

“The Greatness of God”
Psalm 115
(Preached at Trinity, September 2, 2012)

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. As we’ve seen the series of psalms beginning with **Psalm 113** were sung annually at the Passover. They were known as the Egyptian Hallel. They celebrate God’s mercy upon the downtrodden. They mark God’s redemption that was demonstrated in Egypt but would spread to the nations.
By custom **Psalms 113-114** were sung before the Passover. **Psalms 115-118** were sung after the Passover. So far we’ve looked at the first two:
 - A. **Psalm 113** is simply a glorious demonstration of praise. It begins and ends with praise. God is without equal.
Psalm 113:4-5 KJV - "The LORD *is* high above all nations, *and* his glory above the heavens. ⁵ Who *is* like unto the LORD our God"
 - B. **Psalm 114** rises up to exalt God’s power and dominion. Everything falls beneath His infinite sovereignty. There is only one response to such majesty:
Psalm 114:7 KJV - "Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord"
 2. The theme of **Psalm 115** is the greatness of God. And, once again, the psalmist comes to the same conclusion: "Praise the LORD."
 3. Last time I narrowed our sights to just a small portion of **Verse 1**
"Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory"
I directed you attention to the great and dreadful danger of seeking our own glory and thus robbing God of His glory.
 4. Tonight I want to pull our sights back to get the full picture of **Psalm 115**. This psalm sets up an investigation into the nature and character of the God worthy of praise. I’ll set it before you by answering three questions and then following with a conclusion.
 - I. Who is the LORD? – **Verse 1**
 - II. Where is the LORD? – **Verses 2-3**
 - III. What is the LORD? – **Verses 4-8**
 - IV. Worthy is the LORD? – **Verses 9-18**
- I. Who is the LORD? – **Verse 1**
 - A. The psalmist is overwhelmed by the greatness of God
 1. His life is consumed with God so that the only thing that matters is God’s glory
Psalm 115:1 KJV - "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory"
 2. This is the essence of Christianity
 - a. The Christian is one who is consumed with God

- b. Jesus makes this the clear requirement for those who desire to receive Him.

Matthew 16:24-25 KJV - "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. ²⁵ For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

John 12:25-26 KJV - "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. ²⁶ If any man serve me, let him follow me"

- B. There were two particular characteristics about God that attracted his attention and captured his heart. "for thy mercy, *and* for thy truth's sake."
1. These are two attributes of God that display the nature of God's covenant relationship with His people. The Psalms display them over and over—15 times in all. We saw them most recently in **Psalm 108**
Psalm 108:3-4 KJV - "I will praise thee, O LORD, among the people: and I will sing praises unto thee among the nations. ⁴ For thy mercy is great above the heavens: and thy truth reacheth unto the clouds."
 2. When Moses asked God to show him His glory these two attributes were at the heart of God's display of Himself.
Exodus 34:6 KJV - "And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,"
 3. They are two words of particular meaning – one of which is very familiar to us.
 - a. **חַסֵּד** - God's covenant love
God has set His infinite love upon us
 - b. **אֱמוּנָה** - The word means: firmness, faithfulness, sureness, reliability – often translated "truth"
- C. Who is God?
He is the God who has set His everlasting love upon His people. It is a steadfast love, unshakable. His promises unto His people are sure. They shall not fail. He will not forget His covenant. He will not forget His people.
Lamentations 3:22-24 NAU - "The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. ²³ They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. ²⁴ "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I have hope in Him.""
1. Has this God captivated your heart.
 2. Does the prayer of **Verse 1** fill your lips?

II. Where is the LORD? – **Verses 2-3**

Psalm 115:2-3 KJV - "Where *is* now their God? ³ But our God *is* in the heavens"
Psalm 113:4-5 KJV - "The LORD *is* high above all nations, *and* his glory above the heavens. ⁵ Who *is* like unto the LORD our God"

- A. The question is expressed with a mocking tone
1. The heathen sneer, "Where is your God?"
The Godly have often heard this jeer when times of affliction come, "So where is your God now?"
 2. They assume He is absent or He doesn't exist at all
But He sees all and rules over all.
Psalm 14:1-3 KJV - "The fool hath said in his heart, *There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.* ² The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, *and seek God.* ³ They are all gone aside, they are *all* together become filthy: *there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*"
- B. Where is our God? Our God is high above.
- Psalm 113:4-5 NAU** - "The LORD is high above all nations; His glory is above the heavens. ⁵ Who is like the LORD our God, Who is enthroned on high,"
1. He is in the heavens where He sits upon His throne. When Christ taught His disciples to pray He stressed this important truth:
"Our Father which art in heaven."
 2. It is a declaration that God is above all, rules all, sustains all
 3. It is a rich contrast between God and the idols of man's creation.
God reigns in the heavens while idols are made of earth and are confined to earth.
- C. The Psalmist concludes: "he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased."
1. He has decreed all things and works all things according to His will.
Ephesians 1:11 KJV - "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:"
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. It is a small thing for God to accomplish all of His eternal decrees. He rules from the heavens. His sovereign power is being brought to bear upon the earth.
 3. May God's greatness fill your heart in every trial – He is in the heavens!
But He is caring for you! Don't forget **Psalm 113**
Psalm 113:5-7 KJV - "Who *is* like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high, ⁶ Who humbleth *himself* to behold *the things that are* in heaven, and in the earth! ⁷ He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, *and* lifteth the needy out of the dunghill;"

III. What is the LORD? – Verses 4-8

- A. He is God over all. He is greater than all man-made idols – "the work of men's hands."
1. They all lack life – they are but dead marionettes - **Verses 5-7**
 2. They are vain inventions created in the imaginations of men.

3. We are drawn to the scene with Elijah and the prophets of Baal
1 Kings 18:26-27 KJV - "And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed *it*, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But *there* was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made. ²⁷ And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he *is* a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked."
 4. It is the height of human ignorance when they sink to the point where they believe they can actually make a god.
 5. Do men create idols today? Surely they do. There are still the vain idols of many of the eastern religions. India is filled with images of multi-armed gods.
 But there are other less obvious gods. Men make idols of their own plans, of their own ideas, of their own declarations of truth. Is evolution not an idol?
- B. This speaks volumes to our generation of relativism where men believe that if they believe something then it is.
1. They worship their own ability to create truth.
 At the same time they deny any concept of absolute truth—truth that governs creation; truth that holds men accountable.
 2. Spurgeon wrote 150 years ago:
 “Their idols are blinded reason and diseased thought, the product of men's muddled brains, and they will come to nought.”
- C. **Psalms 115:8 KJV** - "They that make them are like unto them; so *is* every one that trusteth in them."
1. This is either a prediction or a prayer
 2. And what is the condition of the idols? Dead.
 Those who make idols become just like them.
 Actually, they ARE just like them—Dead
 3. But God has raised us from the dead

IV. Worthy is the LORD? – Verses 9-18

After declaring the foolishness and vanity of human efforts to dismiss the Creator the psalmist declares: "O Israel, trust thou in the LORD: he *is* their help and their shield."

- A. The declaration is, God alone is worthy of our trust
1. **Verse 9** – “O Israel, trust thou in the LORD”
 This refers to the lay people
 2. **Verse 10** – “House of Aaron, trust in the LORD”
 This refers to the priests
 3. **Verse 11** – “Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD”
 This refers to God-fearers in general – Israelite converts
 4. He alone is our help and shield.
 This was probably sung as a refrain
 He alone is worthy of all praise. **Verse 18** - "Praise the LORD."
- B. The God who is in the heavens, who rules all things—He is mindful of us.
Psalms 115:12 KJV - "The LORD hath been mindful of us"

1. **Verse 12** – He will bless us.
He will bless the Israel, He will bless the house of Aaron—He will bless all who bow before Him.
Psalms 115:13 KJV - "He will bless them that fear the LORD, *both small and great.*"
2. **Verse 14** – He will increase us.
 - a. In the Old Covenant increase of physical seed was emphasized and of great importance. It was at the heart of the Abrahamic Covenant
Genesis 15:5 KJV - "And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be."
Genesis 22:17-18 KJV - "That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which *is* upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; ¹⁸ And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice."
 - b. For a woman to be barren was a great curse because it removed her from participation in the promise of God.
 - c. As in all of the Old Covenant promises, they had a much greater fulfillment. God has promised a spiritual seed to his people today. They shall be fruitful.
Spurgeon: "Just as in Egypt he multiplied the people exceedingly, so will he increase the number of his saints upon the earth; not only shall the faithful be blessed with converts, and so with a spiritual seed; but those who are their spiritual children shall become fruitful also, and thus the multitude of the elect shall be accomplished; God shall increase the people, and shall increase the joy."
3. But this word also refers to God's enriching of His people. The word "bless" or "blessed" is used five times in **Verses 12-15**
 - a. God in the riches of His grace blesses us abundantly – He is worthy of all praise and adoration.
 - b. **Verse 15** reminds us that the God who created all things, who also owns all things blesses us abundantly.
4. In the abundance of His riches He gives us the entire earth
Psalms 115:16 KJV - "The heaven, *even* the heavens, *are* the LORD'S: but the earth hath he given to the children of men."
 - a. This refers to both our inheritance and our duty of dominion
Matthew 5:5 KJV - "Blessed *are* the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."
Genesis 1:26 KJV - "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."

Conclusion:

1. The whole point of **Psalm 115** is summarized in the final verse. God is worthy of all praise—endless praise.
Psalm 115:18 KJV - "But we will bless the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. Praise the LORD. "
2. What place does God have in your life? Does He reign supreme? For the person who sees the greatness of God his praise is continual, steadfast, unending—and passionate.