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# Praise the Lord

## Psalm 113

### Introduction

Throughout history, when the hearts of God's people have been right before Him there has been praise. When God brought His people out of captivity in Egypt and delivered them from the hand of Pharaoh, Exodus 15:1 tells us that *there was praise*. When God gave Israel victory over Jabin, the king of Canaan, *there was praise* (cf. Jdg.5). When David brought up the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem, *there was praise* (cf. 1Chr.15:25-28). When King Hezekiah restored the temple worship in Jerusalem, *there was praise* (cf. 2Chr.29:30). At the conclusion of the Lord's Supper just prior to the betrayal and killing of the Lord Jesus Christ, *there was praise* (cf. Mk.14:26). When Paul and Silas were unjustly thrown in jail in Philippi with their backs laid open from being beaten, *there was praise* (Acts 16:25).

Since the days of the O.T. & N.T., God's people have continued to praise. In A.D. 117, Pliny wrote a letter to the Emperor Trajan reporting that among the Christians, *there was singing*. In 1415 as people watched the early Reformer Jan Hus burning at the stake history records that *there was singing*. During the Reformation and throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> century we read that *there was singing*.

And one day, when all of God's people are gathered around the throne of God gazing upon the Lamb that was slain the Bible says that *there will be singing* (cf. Rev.5:9; 14:3; 15:3)

With this fly by over the Scriptures and over Church History, does it surprise any of us that in the middle of our Bibles; at the heart of The Book, we find a Song Book; the Psalms. From weeping because life is hard and God seems far away to rejoicing because grace is good and God is close; from lamenting to lauding we discover in the center of our Bibles a book called The Psalms. It is here that God's people over the centuries have found help and hope to begin, maintain or regain the song of praise. Today we begin our 4-part series taken from the Psalter. In these four messages we will hear "The Call to Praise". We will be exploring this call to praise by noticing:

1. What Praising the Lord is – Psalm 113
2. When Praising the Lord disappears – Psalm 13
3. How Praising the Lord reappears – Psalm 32
4. Praising the Lord "as long as I live" – Psalm 146

Today let's open our Bibles to Psalm 113 and discover what "Praising the Lord" is about. (Read the text)

## Command to

## Vv.1-3

We are not sure who wrote Ps.113. It is an anonymous Psalm. It is classified as a Psalm of Descriptive (i.e. explanatory and expressive) Praise. There are many psalms of this type in the Psalter. Psalms of Descriptive Praise always has a call to praise. Because the one who is calling the reader and listener to Praise the Lord has experienced the reality of God in an overwhelming way, he desires all of us to do the same. We find this pattern here in Psalm 113.

This psalm has nine verses and is made of three movements of three verses each. In this first movement we are confronted at once with the message of the Psalm. What I hope each of us come away with this morning is that *Praise is due the LORD because His reputation is unmatched*. His essence is unequalled. His majesty is matchless. His pity is peerless. His splendor is supreme. He is in a class all by Himself. He has no real rivals to His throne. Without equal is the Lord. This is why we are all called to Praise the Lord.

We see this in how our Psalm begins and ends. From the opening “Praise the Lord” in v.1 to the closing “Praise the Lord” in v.9 this poem overflows with the praise of God! And so, this Psalm starts off with an imperative (i.e. command, something necessary; not secondary). This is seen in vv.1-3.

Our poet under the inspiration of God commands us to Praise the Lord. He does not leave us without instruction. He will not abandon us to our own imagination. He knows we all of us need to understand the what, when and where of this command “Praise the Lord”.

So what is “Praise the Lord”? You are here this morning by God’s providence. You are hearing a preacher preaching Ps.113. You understand that you have no other option if you desire obedience to the Lord. You are to “Praise the Lord”. But you might say in your heart, “What is praise and what does it mean to “praise the Lord”.

### What praise is (vv.1a; 9c)

Notice with me the writer’s answer to this question. What praise is can be seen in v.1.

#### “Hallelujah”

#### v.1a

The Psalm opens with a Hebrew word familiar to Christians all over the world. Regardless of a person’s national language or local dialect, people following the risen Christ know at least one Hebrew word. This word is “Hallelujah”. The word is often used but rarely explained.

To understand the command upon each of us this morning, we need to understand this Hebrew word. It comes from a compound term made up of the verb “to praise” = hallel and the short form of the name of God “Yah”. Hallel is a key verb in the Old Testament. It carries the idea of excited boasting. And this excited boasting is to be both public and vocal.

This word “hallel” is what you say when...

- ◆ Ken Griffy Jr. hits a home run
- ◆ You finally get your Temps
- ◆ You are gazing upon a beautiful sunset with someone you love
- ◆ A baby is born

When we sense that an object is stunning we excitedly boast about it. When we delight in it we desire to express our joy of it. This is hallel. This, however, is infinitely parochial & inferior to what is happening in Ps.113 (and in the rest of the Bible). Coupled with this verb “hallel” we have the shorten name of God “Yah”. Yahweh is the name above all names. He is the object of praise. The Hebrew word translated praise e in our Psalm is a word used best not of soccer or cars or recitals or sales. It is reserved for the living Lord. He is the One who truly deserves our boastful, excited, public and vocal praise!

## Coming from servants

## v.1b

What praise is can also be appreciated as we notice who is spoken to in this Psalm. Look down again at your Bibles. We are still in v.1. We read, “Praise O servants of the Lord”. Here we see who is addressed; “servants of the Lord”.

To carry out glad-hearted obedience to the command “Praise the Lord”, one needs to be a “servant of the Lord”.

The Bible is clear. We start our lives as servants of self. We worship our agendas and accomplishments. We measure how things are going as they relate to self. We are self-absorbed. We self-promote. We preserve and prop up self. We are, in other words, in bondage to self. This is the essence of sin. And the Bible says that we must turn from sin and trust and treasure Jesus Christ. Jesus came to die a horrific death on the cross so that His people are able and willing to do this.

Does slavery to the Most High sound good? For this Psalm and this message to make any sense to us, the “call to praise” must begin here. If anything describes a servant rightly, it is his or her readiness to obey the command of the master. The command we have here from our Mater in this Psalm is to give praise to His great name. Can you see this? Do you like this? Are you ready to bow to the Master? Are you

ready to believe fully in Him? Do you desire to trust and treasure the One we are about to see in this Psalm? You will if God is pleased to open your eyes to see the matchless majesty and mercy of the Lord. And the Psalm will unveil this beauty in a few moments. But for now let's answer another question found in verse 2.

## **When praise is to happen**

**v.2**

Having notice what praise is; namely a public and vocal expression of excitement over the matchless beauty of God coming from servants, we now come to the question, when? When does this obedience in praising the Lord take place? Is it on Sunday from 10:30-noon? Or is it more comprehensive and radical than obeying this command at merely an event?

Our Psalm for today addresses this question. Look with me at verse 2.

## **From this time forth and forevermore**

**v.2**

The Psalm is quite clear on the time factor. "From this time forth and forevermore"!

It may be that this command to praise the name of God was told to you a long time ago. In that case, the command is already operative in your life. If, however, this is the first time you've been confronted with this command, then you should note today's date and write it in your Bible or handout. Go ahead, write this down. The Bible is saying, "from this time forth". And how long shall this praise be due to great and glorious Name? In the words of the popular hymn "Amazing Grace"

*When we've been there ten thousand years*

*Bright, shining as the sun,*

*We've no less days to sing God's praise*

*Than when we first begun.*

"From this time forth and forevermore", praise is due His unsurpassed name.

## **Where praise is to happen**

**v.3**

### **From the rising of the sun to its setting**

If verse two gives the time factor, verse three speaks of geography.

The next question under the command to praise the Lord is found in verse 3. Where is one to praise God? The answer given is plain; wherever you happen to be. The sun rising and setting depicts the directions east and west. In other words, wherever the sun does its duty,

you and I are to do ours. And our duty is to delightfully carry out this command. And the command is to praise the Lord!

This first movement gives us a command to praise the incomparable name of the Lord. Praise is excited boasting. It is to be done by those who are His servants. Praise is to be given from now on, wherever we happen to be. The imperative is clear; the task of obedience is a happy one. Let us with glad-heartedness, obey vv.1-3. Let us praise the Lord from now on and wherever we happen to be.

## Explanation for

### Why praise is to be given

### Vv.4-6

In the second movement of Psalm 113 (vv.4-6), the writer of the poem does something extraordinary. He explains the command of praise. God does not owe us anything. He does not need to explain why He tells us to do something. He is the King of the Universe. And yet, notice with me what is happening in this second movement. We find an explanation for the command “Praise the Lord”.

### high above all

### vv.4-5

The explanation of the command to praise the Lord centers on His excellence: He is matchless!

### Above nations

There is no one like the Lord! Verse 4 starts off by saying that He is high above all nations. In a time of uncertainty in which nations are warring and vying for power, isn't it comforting to realize that the Lord is far above all nations? The Lord is in control; in control over the United States and Canada, over N. Korea and China, over Papua New Guinea and Mozambique, over Israel, Syria, Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Our Lord is over even Iraq. No nation, no leader, no local deity may be compared to Him.

### Above the heavens

To know that above the nations He reigns thrills the heart. But what staggers our imagination and explodes our petty views is what follows. Not only is the Lord above all nations, He is above the heavens. Beyond the hundreds of billions of stars that God has sprinkled throughout His vast universe we find Him. Nothing may be compared to Him! To try to put this in perspective, our sun is one of 200 billion stars banded together by gravity in an enormous spiral called the Milky Way Galaxy. They tell us that it takes light (which travels at 186,000 miles per second) 100,000 years to go through the entire Milky Way Galaxy; one of billions of galaxies in the Universe. And

the vastness of the Universe is described in Isaiah 40:12 by God's span; the distance from the out-stretch thumb to the out-stretched little finger. He is beyond all description!

## Who looks far down

vv.6-9

Were we left with verses 4-5, we might be left in discouragement leading to depression with a God who is so far out there that we would doubt any possibility of His care for those of us who are "way down here? But remember what we are looking at in Ps.113. A matchless God whose name is the Lord who calls us to excitedly boast in public about Him. He commands it. And then He gives explanation for it. What we've seen so far is one half of the explanation. The other half reaches the heart. Look with me at vv.6-9.

From Majesty to mercy notice the progression of vv.5-9. From His incredibly majestic throne He stoops to see the heavens. Think about that statement. Then He stoops still lower to look on planet Earth. He then looks into misery and enters it. This bending down of majesty is no other than Jesus Christ coming to Earth as a 7lb. baby boy, living in poverty, never sinning, always loving, and then going to the Cross to die for the sins of all who will repent of unbelief and begin treasuring and trusting Him in all of life.

The condescending majesty took on the form of man. Jesus Christ brought his majesty down to His mercy and loved sinners like you and me. He was raised from the dead and left Earth around A.D. 30 promising His return when the work was done. This work continued as He sent forth the Holy Spirit. The Spirit using the Bible through His people reaches into our sin and pain and confusion and fear and restlessness. The good news of great joy of Jesus enters poverty and joylessness with hope. Those who believe leave hopelessness and enter the family of God in which they find love and joy and peace and power and purpose and perspective and pleasure.

That is what vv.5-9 are illustrating! Hopelessness and joylessness are products of sin. King Jesus who stoops down to look upon the vastness of the Universe keeps coming down...way down into my sadness and sickness and sinfulness in order to rescue me.

This is the rationale for God's people to rejoice. This is the motivation for our hearts to well up with never ending excited boasting in public over the One who is Majesty & the same one who is Mercy. This is the great and gracious God of the Universe who has made Himself known through His Son Jesus. Are we servants of the Most High? How we express ourselves about Him in public will tell the truth.

## Conclusion

While Psalm 113 points back to the song of Hannah and forward to the song of Mary, first and foremost it leads us to the joyful expression of praise to the name of our matchless Lord. The point of the Psalm is simply this: Praise is due His matchless name. With this message given in a command, and then explained and then illustrated, the Psalm then ends as it began with the great command: Hallelujah. Praise the Lord.

This message has ended. The effects of this message must not. In conclusion, how can we respond to the Lord in Ps.113?

- ◆ Look away from yourself to Jesus Christ in Ps.113
- ◆ Loathe your lack of praise
- ◆ List what obedience would mean for you
- ◆ Link up with those who are obeying by faith
- ◆ Launch out in fresh obedience by faith