

Our Incomparable God

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Bible Verse: Psalm 113
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Well, it's our great privilege to open our Bibles this evening to the book of Psalms once again, Psalm 113 will be our text for tonight. Psalm 113. I invite you to turn there with me as we'll read it to begin, and you see the theme of the Psalm right from the very beginning.

1 Praise the LORD! Praise, O servants of the LORD, Praise the name of the LORD.
2 Blessed be the name of the LORD From this time forth and forever. 3 From the rising of the sun to its setting The name of the LORD is to be praised. 4 The LORD is high above all nations; His glory is above the heavens. 5 Who is like the LORD our God, Who is enthroned on high, 6 Who humbles Himself to behold The things that are in heaven and in the earth? 7 He raises the poor from the dust And lifts the needy from the ash heap, 8 To make them sit with princes, With the princes of His people. 9 He makes the barren woman abide in the house As a joyful mother of children. Praise the LORD!

Our God is incomparable. There is no one like him and Scripture makes this point in many places throughout all of the pages of the Bible. Just a couple of verses to help us kind of get our minds into the right gear here this evening. Exodus 15:11, you don't need to turn there. In the song of Moses after the deliverance at the Red Sea, it says this, "Who is like You among the gods, O LORD? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, Awesome in praises, working wonders?" Then in one of my favorite passages in all of the Bible, a lesser-known passage unfortunately, Micah 7, the prophet Micah 7:18 it says this, "Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in unchanging love. He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will cast all their sins Into the depths of the sea. You will give truth to Jacob And unchanging love to Abraham, Which You swore to our forefathers From the days of old."

So you just have this rhetorical question being asked repeatedly in Scripture, "Who is like you, O God?" And the implied answer is no one is like him. There is no one like him anywhere in all of the universe. There is this vast chasm between the creation and the Creator. There is this vast chasm of sinful humanity and the grace of God which came in the Lord Jesus Christ in order to forgive all of the sins of his people. Why would a great

God, a holy, majestic God condescend to care for the needs of sinners like you and me? Why would he bother with that? Well, it's because he's incomparable, there is no one like him. He does great things for his people and part of his greatness is expressed in the fact that he shows compassion to the helpless, compassion to the undeserving and the unworthy. And we saw that last time as we did an overview of Psalms 113 through 118, those Psalms that were used at the celebration of Passover and other feasts of Israel, we saw that in a collective sense there is this great call to praise in those six Psalms that we are now going to look at one by one, and we saw that they are a collective call to praise. On a national level to the nation of Israel in particular in Old Testament times, on the individual level who has been on the receiving end of God's grace, his saving grace, and it expands out in Psalm 117 to a universal call to praise that all peoples, all nations should join together in worshiping and honoring this incomparable God, and Psalm 113 is the introduction, it is the doorway through which we enter into all of this wonderful praise. And I'm going to break the Psalm down, as I usually do, into three sections here this evening. We're going to start with the glory of God and then, secondly, we'll move on to the greatness of God and then, thirdly, we'll end on the grace of God. The glory of God, the greatness of God, and the grace of God will be the titles of the sections that we use here this evening to enter into this Psalm.

So let's look, first of all, at the glory of God and glory in Scripture and in theology is used in different ways. It can be talked about God's glory, the glory that is intrinsic to his essence, and also it can be used in another way which is the sense that we're using tonight of his people giving glory to God, ascribing glory to God, praising his name. When we praise God, we don't add anything to his great intrinsic glory, we simply recognize it, acknowledge it and give him our praise and submission and worship, and it's in that sense that we are using the term the glory of God here this evening.

Look at the first verse and you can see why we take that approach to it. Three times in the first verse, the word "praise" is used as a command. Praise the LORD. Look at it there with me in verse 1,

1 Praise the LORD! Praise, O servants of the LORD, Praise the name of the LORD.

If you are in Christ, one of the primary, if not the primary reason that God saved you was that you would be an instrument of his glory, that you have been made holy, by which we mean you have been positionally set apart, you have been separated out from the world and set apart for this purpose that your life would be given over to the praise of God. That is your first and preeminent purpose in life. Everything else about the details of what you do with your life and you spend your life with, everything else is secondary to that great transcendent purpose and that's why the catechisms say the chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

So I think it's helpful for us to dwell on that for just a moment and to realize that the great object of your salvation is not you, it is God. The great object for which you were saved was to be giving praise back to the God of your salvation, not to simply make God the

servant of your needs and for God to smooth out all of the trials in your lives. That's not the purpose. God is not there for your glory, for your satisfaction preeminently, the first principle of salvation is that as servants of the Lord, we are dedicated to the praise of his holy name and that's a great and high and lofty and noble calling. That's the greatest possible calling that anyone could have on earth whether it's a lowly farmhand in the fields of Mexico, whether it's a banker in New York who belongs to Christ, and all points of social strata in between, the great purpose of being a Christian is that you are set apart for the glory of God. And one of the things that I want to encourage you with in light, for many reasons, I would say, is that God is especially glorified in your private worship and your private honor of him.

Look at Matthew 6 with me for just a moment. Matthew 6. There are some voices, and it irritates me, honestly, that just try to pound upon people a sort of works-based view of salvation that, you know, that we all have to do great things for God and, you know, that's how you serve God is by doing great things with him and go relocate and do something great for God. I want to give you a biblical corrective to that as we think about the ways in which we glorify God, is to understand that what God looks for, first and foremost, is someone who will simply worship and glorify and ascribe praise to him in secret, in private where no one is observing. And this is so plain and obvious in the Sermon on the Mount, it is a crying shame that it is overlooked so much in our pleasure-seeking, praise-seeking for man kind of world that we live in.

Look at verse 5 with me, Matthew 6:5, for example, "When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But you, when you pray," as a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, here's what God wants you to do, "you go into your inner room," where no one can see you, "close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you." Three times in this chapter, Jesus makes that point about doing things in secret. Verse 4 when he talks about giving, he says, do your "giving in secret so your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you." In fasting, he says the same thing, verse 17, "you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you." Every single time I see a message or a blog article or some kind of speaker talking about the way that he fasts and calling people to fast like he does, I always think of this passage. The whole act of promoting self and saying, "This is what I do in fasting," is against the whole spirit of this passage. Jesus says, "If you're going to fast, if you're going to pray, if you're going to give, do it in secret where no one does it," so that, the purpose of all of this is so that it purifies your motives so that you're doing it exclusively for the glory of God and not for the praise of men. If men can't see you doing it, they can't praise you for it. So you separate yourself out, you mortify your own desires for acknowledgment in your service to Christ, you mortify that by getting alone and giving glory to God in private and making that the centerpiece of the reason that you exist. This is the life given over to the glory of God.

Now, of course, we gather together corporately to praise him, to praise him together in a corporate way, but that corporate praise is an overflow of what we should be doing on a private basis throughout the week. A life given over to the glory of God is one that delights in giving him glory in private and seeking him when no one is watching. So when we see here in Psalm 113:1, "Praise, O servants of the LORD, Praise the name of the LORD," we get an orientation to the whole purpose of this Psalm and what it is trying to get us to do. Praise is the command at the start, praise is the command at the very end of the Psalm. Look at the end of verse 9, "Praise the LORD!" Is the theme that he ends on so that everything we are going to see in the Psalm between the beginning and the end is designed to reinforce and to drive us to that aspect of ascribing glory to God.

So what is it that we give glory to him for? Well, look at it there at the end of verse 1 and into verse 2. It says,

Praise the name of the LORD. 2 Blessed be the name of the LORD From this time forth and forever. 3 From the rising of the sun to its setting The name of the LORD is to be praised.

Do you see it there three times in those three verses? The name of the LORD. The end of verse 1, "Praise the name of the LORD." Verse 2, "Blessed be the name of the LORD." End of verse 3, "The name of the LORD is to be praised."

Now the name as we've discussed multiple times from this pulpit, the name of God when it's talking about praising the name of God, it's more than simply the term by which we address him. We address God as Father, we address him as our Lord Jesus Christ, we pray at times to the Spirit and ask for his help and blessing, but the name here is more than just that title, it is a shorthand reference to the totality of the being of God, the totality of all of his perfections, the totality of his attributes, for all that God is, is a cause and a grounds for praising him. So the name includes everything that contributes to his excellent, holy, separate and exalted reputation. We praise him for all that he is and we worship him according to his name that he is revealed in in Scripture.

Now here in Psalm 113, the particular name of God that is used is the term Yahweh in the Old Testament, in your Bibles it may be in all caps, LORD, L-O-R-D, and you see that given at least five times in those first three verses. Notice it here, "Praise the LORD! O servants of the LORD, Praise the name of the LORD. Blessed be the name of the LORD." Verse 3, "The name of the LORD is to be praised." Five times in those three verses using the same name of God to call attention to the focus of our praise.

Now this name Yahweh identifies God in a particular way. It identifies him as the covenant-keeping God to his people. God enters into covenant with his people, in Israel they served under the old covenant, we come to God through Christ by way of the new covenant made, inaugurated by his shed blood, but God is a covenant-keeping God. He promises to care for his people and he keeps that promise in his loyal love. And speaking in New Testament terms, the one who has come to God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, trusting in Christ and his shed blood and righteousness alone as that which would

reconcile you to a holy God, the one who comes to him in that way is on the receiving end of the fullness of all the promises of God, and to just choose one at random, Jesus said, "No one will pluck them out of My hand."

And in Romans 8, let's go there. I know that's more than one, I can count up to two at least. In Romans 8:29, skipping over the widely familiar verse 28 for now, verse 29, "For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified." No one is lost in the process. Of all of those that God appointed to salvation before the beginning of time, all of those that Christ died for on the cross, his people, all of those that the Spirit regenerates and comes to indwell, all of them, without exception, are kept all the way to the end until they are glorified with God in heaven. No one loses out. No one is lost. No one who is truly saved, truly regenerate, could possibly lose their salvation after they once possessed it, and the reason for that is not because we are so good at persevering, because we are not, the reason that we all reach heaven once we are saved, the reason that we cannot fall out of salvation, is because the God of our salvation is a covenant-keeping God who is faithful and loyal in his love to his people for time without end. He is a covenant-keeping God who keeps his promises and his promise, as we see at the end of Romans 8 in verse 38, the Apostle Paul says, "I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Paul identifies various aspects of creation, then he calls it all together, no other created thing. He says all of creation does not have the power to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. That's profound. That is greatly enriching and encouraging and a great cause for us to ascribe glory to our God.

Do you realize that if God saved you once, he saved you forever? That means that even in the midst of your struggles and the sins that you commit and those besetting sins that discourage you, even in the midst of the adversities of life and the trials and the challenges and the difficulties that we face, in all of that, the love of God is an unchanging constant for his people. The love that sent Christ to the cross, for Scripture says that, "This is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins," that love which seeks your highest good, that love which redeemed you, that love which is keeping you, means that he will always keep you and you will never be lost in the end. No true Christian will ever be in hell. The thought is ridiculous. The thought is blasphemous to suggest such a thing, and if not blasphemous, it surely shows fundamental misunderstandings of what Christian salvation is. God didn't simply pay for your sins and forgive your sins at the moment of your conversion and then leave it to you to work out your salvation by yourself and on your own and you've got to work now to keep his favor. Look, you can't earn his favor like that. You can't be good enough for God. Your hope is not in your goodness but in the goodness of God, in the love of God, in the love of Christ, in the mercy proven by the bleeding wounds of his side at Calvary.

So what does that mean? It means that whatever happens in life, our salvation is secure, and because God is a covenant-keeping God, a promise-keeping God, a God of loyal love to his people without end, that means that your heart can be full of joy and in response to such great saving love, you praise the Lord. It's a particular privilege for me to say these things to some of you knowing some of your, you know, past religious backgrounds in Catholicism and other works-based systems and in, you know, professing Christian churches that, you know, threatened you with legalistic judgment because, you know, you could lose your salvation if you don't obey enough. It's a great privilege for me to simply open up Scripture and show you these simple basic truths from God's word and trust his Spirit to put those things out of your mind and give you a true view of what the implications of his sovereign grace is. It's magnificent, and because it's magnificent and because it was his idea, all of these things at his initiative, then we respond and make him the object of our praise.

Go back to Psalm 113. When you understand these things, you are liberated from fear of judgment if you are in Christ. You realize the utter impossibility of a perverse doctrine like purgatory being true, that God would save you, that Christ would bear all of your sins, that it would be finished at Calvary as Jesus himself said, and then to think that God was not completely satisfied with the death of his Son and therefore cast you into a purgatory of unknown duration for thousands and thousands of years to kind of burn off whatever sins weren't sufficiently paid for at the cross. That cannot possibly be reconciled with biblical teaching. There is nothing in the Bible about purgatory and it would be counter to everything that Scripture teaches us to adore and love God for, that he is a faithful covenant-keeping God of loyal love. He forgives our sins. No, we don't deserve that, that's what makes it so wonderful, that's what makes it such a ground of praise, is that he is a forgiving God who does not hold the sins of his people against them. That's what we saw in the book of Micah, he passes over our iniquities because of his great great grace.

So we praise him for that and when do we do that and where do we do it? Well, we do it all the time and we do it everywhere. Look at verses 2 and 3, Psalm 113.

2 Blessed be the name of the LORD From this time forth and forever.

Constant praise. You know, whatever else has been mixed up in our minds about the grace and the goodness of God and the nature of our salvation, we come to this point of understanding and, as it were, we drive a stake in the ground and say, "This is a turning point where I understand that henceforth and forever more my life is set apart to the praise of God come what may. Will He gave me prosperity? I'll praise Him in my prosperity. Does He send poverty? I'll praise Him in my poverty because I have eternal riches waiting for me. Does He send good health? I'll praise Him for blessing me like that. Does He send physical adversity? I'll praise Him for the grace that sustains my heart and renews my inner man day by day even while my our man is decaying. Am I on my deathbed? I'll thank Him for the life that He's given and I thank Him as I draw my last breath and inhale my first breath in heaven; I'll give Him praise then knowing that the

praise has only begun. Death isn't the end of my praise, it's just the beginning of being able to give Him glory in a glorified state, in a glorified place, time without end."

So yes, yes, the triplicate repetition in the first verse is well-deserved, "Praise Him! Praise Him! Praise Him! Ascribe glory to His name." You do it constantly, verse 2, "From this time forth and forever," verse 3, you do it everywhere,

3 From the rising of the sun to its setting The name of the LORD is to be praised.

As the sun runs its course from sunrise to sunset and goes through its cycle 24 hours a day, it covers everywhere, and as it runs its course in the skies, it is covering and declaring the glory of God to everyone that is under its light and heat, showing by its consistent circle in the sky that the name of the Lord is being revealed, and as long as the sun is shining, the name of the Lord is to be praised wherever you may be.

The prophet Malachi echoes this theme of universality. He says in chapter 1, verse 11, Malachi 1:11, "For from the rising of the sun even to its setting, My name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense is going to be offered to My name." Everywhere the sun shines, there people should be praising the Lord. Everywhere the sun shines, there should be worship and worship, as we've said a few times in recent weeks, worship is that loving, trusting, obedient reverence given to God by his people as he is revealed in his word. And as you study the 10 Commandments, as I think we're going to do soon enough, it isn't simply a matter of going through external motions, it's not simply a matter of showing up someplace on a day of worship and kneeling and standing and sitting down when they tell you to do, coming forward, going back, whatever, and going through all of this external stuff without any heart engagement. No. No, worship is an act of love. It is an act of personal devotion, personal gratitude to this God of our salvation. Do you love him like that, I ask you? Worship is trusting him, knowing his promises and trusting him to be faithful to them; to know that God will be good to you and that is your confident response in life regardless of everything around you that might seem to contradict the very premise. Worship is not only a heart attitude of love, it's a heart attitude of trust. "God, You've revealed Yourself to be good. Christ was on the cross, Christ is raised from the dead, Christ is mine, of course, You love me, of course, You're being good to me, of course, I will trust You." And it's obedient. Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep my commandments." 1 John says, "The one who says I know Him and does not keep His commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him."

So there are multiple aspects to this matter of worship. There is an emotional component but it's not simply about getting your emotions stirred up by a big stage performance, that in that act of manipulated heightened emotion, that then you're worshipping. No, worship is all of life. Worship is an act of life response of the total man in love, trust and obedience to the God of our salvation. This is what his people do. Contractors build, athletes perform, the people of God, they worship and they worship in their love with their heart affections, they worship in their trust, and they worship in their obedience. It's

a total response of the total man to the totality of the name of God in all that he has revealed himself to be and to have done and what he will still yet do.

So I ask you, do you love him? Does something inside you resonate with these things and say, "Yes, that's right and, yes, that's the commitment of my heart." Not simply, "I've heard about this." It's not simply an intellectual exercise, this isn't something there's going to be a quiz on it at the end of the message so that we can regurgitate things that we've said. I'm asking whether your inner man responds to God and to Christ like this and it's fair and right that I should ask you because the command of Scripture is praise the LORD. Do you trust him? Do you obey him or do you tolerate a lifestyle of irreverent disobedience to him, or do you tolerate just a lifestyle of utter indifference to his word, a carelessness about attending to public worship, a carelessness and a rejection of prayer and a total indifference to the things of God? Well, if you want to live a life like that, I can't make you not, can plead with you to come to Christ and not do that, but if that's going to be your lifestyle, do us all a favor and forsake the name of Christian and stop claiming to be a Christian if your lifestyle doesn't show some kind of heart response of this love, trust, and obedience. If you can go through life with utter disregard to Christ, you're not a Christian. It doesn't matter if you were baptized. It doesn't matter if you were baptized over there. It makes no difference. All that a baptism does for an unregenerate person is get them wet. It does nothing for their soul if it's not an act of faith.

So yeah, I lose sleep over things like this as faces pass through my mind at night. I toss in bed and I say, "God, do something. God, open their eyes. God, do something because their life is not consistent with what they're professing." Because if the Spirit of God was in their heart, surely there would be something more of a life perspective, a life attitude, a life life, if you want to put it that way, that clearly manifests a desire to praise the LORD. We're not talking perfection, we are simply talking about a heart that has been captivated by love for Christ and can't help but respond any other way.

Now as you go on in Psalm 113, the psalmist gives reasons for this worship. I've been bringing other biblical matters to bear on the thing almost prematurely, you might say, but in these next two sections, you see the psalmist's reasons for worship and we come to the second section and we see him talking about the greatness of God. The greatness of God. At the end of verse 3, he said, "The name of the LORD is to be praised." Now there is no transitional word there, "because," it's implied. It's shown by the flow of thought. Why is the name of the Lord to be praised? I'll tell you why, verse 4, because,

4 The LORD [Yahweh] is high above all nations; His glory is above the heavens.

What these verses are expressing, to give you a theological term, these verses are expressing the transcendence of God. God is high and lofty and far above all of his creation. He is high and lofty and far above us. He is not like you and me. The uncreated Creator, holy and majestic, is not like us, creaturely and sinful and mortal. He lives forever, we will die in our flesh.

So to define the term transcendence means that God is separate from creation and he is far above the human race. Before there was Genesis 1:1, before there were the six days of creation, God was. God is before that time. Before Genesis 1:1, Christ is, Christ was with God and he was God. Transcendent. Beyond time. Beyond space. Beyond measurement. No origin, no end. Utterly infinite. Utterly perfect. Utterly unchangeable. Utterly omnipotent. Utterly omnipresent. Utterly omniscient. Every fact that there is to be known about every molecule in the universe is known infinitely by God and infinite other things besides. That's how far transcendent he is. You know, some people excel in their area of expertise. You know, a lawyer specializes in commercial transactions, a doctor specializes in brain surgery, others specialize in other aspects of what they do and they get a particular sliver of knowledge that they excel in. Well, you know, that's nothing compared to the greatness of the knowledge and the transcendence of God. We're all humbled before him when we contemplate these things. You and I had a point of origin in our mother's womb, God had no such thing, he simply always has been. How did that come to pass? You expect me to explain the utterly transcendent? We receive it by faith, this is what God has declared to be true. No one caused God, no one brought God into existence. He is independent and self-existent. Always has been, always will be totally transcendent.

So when Scripture says, look at it there with me in verse 4, that he is high above all nations, his glory is above the heavens, we get something of the sense of his utter magnificence. He rules over every nation. The heavens cannot surround his glory. The heavens cannot contain his glory. We send rockets to Mars and get sent back wonderful pictures of the surface of that red planet and the human genius that made that happen is great, we send telescopes into the outer reaches of the galaxies and they probe deeper and they're not beginning to exhaust the glory of God in the heavens. We boast in these accomplishments as a human race as if it's something great, utterly losing sight of the greatness of the one who is far beyond them who set those things in motion and hung them by nothing in space himself. He is sovereign over everything. He is beyond everything and the question is who is like that? And the answer is: no one is.

And for all of the failings and shortcomings of us as the people of God, we should at least see and acknowledge and praise God because he's utterly incomparable. There is nothing to compare him to and we haven't even explored and discussed tonight something about his Triune essence, a single essence of God with three distinct conscious entities each possessing the fullness of the indivisible essence. Incomparable. There is no one like him. Lofty. Majestic. Holy. Transcendent. Great. That's why we praise him and his transcendence alone would be sufficient cause for unending praise, if we only knew him by way of his transcendence, the awe that that would produce would be sufficient to orient us to a proper fear of God and worship, and yet there is another aspect of his being that calls for worship and we see it in the third section of the Psalm that we've put under the title of the grace of God. The greatness of God, verses 4 and 5,

5 Who is like the LORD our God, Who is enthroned on high,

But then he introduces another theme, the psalmist does, in verse 6, the grace of God. Although he is high above the heavens, you could say, while he is high above the heavens, in addition to being high above the heavens, without compromising that thought or mitigating, minimizing it in any kind of way whatsoever, holding that great transcendent thought in our minds, we see that this is a God who is near his people. Verse 6,

6 Who humbles Himself to behold The things that are in heaven and in the earth?

This God who is beyond and above the universe is a God who condescends to observe and to be actively involved with everything that happens on this one particular globe spinning around the sun in the midst of a complex galaxy of galaxies. He looks down on us and sees and cares.

This verse and the verses that follow express another aspect of the character of God, theologians use the term his immanence, his immanence. His transcendence, he is above all. His immanence. I'll spell that for you because there's two different theological words that sound the same to the human ear. I-m-m-a-n-e-n-c-e. Immanence. Immanence means that God is present and active within creation and human activity. He is present and active within the affairs of earthly life. The doctrine of providence teaches us that God is actively directing everything that happens in order to accomplish his preordained end. The Deist who said that God created the world and then just stepped back to let it work out however it wanted to, absolutely wrong, totally wrong about that. God did not create the world and then abandon it. God created the world and now actively sustains it in everything that happens. The hair on your head, the sparrow in the air, all subject to the care of our heavenly Father.

So while God is transcendent, he does something amazing, he stoops down to see what is happening under the heavens. He's lofty above it and then he condescends to look into it, so to speak, is the picture that is given, so much so that in his immanence, God stoops down to care for the lowly, to show compassion to the needy, to care for the poor and to care for sinners in order to reverse their fortunes.

Look at verses 7 and 8. Let's read verse 6 again just to.... actually, let's go back to verse 5 just to kind of get the running start through it all, such great thought, such great thoughts side-by-side in an utterly divine genius of brevity of language. Verse 5,

5 Who is like the LORD our God, Who is enthroned on high, 6 Who humbles Himself to behold The things that are in heaven and in the earth?
7 He raises the poor from the dust And lifts the needy from the ash heap, 8 To make them sit with princes, With the princes of His people.

God is opposed to the proud but he gives grace to the humble, as we said on Sunday. Broken, guilty sinners, fully weighed down by their guilt, can turn to the crucified and risen Christ and find mercy and forgiveness for their sins against this great and holy God.

The promise of Christ is that, "The one who comes to Me, I will never cast him out." And you see that illustrated as you read through the gospels. Desperate fathers whose children were possessed by demons coming to him and saying, "Lord, have mercy on my son," and Christ had mercy on them. Guilty women full of sin, prostitutes coming, weeping at his feet, cleansing his feet with their hair and the religious leaders thinking badly about Jesus, that if he knew what this person was like, he wouldn't let them touch him. He'd know that they were a sinner. Men were supposed to be separate from sinners. Christ, on the other hand, says, "I came like a physician to heal the sick. I did not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." And there's this fullness of mercy, there's this fullness of grace and kindness and patience that he has on needy, broken, sinful rebels who come to him, he says, "If you come to Me, I'll never cast you out." He will welcome you into the family and just as the prodigal went off and spent his father's inheritance, squandered it on loose living, came back and said, "Father, if you'll just take me as a slave," his father ran, embraced him, threw a party, a picture of the mercy of God unrepentant sinners. How great is the grace of God? It's that great. He shows kindness and forgiveness to sinners like that.

It's remarkable to me, it truly is. It's truly remarkable to me that there's a God who is merciful like that. That's remarkable but when you see the fullness of Scripture and even just the fullness of Psalm 113, it is exponentially, infinitely, geometrically, greatly more remarkable that the God who is like that is the God who is transcendent and high above the heavens. Who is like this? Who can be compared to this God of the Bible? I'll tell you who: no one. The nation of Israel, poor and needy during their slavery in Egypt and God heard their cry and answered them.

How tender and kind and compassionate is his mercy? Verse 9, look at it there with me. Perhaps there's someone here tonight who thinks, "Eh, but not me, that He wouldn't look with favor on me. Too small, too insignificant. Ain't no good." Well, you're not good but God is, so much so that in verse 9 it says,

9 He makes the barren woman abide in the house As a joyful mother of children.

In those days in the nation of Israel, motherhood, one writer says, was a crowning achievement of any woman. A barren woman was a social outcast. She was a disappointment to her husband, other women, and herself. Still another writer said the curse of barrenness was so bitter a thing in Jewish eyes that its removal was hailed as a special mark of divine favor. And God answered Hannah when she was childless and prayed for a child, God gave a child to Mary, though she was humble and lowly, and what we see in this is that the outcast, the grieving outcast, rejected by those around her, can find favor from this God knowing that his eye is on such a needy one and his tender heart is inclined toward mercy, and not in simply a sentimental way, but to act to actually help and relieve the suffering condition of the one who turns to him. God is like that. Christ is like that. The Spirit of God is like that.

Now humanly speaking, to take the transcendence of God and the immanence of God and to put them together in one place seems utterly impossible, it seems almost in opposition. God is so high that he is above all the nations and above all the skies, and the nations are like a drop in a bucket to him, and yet in that position, he is so caring and so gracious that he regards the lowliest man on earth. We see this perfectly ultimately exemplified in the incarnation of our Lord, don't we?

Look over at Philippians 2 with all of these thoughts of transcendence and immanence in mind. Philippians 2, beginning in verse 6. Christ, "existed in the form of God, [and yet He] did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men." Transcendent in the very nature of God, Christ is, was, and yet immanent to the point that he would come to earth and take on human flesh and be humbled in the form of a bond-servant. But not only that, his grace, his mercy, his condescension so remarkable, so amazing, so unlike anything that he could be found in appearance as a man and yet he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. The Creator of the universe submitting to crucifixion at the hands of his creatures in order to fulfill the great covenant of redemption.

What do we say to such transcendent immanent wonder? Look at the end of Psalm 113. What else can you say except,

Praise the LORD!

Praise the LORD, lost in his transcendence, lost in the magnificence of his immanence, lost in the wonder of Christ, lost in the wonder of the crucifixion, lost in redemption, lost in the ascension, lost in his continual intercession for the saints now at the right hand of God, so great and so willing to receive us, praise the LORD!

I suppose a word of warning is in order. Friend, young person, old person, I want to just tell you and warn you and caution you in your hardness of heart, if you would turn away from this in cold indifference and not join in the praise and not give your life to Christ, to refuse him and to reject him, to reject the gospel that offers this Christ to you for the fullness of your salvation, for all of the promise of eternal life and the forgiveness of all of your sins, and you spurn that and say it's not of interest to me? What's going to happen to you in the end? What will happen to you rejecting a God like that while he is great and while he is gracious? He takes the gospel seriously and it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of a transcendent God unredeemed. Come to Christ. End your foolishness. End your rebellion.

For the people of God, I'll close with these words of Charles Spurgeon. He said, "Let us praise Him in our youth and all along our years of strength, and when we bow in the ripeness of abundant age, let us still praise the Lord who does not cast off His old servants. Having been ourselves lifted from spiritual poverty and barrenness, let us never forget our former estate or the grace which has visited us, but world without end, let us praise the LORD."

Father, indeed we praise You for Your greatness. Indeed, we praise You for Your grace. Look on our humble weak estate, dear Lord, show compassion to Your servants for Your name's sake, and as You do, we will join with the psalmist, we will join with the apostles, we will join with the martyrs, we will join with the reformers, we will join with the true people of God throughout all the earth and say, "Praise the LORD," for the sake of Your great name. Through Christ our Lord we pray. Amen.

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