

“One Generation to Another”

Psalm 145

by Pastor Jason Van Bommel

A Song of Praise. Of David.

¹ *I will extol you, my God and King,
and bless your name forever and ever.*

² *Every day I will bless you
and praise your name forever and ever.*

³ *Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised,
and his greatness is unsearchable.*

⁴ *One generation shall commend your works to another,
and shall declare your mighty acts.*

⁵ *On the glorious splendor of your majesty,
and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.*

⁶ *They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds,
and I will declare your greatness.*

⁷ *They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness
and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.*

⁸ *The LORD is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.*

⁹ *The LORD is good to all,
and his mercy is over all that he has made.*

¹⁰ *All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD,
and all your saints shall bless you!*

¹¹ *They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom
and tell of your power,*

¹² *to make known to the children of man your mighty deeds,
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.*

¹³ *Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and your dominion endures throughout all generations.*

*[The LORD is faithful in all his words
and kind in all his works.]*

*¹⁴ The LORD upholds all who are falling
and raises up all who are bowed down.*

*¹⁵ The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food in due season.*

*¹⁶ You open your hand;
you satisfy the desire of every living thing.*

*¹⁷ The LORD is righteous in all his ways
and kind in all his works.*

*¹⁸ The LORD is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth.*

*¹⁹ He fulfills the desire of those who fear him;
he also hears their cry and saves them.*

*²⁰ The LORD preserves all who love him,
but all the wicked he will destroy.*

*²¹ My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD,
and let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever.*

- Psalm 145, ESV

Did you ever get so excited about something that you just couldn't stop talking about it day after day? As the NFL season approaches, some of you get that way about the Ravens or the Washington Football Team or the Eagles. As baseball season gets closer to playoff season, some of us are pretty excited about the Orioles and might track their wins and losses daily. But maybe for you it was the InstantPot when you first got it or your sourdough bread starter and all that you'd done with it or maybe something else. Something happens over time with all of these things. Eventually, we stop talking excitedly about these kinds of things on a daily basis. Why? Well, maybe we get bored of them. Maybe they disappoint us, again, like an early Ravens playoff exit or a disappointing Star Wars sequel movie. Or maybe something else, something better, comes in and distracts us and gains our attention.

Psalm 145 tells us that the LORD is the only One worth talking about, praising, and sharing with others excitedly every day of our lives and every day into eternity forever and ever. He was worth talking about, praising, and sharing with others 3,000 years ago when David wrote this Psalm, and He's just as worthy of our praise and proclamation today and He will be just as worthy millions of years from now in eternal glory. Why? Because of how wonderful He is in Himself and how matchlessly wonderful His works have been and continue to be. There's no disappointing sequels with God - each of His great works is followed by more great works with even greater works still in store for the future.

Psalm 145 is the last of the Psalms of David and is the final psalm before the 5-psalm conclusion of the Book of Psalms. The Book of Psalms has a 2-psalm introduction, Psalms 1-2 laying out the major themes of the book before Psalm 3 begins the body of the Psalms, and then a 5-psalm conclusion, Psalms 146-150, each of which begins and ends with Hallelujah! or "Praise the LORD," and so they're set up by this "Song of Praise." The body of the Book of Psalms begins and ends with Psalms of David, and Psalm 145 is the only psalm with the title "A Song of Praise," thus serving as a very fitting set-up for the concluding five psalms, which I'm planning to preach at the end of the summers in the Psalms some number of years from now, if the Lord graciously allows.

In traditional Jewish practice, Psalm 145 was recited twice in the morning and again in the evening, putting this Psalm on the lips three times per day on a daily basis. It is not only the final Psalm of David but it is also the last of 9 psalms that are written in an acrostic format, with each verse starting with the next letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Psalm 145 may be an incomplete acrostic, as the Hebrew letter Nun is missing from the middle. Some have commented that this is because our praise of God is never complete, never finished, as Psalm 145 emphasizes - We are to praise God every day forever and ever, so our praise of Him is never finished. However, if the second half of verse 13, which you see in brackets in the ESV text, is actually an original part of the psalm, then the acrostic pattern is complete.

It's very difficult to neatly outline Psalm 145 because it is an acrostic psalm, and so the structure was determined by the Hebrew alphabet, so the major themes are

interspersed throughout. However, Psalm 145 begins and ends with David’s personal resolve to praise the LORD:

*¹ I will extol you, my God and King,
and bless your name forever and ever.*

*² Every day I will bless you
and praise your name forever and ever.*

*²¹ My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD,
and let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever.*

At the ending, David’s personal resolve to praise the LORD is expanded into a call for all flesh – all people and all living creatures – to bless God’s holy name – and notice the three-fold repetition of “forever and ever” in this open and close. I think this is probably part of the reason why the Jewish tradition was to recite this twice in the morning and once in the evening.

As we’ve seen in several of these Kingship psalms this summer, David praises God himself, calls on all of God’s people to praise Him, then all the people of the world, and then all of creation to praise the LORD. Like other psalms, David praises God for who He and for what he has done – for His holy name and for His wondrous works. But this psalm is perhaps the most explicit in highlighting the praiseworthiness of God for these two things.

We’re going to take a look at Psalm 145 under three broad headings – the Greatness of God’s Power, the Goodness of God’s Character, and the Kindness of God’s Glorious Kingdom.

I. Praising the Lord for His Greatness, 1-6

The greatness of God’s power is mainly in focus in verses 1-6:

*¹ I will extol you, my God and King,
and bless your name forever and ever.*

² Every day I will bless you

and praise your name forever and ever.

³ *Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised,
and his greatness is unsearchable.*

⁴ *One generation shall commend your works to another,
and shall declare your mighty acts.*

⁵ *On the glorious splendor of your majesty,
and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.*

⁶ *They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds,
and I will declare your greatness.*

Verse 3 is the heart of this section: “Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised, and His greatness is unsearchable.”

The psalm opens with a resolution to extol and bless and praise the LORD. To extol the LORD is to lift Him high, to raise up His name and His reputation and His fame for all to see and admire and praise. To bless the LORD is to kneel before Him, to bow low and to stoop in His presence as we speak well of Him. To praise comes from the root to shine or to flash forth light, so when we praise the LORD, we’re shining a light on His greatness, or causing the glory of who He is to shine forth in our words and actions. To lift high, to bow low, and to shine forth the greatness of God is to do everything we can in a variety of ways to declare and honor God’s greatness.

Why would we do this? Simply because of how great God truly is. Have you ever met someone who just really impressed you by how great they were at something – maybe a great artist or musician or a great athlete or a greatly intelligent person or a greatly kind person. If you’re really deeply impressed by someone, you naturally and excitedly talk about how great they are – David and Cathie’s son, Dalvin, is the greatest artist I know, and some of his artwork is just astoundingly great. I am impressed by his painting and an eager to share it with others. Patrick and Erin Fulford are amazing musicians and Patrick’s ability to transpose music on the fly and adjust arrangements so fluidly to make them easier for us to sing is amazing. Gabe Raiber’s ability to solve a Rubik’s cube in seconds amazes me.

But think about this: God is infinitely better as an artist than the best artist you've ever known. He paints sunrises and sunsets every morning and evening all around the globe continually, and you've never seen two that were exactly alike. And don't even get me started on varieties of flowers and butterflies and birds.

God is infinitely smarter than the most intelligent person you know. DNA is a highly complex code God uses to program every form of life from amoeba to sequoias to blue whales to people. And just within humanity, God can encode almost 8 billion people in the world so that no two are exactly alike. Even identical twins aren't completely identical – they don't have the same fingerprints – because God's creative variety is not limited to the DNA code.

God is infinitely stronger and more powerful than the most powerful person you know.

God is infinitely kinder and more tenderhearted than the kindest, most loving person you know.

And the way we see the greatness of God displayed is through His great works. In verse 5, David says, "I will meditate on your wondrous works." If you're not deeply impressed, amazed, and eager to tell of the greatness of God, then meditate on His works – study and ponder. Psalm 111:2 says, "*Great are the works of the LORD, studied by all who delight in them.*"

Study how capillary action allows a mature oak tree to drink in 15-30 gallons of water per week. Or study how redwood trees in California can grow to 350 feet in height while only having roots that grow about 10 feet underground – How? By intertwining their root systems, they literally support each other as they grow to be 500 tons in mass. Or did you know that killer whales live in isolated and distinct pods, each of which has their own communications language? Did you know that a shark can detect a drop of blood in the water from a quarter of a mile away?

You can dismiss all of this as nerdy science stuff, but these are the great works of God. And, by the way, so is the fact that Mac McClung at 6'2" can jump so high he almost hit his head on the rim on some of his dunks and so are the creative abilities of artists and musicians, given to them by God who made them in His image.

All of that and so much more falls under God's works of creation. Better still are His works of redemption, by which He has worked in the world to reveal Himself in Scripture and secure the redemption of His people through His Son, the Lord Jesus.

II. Thanking the Lord for His Goodness, 7-10

God is not only great in His power and works, but He is also good:

⁷ *They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.*

⁸ *The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.*

⁹ *The LORD is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made.*

¹⁰ *All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD, and all your saints shall bless you!*

It would be terrifying if God were all-powerful and unopposable and not also abundantly good and righteous. The man-made gods of the ancient world were never abundantly good and righteous; they were petty, selfish, squabbling and often deceitful and manipulative. They got angry easily and demanded appeasement that often included human sacrifice.

If you're tempted to think of the Lord in this way, you need to think again:

*The LORD is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
The LORD is good to all,
and his mercy is over all that he has made. – vv. 8-9*

The LORD is gracious: He is kind and generous, treating us with abundant blessings we don't deserve. Jesus said:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” – Matthew 5:43-45, ESV

When God looks at a world full of people who deserve His just and holy wrath because of our continual sin and rebellion against Him and instead of just retribution, He gives us sunrises and rainfall, food and drink and family and rest and music and laughter and every good and perfect gift – this is grace, and the LORD is gracious.

The LORD is also merciful. Mercy is withholding the punishment we deserve. Every sin deserves the wrath and curse of God. Each sin we commit – lying, lusting, coveting, envying, hating, refusing to help others when it is within our power to help, speaking ill of someone instead of using our words to bless and build up – each sin is a crime against God, a violation of the express will of the One who made us in His image and who clearly calls us to love Him and love others as a reflection of His own loving character. Every time God withholds the punishment we deserve for our sin, He is being merciful to us.

The LORD is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. While the LORD does have a settled anger and hatred of sin, which mars His beautiful creation and hurts people made in His image, He is slow to execute His anger. He is instead abundant, overflowing with steadfast love for His people. “Slow to chide and swift to bless” is how the old hymn, “Praise, My Soul the King of Heaven” puts it.

The LORD is good to all. While the LORD is covenantally committed to save, keep, and bless His own chosen people, all of His creation receives His goodness every moment of every day. There is no one who can say, “The LORD has not been good to me.” Yes, some people have had very difficult, trying lives, but God has showered His goodness into the lives of everyone, despite trials, conflict and affliction.

And so, the right response to God’s abundant goodness is abundant thanksgiving and blessing His holy name. Just as we should study the marvelous works that show God’s

greatness, so we should train ourselves to notice the countless expressions of God's goodness to us every day and give thanks to Him. Marvel at His greatness and give thanks for His goodness. These should be woven into the regular pattern of our daily lives.

III. Speaking of the Lord's Glorious Kingdom, 11-20

And we should also tell others about God's glorious rule over His creation and His people:

*¹¹ They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom
and tell of your power,*

*¹² to make known to the children of man your mighty deeds,
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.*

*¹³ Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and your dominion endures throughout all generations.
[The LORD is faithful in all his words
and kind in all his works.]*

*¹⁴ The LORD upholds all who are falling
and raises up all who are bowed down.*

*¹⁵ The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food in due season.*

*¹⁶ You open your hand;
you satisfy the desire of every living thing.*

*¹⁷ The LORD is righteous in all his ways
and kind in all his works.*

*¹⁸ The LORD is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth.*

*¹⁹ He fulfills the desire of those who fear him;
he also hears their cry and saves them.*

*²⁰ The LORD preserves all who love him,
but all the wicked he will destroy.*

I need to say something quick about the second part of verse 13, which you'll see is in brackets in the ESV text: "The LORD is faithful in all his words

and kind in all his works.” Earlier, I said this was an incomplete acrostic Song of Praise. Well, these lines would be the missing letter if they are indeed not original to David’s Psalm. They are missing from the standard Hebrew texts, but the ancient translations of the Hebrew and one Dead Sea Scroll all contain these lines. I guess I’m personally inclined to believe they are original, as the Dead Sea Scrolls and the ancient translations all pre-date the standard Hebrew text by hundreds of years. However, we can’t really know for sure. I also like to think that David wrote a complete acrostic in his most complete Song of Praise.

These lines are certainly true. The LORD is certainly faithful in all His words, and verse 17 already tells us He is “kind in all His works.” Repeating this line makes sense for this section, for the verses in between – verses 14-16 – are showing us how kind God is in all His works:

¹⁴ *The LORD upholds all who are falling
and raises up all who are bowed down.*

¹⁵ *The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food in due season.*

¹⁶ *You open your hand;
you satisfy the desire of every living thing.*

God’s kingdom is a good kingdom. While His creation has been polluted and defiled by sin and savagery, He still cares for and upholds billions and billions of living creatures all over the world all of the time.

The end of this section may seem out-of-place to us at first, but it isn’t:

²⁰ *The LORD preserves all who love him,
but all the wicked he will destroy.*

Justice, too, is part of God’s goodness and kindness. Allowing wickedness to go unpunished is neither good nor kind, and God is too good and too kind to be unjust. His preservation of His own people and His creation required the destruction of the wicked. One day, God will finally and completely and eternally destroy all the wicked,

and then His people and His creation will be truly and eternally free!

IV. Resolving to Praise the Lord Always, v. 21

Until that day, while we live by faith and in hope, we need to join David in his resolve to praise the LORD and call others to join us in our praise:

*My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD,
and let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever.*

So, we need to study and be in awe of the marvelous works of God that show the greatness of His power. We need to notice and give thanks for the kindness and goodness of God in our lives. We need to tell others of the great power, good character, and kind kingship.

And, of course, there is one centrally important work of God that best and most fully displays the greatness of His power, the goodness of His character, and the kindness of His kingship, and that is the cross – the death and resurrection of Jesus. King Jesus died on the cross, taking all of our sin on Himself. This showed His strength and power, in that He was able to drink the cup of God’s wrath fully for all of our sins. He did so willingly as God the Son and the perfect representative of His people, and so the cross also shows His good and kind heart for His own. He rose again from the dead three days later, conquering death and hell forever, freeing His people from the tyranny of death. We see how good, how powerful, how loving, how righteous, and how altogether praiseworthy our king is most clearly when He died and rose again for us and our salvation.

That is also the aspect of God’s greatness and goodness the world most needs to hear and most needs to join us in praising God for. For only in the message of the cross can lost and ruined sinners alienated from God find full forgiveness, reconciliation to God, and eternal life!