earthly powers – kings, caesars, czars, prime ministers, and presidents.

From verse 11 the word **peoples** speaks of ethnic groups or nations.

In other words, kings and all the people that they rule along with all other government officials are to praise the one true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Then in verse 12 we have different categories of people.

We start with grown but unmarried men and women called young men and maidens.

Then we have fully grown, bearded men, which is the literal meaning of the word **old men** along with children.

⁵ Spurgeon, s.v. Psalm 148:10.

All the different ways people can be classified in terms of position, gender, and age, what is to unify all is praising the name of the LORD.

His name alone is exalted.

His glory or majesty is displayed throughout the earth and heaven.

What the Psalmist in verse 13 declares is the same thing that Paul wrote in Romans 1:20.

Rom. 1:20 For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,

Finally, in verse 14 we move from the wonderful and important fields of science to the power of God in the salvation of sinners.

Some believe this Psalm was written after the Babylonian exile.

We know that God's people of old were judged mightily and cast out of the Promised Land.

Yet God in His sovereign power preserved a remnant of Israel.

They were brought back to the land.

Some translations of verse 14 read in the past tense – He has exalted the horn of His people.

Others would read verse 14 as a prayer – May God exalt the horn of His people.

Horn is a word that speaks of strength.

Either way you read this verse we have to understand that this hope and prayer is ultimately found in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Zechariah the father of John the Baptist used the word horn in his praise of God after the birth of John.

Luke 1:69 And has raised up a horn of salvation for us

In the house of His servant David,

In this prophesy, Zechariah was not speaking of his son but the one his son would go before in preparing the way.

The great work of salvation then is the provision of a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, and second in saving His people so that we can be near to God.

Listen to two verses which speak of the blessing of being near to God.

Eph. 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been **brought near** by the blood of Christ.

Rev. 21:3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God.

It is in this final verse that we learn that the only way that sinful men and women can be brought to properly praise the LORD is when they have been brought near to God by the blood of Christ.

All of creation is to praise of God, but especially those who have been redeemed by sovereign grace must be filled with praise to our Lord.

Let me close by sharing just a few words of challenge and application.

First, we must recognize how much God deserves to be praised.

God deserves absolute and total praise.

There is no limit.

And so second, we should take stock of our own attitudes and actions.

How much are we focused on praising God?

Everyone honest must say, not enough, not as much as I could be.

Third, we must recognize that we are often slow in giving the praise that God deserves.

How can this be?

It is part of our nature as fallen creatures that we don't give God the praise that He deserves

That one day will change.

But it is the reality that we face now, but by God's grace we are still led to praise Him.

Fourth, to direct us God has given us all that He has made. He has given us His Word. He has provided us salvation and the continued ministering work of the Holy Spirit.

A good application of this Psalm would be that every time you look at what God has made, you would praise to God.

When you see the stars, sun, moon, clouds, or the deep blue sky - be filled with praise.

Every tree should remind you, God deserves your praise.

All of the animals including the annoying mosquitoes and house flies and ants that invade your space - God made these amazing creatures.

And then especially when we consider how as totally undeserving sinners, God redeemed us through the blood of His Son, how can we not be gripped with praise?

O Lord, open our eyes, our hearts, and our lips to be filled with praise to You, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen and amen!

Prayer

Closing Hymn: Psalm 148

Benediction: Romans 11:33-36

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable
are His judgments and His ways past finding out!

“For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?”

“Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?”

For of Him and through Him and to Him *are* all things, to whom *be* glory forever. Amen.