

Praising God's Performance
Psalm 146

Praise the LORD, O my soul! ²I will praise the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being. ³Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation. ⁴When his breath departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish. ⁵Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God, ⁶who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, who keeps faith forever; ⁷who executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets the prisoners free; ⁸the LORD opens the eyes of the blind. The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous. ⁹The LORD watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin. ¹⁰The LORD will reign forever, your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the LORD!

This is a Psalm that begins and ends the way our lives should begin and end: praising God. The psalmist doesn't take for granted that we will or that we will understand why we should. He builds his case for praising God and then, ends the Psalm convinced that we will join him in God-centered living.

First: The Command to Praise God. 1-2

Why does God command us to praise him?

- a) God loves us so much that he does not want us to waste our lives trusting in, directing our attention toward things that cannot do for us what needs to be done most.
- b) God wants us to see him in such a way that it transcends what negatively affects us
 - Covid-19 – We are not alone. God is with us.
 - Protests – We are not forsaken. God is in control.

The health of the eye demands a horizon
Henry David Thoreau

We need God to fill our horizon so that temporal, passing, here-today, gone-tomorrow issues that appear life consuming are put in their right perspective.

This is how Daniel prayed –

Daniel 9:4 – *I prayed to the LORD my God and made confession, saying, "O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments,*

It is the way Jesus taught us to pray –

Matthew 6:9 – *Our Father in heaven, hallowed by your name...*

Focusing on God puts the rest of life in its proper place.

This is not something we *could* do or *should* do but must do. We are *commanded* to praise God.

Second: The Options We Have 3-4

- a) Princes are powerful
- b) But cannot truly save
- c) Every prince and pauper will die
- d) The best laid plans of mice and men go awry – (Robert Burns)

What does this mean?

EX: David, Khurram, Ray (Clayton) and I spoke to about 15 Pakistani men this past Thursday. They are all learning evangelism. My encouragement was to remember the ‘third person in the conversation.’ What do I mean?

- Daniel 2 – Daniel prophesies that God’s kingdom will eventually crush all human kingdoms
- Matthew 13 – Jesus presents the gospel as a mustard seed that will eventually become a tree that shades and nourishes the earth
- Revelation 15:11 - *The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.*

Between Daniel, Matthew and Revelation is –

- Matt 13 – Some seed falls on the wayside, some on stony ground, some into thorns and some takes root.

How does the kingdom grow? The gospel is a good virus. It grows by mouth to ear transmissions. BUT....

John 16:8 - *And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:*

Our efforts are essential to kingdom growth but, only God can make converts

What does this mean to our everyday lives?

PICTURE of couple standing in field praying

- Every farmer must plant but trust God for the harvest
- Every parent must guide and correct but trust God for salvation
- Every teacher must instruct but trust God for wisdom
- Every citizen must vote but trust God with the outcome
- Every employee must work but trust God to provide
- Every policeman must protect but trust God for safety
- Every protester can protest but trust God to create real change

ILL – Jesus did not seek to overthrow the Roman government or the Sanhedrin because he knew that if you remove one corrupt gov't or institution, it will be replaced by another one. True change is only possible when our hearts are changed. And heart change only occurs at the foot of the cross.

We all know there will be another virus, right? We all know there will be something else to protest later, right? We all know there will be another election in 4 years, right? We all know we will suffer again next year or the year after, right? We have a tendency to trust human cures when they really only postpone the inevitable, self-annihilation, unless God intervenes.

Only God can do what our hearts want most.

Third: God Will Not Grant Everything We Want in this Lifetime. 5-9

PICTURE - The Robe – 1953 – A Roman tribune responsible for Jesus's crucifixion who also won Jesus's robe in the dice game at the cross, later becomes a Christian, for which he is condemned to die.

One sub-plot is a paraplegic girl whom Jesus chooses not to heal. – *"I am glad Jesus did not heal me for if he had healed, you would say that I praise him because he healed me. Now that I am not healed and when I praise hi, you pay more attention to my words."*

What does God do?

- a) who executes justice for the oppressed,*
- b) who gives food to the hungry.*
- c) The LORD sets the prisoners free;*
- d) ⁸ the LORD opens the eyes of the blind.*
- e) The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down;*
- f) the LORD loves the righteous.*
- g) ⁹ The LORD watches over the sojourners;*
- h) he upholds the widow and the fatherless,*
- i) but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin*

We all want justice. We all want to see the hungry fed. We all want to see people free of the sins that imprison them. We all want to see the hurting healed. We all want to see the oppressed freed. We all want sojourners to find a home. We all want the widow to be comforted and the fatherless to be loved. We all want wickedness to stop.

All the things we want in life, Republicans or Democrats, police or protestors, saints or sinners, only God can fully, completely do.

2 Corinthians 12:9-7b-10 - *a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. ⁸ Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. ⁹ But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

Why doesn't God just fix everything that is wrong with the world?

- a) Only God can truly say what is 'wrong' with the world. (We all have different opinions about what 'wrong is')
- b) God will not alleviate all that is wrong with this world until Jesus returns. Why not?

That would just make earth a more comfortable place from which to go to hell.

The temporal imperfections of this world are intended to point us to an eternal cure.

Conclusion:

The very thing I dislike and want changed the most, is often the very thing God uses to turn my eyes and heart toward him so that I realize –

V 10 – *The Lord will reign forever, your God, O Zion, to all generations*

And in response to that revelation, I –

V10b – *Praise the Lord!*

Community Groups:

1 – Was anyone present to hear Rebecca McLaughlin? If so, what take-a-way can you share with that might help us?

2 - How can we pray for one another?

3 – How has Covid-19 and the present national situation affected you personally?

4 – Read Psalm 146

5 – Why does God command us to praise him?

6 – What is the major contrast in this Psalm? (What princes can do versus what God can do)

7 – In vs 3-5, what reasons does the psalmist give for not trusting our own efforts?

8 – In vs 6-9, list the things that only God can do.

9 – How do each of these things apply to our lives at the present time?

10 – Why doesn't God just fix everything that is wrong with the world?

11 – What did God intend Paul's thorn to do in Paul's life?

12 – How has God used wrong, heartache, hurt, suffering, in your life?

13 – What is your life application of this Psalm?