

One of the hardest things to do as a pastor is to worship. Because while you're sitting here this morning worshipping, the greatest temptation of any pastor is to ask the following question: How is it going? Was that the right song in that right place? Did those verses that were read make sense? And slowly but surely, most pastors---when they are honest---we very quickly and quietly are submerged in worship analysis and not worshipping.

But I want to thank you this morning that I prayed and was cognizant of that temptation and how often I fall into it. I want to thank you for reminding me this morning to worship the Lord. So I'm thankful for the verses that have been read, the songs that have been sung, and the prayers that have been prayed.

We come this Sunday morning to a final sermon on the Psalms. We spent the summer here looking at various themes within the Psalms. We began in June looking at how the Psalms meet us in our sorrows. In the month of July we looked at the various Psalms---and there are many---that lead us in worship, that tell us of the different elements within worship. And we've spent the month of August looking at particular Psalms that are specifically prophesying and pointing to Jesus. And these Psalms were then picked up in the New Testament by Jesus himself and the apostles, and given their full Christocentric interpretation. It is our prayer and hope that you have been encouraged by looking at the Psalms.

But this Sunday I wanted to finish the Psalms by looking at its final Psalm, Psalm 150. And it is this Psalm that is a fitting conclusion to all the Psalms. I say that because the Psalms themselves are divided into five books. Each of those books within the Psalter, as we call it, end with a Psalm that has doxology in it, giving God the glory, giving him the weight of praise that is worthy of him. But this Psalm, in its brevity and in its beauty, is a fitting conclusion to the entire Psalter.

Hear now God's word as it tells us about worship. Psalm 150.

Praise the LORD.

Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens.

Praise him for his acts of power;  
praise him for his surpassing greatness.

Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet,

praise him with the harp and lyre,  
praise him with tambourine and dancing,

praise him with the strings and flute,

praise him with the clash of cymbals,

praise him with resounding cymbals.

Let everything that has breath praise the LORD.

Praise the Lord.

This is the word of God. Thanks be to God.

Will you pray with me. You, oh God, have created us in your image to worship you. Our greatest challenge, Lord, is not that we don't worship. It's the answer to the question of what do we worship. Your word declares for us this morning that you are the one who is to be worshiped. And so, Lord, we pray because of the beauty of the work of Jesus Christ, his victory over sin and death through the resurrection, his being seated at your right hand. And by the promised presence and power of your Holy Spirit, open our eyes that we may see you, and help us to worship you. Help the teacher. In Jesus' name. Amen.

So in preparing for this sermon, I gave the outline to our very capable administrative team, they printed out the bulletin exactly on time, and then I realized there was an outline point that I failed to include, so we will do it this morning manually. So in your bulletins there is space there on the inside flap if you would like to take notes.

So this morning in looking at this Psalm we are going to first look at *Who do we worship?* Secondly we're going to be looking at *Where do we worship? Why do we worship? How do we worship? Who is to worship?* It is, if you will, the who, where, why, how, and who again of our worship. So let's dig in together, and what I'll be doing this morning is going down through this Psalm in its entirety, demonstrating to you that I did not cook up this outline in some magical creative fuzz, but rather it is all here.

Let's begin with the basics. *Who* are we to worship. You'll see this most prominently, of course, in verse one. It says, Praise the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary. Praise him in his mighty acts. In fact, you will see not only in verse one---Praise the Lord---but you could simply look at these verses and count them with me, Lord, one. God, two. And then it goes one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven different times it refers to the Lord, the one who is worthy to worship. The only one who is worthy to worship is the Lord God. This is the psalmist telling us, if you will, summarizing the entire Psalter from Psalm 1 to Psalm 150. The one that it continually goes back to over and over again, declaring it is the Lord God. And as we look back at our summer in the Psalms, we recognize, as we just look at the different themes that we've looked at---it is God who meets us in our trials, it is God who meets us in our sorrows, it is God who meets us in our poverty, it is God who meets us in the midst of our sin, it is God who shepherds us. It speaks of God not only as a shepherd, it speaks of God as a mighty shield, a defender. It is God who is a refuge, it is God who is a rock. The psalmist is saying, without explanation, but merely, if you will, as a beginning, but also as a summary of everything that has come before, it is Yahweh, the God of Israel, who is worthy of worship. That is why as a Presbyterian church we declare loudly and clearly the pastor or the music or the worship leaders or the ministries or the building---none of these things are ever close to the center of worship, are never part of the equation, except as the ones who are to give glory to God. It is God---according to our very confession that says, what is man's chief end, in other words, what is his ultimate goal, and that is to worship God and to enjoy him forever.

What is also interesting is what is implied here. Notice the writer is not at all describing, necessarily, *whether* you worship. No, he's saying to all human beings as an implication, that first, yes, the one to be worshiped is the Lord God because of all these things. The one who is Creator, Redeemer, and Shepherd. But secondly, he is saying by way of implication, not whether you worship, but *who* do you worship. The Psalm itself, and I think you will be hard-pressed to find an argument for whether the human being should worship at all. You don't hear the Scriptures trying to convince other human beings that you need to worship, because implied in the Psalm is the fact that all human beings are worshipers. And so the question is, if God is the one who is to be worshiped, then the question is, who do you worship? Or if it's not a 'who'---*what* do you worship? We've talked about it before. It is this: that worship itself, the English word, finds its home in the actual word, 'worth-ship,' giving to something ultimate worth. In fact, Gary Ahrens, our worship leader this morning, has already used it throughout our worship--- assigning to God ultimate praise. Worship is the assignment of praise, value, and worth to someone or to something. Bob Dylan, that great theologian, said it another way. Many of you who were around could say it with me. You've got to...You gotta serve somebody. Those of you who didn't know, we'll talk later. You've got to serve somebody. It's not whether you serve, it's who you serve, what do you serve. The psalmist says, not whether you worship, but who. And the one whom we worship is the Lord God.

And then he says, where do we worship? He tells us. Verses 1 and following. He says here, verse 1b: Praise God in his sanctuary, praise him in his mighty heavens. So he gives us two locales that seem

at first glance, somehow to be a definitive list. But in fact, if we look closer, it is not a definitive list. It is all-encompassing. Notice what he says. He says, Praise God in his sanctuary. And what he's demonstrating there is, he's talking about the nation of Israel. It would first have had its meaning for the nation of Israel, and their central place for worship was Mount Zion, at the Temple---there to ascribe that place as the place where God dwells. But then the Psalmist adds---in these words he says, Praise him in his mighty heavens. So he looks out into the universe. You can imagine the psalmist looking to Mount Zion, saying, praise God in his sanctuary, but also praise God in his heavens. In other words, we've sung of it before. His canopy, his tent, God's dwelling place, isn't just the sanctuary. It is all the universe. In other words, where we worship isn't just a particular place or locale, it is everywhere. While, yes, for the first readers of this Psalm, they would've understood it to be the Temple, and---they would've understood---in the rest of life. But as we've learned this summer, the Psalms find their ultimate permanence, their end, in Jesus Christ and the revelation of how God would be redeemer, how God would be a shepherd, how God would be a refuge, a rock of our salvation---it would be in Jesus Christ.

Here is what Jesus says. You remember early on in the Gospels we hear of Jesus speaking to the woman at the well, and she challenges him. She says, you worship God on this mountain. We worship God here. And Jesus says to her, a time is coming and has now come where you will not worship God on this mountain or anywhere else. You will worship him in spirit and in truth. The revelation of Jesus Christ, coming into the world, bringing salvation not only to those who are Jewish who believed, but to all who will come, that Jesus would give forth his spirit. And he is not just to be worshiped in a particular temple in a particular city on a particular hillside, but he is to be worshiped in spirit and in truth. And where does his spirit go? According to Jesus, his spirit is with every believer where ever they are. Meaning, where we worship is everywhere.

But also we hear the apostle Paul when he says in Romans 12:1-2. We hear it in these words when he declares, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God. This is your spiritual act of worship." So therefore what Jesus has declared was in the temple and in all of the universe is now everywhere. Because the giving of his spirit our very bodies do not belong to us. They belong to him. We worship him with our bodies, we worship him with our mind and our emotions. We worship him and submit all things to him, everywhere. I've said it, I'm going to say it a third time. It is this great quote. "There is not one single square inch of God's universe where Jesus does not say, 'Mine.'" Everywhere, every relationship, every activity. That is all-encompassing, and the psalmist means to appropriately overwhelm us. It means that we worship as individuals, and that individual worship leads into the corporate, to the community of the body of Christ gathering together for worship. That corporate worship then bleeds out into our individual worship and our everyday lives. If he is the one who is worthy of our worship, if he has created all things, then our chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

But that is the 'Where.' Let's look at the 'Why.' Look at verse 2. Verse 2 says, Praise him for his mighty acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness. So what he already said was one of self-evidence by saying it is the Lord God who is to be worshiped, in verse 2 he tells us the *why* the Lord God should be worshiped. And he says there are two things: God's acts of power and his surpassing greatness. His acts of power and his surpassing greatness. This idea of acts of power, his powerful deeds...let's consider for just a moment that if we were Jewish and we were of the Israel nation and we heard this Psalm for the first time, there is no doubt in any mind of any Israelite hearing this Psalm when the phrase is used, 'God's mighty deeds, his acts of power,' what that was in reference to. There was no question. One singular event that was the watershed moment was when God freed Israel. He called them out of slavery in Egypt under the tyrannical head of Pharaoh, and freed them from slavery and called them out to himself to be a people for him and for his glory, to be a nation and a city on a hill, to worship him before all nations. It is through that act of calling Israel out of slavery and into relationship with himself as the one true God who is above all gods that Israel

understood how mighty and how powerful God is.

And here is the beauty of God's power. It isn't just the naked demonstration of God yanking them out of slavery from under Pharaoh. You'll remember, and if you're not familiar with this story we can simply look at one window into that story. God frees Israel. Pharaoh is now convinced, because God has moved him so, to free the Israelites from the nation of Egypt, out of slavery. He sends them forth. They are loaded down with wealth---they have more than they could ever have imagined. And they are now fleeing Egypt, and they are going because God is leading them through Moses. And they reach the Red Sea, and what happens? They turn around, and they hear reports, and they can see that now what once was Pharaoh being willing to free them, Pharaoh was now pursuing them with his own armies. The nation of Israel looks to Moses and complains to God and complains to Moses and says, what have you done? Have you brought us out here to simply die in the desert? And do you know what they say? We would rather be back in slavery than to die in the desert. Now here's the beauty of God's power. It's not just the demonstration of raw power; it is the power of his grace. That in that moment where God was demonstrating his power and leading them out of slavery, they are now doubting God's wisdom and doubting his leader, and they say, what is he thinking? And what does God do? Does he crush them? Absolutely not. In his grace he opens up a pathway and parts the Red Sea, and they are led in victory out from under the weapons of their enemies. And he crushes their enemies. God's mighty power isn't just the raw use of power, whether it be earthquakes or showers or clouds or lightening or snow. It is the fact that behind it all, it is the power of his immeasurable grace.

And what is pictured here is God's mighty acts: that God would do the most mighty act ever known in human history, but it would also be seen as the most foolish use of power---that God would submit himself to the cross for our rebellion and our sin. God's mighty acts would ultimately find their fulfillment in the most mighty of acts. Many describe it this way...author Michael Allen describes it like this: he says, God does not compromise with sin, nor ignore it, nor call it good. On the contrary, God removes it by submitting to the cross to show that love is stronger than death. Let me add---love is not only stronger than death, love is stronger than rebellion, love is stronger than pride, love is stronger than rejection. Love is, his grace is, mighty, and it is powerful. And he goes on, and he says, grace in its disruption surpasses all that we imagine or can think. For the psalmist, the 'Why' of worship begins with God's mighty acts.

Let me ask you what I asked you earlier, not *whether* you worship, but *who* do you worship and *why* do you worship. Let me invite you into what all of us should be invited into, which is a theater of self-doubt. We need to be willing to ask ourselves the hard questions. What do I worship and why do I worship? What this morning are you ascribing ultimate value to? Let me ask you a further question. If you know what you are ascribing ultimate value to, does it have ultimate power? Let me ask it another way. Do you worship your success, do you ascribe your educational, professional, relational success ultimate prize and value? Let me ask this question: Will your wealth ever forgive you? Will your success ever give you mercy? Will people always forgive you? The answer to that is No. If you are utterly undone by failure, regardless of the pursuit; if you are undone by failures in relationships and you find yourself spiraling downward, regardless of its cause; the question you need to ask in that spiraling down, is to stop and ask yourself, have I ascribed ultimate value to this thing? What am I serving? Because it is only the Lord who is to be worshiped, because it is only the Lord rescues. He's the only one that gives grace. He is the only one who gives mercy.

Let me allow you in on a little confession. I'm being very honest here. I was with a man this week with whom I've been sharing the gospel for a little over a year now. We were riding our bikes together. I haven't had many moments like this in Maryland, but a driver of a car decided to yell out the window at us. Asked us in a loud tone, Why are you in the middle of the road?!? Even though our arms were pointing left, and we are at a left turn. The obvious did not seem to have a grasp on his knowledge at

that moment. Even as I describe it, I can feel myself getting angry. I turned to him, and I shouted....that which I cannot repeat. We made the left turn, and I looked at my friend who looked at me with bright eyes. And I said, I am deeply sorry, but you see who I am. I wasn't mad that day, I was in a good mood, I was riding my bike. But in a moment I lashed out. My comfort was impended upon, was impeached, and I was thinking, What are you doing?!? And I just lashed out from my heart. Then I thought, Lord, can I see that guy somewhere else on this ride? Maybe I just need to apologize to him---hopefully he wasn't going to chase us down. But in that moment I realized that here I am, I'm a sinner, naked before this guy I've been sharing with, I'm a pastor, for goodness sakes. And yet there I stood, simply like him, a sinner in need of grace.

God's mighty acts. He forgives. But also his surpassing greatness, his surpassing greatness. We assign ultimate value to God because he is worthy of our worship, because he is a God who saves, yes, but he is a God who does more than just save---he gives life. In his greatness he doesn't just redeem and save us from sin. He empowers us to live. He doesn't just create, he sustains. He doesn't just begin, he brings it to conclusion---because of his greatness. We believe that the Bible teaches that God creates, we fall. God redeems, but it will be God who brings all things to conclusion. God in his greatness will make all things right. And we worship him because he is a God of greatness and of eternity and of infinite power. What he has begun, he will bring to an end. And on that day, when Jesus returns, every tongue will confess, every knee will bow, that Jesus Christ is Lord, and all things will be put to rest. This is the God of greatness that we worship and why we worship him.

But *How* do we worship? It tells us in verses 3 through 5. He tells us about instruments---and it's varied instruments. But beneath that, it's telling us that God is telling us how he is to be worshiped. And God's word demonstrates for us how we are to worship. In fact, we've already done it this morning. God tells us of the elements of our worship. We know we need to be careful of innovation in worship, because those who innovated in a way that dishonored God in the Old Testament died as a result. You can go back in the book of Leviticus and other places and Samuel, and so forth, where they died because they came up with ideas about how to worship God that he did not prescribe. God prescribes for us how to worship him: praise, confession, repentance, giving, hearing from his word, responding, worshiping him through the Lord's supper, honoring of him in baptism and confessing faith. These are the elements of our worship.

But the beauty, that not only is God prescribing how to worship him in these verses, but we learn the various ways that we can glorify him. The list of instruments is the instruments known to them at that time. It isn't meant to be just definitive. It's meant to be exhaustive of the instruments they had, which gives us a wonderful breathing room for the kinds of instruments that can be used for giving God praise and glory and honor. But underneath all of that if we simply see this Psalm and go to it and simply say, well this is how God tells us and prescribes for us to worship him, we will have missed what's underneath verses 3 through 5. Notice each of the verses begins, 1 through 5 begin with this: Praise him. And in verses 3 through 5 he talks about the instruments. There were professional musicians who were supported by the temple gifts. They were to give their entire lives for coming up with songs, through melodies for the songs themselves to be used as the people of God, the people of Israel, worshiped him in the temple. In all of that was meant this: beneath the prescription and the instrumentation is what is at the heart of worship. It's joy and reverence. We are to give every instrument to him in worship. We are to give all of our gifts, all of our talents, and give them in service to worshipping him, because...why? God's grace has disrupted us. And his mighty power and his surpassing greatness has invaded our lives with his redemption, and we respond with praising him with all that we have. Everything. Joy and reverence. Because we praise him not with flippancy, but with devotion, giving all that we have for his glory.

But finally, *Who* is to worship, verse 6. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. We know the one to whom worship is to be directed, but it ends with who is to worship. This is all-

encompassing. Again, let everything that has breath. Every thing that has breath. This is the final verse of the final Psalm, which is to be the calling glory of the people of God, which, in the Old Testament was Israel. In the New Testament it is the church.

Now let me bring this to a conclusion. In Psalm 105 God calls the people of Israel to stand before the nations and to call out all of his glory, all of his mighty acts. Tell of his greatness and his power. That is, the people of God are always worshiping surrounded by those who don't believe. There may be some of you here this morning that do not believe. We are glad that you are here. And we recognize that if you do not believe and you are here, there may be many things I have said that made no sense to you. There may have been things that we prayed or words that we used that make no sense to you. But there is one thing that we do want you to see and to be a witness to---that we believe that God has called us out, not just from sin, not just from slavery because of a sinful nature---he hasn't just forgiven us, he's called us out to do something with our breath and with our life: to recount his greatness and his power to whomever will hear and witness this. We are his witnesses in the world among nations to give God praise and glory. And so we are glad that you are here. But if there are things that you don't understand, you have questions, ask someone. We want to tell you of his mighty acts and why and who is the one that we worship.

But we find the church of Jesus Christ here. Church of Jesus Christ, let me remind you of why we're called 'church.' It comes from the Greek word *ecclesia*. And we hear this in the words of Peter. In his first letter he says these words: But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who *ecclesia*, called out, so the word church finds it home in the word *ecclesia*. The word *ecclesia* literally means 'called out,' a people who have been called out, called out of sin and misery---its death, its pain, its brokenness---into a people, a chosen race, to worship him. The church finds its beginning, it finds its life, it finds its end, in worship. Peter says, as the final words to sermon, But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness and into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are a people of God. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. May God be praised and may he be worshiped for his mighty acts and his wondrous greatness.

Let's pray. Lord, our God, you are worthy of our worship. Help us, we pray, to worship you and you alone. Help us to ask the question, who do we worship and why? And renew us by your Holy Spirit to be a people called out of sin and death, to worship, to glorify you, and to enjoy you forever. Among all nations declaring that we were once a people who had not received mercy, and now we have received mercy. May God be praised. In Jesus' name. Amen.