

# The Worship Goes On

By Don Green

sermonaudio.com

**Bible Verse:** Psalm 134  
**Preached on:** Tuesday, March 22, 2022

**Truth Community Church**  
4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road  
Cincinnati, OH 45255

**Website:** [truthcommunitychurch.org](http://truthcommunitychurch.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm](http://www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm)

Our text tonight comes from Psalm 134 and I invite you to turn to the book of Psalms 134 for our time together. We've come to the final Psalm in the Songs of Ascent, Psalms 120-134. Each one of those Psalms being designated by the inscription, "A Song of Ascents." We'll review that a little bit here in this concluding message.

Psalm 134, one of the briefer Psalms in the entire psalter, says beginning in verse 1,

1 Behold, bless the LORD, all servants of the LORD, Who serve by night  
in the house of the LORD! 2 Lift up your hands to the sanctuary And bless  
the LORD. 3 May the LORD bless you from Zion, He who made heaven  
and earth.

This is a transitional Psalm, you might say. Psalm 134 ends the Songs of Ascent that began in Psalm 120, and so it's a final Psalm in a well-designated section of the psalter, and yet at the same time it also introduces what is about to come in Psalms 135 to 150. And so it stands at a pivot point and you can see that if you look at verse 1, Psalm 134, where it says, "Behold, bless the LORD, all servants of the LORD, Who serve by night in the house of the LORD!" Now look at the first two verses of Psalm 135. I find this fascinating, where it says, "Praise the LORD! Praise the name of the LORD; Praise Him, O servants of the LORD, You who stand in the house of the LORD, In the courts of the house of our God!" You see the common themes there. In verse 1 of Psalm 134, it refers to the servants of the LORD, and you see that repeated in Psalm 135. You also see the reference to the house of the LORD in Psalm 134:1, and it's repeated there in verse 2 of Psalm 135. So these are linked together like links in a chain that are meant to carry you along, to pull you along as you read through the psalter together.

Now there's more to it than even that. Psalm 134 is really giving us a launchpad into the final 16 or 17 Psalms altogether. Psalm 134 is a call to worship where it says there again in verse 1, "bless the LORD," and in verse 2, "bless the LORD," the idea of praising God, we'll look at that more closely in a moment, but it's a call to worship. Psalm 135 is a call to worship also. If you look at it there in verse 1 with a triple rendition of the word "praise" in English, "Praise the LORD! Praise the name of the LORD; Praise Him, O servants of the LORD." Verse 3, "Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good."

And so there is this heavy emphasis on worship, on praising God, and one of the most exciting things that I think you can learn about the entire psalter is that all 150 Psalms are pointing to a great climax, a fireworks extravaganza of praise in the final five Psalms and I want to show you this, we'll obviously look at it more in the time to come, but in Psalm 146, if you look there, and remembering what we're doing here is we're just seeing the transitional nature of Psalm 134 and how it serves to introduce the rest of the psalter, its emphasis on praise is picked up on Psalm 135, and then I want you to see this in Psalm 146 and this is worth a long time of private meditation on your part because the final five Psalms all make repeated claims, repeated calls to worship, repeated calls to praise the Lord. And the exponential emphasis and the repetition shows us that this is the whole point of the entire psalter; all 150 Psalms are directing you to praise the Lord, and all of their different textures and different Psalms of confession to Psalms of imprecation, it's all designed to bring you to this great climax of praising the Lord.

Psalm 146:1, "Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD, O my soul! I will praise the LORD while I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being." Look at Psalm 147, "Praise the LORD!" Actually look at the end of Psalm 146, I'm sorry, because it ends on that theme also. "The LORD will reign forever, Your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the LORD!" It opens and closes with praise. Each of these final five Psalms do that.

Psalm 147:1, "Praise the LORD! For it is good to sing praises to our God; For it is pleasant and praise is becoming." Verse 20 of Psalm 147, "He has not dealt thus with any nation; And as for His ordinances, they have not known them. Praise the LORD!"

Psalm 148:1, "Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens; Praise Him in the heights! Praise Him, all His angels; Praise Him, all His hosts! Praise Him, sun and moon; Praise Him, all stars of light! Praise Him, highest heavens, And the waters that are above the heavens! Let them praise the name of the LORD, For He commanded and they were created." Verse 7, "Praise the LORD from the earth." Verse 13, "Let them praise the name of the LORD, For His name alone is exalted; His glory is above earth and heaven." At the end of verse 14, "Praise the LORD!"

Psalm 149:1, "Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song, And His praise in the congregation of the godly ones." Verse 3, "Let them praise His name with dancing; Let them sing praises to Him with timbrel and lyre." Verse 9 of Psalm 149, "To execute on them the judgment written; This is an honor for all His godly ones. Praise the LORD!"

The best analogy that I know to make for this, if you've ever been to a really great expensive fireworks display and the climax of it and there are just multiple rockets bursting simultaneously with great thunder of noise and great colors and just the visual explosion in front of you, you get something of the picture of how the psalter is ending. It's just boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom! And every boom being echoed in triplicate, every boom saying, "Praise the LORD."

Then you see it in Psalm 150, multiple praises in every single verse. "Praise the LORD! Praise God in His sanctuary; Praise Him in His mighty expanse. Praise Him for His mighty deeds; Praise Him according to His excellent greatness. Praise Him with trumpet sound; Praise Him with harp and lyre. Praise Him with timbrel and dancing; Praise Him with stringed instruments and pipe. Praise Him with loud cymbals; Praise Him with resounding cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the LORD." And as if that all wasn't enough he says it one more time, "Praise the LORD!"

Now for some the repetition might seem to be excessive, "You know, I got the point back around Psalm 147," someone might say, but the emphasis is telling us how important it is to praise the Lord. This emphasis at the end of the psalter, my friends, is telling you why you exist. This is the reason that you exist, this is the reason that God has given life to you, it's the reason that he has worked in your life, it is so that your life might be devoted to the glory of God and that your heart would be so captivated by the worth of God, the greatness of God, the grace of God, the goodness of God, that you would be so captivated by that that your heart would just be overflowing and bursting with these themes just as the end of the psalter is as well. Everything in the psalter is designed to point you to this great climax and so when we start reading in Psalm 1, Psalm 2, and we start reading through it, it's building up to this great climax. And as we have read through the Psalms, as we have read through the Psalms and we've seen all of the different themes that are addressed by it, the attributes of God on with such magnificent poetry, we see all of that, now we start to see that it was all leading up to this great climax at the end. And while the repetition might, to some, seem to be overdone, it might seem to some, to unbelievers, "You know, I got the point," but what you and I as believing people, as the people of God do, this reinforces upon us how great, how lofty and how central this theme is to everything else.

And let me just remind you from a New Testament perspective, you don't need to turn there, but in 1 Corinthians 10:31 it says, "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." Now that means a lot of things, you know, it has a lot of implications for practical life but, you know, I just want to be real direct here, as direct as I heard John MacArthur be in my 20s in a radio, at the end of a radio broadcast that had a very profound implication for the direction of my life, even before I was married I heard him say this. He was preaching out of 1 Corinthians 13 and he was preaching on the great love passage, you know, and if I speak in the tongues of men and angels but I do not have love, I'm a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal, and he goes on and he's making the point there at what he said at that point is that, you know, if you do not have love, you are nothing, you are zero, you don't even matter. From what was said there in 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 13, let me just...go ahead and turn there. Why not? You know, we're friends. Why would I keep you from turning to the page of the Bible? But he goes on and says, the text goes on in 1 Corinthians 13:2. I'm actually leading up to a point here. It says, "If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains," if I can do all those magnificent things, "but do not have love, I am nothing." And his point was that if you don't have love, you know, his words were, you are zero, you are nothing, you don't even matter.

Well, in like manner, beloved, if your life is not geared toward, if the central focus of your life is not geared toward the glory of God, then you are nothing. You are zero. In the economy of God, you don't even matter because this is the reason that we exist. This is why God created us is so that we would glorify him and enjoy him forever. And if your life is not geared toward this factor, it's in violation of the entire book of Psalms, it's in violation of everything in the New Testament, it's in violation of the very purpose for which God created you. Your life is so off-track, your life is so distorted, it is you're utterly missing the purpose for which you were given existence. And I know that that goes contrary to the, you know, to the self-esteem culture of our modern day but we don't care about that. We just care about what Scripture says and Scripture says that you are to praise the Lord, and before I get to those final five Psalms, I need to go through and just count the number of times that that command is in there. But that is how important this theme of worship is, not simply worship on a Sunday morning or a Tuesday evening, not just during the singing time and, you know, music is fine as far as it goes, but the theme of worship, the theme of glory is transcendent and informs all of life whether you live or drink or whatever you do, whatever you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Whether you work with your hands or you work with your mind, whether you work at home or out in the city, you know, it's the same. The unifying principle for all of us is that everything that we are to do is to be done with this goal in mind, to praise the Lord, to ascribe greatness and honor to his name, to thank him for who he is. That's why you exist and if that's not the center of your life, all I can do is call you to repent in dust and ashes before this holy God who created you, who made you, and who made you for that specific purpose. You are not meant to live for yourself. You are not meant to live just in the pursuit of wealth or happiness or entertainment or leisure or whatever it is that flips your switch, that makes your boat motor along. God in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ is to be the central focus of your affections and I ask you whether he is, and you have to answer that question in the presence of God, you standing before God and God having come to you through his word asking you, is that the motivation for which you live, does that motivation inform relationships and friendships, are your relationships driven by a desire to show love and kindness to others in the same way that God has shown love and kindness to you. Or you know, or are you mean to people, are you mean to certain individuals, are you unkind to them, you know, do you go out of your way to make them feel bad. You know, that's not to the glory of God. You know, it may get some chuckles out of your friends but do you know what? It's a gross violation of the character of God and, you know, so we need to look at ourselves in the mirror in light of this great call to praise that is given in Psalm 134, "bless the LORD, bless the LORD," and realize that it is tied to everything that comes later in the psalter.

So this Psalm 134 as brief as it is, just three short little verses, is far more strategic to the entire Bible than it might seem. You know, I've never heard a message preached on Psalm 134 before. It's not that others haven't done it, I just haven't heard it, and so I feel, again, very privileged to open the word of God with Psalm 134 at the focus and to have the word of God search us and sift us and, you know, for those that are in Christ and you do love Christ, this is just fuel to the fire, this just reinforces the aspirations. Those of you that are newer in Christ and your life in Christ is fresh and new and you're reading and finding new things and learning new things and it's all sweet and fresh to you, you know,

this is what we're talking about. This is what we're talking about is that your heart affections have been transformed by the Spirit of God who brought you into union with the Lord Jesus Christ.

I can't imagine why any church would not preach the word of God. I can't imagine because it's the word of God that opens up these glorious themes to us. Nothing else does. Funny stories, personal anecdotes, they don't open us up to this kind of lofty grandeur, do they? They don't but the word of God does. It lifts us out of ourselves and puts us into a realm of purpose and existence that is transcendent, that is eternal, that will go on and echo throughout all of the unfolding ages of future time and eternity.

So what I want to do is just kind of walk through this Psalm and kind of refresh your memory, those of you that haven't been with us, just kind of give you a brief review of the Songs of Ascent. So our first point tonight is titled this: Psalm 134 and the Songs of Ascent. Psalm 134 and the Songs of Ascent. I just want to show you how it fits within the context of the prior 14 Psalms that we have taught on over the past few months.

You'll recall that the Songs of Ascent were sung by the Jewish pilgrims as they went up to Jerusalem for their three annual feasts, and I just want to give you a geographical sense of the progression of the Songs of Ascent just by way of review. We're kind of saying farewell to a great section of Scripture tonight and so we're looking back, we're looking back and remembering the things that we've seen in the past.

The Songs of Ascent began in distant lands from the perspective of the writers and the way that they are arranged for us in English. Look at Psalm 120:5. It says, "Woe is me, for I sojourn in Meshech, For I dwell among the tents of Kedar!" Meshech was an area in modern-day Turkey where warlike people dwelt. It was 400 miles northeast of Jerusalem and there were apparently Jewish people that lived there and would make their way to Jerusalem for the feasts. Kedar was a hostile tribe that was south and east of Jerusalem. So you've got northeast of 400 miles and then down southeast of Jerusalem, and these two regions represented the reality, a very important geographic and spiritual reality for these pilgrims. They were living far from home. They were far from the temple where the center of the worship of God took place in that Old Testament economy. So they were far away physically from the place that their heart loved the most. So the Songs of Ascent open up with this sense of separation and longing for the temple, longing for the presence of God, longing for the place of worship that meant so much to them, because they loved the glory of God, they wanted to be there worshiping with the rest of the people of God.

Now as you read on through these Psalms, in Psalm 122 the pilgrims find themselves in the city of Jerusalem where the temple was located so that in Psalm 122:2, actually let's just start in verse 1 and I can't go any further back than that in Psalm 122, you know, I've bumped up against the end of it there. Psalm 122:1, "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the LORD.' Our feet are standing Within your gates, O Jerusalem." So now they're inside the city walls. They haven't gotten to worship yet, they haven't gotten to the temple yet at this point, but they're at the city. It's like if you're

driving on a trip and you're going to one of the great cities in our country, going to Chicago or New York and you see the skyline off in the distance and then you're in the city proper and you're, oh, the anticipation because you're at your arrival place and everything that you've planned for that trip is about to happen. That's the spirit in which in Psalm 122, they're at Jerusalem and the feast that they've come to celebrate in the remembrance of the Lord, it's all great anticipation at this point.

And as you progress on, eventually they find themselves in the temple for the worship ceremonies. Psalm 132:7-8. Remember, the temple is the place where God manifested his presence in that Old Testament economy and in verse 7 it says, "Let us go into His dwelling place; Let us worship at His footstool. Arise, O LORD, to Your resting place, You and the ark of Your strength. Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness, And let Your godly ones sing for joy." And as you continue on, they've experienced the joy of harmony in worship. They've come from a broad geographic dispersion, they've all come together centered in Jerusalem and they've shared together in this great appointed biblical feast that God gave for his people to remember their national heritage, and more importantly to remember the God who made them a people, made them a nation, and had blessed them and kept them all this time.

So everything about their national identity is worked up in this and the traditions and the worship and the honor of God yields itself into this magnificent glow of gladness and this magnificent spirit of peace and fulfillment found in Psalm 133 where it says in verse 1, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brothers to dwell together in unity!" The worship is done. They're in the afterglow of it like, you know, some of you stay after a worship service and you talk and you interact and you enjoy that fellowship and the common bond that you have in Christ and the sweetness of mutual love and mutual support. I tell you, the unity of the church is so very important because it cultivates this spirit of things and it's not simply a horizontal blessing between us, this goes up as a sweet savor of worship to God. I mean, to violate the unity of the church is just a very serious crime against God and you can see that by how much the Scriptures emphasize the blessing of harmony in worship and you see it there in verse 1.

This is good. This is pleasant for brothers to be together in unity like this. But now as the Songs of Ascent come to an end, the feast is over, the worship is over, it's time to go home. It's almost sad, isn't it? After all of this build-up and everything, it's time to go home and so they're saying their goodbyes. It is time now to bid farewell to Jerusalem and to go home. What's happening in Psalm 134:1 is that the psalmist is saying farewell to those who serve in the temple as they depart. It's a final farewell and this is what they're saying and we'll explain this more in just a moment, but in verse 1 he says, Psalm 134:1, "Behold, bless the LORD, all servants of the LORD, Who serve by night in the house of the LORD!" You can almost see him waving goodbye. "Bless the LORD. It's time for us to go. You guys keep it up while we're gone and we'll see you next time," is the spirit of what's happening here. Their long journey has arrived in Jerusalem, they've gathered for worship and now it's time to go back and they're bidding farewell to the temple service. The journey has refreshed them and now they're going back to the daily life routine that they knew before.

So that's Psalm 134 in the context of the Songs of Ascent. That's point number 1, Psalm 134 and the Songs of Ascent. Now we get into the text proper and we look at our second point for this evening which we could say that man's worship goes on. Man's worship goes on. The feast is over but the worship continues. As the pilgrims are leaving, they are calling the temple servants to continue praising God in their absence, to continue praising God as their representatives, as it were, there in the manifest presence of God; they call on the temple servants to continue in their worship.

So you see it there in verse 1, "Behold, bless the LORD," that's the command in the text, "Bless the LORD," and then you see who the command is addressed to. Who is it that is to bless the Lord in this context? It is, "all the servants of the LORD, Who serve by night in the house of the LORD!" Their job, these servants of the Lord, their job was to serve in the temple year-round, that was their life responsibility and so they're going to be there to continue on the temple service while the other pilgrims are going back to their home. So the ones that are leaving, you see the picture here, the ones that are leaving are not going to be able to worship in the temple again until the next feast, and so that's months down the road. You know, we're used to weekly worship and they're leaving for months until the next feast comes up, so it says, "Behold." It's a call to attention. It's almost like they put their fingers between their lips and they whistle out, "Hey, guys, pay attention. This is our parting call to you, this is our parting charge to you, we want you to bless the LORD. So pay attention." It calls forcible attention to what follows.

You know, I want to show you why we consider these servants of the Lord to be those who serve in the temple on a full-time basis. It seems like these are the Levites, this was their particular responsibility to be in the temple. They were in charge of the temple worship and they were responsible to care for the temple and I just want to show you this biblically. Go back to the book of 1 Chronicles. 1 & 2 Chronicles are very long books, even if you have not read them, they're easy to find as you turn to, you know, in between Genesis and Psalms you'll find the Chronicles rather easily. Samuel, Kings and Chronicles. 1 Chronicles 9:27 and you see this discussion of the Levites. All we're doing is we're just showing from Scripture who the servants of the Lord were that are being addressed in Psalm 134. In verse 27, "They spent the night around the house of God, because the watch was committed to them; and they were in charge of opening it morning by morning." Drop down to verse 33, "Now these are the singers, heads of fathers' households of the Levites, who lived in the chambers of the temple free from other service; for they were engaged in their work day and night. These were heads of fathers' households of the Levites according to their generations, chief men, who lived in Jerusalem."

So there was this subset, you could say, of the Jewish nation, of the Jewish population, they stayed in Jerusalem and they took care of the massive temple complex and served in different ways to prolong the worship and to continue the worship in a smaller setting, you might say, while the rest of the people went away. But here's the spirit of Psalm 134 and what I just think is so very precious: the pilgrims are going home in joy and part of their joy is not simply the lingering sense of satisfaction of having been with their

brethren at the temple, part of their joy is knowing that because the Levites are on the job, the worship of God is going to continue. It's not simply a horizontal thing. They are glad in knowing that someone is going to be there presenting formal worship to God while they go away and the temple servants in that way are serving as their representatives, helping fulfill the desire of the heart that has not been given to them for fulfillment to be involved in that direct worship of God on an ongoing basis. The temple servants God appointed to do that, as they depart they look to those temple servants and say, "You guys, keep it up. Keep doing what you're doing. Keep the worship going."

And what you find in this Psalm, Psalm 134, is that the word "bless" occurs three times, once in each verse, third verse with a different nuance. Look at it there in verse 1, "bless the LORD, all servants of the LORD." End of verse 2, "bless the LORD." And then you see the verb used in a different way with a different subject acting on a different object, "May the LORD bless you from Zion, He who made heaven and earth." And so in the first two verses here, to bless the Lord has a particular meaning that is being given, and to bless the Lord, when we bless the Lord, what exactly does that mean? You know, we can't give God anything that he doesn't already have. You know, God is not lacking in that we need to bless him, to give him something that he is lacking from within himself. So "bless the LORD" here has the sense is to acknowledge God with thanksgiving, to consciously remember him, to remember his attributes, to remember his gifts to his people, to remember his kindness and goodness and grace, and to remember that and to thank him for it. "O God, I bless Your name by which I mean this, I give You thanks for all that You've done for me. I ascribe honor to Your name. I honor Your name for the great intrinsic worth of Your being. I am blessing Your name." To bless God in this way is to recognize him for who he is and to express gratitude to him.

Now this is the purpose of life, you are created to give thanks to God. If that seems like too much, let me just turn you to 1 Thessalonians back in the New Testament. That one's a little harder to find if you're not familiar with your Bibles but after the book of Romans, after Colossians, and you find the book of 1 Thessalonians 5:16 through 18, and this reinforces our aspirations and it also kind of corrects us; it reminds us of where we fall short in our lives. In 1 Thessalonians 5:16 it says, "Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." In everything give thanks, it says. Look over at Ephesians 5:20 where it says, "always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father." And in Colossians 3:17 it says, "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father." Give thanks. Give thanks. Give thanks.

This is God's will for you and it's hard for people that have been brought up in a self-centered approach to Christianity and, you know, God's purpose is to help me find my purpose in life and help me fulfill my purpose in life, it's very difficult for them to take a new perspective on the will of God because we ask questions about the will of God in such a self-centered way. You know, "What job should I take? What person should I marry? Should I change jobs or whatever? And what's the will of God for me?" Look, that stuff is secondary. That stuff is so secondary that by comparison it doesn't even



matter because if you want to know the will of God for you, look to the word that he has given to you and ask, "What does the Bible say the will of God for my life is?" The will of God for your life is that you would be a thankful grateful person in his presence; that you would recognize him for the great Creator, Sustainer and Redeemer that he is; to acknowledge his great worth; to recognize how good he has been to you and to thank him for it as the ongoing pattern of your life. That's God's will for you. How you earn your living is utterly secondary to that more fundamental, vertical, character trait. This is all over the pages of the Bible. It's amazing that people miss it.

I say this gently, sometimes I get into a groove, certain groove and it comes out sharper than I intended to do. But honestly, beloved, look there at Colossians 3:17, "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father." What part of "all" is it that we don't understand? And when it says in Ephesians 5:20, "always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God," what part of "always" is it that we don't understand as something that is to be a comprehensive approach to life? What is it that we don't understand? Now look, I'm as guilty as being a grumbling, ungrateful Christian as some of you are, probably more so. You know, I've had so many blessings in life, I really have no excuse. I mean, there's the Scripture that leaves me without excuse, and then there's the wonderful life that the Lord has given me for the past 60 years, and I'm just utterly without excuse to not be walking around with thanks bursting from my heart at all times. But the fact that I'm not like that doesn't excuse it, and the fact that I'm like that doesn't excuse you either because Scripture speaks in these absolute terms: always, whatever you do. And we just see the priority that God places on his people recognizing him and honoring him for who he is and for what he has done.

This is why we exist is to give thanks to our God, to bless him, to return gratitude and the recognition of his honor to his holy name. So let that sink in a bit, huh? You were created to honor him, to give glory to him, to bless him. The great climax of the Psalms makes this clear, the New Testament emphasis makes this clear and in giving glory to God, included in that, a central feature of that is to be a thankful person in his presence. Now I ask it tenderly and gently to you: when was the last time you gave thanks to God for anything in your times of prayer? What is the pattern of your prayer life? Where does thanksgiving fall into it? And even as I'm preaching this, you know, I'm going to have to go home and do some repenting of my own. But Scripture emphasizes this. This is what the people of God do, they give thanks, they bless the Lord.

We can turn back to Psalm 134 now. This is what they are calling the temple servants to do, bless the Lord. Verse 2, "Lift up your hands to the sanctuary And bless the LORD." Lifting the hands was a symbol of praise, of prayer. I just want you to see this briefly. Again, the point here is to let Scripture interpret Scripture, okay? That's why we cross reference things like this; we let the Bible explain the Bible. What does it mean to lift up your hands in the sanctuary? It's more than just the physical action. I mean, some people raise hands when they're singing and, you know, whatever, but the physical action is meant to have a spiritual significance.

Psalm 28:2 says, "Hear the voice of my supplications when I cry to You for help, When I lift up my hands toward Your holy sanctuary." Lifting up of hands being an accompaniment of prayer, a gesture representing a symbol of prayer. Then you don't need to turn here but in Psalm 63:4 it says, "So I will bless You as long as I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name." The parallelism there, blessing, lifting up the hands being an indication of blessing God. And so when in Psalm 134, when they say, "Lift up your hands to the sanctuary," they're saying, "Keep blessing God. Honor Him. Pray to Him. Keep it going for the rest of us. Represent us in worship until we're back here again to do it ourselves in person." This is what the call is.

So, again, the picture is just so beautiful. They're leaving their temple with full, joyful, thankful, grateful hearts and they look back and they tell the temple servants, "Keep doing it. Keep it going until we're with each other again. Bless the LORD. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary and give Him praise." Now that brings us to our third point, our third and final point here tonight. We saw in verse 2 that the worship is going to go on. God's greatness goes on and his worship is going to go on. You know, the time will come when we'll say goodbye not to people geographically but we'll say goodbye from people in life, you know, we'll exit this life that we entered some years ago and we'll exit it, but do you know what's going to happen after you and I are gone? The worship is going to continue. God is going to continue to have his people. God will have a people set apart for himself who are going to glorify him here on earth, and when the time comes for me to part, you know, I would like it to be on my heart as I'm saying goodbye to people, whatever that looks like if I'm given that opportunity, "Keep the worship going and I'll see you in the heavenly Jerusalem. I'll see you in the heavenly temple but you keep it going here. You take the responsibility and you keep it going here on earth until you join me up in heaven as well."

You know, and you young people, oh boy, the opportunity, the privilege and the responsibility that you have to set your heart and your life on that kind of aspiration, you know, I just, I worry about the young people in our church sometimes. I do. I pray for all of them by name which should go without saying, I suppose. I guess I don't know them well enough to know whether their heart aspiration is set on this or on earthly things. I don't know. I don't know and it remains to be seen for the young people of our church whether they are going to step out from worldliness, step out from ungodliness, step out from, you know, just the carnality of a young life and say, "I'm going to be counted as one, I'm going to stand, I'm going to live for Christ. I'm going to be His and my life is going to be marked by that no matter what I do in life to make a living." You know, and the opportunity is there, you know, but it's something that doesn't happen, part of the reason, I guess, I'm talking about the young people is I'm going to be with them on Friday night with young adults 18 and over and so they've been on my mind here thinking about these kinds of things, but it's not something, this doesn't happen as a group. This doesn't happen as a group. This happens in the hearts of individuals who say, "No matter what my friends do, I am going to be an outwardly faithful and inwardly faithful servant of Christ. That's what I'm going to give my life to."

And those of us that are older, I guess we have the privilege of praying for them that the Spirit of God would do that kind of work in their lives. But you young people, understand that this generation, my generation, we're going to pass soon enough and the baton will be handed to you and the question is what are you going to do with that baton that's handed to you? What are you going to do with it in your home? With your friends? You know, these are great and lofty questions and I say these things not to have a heavy hand but to take someone's chin and lift it up to the glories of living for Christ and living a life that's devoted to him. That's what matters. Nothing else matters by comparison.

So verse 3, third point here which somehow transcends even what we've said in grandeur. Point 3: God's blessing goes on. Man's worship goes on, point number 2. In verse 3 we see this, is that God's blessing goes on. And it's not entirely certain but the final verse reads like a response that the temple servants make to those who are departing. It's like a response of reading where the departing pilgrims have said the first two verses and then there's a response in verse 3 from the others, from the temple servants to them. That's not certain but some commentators see it that way and it's an attractive way to interpret the passage so that in verse 3 the response is this, "May the LORD bless you from Zion, He who made heaven and earth."

In the first two verses it was the Lord who was receiving the blessing. "Bless the LORD. Bless the LORD." Our ascription of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord going up to him. Now the roles are reversed. Now the subject and direct object have been reversed and now it's the Lord who is the one who is blessing. And the "you," whoever the "you" is, is receiving something from God. So in the first two verses the Lord was receiving the blessing, in this verse he is giving the blessing. Oh, the wonder of the majestic mind of the Holy Spirit to wrap such wonderful things up in such a condensed version. This is an individual blessing here in verse 3 as shown by the singular pronoun in the Hebrew, singular "you, you" singular, not "you" plural. But the word "bless" here has a completely different connotation even though it's the same word, the subject and object makes the connotation of the verb something different.

Think about it with me here. When we bless God, we give him praise that he deserves for what he has in himself and for what he has done. We're ascribing thanks to him and he deserves it. When God blesses us, the roles are totally reversed. When he blesses us, he gives good to us which we don't deserve, and he gives us that which we lack. God lacks nothing and deserves all blessing and so we bless him. We deserve nothing and we lack and we are dependent and God generously gives and thereby blesses us in that sense.

So you see there at the end of the Psalm, "May the LORD bless you from Zion," that poetic name for the city of Jerusalem, that place of the temple, that place where God manifested his presence. And this, again, you see this back in Psalm 128:5, you see the interconnection of these Psalms is worthy of a book in its own right. Psalm 128:5, "The LORD bless you from Zion, And may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life." Then peeking ahead to Psalm 135:21, "Blessed be the LORD from Zion, Who dwells in Jerusalem. Praise the LORD!" And so this blessing emanating, as it were, from Jerusalem being one of the key themes in this part of the psalter and who is it, who is it

that gives this blessing? Who is it that blesses us in Christ? It's the Lord who made heaven and earth. It is the Creator himself. And again, this is a common theme in this portion of Scripture.

Look over at Psalm 121:2, "My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth." Psalm 124:8, "Our help is in the name of the LORD, Who made heaven and earth." So he's saying, "May the LORD help you." As the temple servants send out a blessing, as it were, to the departing pilgrims, "May the LORD help you on your journey. May the LORD bless you and provide for you, lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace. May He make His face shine upon you and bless you. As you go may the fullness of the blessing of God, the One who is omnipotent over all of creation, may He bless you and help you until we see each other again." God displayed his mighty power in creation when he created the heavens and earth by divine fiat, and this God who created heaven and earth like that by his spoken word with such great great power, he hasn't changed, and so the reference to heaven and earth, the reference to heaven and earth is a reminder of the power of God to be able to bless his people.

He's the same God today as he was in Psalm 134, and he was the same God in Psalm 134 as he was in Genesis 1:1, as he was before the beginning of time. He's unchanged. He's immutable. He has the same power now. Nothing has been spent from his inexhaustible resources. He has the same fullness of divine power today that he did from before. It's not like us, we go out and work hard and, you know, we're spent at the end of the day. It's not like that with the Creator of heaven and earth. He's in the same blessed position of glory that he was before he started and the point here is this: the God who did creation has the power to bless and keep you as you go and that's the significance of heaven and earth.

Well, those were the Old Testament times where they blessed God in Jerusalem and there was that geographic focus to it. This is worthy of another message but I'm not going to do it that way, just to bring it to this side of the cross, to bring it into New Testament times. We today, we bless God not in a city but we bless him in Christ. It is in Christ that God has made his presence manifest to us, not in a physical location. God doesn't manifest himself like that here in this auditorium like he did in the temple. It's not like that at all. It's a spiritual manifestation made in the proclamation of Christ. So we bless Christ, we bless God in Christ for who Christ is, for his magnificent person fully God, fully man in one person, both natures in one person, we bless him for that, we bless him for his mediation on our behalf, we bless him for his redemptive work at the cross, we bless him for the fact that he is at the right hand of God interceding on our behalf in an unbroken intercession, we bless him for the fact that he's going to return, we bless him for his resurrection. It just goes on and on and on the way that God has blessed us in Christ and the promises, oh, the promises of God to those of us that are in Christ, that he will perfect the work that he began in you until the day of Christ Jesus. The promise that Christ made in John 14 that he's going away but he'll send the Helper and that he's going to prepare a place for us, and if he goes to prepare a place for us, what's he going to do? He's going to come back for us and receive us to himself so that where he is, we may be with him always forever and evermore. Oh, the blessing of God from us in Christ. What's been given to us and what's been revealed to us as great as the glory was in the Old Testament,

it's far more manifest to us in a way that they never could have dreamed of. These faithful pilgrims with weary dusty feet had such blessing and we have in Christ so much more.

So we bless Christ and thank him for who he is and what he has promised and what is yet to come. I mean, honestly our hearts should be bursting with praise and thanksgiving and just the recognition, as Andrew said in his opening, this magnificent God, this great Creator is the one who conceived and executed the plan of salvation so that your sins could be forgiven, so that you could be in harmony with him, your sins fully forgiven, declared fully righteous in his sight, and that you could enjoy fellowship with this great God forever and know him as your Creator, Savior and Keeper and Shepherd and the Light of the world forever and ever. To you personally. He loved me and gave himself up for me. You know, I mean, it just goes on and on and on.

So we bless God, we give thanks to him in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father. We bless God that direction and understand this as we close, it is through Christ that God blesses man. The blessing comes down from God in the person of Christ and through Christ and through him alone because Christ himself alone is the Mediator between God and man. There is no other way to God. Acts 4:12, "There is no other name given to us among men by which we must be saved." There is salvation in no one else. John 14:6, "No one comes to the Father except through Me," Christ said. 1 Timothy 2:5, "There is one God and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." It's through Christ alone that God blesses anyone otherwise you're outside and under his judgment. And it's through those riches of Christ that we receive blessing, the great great blessings from God. 1 Corinthians 1:30, you don't have to turn there but it says, "by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption." In Christ we have all of these spiritual blessings. And in Philippians 4:19, "my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." Nowhere else. Nowhere else.

So corporately we gather together and we offer up this blessing to God, "God, thank You for the Lord Jesus Christ and all that You have done for me and all that You still will do for me in Christ. O Christ, we praise and honor Your glorious name, Your glorious person, Your glorious work, Your glorious grace." And in turn we recognize in all that God has given us, we bless him and we thank him. How? In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and in Christ, my friend, in Christ this kind of worship is going to go on forever.

Let's pray.

*Thank You, O my Father, for giving us Your Son and for leaving Your Spirit until the work on earth is done. Amen.*

Thanks for listening to Pastor Don Green from Truth Community Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. You can find more church information, Don's complete sermon library and other helpful materials at [thetruthpulpit.com](http://thetruthpulpit.com) teaching God's people God's word. This message is copyrighted by Don Green. All rights reserved.