

Today's Sermon

The Greatness of God

Psalm 145:1-6

Pastor Phil Layton, GCBC, July 10, 2022

16 years ago this summer I stood behind this pulpit for the first time. On a Sunday night service I was a guest preacher and potential pastor and I began my message the way John Piper began his book *The Supremacy of God in Preaching*, a truth that has truly changed my life. He starts on the first page in his first paragraph: 'People are starving for the greatness of God. Most of them would not give this diagnosis of their troubled lives. The majesty of God is an unknown cure. There are far more popular prescriptions on the market, but the benefit of any other remedy is brief and shallow. Preaching that does not have the aroma of God's greatness may entertain for a season, but it will not touch the hidden cry of the soul: "Show me thy glory!"'

That should be the cry of our soul, and that is the cure for our soul

Moses says 'show me thy glory' in Exodus, and next month I'm excited to preach Exodus and how it shows us God's glory. My first preaching series here was on God's attributes before I preached Genesis. That study changed us and me. We looked at several psalms and I want to look at a couple more to finish this series on God. I was convinced then and now our greatest need is to know God and more of who He is, to be God-centered, to have a high view of God and a low view of self. He's God, we're not. I've experienced believers are starved for the glory of God, and as He's magnified, souls are satisfied. The bigger we see God to be, the smaller we and our troubles become. He's large and in charge. And when we become less, we're blessed.

For today let's turn to Ps 145 where David shows us a very big God so we would show and tell others. The remedy for our sin-sick selfish shallow souls is to be lost in wonder, love, and praise of our God. He must increase, we must decrease. In Ps 145 the supremacy of the Lord is to be preached, the greatness of God is to be praised, and the majesty of our King is to be proclaimed.

Psalm 145 (ESV) A SONG OF PRAISE. OF DAVID. ¹ I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever. ² Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever. ³ **Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable.** ⁴ One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts. ⁵ On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate. ⁶ They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds, and I will declare your greatness.

Ps 145 is a psalm all about God's attributes, many we've seen in Romans but a few more here we haven't seen yet. Today we'll see His greatness in v. 1-6, next week His nearness in v. 18: *The LORD is near to all who call on him...* That takes us from His bigness to His closeness, He's not only infinitely great, He's also intimately near as believers pray. In v. 1-6 'great' is used 4x. In v. 7-21 David highlights God is also good, righteous, gracious, merciful, longsuffering, loving, faithful, kind, holy – we studied those already this year – today we'll see God is great.

- Outline:**
1. Extolling the greatness of God the King (v. 1)
 2. Praising the greatness of His name (v. 2-3)
 3. Applying the greatness of His works (v. 4-7)

1. It starts with extolling the greatness of God the King.

¹ *I will extol you, my God and King ...*

This is the last psalm we know is written by King David in the book of psalms (146-150 - don't list the author). David the King goes out lifting up God the true greater King, the King of kings.

EXTOL = to exalt, lift up, light up, raise up. In other places it's translated '*high praise*' (66:17).

A great illustration of extolling the greatness of God's attributes is in Augustine's Confessions: 'Most high, utterly good, utterly powerful, most omnipotent, most merciful and most just, deeply hidden yet most intimately present, perfection of both beauty and strength, stable and incomprehensible, immutable and yet changing all things ... never old, making everything new ... always active, always in repose, gathering to yourself but not in need ... searching even though to you nothing is lacking ... you are jealous in a way that is free of anxiety ... you are wrathful and remain tranquil. You will a change without any change in your design ... Never in any need, you rejoice in your gains ... owing nothing to anyone; you cancel debts and incur no loss. But in these words what have I said, my God, my life, my holy sweetness?' (Book I.iv).

That's extolling my God and King, lifting high His excellencies. Other psalms say '*the Most High ... is a great king over all the earth*' and '*a great God and a great King above all ... let us ... bow down, let us kneel ...*'¹ That's what you do before any king, the Lord is King of kings.

Spurgeon said on this psalm God's 'royalty arouses our loyalty' and there is a 'deepening and sweetening of the sense.'² More kingly words in v. 5: *On the glorious splendor of your majesty*

... Calvin's Institutes: 'Man is never sufficiently touched and affected by the awareness of his lowly state until he has compared himself with God's majesty.'³ It's been said the fundamental issue of all Calvin's life was 'the centrality and supremacy and majesty of the glory of God.'⁴

We sing 'the splendor of the King, robed in majesty,' that's part of His regal glory and royalty.

Maybe on Monday for 4th of July you heard of America's beautiful 'purple mountains majesty' and grace shed on thee 'from sea to shining sea.' God's beauty and majesty is all around us in mountains and mighty waves and magnificent sunsets and the massive ocean He is King over. Extolling is what you did when you first saw the Pacific or Lake Tahoe or a bright shooting star

In Yosemite you look up at Half Dome, but with Yahweh you look up far higher and marvel at the Majesty that made this majestic creation. A magazine ad years ago pictured two enormous immense peaks and there's 2 hikers standing at the top of the range, so

miniscule you can barely see the tiny men. The caption: "You've never felt so alive. You've never felt so insignificant."

When we get our eyes off ourselves to real significance and magnificence, that's real living. We are hardwired for majesty, made for glory, something far bigger than puny humanity. Greatness is our soul's cry. You've heard before people don't go to the Grand Canyon to lift self-esteem.

Ultimately God's majesty is what we need to lift up so David says '*I will extol God my king...*'

Like he said in Ps 8, '*how majestic is your name...when I consider the heavens...what is man?*'

A scientist considering the heavens once said the universe is 'very magnificent and shouldn't be taken for granted. In fact, I believe that is why Einstein had so little use for organized religion, although he strikes me as a basically very religious man. He must have looked at what the preachers said about God and felt that they were blaspheming. He had seen much more majesty than they had ever imagined, and they were just not talking about the real thing.'⁵

We need to speak the reality of God's majesty. My job description is to preach the supremacy of God. Peter says we're call to proclaim His excellencies⁶ and David says *extol God my King*.

That's #1. Now

#2 David also calls us to join him in praising the greatness of God's name

² *Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever.* ³ *Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised* [i.e., not just David, a great multitude], *and his greatness is unsearchable.*

NOT JUST A DAY OF WORSHIP ... NOT JUST ON GOOD DAYS ... '*every day I will...*'
BLESS – Hebrew *barak* (no relation to Obama) = kneel before a king, adore on bended knee

PRAISE – Hebrew *hallel* we get hallelujah from, praise that sings, celebrates or even radiates

NAME – character, who He is (great in v. 3 is a sum of His attributes, not a separate attribute)

ASEITY – self-existent, self-sufficient, and independent (God doesn't need you or me)

SIMPLICITY – simple in the sense of pure unity as Trinity, God is not made up of parts

SPIRITUALITY – as kids catechism says 'God is a spirit and has not a body like men'

IMPASSIBILITY – confessions say 'without passions,' not emotional like humans are

IMMUTABILITY – God doesn't change, very good news in our rapidly changing world

ETERNALITY – no beginning and no end, outside of time (this really blows my mind!)

We can't exhaust all the attributes of God, even a little mentally without aspirin

Theologians like to use another big word, *incomprehensibility* -> God is bigger than our little brains can ever fully comprehend or grasp, so the smartest guys have to make up words to try.

David's word at the end of v. 3: *his greatness is unsearchable* – QUOTE ROMANS 11:33-35.

David adds in Ps 139 God's '*knowledge is too wonderful for me, it is too high, I cannot attain.*'⁷

Job says He '*does great and unsearchable things...great things too marvelous to understand.*'⁸

Isaiah says the great God is unsearchable, incomparable, and His thoughts are infinitely higher⁹

Paul says inscrutable, immeasurable, surpasses knowledge, transcends all understanding
We know only a fringe of His ways. But His fullness can't be fully comprehended by us, finite man can't grasp the infinite. None can fathom the indescribable, uncontainable, untamable God. He's not a tame lion. Matthew Barrett has a book *None Greater: The Undomesticated Attributes of God*. He explains His burning holiness is like the sun you can sort of explain, but can't explore very far: 'straight on, our eyes will burn ... dare to approach the sun, we will be disintegrated ... The proper way to experience the sun is through its effects. Its rays warm us, and its beams give us light ... no one can know or see the very essence of God [straight on or in its fullness] ... That word "unsearchable" is key ... inexhaustible and unfathomable ... no one ever will know the depths of his essence, the scope of his might, or the height of his glory.'¹⁰

**Too marvelous for words, too wonderful for comprehension,
like nothing ever seen or heard
Who can grasp your infinite wisdom, who can fathom the depth...
beyond description...I stand in awe¹¹**

God can't be domesticated. There is none greater and none like Him. Don't think He's like us (Ps 50:21). But it's our great privilege and joy to know some of God in a greater way. God's *greatness is unsearchable*, David says in v. 3, but *great is the Lord and greatly to be praised*.

The Bible repeats that command 4x, and others '*praise him for his surpassing greatness...you are very great...give great thanks...greatly extol the Lord...your love is great to the heavens*'¹²

The love of God is greater far...to write the love of God above...stretched from sky to sky¹³
David in 1 Chron 29: '**Yours, O LORD, is the greatness...Yours is the dominion...You rule over all...it lies in Your hand to make great...we thank You, and praise Your glorious name. But who am I...all things come from You, and from Your hand we have given You...all is Yours**'¹⁴

It's all about You, God. Who am I? Yours is the greatness. **Praise the greatness of His name. That's #2. Now**

3rd and finally our text calls for Applying the greatness of His works

⁴ *One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts...*

v. 7: They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness [NKJV 'Your great goodness']

It's like another psalm that calls us to '*praising your greatness from generation to generation*'¹⁵

- **1st application: Tell another generation His great work and power (v. 4, 7)**

This should be proclaimed, or pour out our mouths, gushing out like an overflow you can't stop.

You can't keep this to yourself. Each generation shall commend and declare God's majesty and mighty works to another generation. Whatever generation you are, you're called to proclaim the greatness of wondrous acts He's done across age groups. Young, old, whoever you feel you are!

I like NASB of v. 7 '*eagerly utter the memory of Your abundant goodness*' (f.n. for eagerly 'or bubble over with'; others have 'celebrate' or 'share the story' or 'give a testimony of your great goodness').¹⁶ Are you eager to? Do you love to tell the story of Jesus and His love in your life?

When something good happens in your life, you can't wait to tell others, but here not just peers or friends your age, who can you tell who's older or younger what God has done in your life?

1 Tim 4:12 says the young can set an example in their speech, how they speak can encourage the older. Titus 2 talks about older men exhorting younger, older women teaching younger ones

If you don't have someone younger or older in your life for that, pray and pursue that

We have a great duty to tell kids how great is our God. ¹¹ *They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom and tell of your power,* ¹² *to make known to the children of man your mighty deeds...*

- Other Psalms: '*Come children, I will teach you... Oh magnify the LORD with me!...I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken or his children begging for bread. He is ever lending generously, and his children become a blessing.*'¹⁷
- Ps 78: '*we will tell the next generation about the glorious deeds of the LORD, about his power and his mighty wonders...to teach them to their children, so the next generation might know them— even the children not yet born— and they in turn will teach their own children. So each generation should set its hope anew on God, not forgetting*' (NLT)

A great testimony isn't about your great sin, it's about a great Savior. Ps 71 is a great testimony:

I've trusted you, O LORD, from childhood...I can never stop praising you; I declare your glory all day long. And now, in my old age, don't set me aside. Don't abandon me when my strength is failing... I will proclaim your saving power, though I am not skilled with words. I will praise your mighty deeds, O Sovereign LORD... you have taught me from my earliest childhood, and I constantly tell others about the wonderful things you do. Now that I am old and gray, do not abandon me, O God. Let me proclaim your power to this new generation...You allowed me to suffer much hardship, but you will restore...I will tell everyone...you are faithful to promises¹⁸

As long as you're alive, God has a purpose for you, this is part of it (Ps 150:6)

APPLY TO CHILDREN'S MINISTRY, YOUTH, YAG, H2H, SSL, HOME GROUPS, ETC.

- **2nd application: Meditate on His glorious and wondrous acts (v. 5)**

Ps 145:5 moves from talking about glorious acts to 'on your wondrous works, I will meditate.'

What keeps us speaking about God's greatness is when we keep thinking about His greatness.

I will meditate – Hebrew idea is telling yourself, preach to yourself don't passively listen, Ps 42

TALK ABOUT ACROSTIC PSALM, MNEMONIC, GOOD TO DO SAME IN ENGLISH

An Acrostic of God's Greatness (or the A-Z of God's Character)

A - almighty, aseity (self-existent, independent), awesome

B - beautiful, bountiful, benevolent

C - compassionate, caring, Comforter

D - deliverer, defender

E - eternal

F - faithful

G - great, good, gracious

H - holy, helper, healer

I - infinite, impartial, immovable, I Am

J - just, judge

K - kind, King, keeper (Ps 121:5)

L - love, longsuffering, light, life

M - mighty, merciful, majestic

N - near, never-failing

O - omniscient (all-knowing)

P - present, powerful, preeminent, patient, providence, protection

Q - quickening (Eph 2:5 KJV), quick-to-help (Ps 70:1 NIV)

R - righteous, rock, refuge, Redeemer

S - sovereign, Spirit, simplicity, supremacy, shade, shield, stronghold

T - true, transcendent, treasure, trinity

U - unchanging, upright

V - victorious, very present help (Ps 46:1)

W - wise, wonderful, worthy

X – Xristos (X is Greek initial for Christ, or for English "x" sound: exalted, excellent, etc.)

Y - Yahweh

Z – zealous

TALK ABOUT HOW TO APPLY ABOVE, HELP MEDITATE, SLEEP, RENEW MIND

3rd application: Declare His greatness and gospel

(v. 6b 'I will declare your greatness...')

This last psalm of David isn't the last word and some of its words are gospel words in the OT:

- David already used this word *majesty* in psalms that the NT applies to Jesus (Ps 8, 45)¹⁹
- David earlier used this same verb *declare/proclaim* of Messiah to come (Ps 22:22, 27)
- This word in v. 6 for *might* he also used of the coming Messiah-King of glory, Ps 24:8

- This same word *great* was used in the prophets for the great light Messiah would bring²⁰
- This word *awesome* in v. 6 was used by Isaiah for coming Messiah and good news²¹
- In v. 5 the word *wondrous* is in Isa 9:6, His name shall be called *Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God* (same word *mighty* in Ps 145). *Glory* is also in Isaiah's prophecies of Jesus

Some of the ancient Jewish rabbis also saw verses in Ps 145 that they applied to the Messiah.²²

David knew promises of his greater son and King to come in his family line on David's throne.

The gospels begin: '*The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David...*' Like v. 1 of this psalm, the first 2 chapters of the NT start with Jesus as God and King (1:23, 2:2) and the end of the NT has the name of Jesus being blessed and praised forever and ever. Revelation also pictures Jesus as '*great and wondrous*' (12:1 NIV). His future day is '*great and awesome*'²³

David says '*my King, I will bless your name...and praise you,*' on Palm Sunday the disciples

'praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! ... glory in the highest ... blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David' (Lk 19:37-38). Those are words of David in Ps 145 being echoed to the Son of David. Ps 145 extols the name of the Lord every day, the book of Acts says '*the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled*' (19:17) and the church praised '*every day*' (2:46-47 NIV)

David talks about the Lord's power and the '*glorious splendor of...majesty.*' Peter talks about

'the power...of our Lord Jesus...we were eyewitnesses of his majesty...he received...glory from God the Father...by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son..." (2 Pet 1:16-17 NIV). The disciples on that Mount of Transfiguration saw '*glorious splendor...with Jesus*' (Lk 9:31 NIV). Then Jesus came down from that mountain and healed a boy, and it says '*all were astonished at the majesty of God*' (v. 34 ESV). The He taught them true greatness in His kingdom (v. 46-48). Some translations say in His miracles people '*were amazed at the greatness of God*' (v. 43 NAS)

David commits to speak of the mighty deeds of God, another generation in Acts hears apostles '*speaking of the mighty deeds of God*' (Acts 2:11 NASB). Peter declared the greatness of the Lord like v. 6 at Pentecost: '*Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders...*' We can say in an even greater way '*Great is the Lord JESUS and greatly to be praised, His greatness is unsearchable!*' We get to '*proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ*' and '*what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe*' (Eph 3:8)!

**Wisdom unsearchable, God the invisible, Love indestructible, In frailty appears
Lord of infinity, Stopping so tenderly, Lifts our humanity to the heights of His throne
Oh what a mystery, Meekness and majesty! Bow down and worship,
this is your God [and King]²⁴**

If He's not yet your God and King, the great day of the Lord is coming in wrath, and how will you escape if you neglect so great a salvation (Heb 2:3)? Your great need is to see your great need as a great sinner and that Jesus is a great Savior. Turn from your sin, trust Him as Lord who died for your sin and was '*brought up from the dead...the great Shepherd of the sheep.*'²⁵

He ascended to heaven where He sits right now at the right hand of the throne of Majesty and we're looking for the *glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ* (Titus 2:13)!

If you're saved, extol your King Jesus. Meditate on His mighty wonderful works to you. Tell other generations about His awesome amazing grace in your life. He says in the gospel:

Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you." And he went his way and proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him (Lk 8:39 NKJV)

¹ Psalm 47:2, 95:3, 6.

² Spurgeon, *Treasury of David*, on Psalm 145:1.

³ Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.1.3.

⁴ <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/the-divine-majesty-of-the-word>

⁵ Charles Misner, quoted in *First Things*, Dec. 1991, No. 18, p. 63.

⁶ 1 Peter 2:9.

⁷ Psalm 139:6 NASB.

⁸ Job 5:9 NASB, 9:10 NLT.

⁹ Isaiah 40:26 (greatness), 18, 25 (incomparability), 28 (unsearchable / unfathomable understanding), 55:5 (thoughts infinitely higher).

¹⁰ Matthew Barrett, *None Greater: The Undomesticated Attributes of God*, 18, 22.

¹¹ Sovereign Grace Music, "I Stand in Awe."

¹² Psalm 57:10 & 104:1 & 109:30 in ESV; 150:2 in NIV.

¹³ F. M. Lenhman, "The Love of God":

Could we with ink the ocean fill, and were the skies of parchment made
Were every stalk on earth a quill, and every man a scribe by trade.
To write the love of God above would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole tho' stretched from sky to sky.

¹⁴ 1 Chronicles 29:10-16 NASB.

¹⁵ Psalm 79:13 NLT.

¹⁶ NIV, NLT, HCSB.

¹⁷ Psalm 34:11, 3, 37:25-26.

¹⁸ NLT.

¹⁹ Psalm 8:1 and 45:3, compare how Hebrews 1:8 and 2:5-9 quotes from these psalms and applies them to Jesus. Hosea 14:6 and Zechariah 6:13 also use this Hebrew word *majesty* of Messiah.

²⁰ Isaiah 9:2, note context of v. 6-7, and 7:14.

²¹ Isaiah 11 (translated "fear" in v. 2 and v. 3), 40:9 links this "awesome/fear" with "good news."

²² Tom Huckel, *The Rabbinic Messiah* (Philadelphia, PA: Hananeel House, 1998), Ps 145:19, citing Midrash Rabbah, Esther II, 14: "But in the Messianic future, at the gathering of the exiles, God has said, ... Who is it that fulfills the desires of them that fear Him? It is the Holy One, blessed by He, of whom it is written, He will fulfill the desire of them that fear Him; He will also hear their cry, and will save them (Ps. CXLV, 19)."

²³ Acts 2:20 NKJV.

²⁴ Graham Kendrick, "Meekness and Majesty."

²⁵ Hebrews 13:20.