

## **HE HUMBLING HIMSELF FOR US!**

Psalm 113: 1-9 --- Pastor Richard P. Carlson

When I think of God humbling Himself, I think of the miracle of motherhood mentioned in verse 9 of Psalm 113. In a small measure, becoming a mother is a sacred humbling that to some extent, mirrors Jesus coming to earth for us in His incarnation, born of a virgin maiden. Let me read to you an article from the Washington Watch, April 1999, Volume 10, Number 6. It was an article entitled "The Price Of Motherhood." This anonymous author gives what we might call a two hankie perspective. I will read it as I found it, but only excerpts:

"Time is running out for my friend. We are sitting at lunch when she casually mentions that she and her husband are thinking of "starting a family." What she means is that her biological clock has begun its countdown and she is being forced to consider the prospect of motherhood. "We're taking a survey," she says, half jokingly. Do you think I should have a baby?" "It will change your life," I say carefully, keeping my tone neutral. "I know," she says, "No more sleeping in on Saturdays, no more spontaneous vacations." But that is not what I mean at all. I look at my friend, trying to decide what to tell her. I want her to know what she will never learn in childbirth classes. I look at her carefully manicured nails and stylish suit and think she should know that no matter how sophisticated she is, becoming a mother will immediately reduce her to the primitive level of a she-bear protecting her cub. I feel I should warn her that no matter how many years she has invested in her career, she will be professionally derailed by motherhood. She might successfully arrange for childcare, but one day she will be waiting to go into an important business meeting, and she will think about her baby's sweet smell. She will have to use every ounce of discipline to keep from running home, just to make sure he is all right. Looking at my attractive friend, I want to assure her that eventually she will shed the pounds of pregnancy, but will never feel the same about herself.

I want her to know that a caesarean scar or shiny stretch marks will become badges of honor. I think she should know that she will fall in love with her husband again for reasons she would now find very unromantic. I want her to know that however decisive she may be at the office, she will second-guess herself constantly as a mother. I want to describe to my friend the exhilaration of seeing her son learn to hit a baseball. I want her to taste the joy that is so real that it hurts. My friend's quizzical look makes me realize that tears have formed in my eyes. "You'll never regret it," I say finally. Then I reach across the table, and squeezing my friend's hand, I offer a prayer for her and me and all the mere mortal women who stumble their way into this holiest of callings."

Ladies, if you think the price of humbling yourself to be a mother is high, imagine the price Jesus paid to become the Savior of all those who repent, believe and receive Him. Beloved, everything worth anything comes to us at a great price. Eternal life for every believer came to us at the most dreadful price—the death of God’s only beloved Son. Yet, today in America, tens of millions are debating what they should do with Jesus. Why should it matter? It makes all the difference, because everything you and I have that is an answer to our hopes and our dreams comes to us at the intentional price paid by the humility and humbling of God. Any success I have ever known as a husband and father and pastor and district superintendent and writer and author, any success has come to me at the price of the incredible humbling of God for me. What a price Jesus paid for us and still pays today for any successes any of us claim! At what price to God do any of our impossible dreams come true? Psalm 113 tells us the price is fourfold:

**THE PRICE GOD PAID IS HIS HUMBLING HIMSELF TO SEE AND FEEL OUR DEEPEST LONGINGS.** (I.) Notice Psalm 113: 1-6. Before I look at

this humbling of God for us, let me say I hear Christian people often say, “God is good all the time; all the time God is good!” I agree, but I wonder if we can say that so often tritely, that we lose the beauty of His goodness. God humbles Himself for us daily still. What He does for you and me is awesome. Even as I struggle to get across this message and the greatness of our God, God is leaning down from heaven’s portals and helping me, anointing me and cheering me on. He knows my deepest longings to help us all as a congregation come to praise and revel in Him and in His work in our lives. Psalm 113: 1-6 is simply a marvelous way we can respond to God when we watch Him humble himself to see us, hear us and answer our prayers. Notice Psalm 113: 1-6 should be our moment by moment response of praise to God, but again I urge you all--don’t let these words of praise become trite or just words. Today I come to join the psalmist to cry out to God, “Praise the Lord! Praise, O servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD! Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and forevermore! From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of the LORD is to be praised! The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens! Who is like the LORD our God, Who is seated on high, Who looks far down on the heavens and the earth?”

Once we begin to praise the Lord for how great He is from the rising of the sun to its going down, once we lift up the Name of the Lord who is to be praised, and once we begin to cry out—“Who is like the Lord our God who is seated on the throne on high and who looks far down on the heavens and the earth—once those praises leave our lips, we must stop and say—“Why does He care about us, about you and about me? Now I must tell you—no translation is as accurate as the New American Standard Bible on verse 5 and 6. There I read—“Who is like the Lord

our God who is enthroned on high **who humbles Himself to behold** the things that are in heaven and in the earth. Our ESV says “Who looks far down, but the Hebrew word for looks far down is **shaphel**. Shaphel means to depress, to sink, to abase, to humiliate, to bring down, to lay low or to put lower as in being humbled. The Jews used this word often in connection with leprosy being deeper and lower than the skin. This word is used for what God does to those who walk in pride. Yet God chooses voluntarily in love to humble Himself for us. He says in Isaiah 57: 15, “For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy! “I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.” The word Isaiah uses for lowly is shaphel. In Psalm 138: 6, David says, “For though the Lord is high, He regards the lowly, (shaphel) but the haughty He knows from afar. Beloved, it is the uniqueness of God that though He is the incomparable One enthroned in the highest heaven; yet at the same time, He sets His deepest gaze downwards in the heavens to the earth where nothing in all the realm of His creation escapes His notice. Nothing is too low (Shaphel) or too small. In fact, God loves and longs to make the most lowly people with all their problems the special object of His concern, regard and focus. (v. 7) David in Psalm 139: 13-16 tells us how God weaves us in our mother’s womb. Why should He care? David says in Psalm 144: 3, “O Lord, what is man that You regard him, or the son of man that You think of him?” These words are echoed in Psalm 8: 4.

Now look at the longings of the poor, the needy and the barren in verses 7-9. The price of God humbling Himself to see and know and feel our deepest longings, feeling the heaviness and caring more deeply than any parent or spouse or human friend could ever know. Turn to I Samuel 1: 8 and listen to the response of Hannah’s husband Elkanah to her barrenness. He said, “Hannah, why do you weep? And why do you not eat? And why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons? No husband can fully feel the depths of longing in a barren woman. But though Elkanah missed Hannah’s heart and Eli took her for being drunk, God looked down from heaven on this lowly broken woman. She and her husband went back home. In I Samuel 1: 20, I read, “And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the Lord remembered her and in due time, Hannah conceived and bore a son and she called his name Samuel, for she said, I have asked for him from the Lord.” At what price do I have seven children? I too asked of the Lord with my wife, and He looked down on us lowly people—a husband and wife and each time, He opened the womb. God humbles Himself to behold, but there’s more! Secondly,

**THE PRICE GOD PAID IS HIS HUMBLING HIMSELF TO HEarken TO OUR PITIFUL CRIES.** (II.) Notice Psalm 113: 6. God humbles Himself to look far down. The Hebrew word for far down is shaphel, but the looking or humbling

of Himself to look—this Hebrew word for look is **raaw**. Raaw means to consider, to discern, to gaze upon, to perceive the need, to view a situation and think about what is needed to help. His look far down is what leads the Lord to humble Himself to raise the poor from the dust and to lift the needy from the ash heap. Who does this remind us of? Job exactly. Do you remember the word of the Lord to Moses when God called him to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt? In Exodus 3: 7, we read, Then the Lord said, “I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings.” There is nothing so pitiful as listening to a desperate cry. When God looks down and sees our little that we form, our prejudices and how pitiful even believers can look down on one another, He often must weep. In the family of God, there should be no cliques—no separations that say—don’t invite that family, or leave that couple out, but it can happen. As a teenager and member of the Big Branch Fellowship Chapel, we had a dear lady in Kentucky open up her home up on Big Branch of the Troublesome River for challenged young people and adults. It was a challenging job. In that day, folk called the people she helped retarded. She came to my Dad and asked permission to bring some of them to church on Sunday nights. They came and filled the two back rows on the right side in the back of the church. But I heard the scuttlebutt and the words spoken about that woman and her tribe. They were slobbering in church, disheveled in appearance, and they couldn’t even talk, could they? It was becoming a problem.

Until—until, until the Lord looked down one Sunday night when Dad asked for testimonies. A few regulars gave their testimony. Always Martha Cornett testified as her husband stayed home with their son. She stayed home in the morning. Their son, Sparkman—they called Sparky got brain fever and all he could do was lay in bed, tied down at age 32 and he grunted loudly. Martha had the joy of the Lord and she knew about challenged folk. Somehow folks didn’t judge her. She got up and testified of hearing the birds singing outside her window and the goodness of God. Then no one could believe what they saw next and heard. A young lady from that back row stood up and said, “Psalm 116: 15, “I love the Lord because He has heard my voice and my supplication. Therefore, I will call on Him as long as I live.” We were all crying and God looked down on Big Branch Fellowship Chapel. He brought revival. The scuttlebutt was over. The cliques and the harsh words about Dad letting this lady and her retarded folks come to church was over. God breathed on us through that 23 year old lady. He hearkened to her pitiful cries. When Mom woke me 36 hours before she died at midnight, as I slept on the floor beside her bed, she told me what to preach. She gave me three verses to preach and one of them was Psalm 116: 15. This very week, afresh, I have cried out to God in heaven to hear my voice and my supplication as I gave him every part of me. Thirdly,

## **THE PRICE GOD PAID IS HIS HUMBLING HIMSELF TO HAVE**

**MERCY ON OUR PLIGHT**(III.) Notice Psalm 113: 7-9. “He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes, with the princes of his people. He gives the barren woman a home, making her the joyous mother of children. Praise the LORD!” There’s no simpler way to describe what God does from heaven’s portals than to say He beholds far down below Him and hears and hearkens to our cries and He has mercy on our plight. This is God’s hesed, His lovingkindness, His undeserved grace and tender mercy. Of all the grand stories in the scriptures, the one I am just now reading in my devotional time with the Lord alone is Judges 13: 1-24. As you all know, for the Jewish woman in Old Testament times, no blight or plight or affliction was any worse than for a man and a woman to have no children. Barrenness was awful. Blind Bartimaeus was rebuked by Jesus’ disciples for crying out for mercy to Jesus, but he cried out even louder, crying “Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.” Jesus had mercy on his plight and gave him sight. We aren’t told of the agony in the life of Manoah and his wife because of her barrenness. Yet I am persuaded that her cries often split the air all the way to heaven as she and Manoah prayed for a son. Then it happened. If anyone could dream that a young teenage girl would be God’s choice for being the mother of God’s beloved son, to be born of a virgin—how could we have believed God would pick a young teenager. But God knew she knew the Word—and He chose a young virgin lady who would speak and sing to baby Jesus His very words. Do you remember Mary’s words to Elizabeth when Mary had recently conceived in her womb, but she wasn’t even showing yet. We call her words the Magnificat—her theologically fantastic song of praise—from the mouth of a teenage girl. She sang out—Luke 1: 46-55,

“And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for He has looked on the humble estate of His servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name. And His mercy is for those who fear Him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; He has brought down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of humble estate; He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty. He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.” Beloved, whatever else scientists or biologists say, to God be the glory, it is the Lord alone who opens and shuts the womb of a mother. And it is time beloved, after nearly 60 million babies have been aborted, it’s time to praise the Lord that you and I were not aborted. It is God’s mercy that brought us all to our birth. I love the words of Titus 3: 5, “He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of

regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.” God still humbles Himself to behold us far down below, to hear us and hearken to us, and to have mercy on our plight. Those mighty words of blind Bartimaeus were the words of John Hus, that mighty man of God who was burned at the stake for his stand for the scriptures. As the green wood was smoking and catching fire, that firebrand started himself to flame up in the smoke until the last words his executioners heard were listening to him sing, “Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me—over and over, and God heard his plight, had mercy on him. Though his body was consumed in the flames, he was airborne—gone Home, absent from the body, present with the Lord. 4thly,

**THE PRICE GOD PAID IS HIS HUMBLING HIMSELF TO FULFILL OUR DEEPEST HOPES WITH HIS DEEPEST JOY.** (IV.) Notice Psalm 113: 9. “He gives the barren woman a home, making her the joyous mother of children. Praise the LORD!” As I came to this text, I sensed not only the heart cry of barren married women, but the heart-cry of unmarried women who too are barren. Their hope is first for a godly husband and then for children. To the Jews, the granting of children, especially to those long given up to be barren, was the choicest favor God could bestow—to Sarah, to Manoah’s wife, to Hannah, to Elizabeth. How far we have drifted from that biblical hope in godless America. God’s gift of pregnancy has been spurned and ended in abortion between 59-60 million times. When a nation quits praising God, its blessings become curses and its curses become blessings. Today, millions of women do not want children. They disdain the thought of being pregnant and carrying a baby. How truth has fallen in the street and been turned on its head. Slowly, couples often wake up too late, waiting past their biological clock and they want children in vain. And sadly, read the billboards even going into Laramie. Couples that have decided permanently to prevent children are crying out for a reversal of their decision. I announce to all of us today that God’s word says to us in effect, “As long as we live, there is no higher calling, men and women than to have children—God desires, Malachi 2: 15, “a godly offspring.” Ladies, hear the word of the Lord! Hear the voice of the Holy Spirit. You will never find a higher calling than bearing children for the Lord and when you are older, to obey the Word in Titus 2: 4-5, to teach younger women as an older woman to love their husbands, to love their children, and to be tidy keepers at home. Why should Sarah and Abraham do all the laughing having children at 90 and 100? Being the joyous mother of children—v. 9 is a joy—rivalled only perhaps by the joy of being a bride. It’s hard to top Sarah’s joy and laughter as she at age 90 nursed her little son of promise named Isaac. At what price does motherhood and fatherhood come? At what price does finding a bride or groom come? At what price does adoption come? Laughing fulfillment of our hopes and dreams comes from God –1-4. We can lead the lost to Jesus—and bear new sons and daughters that are born into God’s kingdom. What a price the Lord paid!