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A Right View of God

Psalm 145

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Whenever we hear a message from the Scriptures, we're listening for what's relevant, what's applicable, what do I do with this, what difference does it make on Monday morning in the real world. And that's right. That's as it should be. Everything about God is relevant to everything in life. But sometimes it's not something we need to do, it's something we need to know that will then affect everything we do.

Over the years it's taken me, I guess I would say, most of my life to figure this out. And when I say that, you're going to say, "Duh. That comes right out of the 'duh file'." But maybe it's that way because I say it all the time. There is nothing more important in your Christian life than your view of God. Nothing else affects your experience and how you live out your Christian life like your view of God.

Now we say, "Well, we know that." But we give ourselves away when we're constantly trying to find all these quick fixes to our problems. We want to go down to the bookstore and find a quick fix for our marriage, or our relationships, or our finances, or *this* emotional problem, or *that* emotional problem. We want seven steps; we're fixed, and we can go on. Yet it seems like we never really experience this abundant life that Jesus promised. The problem is we're treating symptoms, and we're often not getting to the foundational issue which is a correct view of God.

Now, nobody has this figured out. We're all on a journey of trying to really understand: *Who is this God*. And we all constantly have to correct misperceptions about God. It's a lifelong process of concluding what's true about God.

David, at the end of his life in the final Psalm that he penned, essentially wrote about his view of God. After all of his ups and downs, his victories, his struggles, he's concluded this is what he believes to be true about God.

But it's more than that. Because we believe the Bible is a book inspired by the very Spirit of God, it's God's self-description. It's God describing Himself.

So if you have a Bible this morning, turn with me to Psalm 145. Psalm 145 is organized around an acrostic. There are several Psalms that are organized this way. Basically what that means is that if you go through twenty-one statements, they line up with the twenty-one letters of the Hebrew alphabet. So if you put it into English, the first line would start with an "A," the second line would start with a "B;" the third line would start with a "C."

It's all very beautiful; it's very poetic, but of course when it translates from the Hebrew to the English, all of that is lost. Which then makes the acrostic psalm somewhat more difficult to teach because it's hard to organize them because the thing that organized it is lost in the translation. So the best way to think about this is just as a collection of David's thoughts about Who God is of course inspired by the very Spirit of God.

Verse 1:

I will extol You, my God, O King, and I will bless Your name forever and ever.

Every day I will bless You, and I will praise Your name forever and ever. (Psalm 145:1-2, *NASB)

The word “extol” means to praise God. It’s in verse 1 and verse 21. Those are the bookends. Everything in between is essentially David’s explanation for why he will praise God.

He refers to God as his King, and then he says, **“I will bless Your name forever.”** There are several different Hebrew words that get translated into the English word “bless.” This particular Hebrew word is one that means “to kneel or to surrender.” He’s acknowledging God as his King, and before that King, he will kneel or surrender his life both now and forever.

I think it’s hard for us living in a democracy to understand life under a monarch, life under a king. It’s so different from the way we experience life. In the ancient world when you lived under a king, the king was the law. And the king could do whatever the king pleased, and there was no one to challenge that. If the king wanted this done, the king would do it. If the king wanted to do something else, the king would do it, and nobody said otherwise.

When you entered the presence of the king, you would kneel and you would bow. And in essence, you exposed the back of your neck. And that was in essence saying, “You may do with me as you wish.” And if the king wanted to, he’d cut off your head and no one would challenge him on that. He had that right. Or he may raise you up and reward you. He had that right as well. But to kneel, to surrender to the king was an act of ultimate vulnerability, because the king was sovereign. There were no laws that prevented the king from doing something to you.

Well that’s exactly the language that David is using here. God is his King. And he comes into the presence of God and he kneels and he bows. And in essence he exposes his neck to God and says, “God, You’re King. I give You all that I am and all that I have, and You can do what You want with it.” It’s a full surrender.

It’s often hard to determine whether or not you have a right view of God. How do you know if your view of God is incorrect? Well this is a pretty good way to measure that. If I this morning invite you to come into the presence of God and to surrender all that you have and all that you are before God, and say to God, “God, You can have it all. I let it all go; I lay it all down before You. You can have my life; You can have my spouse; You can have my children; You can have my grandchildren; You can have my money; You can have my business; You can have my health; You can have my hopes and dreams; You can have it all. I lay them all out before You, God. They’re Yours; do what You want with them.” If you find any hesitation in your spirit, I would suggest to you that you have an incorrect view of God. Because I’m convinced if we understood God for all that He is, we would not hesitate for a moment.

Now you may be sitting there thinking: *You know, probably everybody around me is so super spiritual, they get this. But I’m the only one that has this hesitation.* You need to know that every single one of us has that hesitation. That’s part of the struggle.

About the time you have it figured out, and you think you’ve laid it all before God, something new appears in your life and you have to wrestle with releasing that before God. That’s part of the journey.

But that’s a good way to measure whether or not you have a right view of God. How willing are we to bow our neck and to kneel before Him and let Him have it all and trust Him with what we have and who we are.

David says in verse 2, **“Every day I will bless You.”** It’s the same word. Every day I will kneel; every day I’ll surrender. It’s not something we do once for all time. We do it everyday. It’s not

something we do on Sundays when everyone's watching. It's something we do everyday of the week. It's a way of life. It's what defines our life before the King.

It's interesting when you go through this Psalm how much emphasis there is on forever and ever. The theme of the *Esprit de Corps* this year is "Here and Gone." It's a reminder that life is brief. We're here today; we're gone tomorrow.

But one remarkable truth is that in this brief moment of time, God gives us the opportunity to connect with that which will last forever. In essence, when we bow a knee and we surrender before God, we are rehearsing that which we will do forever. It's a beautiful picture of the people of God responding to their King.

Verse 3:

Great is the Lord, and highly to be praised, and His greatness is unsearchable.

God is great. As a matter of fact, He is *so* great that His greatness is unsearchable; it's inexhaustible. I can't ever come to the end of God's greatness. As a matter of fact, I will spend all eternity trying to understand how great *is* this God, and I'll never get to the end of that.

Now when you think about that, that's quite an amazing concept, because what has to go with this statement is: God is great and I'm not. See this is a problem we have sometimes with our view of God. We have an over-inflated view of our own greatness, which always leads to a lower view of God's greatness. Sometimes we're confused into thinking the chasm there isn't all that wide. That's a warped view of God. God is great. And for all eternity, I'll never exhaust God's greatness, which reminds me, I'm not great.

This last week, we're probably all aware of the big news that Warren Buffet is giving away unbelievable amounts of money. And it *is* an incredible amount of money. He's obviously very good at what he does. But I heard he made a statement this week that really troubles me. He said, "There are many ways to get to heaven, but this is a great one."

Does he think God's impressed with his money? This is the God who owns the universe! This is the God that has it all! Does he think his money can buy God's favor as if God somehow would need that piddly little amount of money when He owns the universe? What a sad idea.

It reminds us why we cannot perform our way to God. Because God is not impressed, He's God. God created the universe with a spoken word. What are we going to do that's going to impress Him? You can't somehow give away enough money or do enough good works, that God's going to say, "I'm so impressed I'm inviting you into My heaven."

This idea of God's greatness being unsearchable is worth pondering. If we were to enter into a conversation trying to figure out what great things I have done, I can't think of one thing by this world's standard that would be considered great. But even if we arrived at some things that seemed like they were pretty good, what would it be? One or two maybe? You know, even the people in this world that are considered great, how many things are on their resume? One? Two? And that's the end of the list.

God's greatness is unsearchable. It's inexhaustible. We can't ever get to the end of the list. God is so far beyond us – He's great! We're *not* great. We have to understand that we don't impress God by our performance. There's got to be another way to God.

Verse 4:

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

This is a theme throughout the Old and the New Testaments. It reminds us how important it is that those who have walked with God tell their story to those who are beginning the journey. Those of you that have walked with God thirty, forty, fifty, sixty years, you have a lot to say to those that are beginning their journey. You need to tell them, “Hey, God is always faithful. God has always been good. God is gracious and merciful.”

We remember many times recorded in the Psalms where David wasn't so sure of that. Where he cried out and wondered, *Where is God? Where is God in those moments when you need Him?* But now looking back over his life, he remembers: *God has always been faithful. God has always been good. God has always been there for me.*

There are many ways to do this. One of the ways it's done is through music – through song. That's why we will never abandon the great hymns of the faith. It's one generation saying to the next generation, “This is our experience with God. And we want you to know God has been faithful to us.” We need to hear that.

There are those songs of this generation today that one day will be handed down to the next generation, and it will be their expression of faith. “God has been faithful to us.” And we pass that on to the next generation. It can be done through books. It can be done many ways, but best done eyeball to eyeball, face to face.

We have wonderful senior saints in our church. Those who have walked with God for years, and they're excited about God. They're excited about the mission. They have a tremendous amount of wisdom to offer the younger generation. To be able to say to them, “Hey, I've been where you are, and you need to know God will be faithful. God will be there for you. There's times when it may not feel that way, but I've been there and now looking back, God is good. And God is faithful.”

This is a driving theology in our philosophy of worship. There are many church consultants today who are saying, “You know, you really have to have multiple styles of worship. You have to have a contemporary service that appeals to young people. And you have to have a traditional service that appeals to the older people. And you have to appeal to the consumers out there.”

But we don't buy into that because we think we're family. And family stays together. And we all learn from one another and grow. We need the older generation to remind us that God is faithful and He'll be there for us. But the older generation needs the younger generation always asking those annoying questions like: “Why do we do that? Can't we do this differently?” And reminding us what the mission is and bringing our energy back up and challenging us as to what we're really about as a church. We need that. It's easy to start getting kind of stale and lose your vision as you get older. So, we need each other. We need that family together – the old and the young.

And David's cry to the old is: Tell your story—eyeball to eyeball with these young people. And say, “Hey God is good. God is faithful. God will be there.” Because I'll tell you, these 18, 19, 20 year old young people need to hear that. They need to know that along the way.

Verse 5:

On the glorious splendor of Your majesty and on Your wonderful works, I will meditate.

David is talking there in verse 5 about God's creation—what God has made. He says, "I won't give it a passing glance." He says, "I'm going to meditate on it." There are things about the person of God and the character of God that cannot be known apart from meditating on what God has made. It's a beautiful revelation of God and Who He is.

But it seems to me in this highly technologically driven culture with such an accelerated pace, this is becoming a lost art. There is the assumption that technology is always good and newer technology is always better. I'll grant you that I think technology has made our lives more convenient; I would argue with you that it has made our lives better.

You see young people today; they always have a cell phone in their ear. They always have headphones on. They're always clicking on the computer. They're always watching television. And you really have to ask yourself, "When do we turn these things off and once again wonder at the majesty of the glory of what God has created?"

We need to remember all of these technological devices do have an "off" button. Turn the phone off. Turn the CD player off. Turn the TV off. Turn the computer off. And once again be captured by the majesty of a mountain, by the power of an ocean wave, by the power of summer storm, by the intricacies of a flower, by the wonder of the instinct that God has put within His creatures and ask ourselves, "How magnificent is this God?" God is so beautiful; He's so creative; He's so glorious in His majesty. David says I'll meditate on that because that reminds him of Who God is.

Verse 6:

Men shall speak of the power of Your awesome acts, and I will tell of Your greatness. They shall eagerly utter the memory of Your abundant goodness and will shout joyfully of Your righteousness. (Psalm 145:6-7)

In verse 7 when it says "eagerly utter," it's a Hebrew word meaning it will just bubble out of him. What David's talking about here are God's acts in history—going from the creation act to God's intervention in history at various times.

Think about God's intervention in the life of the Hebrew people. In an ancient culture where they didn't record things primarily in books – it was an oral tradition – they told the stories generation after generation of what God had done. As a matter of fact, we know conclusively that the ancient pagan nations were aware of the remarkable stories of the Hebrew God.

One of my favorite examples of this is found in the early chapters of Joshua. When the spies went in to take Jericho, they ran into a prostitute by the name of Rahab. When she found out they were from the Hebrew people, she said, "When our soldiers find out that it's the Hebrew God knocking at the door, their hearts will melt with fear. We've heard of your God. We've heard your God can part the waters. We've heard your God gives these great victories over the Philistines. We're heard about your God." It's a great statement: *Our soldiers' hearts, they will melt when they find out it's the Hebrew God that's knocking at the door.*

Throughout history, God has intervened for the sake of His people. And the stories are told of the wonder of the power of God. It's very important that we don't lose that as a church – that we're continually taking huge steps of faith. Steps of faith that are so big, there's no *human* way to explain how they could be done. So that people realize this wasn't just a group of people that gave it their best effort and it happened. This is God stepping in and doing the unimaginable.

There are many ways to do that. One of the ways we've talked about is if next Easter when we walk into the new auditorium and every bill is paid. I'll guarantee you the people of Lincoln will talk. They're already talking—they're seeing this mammoth thing out there—but to know that God has shown up and every bill is paid, they'll talk. They'll say, "There's got to be something going on out there." They might even in a weak moment say, "Let's check it out."

Verse 8:

The LORD is gracious and merciful; slow to anger and great in lovingkindness. The LORD is good to all, and His mercies are over all His works. (Psalm 145:8-9)

This is taken from Exodus 34. As a matter of fact, it's the most re-quoted verse in the Old Testament. This is God's description of Himself.

Sometimes I hear people say, "You know the God of the Old Testament was a God of judgment; the God of the New Testament is a God of grace." That's not right. There's an incredible amount of grace and mercy that was poured out on the Hebrew people in the Old Testament. God Himself describes Himself in the Old Testament as a God of grace, a God of mercy, slow to anger, filled with lovingkindness.

Grace is being extended favor you don't deserve – you don't have coming. Mercy is withholding what you *do* have coming. And it's all in a context of God's lovingkindness.

A couple of weeks ago on Father's Day, we talked about this as what should define the environment at home. Does God discipline His children? Yes, He does. Does God judge? Yes, He does. But that's not what defines Him. He's defined Himself. He's defined by grace, by mercy, slow to anger, lovingkindness.

There are some of you that were raised in a home where you had parents that never seemed to be satisfied. It seemed like you could never measure up. You could never do well enough. It seemed like they were always disappointed. No matter what you did, no matter how well you performed, it was never enough. And you've projected that feeling onto God, and you think that's how God is. That no matter what you do, enough is never enough. It's never good enough; you never perform well enough. And you think God's just one step behind you with a club. You need to understand *that* is a warped view of God.

Some of you growing up experienced abuse at the hand of adults. And deep inside, you're convinced maybe that's what God is like. *If I were to surrender fully before God, He would take advantage of me – like other people who supposedly loved me.* God's not like that. God's gracious; He's merciful; He's slow to anger; He's loving and kind. That's Who God is.

Sometimes we tend to think, *You know, if I was God, this is how I would feel about me.* But you're not God. You feel like if you aren't performing well, that you're a loser. And everybody else thinks you're a loser, so God must think you're a loser. It's not true. It's a warped view of God. God is unlike anyone else. He gives us grace, mercy, lovingkindness.

Verse 10:

All Your works shall give thanks to You, O LORD, and Your godly ones shall bless You. They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom and talk of Your power; to make known to the sons of men Your mighty acts and the glory of the majesty of

Your kingdom. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Your dominion endures throughout all generations. (Psalm 145:10-13)

In verse 10 when he says, “**All Your works shall give thanks to You,**” I think he’s talking about creation. There’s kind of a metaphorical picture in the Psalms of all of creation giving thanks back to God – their existence is due to the power of God.

But then he gets personal, but “**Your godly ones,**” those who are made in the image of God have a will to choose. And we can choose to kneel and surrender before God. “**And Your godly ones shall bless You.**” It’s our same word – shall kneel before You, shall surrender to You.

And they’ll talk about the wonder of God and the glory of God and the power of God. They’ll tell anyone who will listen, “Our God is awesome!” A right view of God is what energizes our witness. We talk about that which we’re excited about. When you fall in love, that’s what you talk about. When you’re excited about something, that’s what you talk about.

David is saying when we kneel and surrender to God, and we experience the power and the majesty of God, we’ll tell anybody who will listen. That’s what we’re all about. That’s what defines us.

A month or so ago, I was having a discussion with a friend of mine who’s been recently employed with a business here in town that is a financial management business. Everyone that works there – the men, the women – are all Christians. And I would say they do what they do with excellence. They’re very, very good.

But in talking to him, he said, “It’s really awesome working in this place. When we go to lunch, you know what we talk about? We don’t talk about stocks. We don’t talk about bonds. We don’t talk about money. They say things like, ‘What is God doing in your life? What are you reading in the Scriptures these days? What do you think about what’s happening at church?’” He said, “That’s who they are. That’s what excites them. That’s what they’re living for.”

You learn a lot about your value system when you look at what excites you. And what excites you is what you talk about. David says with his view of God he can’t help it. He talks about God, because he’s excited about God. That’s the heartbeat of who he is and what he lives for.

It’s interesting again in verse 13 he reminds us that this kingdom he’s so excited about is a kingdom that will reign forever. Do you realize how many people around you are living for the here and now? And at the end that’s all there will be. What’s the point of investing yourself in the here and now? It’s here today; it’s gone tomorrow. What is the point of that?

David says, “I’m connected to something that will last forever.” And that’s what excites him, and that’s what he talks about. He’s trying to get people to realize, “Hey, this will be here today, gone tomorrow; what about the things that last forever? That’s really something to be excited about.”

Verse 14:

The LORD sustains all who fall and raises up all who are bowed down.

It’s a picture that when somebody falls, God reaches down and picks him back up. And when somebody bows down – meaning they are in despair – God once again gives them hope.

Depending on your experiences in life, you may think that God’s just tired of you. God’s just disgusted with you. He’s tired of seeing you fall, and He probably just wants to kick you when

you're down. And He's tired of you drifting off the path. He's tired of trying to get you back on the path, because that's how people in your life would respond.

But that's not Who God is. That's a warped view of God. When you fall, God just wants to pick you up. When you get off the path, God just wants to get you back on the path. When you're despairing, God wants to fill your life with hope. He wants you to succeed. He wants you to walk hand in hand with Him down this path, and He's committed to making that happen. That's Who He is. It's a beautiful picture of God.

Verse 15:

The eyes of all look to You, and You give them their food in due time. You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing. (Psalm 145:15-16)

Every person on the face of the planet, every thing that God has created, ultimately is dependent upon God to survive. And God gives them what they need when they need it. Now one question that could arise out of that: If that's true then how come there's all these starving people and starving children in the world? It's a good question.

Over the years it's been interesting to me how we blame God for that. When study after study after study after study concludes the same thing: There is more than enough food in the world to feed every person. God has given us an abundance of food. The problem isn't God. The problem is we're selfish. The problem is nations are selfish. The problem is nations can't get along.

There's enough food in our world today to feed every person in the world and have food left over. God's provided more than we need. The problem isn't God; the problem is us and what we do with what we've been given.

It's interesting in verse 16 he says, **“You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing.”** Do you believe that this God will satisfy your every desire? That would be another way to measure a right view of God. The problem is we don't believe that. That's why we seek to have our desires met in other ways, in other things. We try to satisfy our desires in other relationships, through money, through things, through position, through power, through pleasure, because we're not convinced that God will do His job. Do you realize that if you passionately pursue God with all your heart, He's promised He'll satisfy your every desire?

Verse 17:

The LORD is righteous in all His ways and kind in all His deeds. The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth. (Psalm 145:17-18)

Now this is an amazing thing. When you read through this Psalm and you recognize this God is *so* glorious, He's *so* majestic, He's *so* great, He's *so* gracious, He's *so* merciful, He's *so* kind, He picks me up when I fall, He gives me hope when I'm despairing, He's there to satisfy my every need—and then this same God says, “to everyone who wants to know Me, for everyone who wants Me, all you have to do is call on Me, and I'll be there.” But He does say, “You have to call on Me *in truth.*” It's a key phrase in this Psalm. What that means is you cannot just define God any way you want. You come to God as He is on His terms. The idea that all religions lead to God simply is not true. God Himself says, “That's not true. You come to Me, you come to Me on My terms. But if you're willing to come to Me on My terms as I am, all you have to do is call, and I will be there.”

David says,

He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him [or reverence Him or honor Him]; He will also hear their cry and will save them. (Psalm 145:19)

It's a remarkable concept. No matter who you are. No matter what you've done. No matter what's in your past. No matter how much of a loser you may feel like you are. Rich or poor, it doesn't matter. If you want to know this remarkable God, both now and forever, all you have to do is ask. And He will come, and He will save.

The New Testament defines this further as understanding that God at a point in time became flesh Himself. And allowed Himself to be nailed on a cross in payment for your sin. He died in your place because there's nothing you can do to perform for God that would impress God or deserve a place in heaven. So God did it for you.

God took your sins on the cross, and if you're willing to believe that, to acknowledge you're a sinner and say, "I believe Jesus died for me." And to embrace Jesus as your Savior, God not only forgives your sins, but He desires an intimate, personal relationship with you. Imagine a God this spectacular knowing your name, walking with you through the joys and the valleys of life—a God like this Who desires spending forever with you! And all you have to do is ask – to come to God on God's terms and receive Jesus by faith.

Verse 20:

The LORD keeps all who love Him, [He keeps them forever.] But all the wicked He will destroy.

There is this one reminder in this Psalm that if you choose to reject God, if you choose to reject His salvation, there is a consequence to that. You will be destroyed forever. For those who respond to God and His salvation, you will experience His grace, His mercy, His lovingkindness, and He will keep you forever. Just for the asking. But for those who choose to reject that, there will be condemnation forever.

Verse 21:

My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD, and all flesh will bless His holy name forever and ever.

"All flesh will bless" – it's the same Hebrew word as before – one day, all flesh will kneel, will surrender, before the God who is King. David utters his choice.

The question is not whether you'll kneel before God or not. The New Testament affirms the same message: One day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord – Jesus is King – to the glory of God.

The question is not whether you will kneel or not. The question is whether you'll do it now, in an act of your will, or whether you'll do it one day when you have no choice. But one day, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess. All flesh will kneel and surrender to the One Who is King.

This morning God offers you the opportunity to experience His salvation. To know this God Who is so wondrous; Who is so great; Who is so gracious and merciful and loving and kind. A God Who picks you up when you fall; Who gives you hope when you despair; a God that is waiting and

longing to enter into a relationship with you. If you're just willing to call and to embrace Jesus as Savior, He will keep you now and forever.

But for those who choose to reject God's gift of salvation, you will experience an eternal condemnation, separated from God. But one day, you will *still* bow a knee and you will know that He is King, that He is Lord. My prayer for everyone of us this morning is that we would choose in an act of our will today to receive God's salvation, that we might know Him, that He might keep us, now and forever.

Our Father, we are thankful that You are such a gracious and merciful God. Lord, it seems like every day we as people on this earth figure out some new way to offend You. And yet You respond with grace, mercy, slow to anger and lovingkindness. Today to each person that hears this message, You offer salvation that we can know You, that You will keep us with You forever. Lord, I pray this morning that every one of us would be willing to kneel, to surrender ourselves before the King. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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