

Teaching Our Children to Have a God-Ward
Orientation
By Rev. Erik Guichelaar

 sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: Psalm 145:4
Preached on: Sunday, January 15, 2023

Grace Protestant Reformed Church
O-11225 8th Ave NW
Grand Rapids, MI 49534

Website: www.graceprc.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/graceprc

The scripture reading this morning is Psalm 145. Psalm 145. The text is verse 4 but we will first read the Psalm in its entirety. The heading there reads "David's Psalm of praise."

1 David's Psalm of praise. I will extol thee, my God, O king; and I will bless thy name for ever and ever. 2 Every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever. 3 Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable. 4 One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts. 5 I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works. 6 And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts: and I will declare thy greatness. 7 They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness. 8 The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. 9 The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works. 10 All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD; and thy saints shall bless thee. 11 They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power; 12 To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom. 13 Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations. 14 The LORD upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down. 15 The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season. 16 Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing. 17 The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. 18 The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. 19 He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them. 20 The LORD preserveth all them that love him: but all the wicked will he destroy. 21 My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD: and let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever.

So far we read God's holy and infallible word.

The text is verse 4,

4 One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts.

This the sermon actually this morning is supposed to be a continuation of the series we've recently begun the building of a covenant home, but we step aside from that series this morning to have this sermon, and that's largely due to the busyness of this past week with work of classes and other things. So that's why we have a detour from our series.

Beloved in our Lord Jesus Christ, Psalm 145 is a very beautiful Psalm. In fact, there's a few things about this Psalm that make it a special Psalm and rather unique. First, this Psalm is an acrostic and, children, maybe you know what an acrostic is. In this case, an acrostic here with the Psalms is when every verse of the Psalm begins with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet. You go from A-Z and with every letter of the alphabet the psalmist begins another sentence. Acrostics were used for different reasons. They were used as a memory device to help people, to help children memorize this Psalm. It was also to add some artistic beauty to the form of the Psalm so that you could see in the very form of the Psalm art and beauty. And an acrostic is also used to emphasize that the subject material being treated in the Psalm is being treated fully. It's being treated exhaustively. You might say from A-Z the psalmist is saying everything about the subject or that's what he wants to show, he's covering this topic from A-Z. And all these things apply to Psalm 145. It's a very carefully organized Psalm.

The second thing that makes this Psalm special is its heading. Notice the heading, "David's Psalm of praise." Now that's special because this is the only Psalm in the Psalter that has that heading, and that's interesting because David had many Psalms that he used to praise God and yet this has this peculiar heading, "This is David's Psalm of praise." And so we may deduce from that this was a special Psalm to David, a Psalm he went to again and again when he wanted to praise God's name, and it is a Psalm that's full of praise. We just read it. It's a Psalm that covers some of the virtues of God. God is great and greatly to be praised. God is a gracious God, full of compassion and lovingkindness. God is a good God, good to all. God is faithful. He supplies the needs of his people and he hears their cries. And he is a righteous God and a just God. So in this Psalm David meditates on these attributes of God. It's a Psalm of praise. We could say David uses every letter of the Hebrew alphabet to sing God's praises. He wants to sing God's praises as fully and exhaustively as he possibly can, and he shows us that intent by using every letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

Now what David especially has in mind in Psalm 145 is the establishing of God's kingdom. That's what David is celebrating in this Psalm. Under David, God has established a great kingdom. Think of how it was for God's people before God raised up David. The people were living in misery. They were living under the oppression of enemy nations. There was no unity in the nation. Everyone did that which was right in his own eyes because there was no king. But now, under David's rule with the establishment of the kingdom under David, the people are brought together, they are unified, and now they are enjoying peace and prosperity. So David sees that and he gives God praise for the establishment of God's kingdom, and now when we sing this number, we think of

Jesus and we see how this points us to Jesus, who is the great King whose kingdom is not just an earthly kingdom but a spiritual kingdom and a heavenly kingdom, and we see the peace and the unity and prosperity found in Jesus' kingdom and we sing this Psalter number as well and we give God praise for what he has done, and we endeavor to give God our praise as fully and exhaustively as we possibly can.

Well, the question that comes to us this morning, however, is this: why look at this Psalm this morning? Why do we want to look at this Psalm on the occasion of baptism? And the answer is this: we look at this Psalm because it captures exactly the kind of attitude that parents are to communicate to their children, and this Psalm captures the calling that parents have towards their children to show their children what joy it is to belong to God's kingdom and to speak to their children about their own personal joy of being part of God's kingdom, and to show their children, in a sense, how to praise the Lord and to praise the Lord to their children. God has done marvelous things. Our God is a glorious God indeed, and this is what we need to be presenting before our children every single day with all our words, with all our attitudes, even with how we discipline them, how we carry out our callings towards our children. This is the kind of attitude that Cody and Aaron are to communicate and to present before little Beckett as little Beckett grows up and also towards a Remy and Walker as well. They must say, "Beckett, God is glorious and God is glorious in every way, and God is our joy, and to sing God's praises in how we live and in how we talk and how we pursue his good and holy commandments, that's our hearts desire because God is worthy of it all. He is worthy, little Beckett, of all our praises as your parents, and he is worthy of all your praises as well, my son." In a sense, this is the great calling that God gives parents to teach their children to have a God-ward orientation, to teach to have their hearts directed towards God in all they do, in all they think, and in all they are.

So that's what we want to do this morning with this Psalm and with verse 4, we want to look at the calling that parents have to direct their children to the praise of the Lord. So we take as our theme, "Teaching Our children to have a God-Ward Orientation," and we look at that theme under three points. First, we look at the need; second, we look at the manner, how this is done; and then third, the fruit.

The calling that parents have is to teach their children to have a God-ward orientation. What that means is this: parents need to show their children that Jehovah God is the only one worthy of their worship and he is worthy of all their worship. That's their calling and this is a needed activity. In a sense, this is the need of the hour in our day, to put before our children the beauty of our God and to show them in every way that he is the one we are to be living for, he is the one we are to be worshiping and trusting and obeying. And this is a needed activity for a few reasons. Let me mention three reasons why this is so needed.

First, our children are worshipers. Instinctively and compulsively, our children are worshipers. Our children are hardwired for worship. They have been made, they've been created to worship. In fact, we can go even further and say our children know that there is a God and that he is to be worshiped. After all, all men know that there is a God and he is

to be worshiped. Romans 1:18 through 20 teaches us very clearly, "For the wrath of God," God is revealed in his wrath. "The wrath of god is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness. Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him," the invisible attributes of God, "from the creation of the world are clearly seen." They are clearly seen by us in the world around us, "being understood by the things that are made." We understand these invisible things of God, "even his eternal power and Godhead." We see that. When you look around at the world, you see the invisible attributes of God before you shining the eternal power and Godhead of God, "so that they are without excuse." That's Romans 1. Our children know who God is. All people have God's revelation of truth. They know that there is a God and that he is to be worshiped.

All you have to do is look out the window and you see there must be a God who created all things and that this God is glorious and he is to be worshiped, but the point right now is this: our children will worship, instinctively and compulsively our children are worshipers, in every day of their lives our children are worshiping something. That's the first thing why we need to teach our children to have a God-ward orientation. The second thing we need to mention is this: our children are not born neutral. In fact, by nature in how our children are brought forth from us, our children are born as idolaters and the Bible is very clear on this matter. We even saying that already this morning, Psalter #143, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." David says that, David who was born as a covenant child in the midst of the church, he says he was shapen in iniquity.

Now, the Bible also teaches us that God is pleased to gather his people in the lines of continued generations. God says that his salvation is unto believers and to their children, as many as the Lord our God shall call. God teaches us that he saves our little children and he saves them as children. He doesn't wait until they reach a certain age, but he saves them as children. And so the Bible also teaches us that we are to treat our children as God's people and as members of his church, that's also why we baptize them, but that doesn't take away from the fact that our children still have that old man of sin in them and that they were originally brought forth shapen in iniquity. They certainly still have that old man of sin in them. In fact, that's exactly part of what baptism teaches us. Part of what infant baptism signifies is that even our little children are born in sin and they too need the washing away of all their sins. Even little children like Beckett need the washing away of his sins.

So first, our children are worshipers, they are instinctively and compulsively worshipers and second, our children are not neutral. They have an old man of sin and they have a new man in Christ. We believe that's how we are taught to view them. And now the third thing we must say is this, and this really flows out of the first two things: our children are always interacting with God. And what I mean is this, our children will either be worshiping God or they will be putting God to the side and they will be turning away from God and exchanging the truth of God in exchange for an idol and for lies. So either way, our children are always interacting with God. God is their Creator. God is the one

who is kind and good and holy. He's the one who's made all things and made them for his glory. He has made us to worship him and we are called to respond to his goodness and his glory with love and delight and worship. But what our sinful natures want to do is this, turn aside and worship an idol. By nature, we exchange the truth for a lie, and we turn ourselves to worship the creature rather than the Creator. And that's what we do and that's what our children are inclined to do too. Our children, just like us, are either worshiping God out of the new man in them, out of Christ, or they are exchanging the truth of God in order to worship idols. Either way they are interacting with God, choosing either to worship him or not worship him.

Well, what are the idols that our children are prone to worship? Well, they're not those small wooden or stone figures or statues that we might think of, especially, you know, when we think of the Old Testament and the figurines that they had to worship their idols. No, the idols our children, just like in the Old Testament, it's really no different, the idols our children are prone to worship are the subtle idols of the heart. The Bible uses such language as the fear of man, worshiping man, caring what man thinks before what God thinks. Evil desires. Lusts. Pride. The idols that our children are prone to worship are the idol of self. Sometimes it comes in the form of living for the praises of their parents and the accolades of those around them. Sometimes it comes in the form of the approval of their friends at school, being cool in the eyes of their classmates. Those are the ones that they're seeking to please. Or maybe their idol is their pride or their athletic ability, or maybe their ability to control and influence others, or their independency and self-sufficiency, or their intellectual giftedness. Sometimes the idols are earthly things, maybe Christmas presents that they've received in the past month.

Just because our children don't understand that these are the idols that they are serving doesn't mean that these things aren't idols for them. Just because they don't recognize it doesn't mean that these aren't idols. Oftentimes the sad thing is that we as parents can fill our children's lives with things that actually feed their idols. We feed their lives with stuff so that stuff does become their idol. Oftentimes the idol can be the child himself. Parents live for their children. They do everything for their children and they praise their children to the skies, and by their own example, they teach their children to think that this is how it should be, and that everyone, including themselves, should be living for them, the world revolves around, and that's when our children learn to walk in sin.

That's idolatry and the point right now is this: our children are always interacting with God. They are interacting with God either by seeing God's beauty and seeing God's glory and seeing that God is the one worthy of their devotion and their time and their strength, or they are interacting with God by exchanging the truth and beauty of God for an idol and the worship of Almighty God for the worship of themselves or the things here below. And that's when children become rebellious, untrustworthy, selfish, proud. They learn to walk in the paths of sin because they're turning away from living for God. And when we put it all together, the need that our children have is for parents to teach them to have a God-ward orientation. Our children are spring-loaded for worship. They can't help but worship. The question is not will our children worship, the question is what, whom will they worship? And what is parenting? Parenting is not just creating a positive home

environment and a positive interaction between parent and child, but part of the parent's task, we can even say the chief task of the parent is to shepherd the child as a creature who worships, to shepherd the child as a creature who is spring-loaded for worship and then to be constantly pointing that child to the one who alone is worthy of his worship or her worship.

This is absolutely vital. The calling that parents have towards their children is to help their children see the glory of God and be so overwhelmed with the glory of God that they understand full well, their hearts know it right well, that God alone is to be worshiped and trusted and obeyed and lived for. The calling of parents is to hold out before their children the beauty and the excellency of our God. That's exactly what David is talking about here in this Psalm when he says, "One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts." Parents need to praise the works of God to their children. Parents need to declare, they need to declare the mighty acts of God to the next generation. The word "declare" in verse 4 is even very striking. It means to put in front of someone so that you can see it. That's what you do when you declare something. You put it before them so that they can see it. That's what God's people were doing in David's day. They were putting God's glory in front of their children so that their children could see it and respond to it in worship and that's what parents need to be doing today.

Parents, are you talking to your children about how great God is? Parents, do you have those, this is a question for me, do we have those heart-to-heart conversations with our children telling them how glorious God is and how glorious God is to me and to you as a parent? And that you love God, and that you love Jesus, and that God has been so gracious to you, and God is worthy of all your heart and soul and mind and strength? And parents, do you explain to your children that this is actually why you live the way that you do, and you make the sacrifices that you make, and you have the priorities that you have because you love God because his word is your delight and because God is worthy and because you know that every fiber of your being is to be pressed in the service of his glory and your life is lived in vain if it's not being lived to his glory? Parents, do you actually let your children see, do you expose them to your own love for God's word and the reading of God's word? Do you show them your own personal love for the Bible when it comes to devotions around the supper table? Do you expose your love for God's word to your children and communicate your love for God's word to them?

I think this is very important for us today because what's so easy for us is this, to focus on the external settings in which our children are living and growing, and to focus on external matters. Obviously, we want our homes to be comfortable, warm, safe places for our children. We want our homes to be those places of stability where our children can find the security and safety that they need. And we want our homes to be a reflection of God's home, right, and how we need that home and enjoy fellowship with God in his home. Obviously, we want to make sure that our disciplining of our children is appropriate and it reflects God's loving discipline towards us. We want our children to know that they are loved. We want to provide a healthy, constructive atmosphere for our children, being at home with them, developing a relationship with them, meeting their

needs as best as we can. But when all is said and done, as important as these things are, there is something more to our children.

Our children are not just the product of what their home life was like growing up. There's deeper things. We may have a steady job our whole life, we may have a stable marriage and maybe as a result of everything we don't have very much stress in our life compared to maybe others, and maybe as our family grows up, our family looks like that regular stable Christian family and life is good and we can make life comfortable and even luxurious for our children so that they can do all that that they might want to do, but we need to realize that none of that means that our children are growing up actually worshiping God and enjoying God and seeing the Lord for who he is. And as I already said, so often parents can fill their children's lives with things that only feed the idols of the heart, and parents maybe even do it with good intentions, and what we need to recognize this morning is a reminder that there are heart issues, there are heart issues that we need to focus on. Our children are worshipers. Every single day my child is bowing down to someone or something and we need as parents to put before them something or someone to worship, and this is exactly the issue we need to put before our children, the glory and the majesty of our Creator God so that they learn to worship him. We need to train and teach our children so that they understand and experience it for themselves that fulfillment in life and happiness in life will only come in the way of knowing and serving and honoring the living God and walking through life with him.

I hesitate to say this but I think this is perhaps sometimes where we as families can see where the children grow up and and they turn away from the worship of the Lord. Now we know there are many factors as to why children grow up and leave the church, and we know God is sovereign over everything, and we know it's only by God's grace alone that our children are saved along with us, but we do need to ask ourselves when my children were growing up did I actually show my children that I was trying to worship God in everything I was doing? I was busy here. I was busy there. Was I actually showing my children that I'm striving to do it unto the Lord? Did I actually praise God's works to my own children? Did I actually declare God's mighty acts to my children? Did I actually have God's commandments as my chief delight and actually communicate to my children just how much God means to me? "Let me show you my heart, child, and how the Lord has changed my heart and how he lives in my heart, and this is the love he's worked in my heart for him." Or did I simply assume that my children could understand why I was doing everything that I was doing? Have I spoken to my children how much God means to me and how gracious God has been to me, saving me from all my sins, forgiving all my iniquities? And as I went to the cross to confess my sins and to seek the forgiveness of God through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, did I take the hand of my child and bring my child to the foot of the cross with me to seek that forgiveness meaningfully together? And did I impress upon my child my own need to trust the Lord, my own struggles with the battle of faith, and my own need to submit more and trust more in his word and seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, trusting that he is my heavenly Father, will take care of me as his child?

This is the need to teach our children to have a God-ward orientation. Well, how do we do this? What is the manner in which we do this? What I want to emphasize this morning is this and I'm taking this from the Psalm: we teach our children to have a God-ward orientation by giving ourselves as the example for how they should live. If we want our children to have their hearts fixed on the Lord, serving him, it starts with ourselves and our own hearts. And what I mean is this, as parents we need to make sure that we ourselves are enraptured with the holy delight in God because we need to recognize this too, we as parents are instinctively and compulsively worshipers. We are hardwired for worship and every day we, as parents and as members of the church, are worshiping something or someone. And now we need to recognize that in our children and give ourselves as the example for them of whom we are to worship and how we are to worship.

Really, this is what Psalm 145 is all about. Just reflect on what's happening in this Psalm as a whole. What is David doing? He's writing a Psalm in which he's extolling the glories of God and the virtues of God. And the fact that this Psalm is an acrostic, that it's very organized and structured, tells you that David spent some time working on this Psalm. We know it's God's inspired word but David also took careful thought as the human instrument through which God wrote this word, to think about it as an acrostic. We understand that. And think of David as a king with a busy schedule, many other things that could have been entertaining to him. This is what he's focused on. He's delighted to focus his energy and time on doing things that brought worship and praise to God.

So in this Psalm David is showing, he is telling others, he's telling the next generation that comes after him what he himself thinks of God. He's not just telling us who God is, but he's showing us what matters to him. What is David's joy? Verse 4 tells us his joy is that he sees in the nation of Israel one generation praising God's works to another and declaring his mighty acts to the next generation. And then in the very course of the Psalm, David himself does the very same thing that he's rejoicing in, he himself is declaring God's mighty acts to those around him. And beloved, let me ask you when you read this Psalm and you read of David exalting God's name, what happens to your own heart? Well, you begin yourself to rejoice with David and you say, "Yes, I want to do what David is doing. I want to exalt God as my King, and I want to bless his name forever and ever." When you hear David singing God's praises, you begin to recognize afresh, you yourself are reorientated towards God and you see how worthy God is of all your praise and that fire in your bosom is kindled again, and you have the desire to praise God. "He is nigh unto all them that call upon him. He will fulfill the desire of them that fear him. My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord." That's David saying it, and we say it with him when we read this Psalm.

Now isn't that exactly the same thing as what happens, for example, at a Christmas program, that the children stand here before church and they sing their heart out to the Lord. They sing out their heart praising God, and inwardly we are listening to them and we take great joy in how the children of the church are praising God and we say, "Amen and Amen." But now think about. We should say if the children are doing that for the parents and for the members of the church, shouldn't we also be doing that for the

children, and shouldn't we as parents be putting God on display for our children so that they see his worth and his beauty and his glory through our singing? In one sense, maybe this is an idea for the Sunday school committee, shouldn't we at the Christmas program have a song where the parents come and sing to the children and declare God's mighty acts to the children so that they enjoy it too?

That's what David does right here. How often do we as parents talk to our children about God's faithfulness, for example? We do but this is a good question to raise and talk about God's faithfulness in a way that really makes an impression on our children so they can understand through our speech and through the tone just how meaningful God's faithfulness to me is. I need a God who is faithful and blessed be the Lord, he is the faithful God who is faithful to me in every way.

Isn't this what the preaching should be doing every week as well? In one way or another, we get another glimpse of God's glory through the preaching and we're moved again to worship him all week long. That's what this whole Psalm is about and don't just think of Psalm 145, there are other Psalms that give us beautiful examples of this too. Psalm 4, one of the elders read Psalm 4 at classis this past week, and in verses 6 and 7 David says this, "There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us." And now notice this, "Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." Congregation, do you understand what David is saying there? Children, do you understand what David is saying there? In David's day, there was a brief window of the year where you would have the harvest time, right, and these were the days before electricity, before refrigeration, so you'd have all the harvests coming in at once, all the fruits and vegetables coming in at once, and you didn't want that fruit to waste, to spoil, so what would you do? You would have a feast and part of that was the Feast of Tabernacles at the end of the harvest season. And so you might as well have a feast, and so you can imagine the people enjoying a great great feast, eating to their hearts' content. They were merry with eating and David says, "God himself is greater joy to me than the joy we experience at harvest time with all our feasting and drinking. God himself is greater joy to me than that." Do we communicate that same sentiment towards our children?

For another verse, listen to these words from Psalm 27:4, "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple." That's the attitude of David's heart. Going to church was his greatest joy. Going to the temple, worshiping God with God's people, that was his joy. David is saying, "O God, I want to know thee, and I want to see thee. I want to behold thy beauty. I want to learn more about thee and inquire in thy temple." And now just compare that, the attitude of David with many professing Christians today for whom going to the cottage or going on vacation on Sunday, or sleeping in on Sunday morning is of greater joy to them than going to church. No wonder you might say, no wonder that children growing up in such circumstances so easily grow up and stop going to church altogether because their own parents' actions were speaking volumes to them, telling them that skipping church is actually to be desired above going to church. Just think when church is half empty in the afternoon

service, what is that communicating to the children? We have the opportunity to sit and fellowship with God and have his word brought to us and we choose not to. Well, ministers can do the same thing. This is a word for me. By constantly telling stories instead of bringing forth God's word, ministers are communicating something to their own flock, their own congregations, communicating that entertaining stories are actually of greater value than the preaching of God's word and that communicates something to the children.

For one more example, think of what Jesus says in Matthew 13, Matthew 13:44, where Jesus says, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." Is that what the Christian faith is to us? Is that what the Christian faith is to us as parents? Is that who Christ Jesus is to us, like buried treasure that we have just discovered? What did this man do? He sold everything that he had just so that he could buy that field so that he could have that treasure. That makes sense. Now, what is our treasure but Jesus Christ? What was that man's attitude? His attitude is, "I'll give up everything to have that treasure," and now for the child of God the attitude is the same, "I must have God. No matter the cost, I must have Jesus Christ. He is above all things precious." And that's what we must convey to our children. We can't make our children believers but we can hold before our children the worthiness of God every single day.

So how do we teach our children to have a God-ward orientation? Well, it's rather simple, we put God on display. We show our children the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. "Just look, my child, at who your God is." You know, that's what they did during the days of David. "Child, we're going to have a class trip today or a home trip. Let's go to the battlefields and let's see where the Lord gave his people marvelous victories. Let's look at the memorial stones that God has given his people throughout the land. You see that stone over there? That stone is called Ebenezer, hitherto hath the Lord helped us. That was the instance when God gave his people a marvelous victory over the Philistines and he began to deliver Israel out of the hand of the enemy. Look at those stones, you see those 12 huge stones at the edge of the Jordan River? That marks the time when God himself stopped the flow of the Jordan River and led his people into the Promised Land on dry ground. These are the mighty acts of our God and Father. You still see that rubble, that pile of stones? That was Jericho. And then of course you have Hiel who rebuilt the walls of Jericho and all his sons were slain by God in the rebuilding of that city and those walls, because God says you're taking away the declaration of my mighty acts to the next generation." They brought their children to the temple. They explained the sacrifices to their children. They spoke to their children about the hope of the coming Messiah, the lamb who would take away their sins. They spoke about the days of yore, how the land of Canaan had been filled with idolatry and how God then raised up a man, David, and how things marvelously changed under the rule of their king David. And they told their children of the joys they now experience as a unified nation enjoying prosperity.

Well, that's what they did in the Old Testament. That's what we do today. We bring our children to the preaching. We bring our children to catechism class. And every day we bring our children to the Lord. When we sin or when our children sin, we bring them to

Calvary's hill and we show them the victory that God has obtained for them and us through Jesus' death on the cross. He's covered our sins. Death and the grave has been conquered. You do deserve to be punished, we deserve to be destroyed for our sins and brought to hell, but God has given us the land, he's given us Jesus, and he has borne that punishment so that there is no more punishment at all. In fact, God has not only not punished us, but God has instead given us double for all our sins. He's given us the forgiveness of our sins, and he's given us the hope of eternal glory, an inheritance in heaven. And then we say to our children, as the prophet had to say to Israel, "Behold your God. Who is like unto God? Who will you liken unto God? Who is to be compared unto him? Not only is he powerful but he is gracious. He has pardoned all our sins according to his own good pleasure. And he, then, is certainly worthy of us pursuing after a holy life in obedience to his will for his glory and as an expression of thanks to him. Look what he's done in my life, my child." Maybe some of you have that. Many of us grew up in the church, but we know our sins, our sins of youth. Some of us maybe have been brought in from outside the church and we can say very vividly, "Look what God has done for me. I was a sinner and in my youth I was a sinner, but God by his sanctifying influences has turned me and changed me. And I thank the Lord, it's only by his grace that I am here today and I now worship him and I'm living this life as a token of praise and thanks to him. And this is the power of God himself in me, my child. This is his work in me and through me. Look at him. Look at all his victories. Look at his power. I have a God who is worthy of my constant praise and, my child, little Beckett, he is worthy of your constant praise too."

And that's how we teach our children to have a God-ward orientation. That's what's happening in this Psalm and that's what we need to carry with us in our homes and in our families. And the fruit, what is the fruit? Well, the fruit is obvious enough. First and very importantly I think for our own children as covenant children, the fruit is this: our children will be equipped to respond appropriately to the different challenges and issues that come up in life. And that's very practical and very important. When a disaster happens, when devastating news comes our way as a family or their way as a child, or they grow up and they go through sorrows and devastating circumstances, they won't be angry with God, they won't act in selfishness or act sinfully. You know, we have that impulse to do it, we have that inclination and maybe we will fall into it for a time, but if we have that God-ward orientation that we've been taught from our childhood, we will learn to turn from that and turn to the Lord and the children will learn to reverence God. They will learn to humble themselves before God and trust in him, cling to the promises that we've taught them to cling to, and then they will submit to his will, they will seek his grace, and they will know that the Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, and that he will hear their cry and will save them and preserve all them that love him. They will know that because it's been declared to them that this is who their God is.

Why obey my parents? Why do my chores? Why deny myself in this aspect of life for the Lord's glory? Because I know he is worthy and I am then equipped to respond appropriately to the different issues of life. That's fundamental. That's what our children need to learn. And then second, the fruit is also this: God's name will be praised and we will see the name of the Lord being praised in the lives of our children, and we will sing

of it to the praise of our covenant-keeping God. And what greater joy is there than that? What greater joy than to see our children walking in the truth and appreciating for themselves what we as parents know to be so true? Seeing the children of the truth experiencing for themselves what we as adults and older members know to be true? Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable. They see that for themselves, how true that is. What a blessing that is. May that be the blessing the Lord bestows upon us from one generation to the next. Amen.

Let us pray.

Our Father, we thank thee for thy word and writing it upon our hearts. Lord, write it upon the hearts of our children, and use us and the declaration of thy mighty acts from our lips as the instruments also through which thou dost inscribe thy word upon their hearts, and bless us, O Lord, to the praise and glory of thy holy and worthy name. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.