



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Psalm 147

Fall 2021

"In Praise Of Praise"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Chris, and good morning. As I think you know, I've announced that we're going to begin a series in the Gospel of John next week, but I wanted to take a couple of Psalms in between our series in James, and then in John, to do some Psalms. And we're doing Psalm 147 this morning. I didn't plan it this way, but you may notice that there are some similarities between our Psalm this week and the one we had last week, Psalm 104. I'm going to read all 20 verses and then we'll have prayer. Psalm 147,

147 Praise the LORD!

For it is good to sing praises to our God;

For it is pleasant *and* praise is becoming. (*or 'praise is beautiful'*)

²The LORD builds up Jerusalem;

He gathers the outcasts of Israel.

³He heals the brokenhearted

And binds up their wounds.

⁴He counts the number of the stars;

He gives names to all of them.

⁵Great is our Lord and abundant in strength;

His understanding is infinite.

(That is an important thing to note and to realize. If you have difficulty with the LORD numbering all the stars, and naming them, then you will have no difficulty, first of all, with the fact His understanding is infinite, but if it is infinite there is nothing He cannot do. That, really, is the point this psalmist is making.)

⁶ The LORD supports the afflicted;

He brings down the wicked to the ground.

⁷ Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving;

Sing praises to our God on the lyre,

⁸ Who covers the heavens with clouds,

Who provides rain for the earth,

Who makes grass to grow on the mountains.

⁹ He gives to the beast its food,

And to the young ravens which cry.

¹⁰ He does not delight in the strength of the horse;

He does not take pleasure in the legs of a man.

¹¹ The LORD favors those who fear Him,

Those who wait for His lovingkindness.

¹² Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem!

Praise your God, O Zion!

¹³ For He has strengthened the bars of your gates;

He has blessed your sons within you.

¹⁴ He makes peace in your borders;

He satisfies you with the finest of the wheat.

¹⁵ He sends forth His command to the earth;

His word runs very swiftly.

(I've been reading a biography of Martin Luther. After the Diet of Worms, he was speaking about the Word of God and how he had preached the Word of God, (and he

laid great emphasis on that), and not using our own strength and power to try to affect change—but simply preach the Word of God. And he was talking about, “running swiftly throughout the earth”. I don’t know if he got it from this passage but that’s certainly true. The Word of God is alive and it runs swiftly when it is proclaimed)

¹⁶ He gives snow like wool;

He scatters the frost like ashes.

¹⁷ He casts forth His ice as fragments;

Who can stand before His cold?

¹⁸ He sends forth His word and melts them;

He causes His wind to blow and the waters to flow.

¹⁹ He declares His words to Jacob,

His statutes and His ordinances to Israel.

²⁰ He has not dealt thus with any nation; *(This is a point I am going to make when we deal with the text—that Israel is unique. It’s a chosen nation; He favors Israel and He’s going to take care of Israel.)*

And as for His ordinances, they have not known them.

Praise the LORD!

Psalm 147

May the LORD bless this reading of His Word and bless our time together in it.

(Message) Well you sang that well—and that's healthy. Singing is healthy. I've read that in some articles, that it's good for a person's physical and psychological wellbeing. It strengthens the immune system by increasing the number of proteins in it that function as antibodies. It helps with sleep, and it's a natural anti-depressant—just to name a few of the benefits. I've been told that humming is good for your vagus nerve, the longest nerve in the nervous system, and a very important one. I don't know how true all of that

is—but I'm not taking any chances. So if you hear me humming in the hall, I'm working on my vagus nerve.

But what I know is, the Bible supports the value of singing. Paul told the Ephesians that they should speak to “one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs...making melody with your heart to the Lord”. (Eph 5:19). Paul's concern wasn't the immune system or sleep—but our spiritual condition. And here, in Psalm 147, the psalmist begins the same way—and for the same reason. It is good to sing praises to our God.

One of the commentators titled this Psalm, *In Praise of Praise*. I thought that was a good title, so that's the one I adopted. And this Psalm is a good example of how and why that should be done. The object of praise here, as in Ephesians chapter 5, is God, the LORD. That's always the object of worship, of true worship.

Here the psalmist praises God for two reasons. First, for His control of the universe: Control of nature around us but also the stars above us. The entire universe is under His control. And he praises God for that. And secondly, and in a related way as we'll see, he praises God for His care for Israel. And he weaves these two together throughout the Psalm. He uses God's management of the universe, from the stars to the snowflakes, to magnify the LORD's constant care of His people.

It's really about God's sovereign grace—as all praise really is. So rather than expound this Psalm verse by verse as I normally would do, I think what I'm going to do, or what I am going to do, and I think this is perhaps a good way to deal with the Psalm, is deal with it according to subjects. First with the verses that praise God's activity in nature and then His dealings with Israel. And then we'll consider the connection between the two, which is the Creator and controller of the universe is certainly able to direct and bless Israel; and by application us, His people. He has done that, He is doing that, He will do that.

The author of the Psalm is not stated, nor is the occasion for the Psalm given. But it seems to be a late Psalm, like Psalm 137 that was written during or just after the

Babylonian captivity. And there's evidence within the Psalm that suggests that this is a reflection on Israel's return from Babylon and the hard experience of that period in their history—but the faithfulness of the LORD during it.

For example, in verse 2 the psalmist praises the LORD for 'building up Jerusalem' and 'gathering the outcasts of Israel'. Then, in verse 13, he praises God for 'strengthening the bars of Jerusalem's gates.' The language fits the events of that time. But of course, it's applicable at all times. It's always good to sing praises to our God because our God is always good.

Praise is a natural response to what is good. Sports fans respond naturally to a spectacular event on the field. When a grand slam home run wins the game, they spontaneously jump up and cheer, they don't think about it; it's instinctive. And we have the same kind of experience when we look off to the west in the evening and happen to see a glorious sunset. What's our instinctive response to that? It's to express how impressed we are; "Wow. Look at that," we say. That's praise, and that's proper.

How much more, then, when we contemplate God; His person; His being; His works; His works around us in the cosmos; His works in nature; and His work among us in His grace? We naturally praise Him when we understand these things. In fact, it is wrong not to praise Him.

So Psalm 147 begins with instruction to do that, "Praise the LORD, for it is good to sing praises to our God; For it is pleasant *and* praise is becoming." It is good. It is pleasant. It is becoming, or it is *comely*, it is *beautiful* to praise the LORD. It is beneficial to do that.

Derek Kidner wrote that it is "enlivening and emancipating." It energizes us. It frees us up. And it is pleasing to God that we worship Him, that we offer back to Him something beautiful for His beauty. So we need to do it. We need to do it often. We need to do it regularly. That's clearly the point here at the outset of the Psalm.

But we can only do that to the degree that we know God: That we know about God; that we know Him personally, and we know the things of God, the attributes of God. So the psalmist praises Him broadly by praising His works in creation. The psalmist

gives that in verses 4 and 8 and 9, and verses 16 through 18. Verses about God dealing with the universe, dealing with nature around us.

Verse 4, "He counts the number of the stars. He gives names to all of them." Now that's taken from Isaiah 40, verse 26, so the psalmist, as we would expect, was a student of Scripture. He read the prophets and obviously was impressed with the Book of Isaiah. Chapter 40 of Isaiah is glorious. Isaiah spoke of the LORD 'creating the stars', 'leading them forth and naming them'. The picture given in Isaiah is of a military commander leading forth his army. Every evening He marshals the stars, assembles them, marches them out on the night sky, to shine in glory. Or at dawn with the rising of the sun to do His work. He controls them. They are His army.

And He knows them. He calls them all out by name. He has named all of them. All of the heavenly lights; the moon, the planets, the stars, which is billions upon billions in our own galaxy. He's also named all of the stars in every galaxy. Scientists estimate there are 100 billion stars in the Milky Way and now believe there are over 2 trillion galaxies in the observable universe. And the LORD counts them, numbers them, names them all.

What we cannot comprehend, what is beyond our ability to fathom, He does easily. He's omniscient. I think every one of you would acknowledge, 'Yes, God is omniscient'. He knows all things. Well, if that's the case, then knowing every star in the universe is nothing to Him. He knows everything. He's omniscient. He knows all. He accounts for every star; not one of them is missing. He knows them thoroughly and directs their every movement. Isaiah said He does all of this "...because of the greatness of His might and the strength of His power." (Is 40:26b).

God is great. That truth was lost on the ancient pagans when Isaiah wrote and the psalmist wrote. And it's lost on men today, as well. A book came out a year ago titled, *The Janus Point, A New Theory Of Time*. It's author is a physicist and called his book, "A song of thanks to the cosmos." Now that's getting it wrong—like thanking a painting instead of the painter. But that's modern man. And really, he's no different from ancient man, worshiping stars rather than the Maker. That's not a healthy song.

The heavens are God's handiwork. They point man to God; that's Psalm 19, verse 1. When men don't see the Creator in the cosmos, it's due to their own blindness. The psalmist was writing to the community of faith that understood these things, believed these things; and it encouraged them. The statements that he's made here encouraged them to worship.

That's really the intention of the psalmist: Talking about the greatness of God. Talking about the things that He does is intended to generate praise, which is right and healthy. It is giving glory to whom glory is due. It is natural, it is healthy, and doing it reminds us of an important truth that is the basis of right thinking. In fact, worship reminds us of the fundamentals and is beneficial to us for that reason.

In verse 8 the psalmist comes down closer to us: From the stars above, to stars that are beyond us to the clouds that are above us, and to the rain and nourishment they bring to the earth; "Who covers the heavens with clouds, Who provides rain for the earth, Who makes grass to grow on the mountains." (vs8).

It's a reminder of how utterly dependent we are on the LORD for the grass that grows, for the wheat and the grain that the earth produces, and crops that we are able to harvest. The farmer can be a hard worker, and be a diligent worker, but it will all be futile if the clouds don't gather and the clouds don't drop rain on the fields. The psalmist lived in a farming society which knew how dependent it was on rain for harvest.

But just as the world worshiped the sun, the moon, and the stars, it also worshiped nature, (we covered that a little bit last week). They had gods like *Baal*. *Baal* was the 'storm god'; the god that brought rain and fertility to the earth. But the psalmist said it's none of that. It's the LORD God who created nature and gives the rain that makes the fields productive everywhere—even on mountain meadows where people don't go, where things are lived out in obscurity. But there He makes the grass and the flowers grow in the wild.

He provides for the animals every day; from the beasts of the field; cattle to wild animals; to the birds of the air. He provides for them all. Provides for the ravens in verse 9, which were unclean birds, according to the Law; yet the LORD takes care of them—

takes care of them daily. That's the greatness of the LORD and the reason for praise—that He takes care of every part of His creation and all of its creatures. He's not 'an absentee landlord.'

We see this praise in other parts of Scripture as well. God is praised for His faithfulness to the creation. I said that the psalmist was a student of Isaiah. He was also a student of Job. In chapter 38, God asked Job a series of questions, which remind him of how much God does and how little we do to maintain things. In verse 31 He asks, "Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades, or loose the cords of Orion?" "Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, So that an abundance of water will cover you?" (vs34). "Can you hunt the prey for the lion, Or satisfy the appetite of young lions? (vs39). "Who prepares for the raven its nourishment When its young cry to God...?" (vs41). 'Can you do any of these things, Job?'

And, of course, Job couldn't do any of those things. None of us can. Only the LORD God can feed the animals in the wild, cause rain to fall over the earth, hold the constellations together and move them across the night sky.

Things don't just happen. Things happen because of God's decree, and His will, and His involvement in everything. This is praise for the absolute sovereignty of God over the earth, and over the universe.

Finally, in verses 16 through 18 the psalmist returns to the weather with a vivid description of the cold; the snow and the ice that God sends then causes to melt with the spring winds that then irrigate the fields. God's sovereign over nature: All of creation, from the stars and constellations to the clouds and rain and fertility of the earth that feeds man and beasts alike.

We can speak of 'the laws of nature', like gravity. But it's God that is behind all of that and causes them to work; all of these laws to function consistently and make them serve His purpose—which is to bless His creation and bless His people. This is one of the reasons to praise God. He is sovereign. He's all wise. He is in control of nature; and guides it and governs it according to His perfect wisdom. But it's not the psalmist's main reason to praise God for the way He handles and governs this created order.

Israel was to praise God because of the good that He did for them. We see that from start to finish in the Psalm. It begins that way in verses 2 and 3. "The LORD builds up Jerusalem; He gathers the outcasts of Israel." Again, this suggests the Psalm was written after a difficult experience, like that of the Babylonian captivity. During the 70 years the Jews were outcasts; they were in despair; they were heartbroken. We get a sense of that from Psalm 137, which begins, "By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down and wept, When we remembered Zion." (vs1). Their captors mocked them and told them to sing songs of Zion. They wanted to be entertained by these Jewish people singing about what they'd lost. But they couldn't do it; "How can we sing," the psalmist wrote, "...the LORD's songs in a foreign land?" (vs4). And so they didn't. In fact what they say, what the psalmist says is, "They hung their harps on willow trees and they didn't sing." (vs2).

But Jeremiah had promised the length, or prophesied the length of their captivity in Jeremiah 29, verse 10: It's 70 years. The LORD would bring them home, bring them back to Judah. Daniel, in captivity there in Babylon, wrote of that as well. In Daniel chapter 9, verse 2, he checked out Jeremiah. Daniel and the nation in captivity knew that promise; and it would have given them hope. Then it was fulfilled; He brought the exiles home; He rebuilt Jerusalem, verse 13, God "strengthened the bars of their gates."

The LORD is faithful to His promises. As the psalmist says in verse 3, "He heals the brokenhearted." Scripture is filled with promises and the LORD is faithful to every one of them. He is reliable. He can be believed. We can trust His Word because of who He is. He's the almighty, the all-powerful, who is absolutely always faithful to His Word—to keep His promises in the midst of difficulty; and in the midst of hardship. That's how He heals broken hearts.

But He has many ways of doing that—and He does it. God's people have the assurance today just as Israel had that assurance in the psalmist's day. Inevitably, God's people, Christians, go through hard times; go through dark days. It may be because of discipline for sin; it may be just the trials of living in a fallen world, (and we all

experience that.) But those are situations that teach us, that test us, that try our faith—and through that strengthen us.

But the reality is, also, as difficult as they may be, as burdensome as they may be, as much as they may enervate and challenge our hope, they are temporary. God sets a limited time for them as He did with 70 years of exile for Judah. We always have hope. That is part of the medicine the LORD uses to heal broken spirits. That's the character of God.

The sovereign God is a God of compassion. That's what Paul said: Paul described Him in 2 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 3, in a beautiful way to begin a book, the outset of that book states that the LORD is a God of comfort, "...the Father of mercies and God of all comfort." (vs3b). That's how he describes Him. And that's who He is for us, always.

So we should never give up hope; and this Psalm was intended to give Israel that assurance. It was written after the nation had passed through a hard experience in a foreign land. A long experience. 70 years in that foreign land, that capital of paganism, all of which was a absolute denial on everything that they believed. And that was reinforced in the accomplishment of that 70 years and bringing them back was an affirmation of God's truth, the truth of God.

Jerusalem had been abandoned. It was in ruins. When they returned they were outcasts, brokenhearted, they were wounded—but that was the past. That was their history. They'd been restored, and they'd been blessed.

And so in verse 7 is the exhortation, "Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; Sing praises to our God on the *lyre*," (or the *harp*). It's the same word that's used in Psalm 137. So 'the harps that they had hung up on the willows' because of sorrow and inability to sing, are now taken down and used for songs of joy, songs of Zion and praise to God for His faithfulness and His blessings. The psalmist was reminding the nation of all of this in order to show that this is their God, and this is **the** God. He's faithful and He is a healer. He cares for them in a special way as His unique and His chosen people.

That's how the Psalm ends in verse 19 and 20, "He declares His words to Jacob, His statutes and His ordinances to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any nation; And as for His ordinances, they are not known to them. Praise the LORD!

Well the praise is not that God's revelation has been withheld from the nations. It wasn't saying, 'what a wonderful thing that they don't know anything and are left in the dark'. Rather it's praise for His special care *for them*. The nations have not had this. The nations had not been treated thus by the LORD. —We have! What a blessing! They're blessed above all of the nations of the earth.

Now, they're blessed not because of anything within them. It is not as though they deserve that. Their lack of merit, in fact, is hinted at in the way the psalmist refers to the nation as *Jacob* and *Israel*. Jacob is associated with deception. You know the story of Jacob and Esau. Jacob, the second born son is holding on to Esau's heel as he comes out, and he's a heel-grabber. He's one that tries to trip up his brother. He has a history of that, and he deceived his brother. He was able to gain the blessing from deception, and take his birthright away from him. —He defrauded his brother Esau.

And all of that is included here in that name *Jacob*. God changed his name to Israel. But often the writers of Scripture referred to the nation as *Jacob*, recalling this natural condition of him. God didn't choose Jacob because of his goodness and his character. And he didn't choose Israel because of their worth—but in spite of themselves.

Election, (and that's what this is about), election is all of grace. And here the psalmist was expressing the wonder of that grace. God passed over the greater nations of the world to reveal Himself to them, to Jacob, the least of all the nations. In fact, that's how Moses describes them in Deuteronomy 7, verse 7, 'It wasn't because you were a great nation that God chose you. It wasn't that at all. You're the least of the nations.' And all through this Psalm is the assurance that He will always be faithful to this nation that doesn't deserve His faithfulness and His care. He's going to be faithful to them because they're His chosen nation.

Well, we see that assurance given in the juxtaposition, or the combination, throughout the Psalm of the praise given for the LORD's control of the universe and the care that He gives to the nation. So for example, in verse 4, after stating that the LORD "heals the brokenhearted", (vs3), the psalmist speaks of God's control of the stars, 'He numbers all of them', (vs4); the trillions and trillions of stars. He names them! He numbers them; He names them; He knows them intimately, completely. He is omniscient and He is omnipotent. He is all knowing and He is all powerful. Since He is the Creator and the controller of the starry host, well, He can certainly take care of His people. And He will do that. And so the point of all of this is, 'Believe that to be true, and praise Him for it!'

So the psalmist's reasons stating God's involvement in the cosmos is not simply to praise God as the great Creator of the universe, but it is to reassure His people that He who names and remembers all of the stars won't forget Israel, or neglect anyone of them. If He cares about the stars; these great, inanimate orbs of gas that will someday burn out, then he certainly cares about those He made in His own image: Sentient, thinking beings whom He has chosen for Himself.

That's reason for thanksgiving and praise. The omnipotent, omniscient God cares more for Israel, (and we can add to that, more for His church), than He does the cosmos. The one who upholds the creation, "binds up our wounds". (vs3b).

This connection between nature and God's people is also made in verses 7 through 11, where the psalmist celebrates the return from Babylon. He does two things here. First, he reassures Israel that the LORD will provide for them. And then he reminds them that they are dependent on Him.

In verses 8 and 9 he states that God gathers the clouds to give rain to the earth; He makes the grass grow and He feeds all the animals, in order to say that, 'He will provide for the material needs of His people.' After all, since He's able to provide for all of the animals, even wild beasts, He can provide for His people. —And He will because they, (and we), are more important to Him than the beasts and the ravens.

Verse 9 expresses that and really expresses the same idea that the LORD expressed later in His Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6, verse 26, "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow nor reap nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them." They don't do any work in providing for themselves in the moment and for the future, but God takes care of them. So how much more will the LORD provide for you? How much more will He take care of us? If He cares about the ravens, he certainly cares about His people.

But often people think that they're too insignificant for God to pay attention to their needs and their sorrows: 'We're just petty pieces, little cogs in this great machine of the universe. We're too small for God to notice.' Well that notion really diminishes the greatness of God. It limits Him. Too small for Him to notice? There isn't anything too small for Him to notice. The most microscopic things in the universe are functioning because of God's will. He knows it all; He is in complete control of everything.

That notion, as I say, diminishes Him, limits Him. And Jesus made it clear that God knows all the details of life, all of the details of this world, all the details of your life and your experience. He said He knows, in Matthew, chapter 10, verse 29, that 'He knows when the sparrow falls to the ground.' Who pays attention to the sparrows that fall to the ground? —He does. He knows how many hairs are on your head. He's numbered all of them. He has to keep numbering them every day, I think, but He knows all of these details.

What that should instill in us is faith. It should instill within us humility and trust. That's what God wants from us. He wants us to know how dependent we are on Him to provide for us—and to trust Him to do it. And rest in that.

So the psalmist wrote, in verses 10 and 11, that God "does not delight in the strength of the horse", or "in the legs of a man." In other words, He is not impressed with great armies, with cavalry and infantry. Now that impresses man, very much so. Human might and strength, in fact, it's what destroyed Jerusalem and took the nation off to Babylon, its powerful army.

But the LORD is mightier. The LORD brought the nation back home without an army. He has real power; power that governs the world; power that keeps the universe functioning and existing. Everything lives and moves and exists in Him. And so they were to look to Him, not to man. Verse 11, "The LORD favors those who fear Him, Those who wait for His lovingkindness." His faithfulness; He provided for them all the way across the desert, from Babylon in Persia to Judah.

And so they were to reverence Him and wait on Him, knowing that He is trustworthy, and His promises are reliable—all of them: He deals with them in grace. He deals with them in lovingkindness. He is faithful. He is all that we need. And they should praise Him for that, for His lovingkindness.

It's that word, *chesed*. You probably don't know too many Hebrew words, but most of you probably know that word. It's a very common word. It's translated different ways, but lovingkindness is a very good translation of it. It's the word for 'His covenant love.' It's the love that He has for those that are in a covenant relationship with Him—an agreement with Him; a special unique relationship—which Israel was in.

They were His "peculiar people", His special people. And this is a love that He had for them alone. It set them apart from the other nations. And God's personal relationship with His people is the emphasis of the last portion of this Psalm; verses 12 through 20. The LORD provided for Israel materially and spiritually, temporally and eternally. —In every way He has provided.

Both are expressed in the use of His Word. That's what really unifies these last verses, God's spoken Word, which has two functions. First, it's to command the elements to obey Him, to carry out their function in this world, whether it's the rain or the sunshine. And the other purpose is to reveal His truth. Verse 15 and verse 16, "He sends forth His command to the earth; His word runs very swiftly. He gives snow like wool; He scatters the frost like ashes."

The LORD controls the weather. He commands snow, and it obeys; every single flake and ice crystal—each fragment obeys Him. Then He commands the warm winds of

spring to come and the snow melts. Now if the LORD uses His Word to control the weather for the benefit of the earth, won't He use His Word to bless His people, with His revelation, the revelation of His person and His purpose, the revelation of His character and His will? Of course He will. He blesses them spiritually. And so we read, in verse 19, "He declares His word to Jacob, His statutes and His ordinances to Israel."

The LORD is consistent in His care for nature. And that consistency and that great ability to care for nature give assurance of His greater care for His people; spiritually and eternally. He has bound Himself to them in an eternal relationship—an eternal covenant. And Paul speaks of that in Romans 11. He speaks of Israel's future, and he says, in verse 29, "The gifts and the calling are irrevocable."

Now we won't go through all of those chapters, 9, 10, and 11, but the natural branches have been temporarily broken off, and unnatural branches, the Gentiles grafted in. But God's not through with Israel. He can't be, "The gifts and the calling are irrevocable." And that's how the Psalm ends in verse 20, "He has not dealt thus with any nation. And as for His ordinances, they have not known them. Praise the LORD!"

Well, that's divine election; that's unconditional election. He made this revelation known to them because they are His special people. Their response here, again, is not self-satisfaction—but wonder, amazement! That's what the doctrine of election should produce. And rightly understood, that is what it will produce.

Election is not the doctrine of God's choice of a few and of the worthy, the elite, the sort of 'cream'; and His disregard of the rest—the unworthy and the unwashed. Just the opposite; it's His choice of the unworthy and His choice of the many. His chosen number 'as large as the stars of heaven and the dust of the earth.' You can't number them. And there's nothing in themselves, nothing in those whom God has chosen, has set His love upon, for which they can boast.

Paul told the Corinthians that. He said, "Consider your calling" because the Corinthians had a problem of boasting—thinking more of themselves than they ought. So he says, 'Consider it.' "...consider your calling...not many wise according to the flesh,

not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise..." (1Cor 1:26-27). And He's chosen many of them.

Rightly understood, the doctrine of Election is the preventative of pride and the promoter of humility. We don't deserve it. Why me? That's the question we all ought to ask if we really understand the doctrines of sovereign grace—Why me? And the reason is because He loved you. Why did He love you? Why does He love any of us? We can never know that. We'll spend all eternity wondering, 'Why would You love me?

But that's why He chooses us. He loves us eternally and unconditionally. What a motivation to obedience, to godliness, and service—that is to really understand it. He loves us with an infinite love because that's His nature to do so; it's nothing within us. We deserve nothing but the wrath of God. And so when we understand all that we've received from Him, this unconditional love that He has for us, then that will be the great motivation, (I think the greatest motivation in a person's life) to obedience, to godliness and to service—and to doing what we're told to do here; 'Praising the LORD!'

This is the crowning blessing of the Psalm—God's sovereign choice of His people for Himself, and for all eternity. That's the great blessing. John put it in perspective in John chapter 1. The chapter begins with the importance of God's Word, the *logos*. In verse 13, John speaks about the origin of a believer's blessing; why we have all that we have; why we have a new nature; why we have the promises of God right now—we can rest on them. We can go to this Psalm and know that God is for us, and He'll take care of us. And why we have this glorious future, John says of them, '...who were born...', (that is born spiritually and eternally), "...not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God" (vs 13). It's all of Him. It's all of His grace. Praise the LORD!, which should cause all of us to do.

If you've not been born again, you won't praise the LORD. You have no thought of doing that. And so if you're here this morning and you're thinking, "I'm not going to praise the LORD. I have no interest. This is an odd sermon that I'm listening to." Well,

maybe it's because you're not born again. Those who are born again know that the LORD cares about them and loves them; and they praise Him for that.

But if you recognize the truth of these statements, if there's some light breaking in to your soul as you hear this—respond to that. Ask the LORD for His grace and mercy; for the spiritual birth that only He can give. Ask Him to save you. Only He can do it. He answers the prayers of the humble; He answers the prayers of those who fear Him. So seek Him. And you will find Him if you seek Him in Jesus Christ, His eternal son. He became a man to die for sinners and save them forever. Trust in Him, be saved. And then, by God's grace, Praise the LORD!

Father we do lift our hearts in praise to our Triune God. We give You praise and thanks for all that we have from You: From Your perfect plan of salvation which was established before the foundation of the world—in fact is as eternal as You are. And in that great plan and in Your great love for us, You set Your love upon a people that don't deserve it. We thank You for it.

And we thank you for the all-sufficient sacrifice You sent Your Son to make on our behalf, that He willingly came to do, and for the Spirit who comes and gathers up Your people. What a blessing. Thank You. We praise You for it.

Bless us now, LORD, as we go; and bless this next part of the service, the time in which we remember that all sufficient sacrifice. We pray that it will be honoring to You. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

(End of Audio)