

August 2/3, 2008

Praise the Lord

Psalm 149

Pastor Bryan Clark

(Three young girls clogging)

Anything is dull after that! (laughter) I believe God was absolutely delighted in what He just saw. I'll talk more about that in just a minute.

Over the years I've concluded there is nothing more significant in your life than your view of God. It affects everything you do; it affects why you do what you do. Over a lifetime, we cultivate a view of God, often times based on our experiences, based on different things we've heard and been taught. But I think all of us are on a journey, throughout our lifetime, to correct faulty views of God and ultimately to see God as He truly is.

Every summer we try to choose at least one of the Psalms to use as kind of a platform to talk about worship (what we do and why we do it). I'd like to do that this morning. If you have a Bible, turn with us to Psalm 149. Worship is one of those things that God has put into our life, to help us constantly correct our view of God, and keep our eyes rightly focused on Him. There are five Psalms at the end of the 150 Psalms, that are called the Hallel Psalms, or we would say Hallelujah Psalms. They're most often translated with the words, "Praise the Lord". You'll notice in Psalm 149, the opening line is, "Praise the Lord", the closing line, "Praise the Lord". It's the Hebrew, "Hallel". So, Psalms 146 to 150 are called the Hallel Psalms and they're just kind of an all out praise of God.

Verse 1:

Praise the LORD!

Sing to the LORD a new song,

And His praise in the congregation of the godly ones. (*NASB, Psalm 149:1)

It opens with this all out call to worship, "**Praise the LORD!**"! Now one of the things that's interesting for us to try to process, is just the fact that God has called us to be a worshipping people. Think of it this way: Say I tell you this morning that starting this week, every Thursday night at 7:00, I'm going to invite all of you, and I'm going to require all of you to gather in order to praise me. And I want you to praise me for an hour and then you can go home. Now, you would have some problems with that, and rightfully so. You would think either *he's incredibly arrogant* or *incredibly insecure*, but anyway we process that, it seems really inappropriate.

And so, it's very hard for us to process that there is One who is worthy of that, and that is what God has called us to. But, it's more than that. God has created us to be a worshipping people; that's the essence of who we are. Every single person who's ever been born, worships something. There's something deep inside of us that is hardwired to worship.

God has called us to worship Him. It's the only worship that is satisfying; it's the only worship that really meets that deepest need that we have in our lives. So God has called us to be worshippers as the ultimate privilege, the ultimate expression of what it means to be made in His image. But, it's also true that worship is what reminds us who God is, about who we are as the people of God. There are people this morning who walked through these doors and they are in a great deal of pain. They

are broken; they are struggling; and it's in those moments that we remember who God is. We remember who we are as the people of God.

That's why he says, "**Sing to the Lord a new song**". The idea of a new song really carries the idea that this is our generation's expression of who God is to us, how God has met us in our hour of need, what our experience with God has been. There are those people that get it in their minds that the real sacred music is "old". And they really want to dismiss the "new". But, if you read through the Psalms, you simply can't do that. Over and over and over again, in the Psalms, we are called to sing unto the Lord a "new" song. God calls each generation to write their experience with God. This is how God has met us today, as the people of God.

You have to remember the old great hymns of the faith were, at one time, a new song. They were that generation's expression of what God has done in their lifetime. And they were probably very controversial in their day as well. So, we sing unto the Lord a new song. But I think the Psalms also call us to remember and retell what God has done in generations gone by. That's a common theme throughout the Psalms.

I think that's the place of the great old hymns of the faith. We're going back to songs that, at one time, were new songs that expressed how God was faithful in generations gone by. And so we blend together the fact that God has been faithful for generations, and God has shown up today. And that's a part of the blend of the old and the new. You can attend churches today where all they sing are the great old hymns of the faith and, if you listen to those people talk, that is a reflection of what they believe. The best days were those days. They are still living in the past and apparently God hasn't shown up for years. You can also go to churches that sing nothing but the new, and if you listen to them, they are slowly losing their way because they have no sense of "root". They have no sense of the people that have gone before them; they have no sense of this relay race of faith that defines us. I think the Psalms clearly call us to bring together the old and the new.

He says, "**And His praise in the congregation of the godly ones**". This is a call to corporate worship; it's a gathering of the people of God, the congregation of God. Sometimes I hear people say that worship is just simply between you and God, that the only audience in worship is God. I think that is completely incorrect. I think when you read through the scriptures, there is both a vertical dimension and there is a horizontal dimension. Sometimes we're singing to God, but sometimes we're singing to one another "about" God. That's part of what it means to gather together as the people of God, to be a worshipping people.

We have this bad habit here in the west, in North America, of defining our Christian faith as really a very private, personal, individual faith. You have to understand, when you read through the scriptures, that is simply not correct. We are defined as the people of God; we are a redeemed people; we are a congregation of people. Even the way we've designed this auditorium is so that we can actually see one another. Not only are we singing to God; sometimes we're singing to one another "about" God. It's not purely a private thing; it's something we do together.

As I mentioned before, there are people that walk through these doors this morning and they're in a lot of pain. Life has hit them very hard and they're struggling to get through another day. Part of what they need from you is to remind them, "God is good; God is faithful; God is filled with mercy and grace and forgiveness and our God is going to get you through another day". They need that from you and that's a part of what worship is about.

When he says "**the congregation of the godly ones**", he's meaning every person today who's trusted Jesus as Savior. They're sometimes translated "saints", sometimes translated "Holy Ones". Now in the Hebrew language there were two words that are often translated, "Godly Ones or Holy Ones" or "Saints". One's a Hebrew word that means to be set apart, to be a distinct people. There's a second Hebrew word that means someone who is the recipient of God's covenant love, filled with the love of God, so in turn, we love God back. That's this word; this word is specifically talking about, yes, "God loves the world". But, there is a very specific covenant love that God pours out on His people, filled with that love, you turn around and love God in return.

The New Testament word "Saint" is basically that Greek word which is a combination of both of those concepts. When we worship, we are a gathering of people whom God loves and we express our love back to God. Based on what we read in verse one is a good place to talk about our philosophy of worship. If you'd like to know more about our philosophy of worship, those are available this weekend. They're at the information centers, the Publication Center; take one home and read it.

We are very clear that when we gather to worship on the weekends, we are targeting believers. There are different ideas in the church world today about what the purpose of the weekend service is. For us, it is very clear; we are targeting believers. We are a gathering of those whom God loves and those who love God, in order to sing our praises to God, and to remind one another of who God is.

We understand every weekend, in every service, there are people here who are on some sort of a spiritual journey. They don't yet understand; they don't yet believe; they're trying to figure this out. There are those of you here this morning that fall into that category. We're very happy to have you here. We're delighted to have you among us, but understand the target, the focus, is on believers. This is a training; this is a discipleship; this is a "building up" so that we go out and reach the people where we work, in our neighborhoods and so forth.

That makes a good place to take a little bit of a rabbit trail and maybe I can clear something up. Once in a while we will hear people say, and typically they're disgruntled when they say this, "Berean is just trying to be Willow Creek". If you don't know Willow Creek, they're a large church in the Chicago area. People say, "You know, Berean is just trying to become Willow Creek and that's why there are all these changes". You know, I have to tell you; that's just silly. You can only make that statement if you're completely ignorant about the philosophy and ministry of Willow Creek and you're completely ignorant of the philosophy of Lincoln Berean, because we're not alike at all. We're not even close!

We do ministry differently. Now, that's no slam on Willow Creek; they just do ministry differently. God has used them in a significant way. They have brought hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people into the Kingdom. It's interesting how often people that are critical of Bill Hybels and Willow Creek are the same people who haven't shared the Gospel with anybody in ten years. Say okay, they've reached hundreds, and you haven't shared the message in ten years. I think I like their philosophy better than yours. But, at the end of the day, God's called them to something different. This isn't Chicago. We're just simply seeking to be faithful to what we think God has called us to be here in Lincoln, Nebraska, and our philosophy of ministry is very different from theirs.

Verse 2:

**Let Israel be glad in his Maker;
Let the sons of Zion rejoice in their King.**

We worship God because He is our maker. God is our Creator; every single person here this morning has been made *on purpose, for a purpose*. I can assure you this morning, there is nobody who delights in you more than God does. There is no one who celebrates you for who you are more than God does. God has made us to be a worshipping people, so we celebrate God as our Maker; we celebrate God as our King.

It's a little bit hard for us to "enter in"; what exactly does that mean? Most of us have never lived in a monarchy where the king is in charge; the king really doesn't care about opinion polls; the king is not re-elected. The king is the authority; the king is sovereign; the king calls the shots. But, it's more than that. In the ancient world, your king was everything. If you had a bad king, he would make your life absolutely miserable. If you had a weak king, you lived every day in fear that the neighboring nations were going to attack and conquer. You lived in fear everyday that you could be killed, your women could be raped or you'd be made into slaves. So a weak king created a tremendous amount of insecurity and fear.

Contrary to that, a strong, good king was everything. A strong, good king gave you a life of peace, gave you a life of security, gave you the life that your heart longs for. So, when we worship God as our King, that's what we're saying. This is a King who is good! This is a King who is powerful! This is a King who, ultimately, will always win the victory! This is a King capable of keeping His promises. That's why we can have peace; that's why we can have joy; that's why we can know in the most difficult of times, it's going to be okay. So, we worship this magnificent King who is both good and powerful.

Verse 3:

**Let them praise His name with dancing;
Let them sing praises to Him with timbrel and lyre.**

The Jewish people really knew how to party and they really knew how to worship. The dancing is very reflective of the Jewish culture. Often times, it was a very raucous, lively celebration of God. Sometimes we get it in our heads that for worship to be worship, it has to be kind of sober and it has to be kind of somber and it has to be really quiet. But sometimes worship is just all out celebration of God. If we can do that for a football team, why is it inappropriate for God? Sometimes worship is a little bit rowdy as we celebrate who God is.

The idea of dance is an interesting one. Of course, for generations it was forbidden in many movements, including our own. One time after church, years ago, a lady on the way out said, "If we sing one more song that has the word dance in it, I will not come back"! So, I went through the Psalms and I said, "*Now what do you do with all the references in the Psalms to worship the Lord with dancing*"? And the answer was, "*That's not what it means.*" Well, it **is** what it means; that's silly! Of course, that's what it means. Just because the world has corrupted dance doesn't mean we can't redeem it back for God's purposes. That's true of all the arts.

Sometimes we get way too narrow a definition of worship and we really put God in a box. We lose sight of all the many ways that God loves to be worshipped. God loves to be worshipped through the dance, through the visual arts, through pottery... many, many different ways. Now, some of you would say, "You know, that dance thing, it just doesn't do anything for me". Okay, that's nice; I'll make a note of that. But, what if it does something very meaningful to the person next to you? Isn't that okay?

Years ago, there was a family that came to church, and I happened to know that just the fact that they walked through the doors (it was a Christmas Eve), was a really, really big deal. This woman was very hard in her heart and, to this day, has not yet trusted Christ as Savior. But, in the course of that Christmas Eve service, there was only one thing that melted her, and that was a dance. I don't know why it spoke to her the way it did but she absolutely wept through the entire thing.

We're like a family and families are different. A couple of weeks ago, Ann did the painting. You may be one of those people that said, "You know, I just didn't get that painting thing." Okay, I'll make a note of that. But, what if it was deeply meaningful to the person next to you? Isn't that okay? After Saturday night church the week that Ann painted the painting, I visited with a young man who, I know for a fact, is in a tremendous amount of pain. He's going through something very difficult, and every Saturday night we talk for a little bit. And he met me immediately after the service and he said, "That painting spoke to me more deeply than you can imagine". If you remember, at the end of Ann's painting, she put the word "refreshing". He said, "When she painted that, I lost it!" He said, "I just wept." It spoke to him deeply; it may or may not to you. That's fine; not every element is going to speak to everyone the same way.

Think about life as a family. When you think about your family, does everybody like the same television show? Does everybody like to go the same place on vacation? Does everybody like the same restaurant? Does everybody like the same music? Part of what it means to be a family is recognizing we don't all like the same things the same way. There's always a "give and take" to the dynamics of the family; that's just the way it works.

What I like to do on vacation might be very different from what Patti likes to do. What I like in terms of music might be really different than what the girls like. But that's part of what it means to be a family. There are many different ways to worship. Some of those ways may or may not speak to you but, you need to know, they may also bring the person next to you to tears as God speaks to their heart in a very unique way.

Not only worship the Lord with dancing but then "**sing praises to Him with timbrel and lyre**". A timbrel is basically a tambourine; there is no subtle way to play a tambourine; it's a pretty rowdy instrument. The lyre is kind of a combination between a guitar and a harp, a stringed instrument. It's just reminding us again, of the diversity of worship.

When I was growing up in the '60's and the '70's, we were really right in the middle of the music wars. There was a lot of debate about styles in music; there was a lot of debate about instruments. At that time, about the only instruments that were allowed on the stage were a piano and an organ. You may or may not know that when the organ was introduced into worship, it was highly controversial because it was a dancehall instrument. Now, somehow, it's become sacred. I remember when they were trying to introduce drums and guitars and, heaven

forbid, an electric bass! And then somebody actually plugged a guitar in and suddenly acoustical was okay, but the electric was bad. Something about that electricity was apparently evil! (laughter) It just goes on and on, all these debates about instruments.

The argument that was consistently made is those are the same instruments that are used in the secular world. Those are the instruments that are used in rock and roll and, because they're used in the secular world, they're inappropriate for worship. Let's think about that for a minute. Was it true that the tambourine and the lyre and the many instruments named in Psalm 150 were the instruments of the culture? Absolutely! Go to the Book of Daniel and look at the instruments that were played when people were required to bow down and worship Nebuchadnezzar exactly the same as Psalm 150. Of course they would be; they were the instruments of the day! All of us reflect the reality of our culture. Does that make it evil? Don't you drive a similar car to your unsaved neighbor? Don't you live in a similar house? Don't you wear similar fashions? Don't you eat at similar restaurants? Aren't all these things a reflection of the culture? Why does this just apply to instruments all of a sudden?

If you're going to hold to that position, you really have to dramatically change a lot of the things in your life. You better go back to a sod house; you better put an out-house out back; you better get a horse and buggy....on and on we go. The reality is, yes, they're the instruments of our culture; that's just normal. What matters is what we do with those instruments. What matters is the issue of the "heart" as they're used for evil purposes, or used for worship.

Verse 4:

**For the LORD takes pleasure in His people;
He will beautify the afflicted ones with salvation.**

Verse four is worth the price of the Psalm. I love when it says, **the LORD takes pleasure** [it could be translated "delights"] **in His people**. I will assure you of this: there is no one on the face of this planet that delights in you like God does. There is no one that takes more pleasure in you than God does. I think one of the reasons we sometimes struggle with God's call to worship, is we imagine that God is sitting on a throne with his arms crossed and he's saying, "Okay, people, worship me" ...like we're some sort of slaves being forced to do something against our will.

That's a terrible picture of God! Imagine this scene: imagine there are grandparents who are somewhere and they don't know that their grandchildren are there. And these grandparents turn around, just in time to see their grandkids running to them with their arms stretched out. Think of the expression on the face of those grandparents; they absolutely come to life! You look in their eyes; there is the absolute sheer delight of a grandparent seeing their grandchildren. That is a beautiful picture of God. That's how God views worship. God views worship with an absolute delight. With this look in His eyes, like a grandparent looking at grandchildren, He's saying He's absolutely delighted to see you today.

That's a beautiful picture of how God takes pleasure in His people. Do you realize how excited God is to be a part of what we're doing this morning? God is delighted to welcome you here and He is enjoying this more than you can imagine. There is nobody that delights in you like God delights in you. You say, "Ah, I'm not sure I'm buying that. I mean, if you knew what I did this week; if you understood how many times I've failed this week; if you understood what I see when I look in the

mirror, I'm not buying that. I think God is rolling His eyes and saying again, "*what are you doing here?*".

You see, that's because we're viewing ourselves through our performance; we're viewing ourselves through earthly eyes. But God says, that's not how He views us. **He will beautify the afflicted ones** (could be translated lowly ones) **with salvation**. What delights God is that He has redeemed back the people whom He has created. He has made it possible, through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, for people whom He has created to know Him and worship Him, to once again, be beautiful in His eyes. He doesn't look at us through our performance; He doesn't look at us through our failures. He looks at us through the eyes of what His Son has done for us on the cross.

He looks at you through the eyes of salvation and, regardless of your performance this week, he looks at you and says, "You are beautiful! And I couldn't be more delighted to see you here"! Nobody dances over you; nobody celebrates you like God celebrates you! That's part of the beauty of worship. If you don't understand verse four, you're never going to get this. You'll never really understand how absolutely delighted God is to see you here this morning and He thinks you're beautiful. When I see it that way, how can I stay away? It's got to be my highest priority.

Verse 5:

Let the godly ones [that's our same word for the godly ones, holy ones, those whom God has loved and we loved Him] **exult in glory;**
Let them sing for joy on their beds.

When you read through the Psalms you see very consistently that the bed is a place of pain. The bed is a place of torment; it is symbolic of those long, long nights that feel like they're never going to end and you often have Psalms that talk about tears on the bed and the pain and those long dark nights. But, at the end of the Psalm, and the next to the last Psalm, there is this wonderful message. As we gather as a worshipping people, we're reminded that God is delighted in us. We're reminded that God thinks we're beautiful. Even in those most private, painful places, there is a song in our hearts because we've corrected our view of God. We know what's true of God and in our most painful moments, there is still a song in our hearts. That's what He's saying there.

Verses 6 through 9 end this Psalm and make it a little bit distinctive from the other five in that there's a strong military flair. There's this sense that our God who is our King is the one who gives us the ultimate victory and that is celebrated.

Let the high praises of God be in their mouth,
And a two-edged sword in their hand,
To execute vengeance on the nations
And punishment on the peoples,
To bind their kings with chains
And their nobles with fetters of iron,
To execute on them the judgment written;
This is an honor for all His godly ones.
Praise the LORD!

There is this sense that God brings the ultimate victory, He cannot be defeated and He has called His people to be part of His conquering army. I love the imagery in verse 6 that, as worshippers, there is a song on our lips and a sword in our hands. God has called us to be a worshipping army. You have this picture throughout the Old Testament. Often times, when the Israeli army would go out to battle, at the front of the army was the choir, the choir singing praises to their God as they were very much a worshipping army.

We need to understand when we gather together to worship, this is not a gathering of choir boys (no offense to those of you in the choir). But it is a gathering of warriors. There is a song of praise on our lips and there is a two edged sword in our hand. We gather to worship..... bruised, bloodied and beat up from the battle... but very much in love with our General, celebrating what we know is an ultimate victory.

Now in the old covenant, in the Old Testament, the people of God were an ethnic people; they had a literal piece of ground. There were literal Kings and nations that were threatening to conquer them and they literally went to war. In the new covenant those concepts are spiritualized. We are a spiritual people, not an ethnic people. We have a spiritual piece of ground, not a literal piece of ground. We are still surrounded by the enemy, seeking to destroy us, but it's no longer flesh and blood; it is a spiritual enemy.

2 Corinthians 5, Ephesians 6, many New Testament passages talk about the fact that we are at war. And the war is against the devil; the war is against the enemies in wicked places. The enemy is not my unsaved neighbor. The enemy is the devil who is seeking to destroy my unsaved neighbor, and I am at war with the enemy for the salvation of my neighbor. And so when I worship, I do so with a song of praise on my lips. But I've got a two edged sword in my hand and I'm taking this song into the battle. It's a beautiful imagery of what we're about as the people of God.

He says in verse nine that this is an honor bestowed upon the people of God. God doesn't need us to win this fight but God, in His goodness and grace, has allowed us the honor of being part of His victorious army, to be part of what He's doing to change the world and to be part of the ultimate victory. And so, He's called us to be a part of what He is doing that will ultimately bring forth victory.

Psalm 149 is a wonderful Psalm that calls us to be a worshipping people. It doesn't cover everything we need to say about worship, but it does give us a lot to think about. As I close my message, what I'd like to do is walk back through what we've done this morning and just talk about it a little bit, so that when you attend week in and week out, you have some sense of what we're thinking about when we put together a worship service. We'll put this slide up (on the screen) as a reminder.

If you were late when you came this morning, I am sorry for you because you missed a wonderful *prelude* from our musical ensemble. The prelude is designed to get you dialed in, to get you focused, but there are lots of ways to do that. Those of us that are introverts, we tend to say that the way you prepare your heart is you have to be quiet. You have to be meditative; you have to be prayerful and that's a very legitimate thing. And then we find our verses to support that. But, that's very consistent with my personality too. The extroverts are busy talking to people and encouraging people and celebrating who we are as the people of God. They see that as how they prepare their hearts to meet with God, and they find their verses. I would say they're both right.

We have to understand, the time we spend interacting with one another is very much an element of worship. It's very much God's value system and I think it is how some people prepare their hearts to engage God; so it can be done many different ways. When Mike asked us to turn and to greet one another, that's not an interruption in the worship. That is very much a part of the worship that delights God. God feels that way too! He's delighted to see His people together. The instrumental opening then, usually, typically, has something to do with the lights coming down. That's really a way to say, "Okay, here we go, it is time now to focus; it is time to engage". There is nobody who can do that for you; that is a decision you have to make.

We sang the *doxology*. It's referred to as the "new" doxology because it's the old words, in essence, with a new arrangement. Now every single person in this room would say, "I prefer the old way; I prefer the new way." Fine, again I'll take note of that. But understand, sometimes the new just refreshes the old. Sometimes the old connects with past experiences and so forth and one is not better than the other. The substance is the truth; the substance is the truth of the words. Therefore, whether it's sung in an old style or a new style, it is still very much there to call you to worship. I'll say it a little more bluntly. If you struggle worshipping, whether it's the old style or the new style, the problem is not the arrangement. The problem is your heart, because the substance of what is there has not changed either way.

We went to a *congregational reading* that actually was a slightly edited version of the Apostle's Creed. In a post modern culture, where it seems like all truth is relative, we dial in on the fact that the church, for 2000 years, has believed the same thing. We went back through reciting basically what we believe and affirming the fact that the church has believed that exact same truth for 2000 years, and we're continuing to believe it full speed ahead.

Sometimes people will say, "Well, you know, we don't really do many creeds and we don't do statements of faith and we don't do confessions". Those are based on various traditions and liturgies that people have been a part of. There's nothing wrong with that, but my answer would be, "Yes, we do: we do them every single week. It's just most of the time, we do them to music". And people would say, "Well, wait a minute; that doesn't count". Yes it does! Do you know that throughout the Old Testament, almost all the statements of faith, almost all the confessions, almost all the creeds were put to music? Read through the Psalms. How many of them say, "a note to the choir director", "a note to the choir director", "a note for the choir director"! Even into the New Testament church, most of them were done to music. It was much later that the tradition started to lay it out as a liturgy, as many denominations understand it today. One's not better than the other, but it's still very much there on a weekly basis. *In Christ Alone* (song) is a great example of that. *In Christ Alone* is basically taking the Apostle's Creed and putting it to music and saying this is absolutely what we believe. At that point in the service, we could have prayed and gone home and every person in this room would have clearly heard the Gospel articulated. Because it was there twice, back to back.

We call the next *announcements*; I wish we could come up with a better word than that. It had to do with the "Men's Fraternity" and some of the things that Mark shared with us. It's very important to understand that's not an interruption to worship. That is another form of worship, because worship doesn't stop at these doors. Worship is a way of life; worship is the Men's Fraternity; worship is the many places where you can serve; worship is being a Ranger in the children's ministry. There has to be some way that we let you know of other opportunities to serve, which is

an act of worship. So, it's just another way we worship; we need to see it that way.

Of course *offering* isn't just a way to pay the bills. It's an element of worship. It's another way we express to God that we love Him and we gladly give back to Him. When we get to the *prayer*, just a note here, and that is, every week we try to pray for something specifically. Basically it goes like this. Every other week we pray for another church somewhere in our community. And typically we have requests that are very specific. We get those because we contact them and we say, "On such and such a date we're going to be praying for you. How would you like us to pray"? So, that's where those requests typically come from. On the "off week" from that, we pray for something specific related to "this" ministry. It might be a Season of Life, might be Youth, might be Children, it might be any number of things. But, that's how that rhythm of our public prayer goes.

And then the song, *You are God*. I really hope you were listening to what you were committing to when you sang that song; that is a very heavy song. There is a line in there that says, "God, You are God". How could we say anything else based on what has preceded this service? It's this eruption of, "God, You are God," and then comes the line, "You are all I'm living for." Was that true this week? Was that true with what you looked at on the internet? Was that true with how you spent your money? Was that true with how you spent your time? Was that true with every word that came out of your mouth with your spouse? To your kids? To your employer? See, that's a pretty big commitment, "God You are all I'm living for." Every single one of us, looking back to the past week would say, "Ouch!" But, that's the point; it drives us back to what we're supposed to be about. God, that is what I want, and that brings us back into focus; I have got to do better!

And then, praise you with the *dance*. What I would say regarding the girls and their clogging is, my belief that God was absolutely delighted with that. The way God has made me, I'm never going to clog for Jesus. (laughter) But, there's something deep inside of me that wants to. (laughter) When I watch these girls, I'm not a passive spectator. There's something deep in my heart that says, "God, if I could do that for you, I would; this is for You!" They do it for me and I just connect with it and I said, "God, this is for You! Because that's how I feel about You!" I wish I could play the violin like Jeremy. There's something deep inside of me that wants to express it like Jeremy does. I can't! I can't, but Jeremy does it for me. I'm not a passive observer. I enter into that and I say, "God, that's how I feel about You and Jeremy's doing it for me! God that's my gift to You; it's just from Jeremy." That's what those expressions of worship are all about. We're not spectators, but we rather connect with what God is doing.

We went into the *message*. These are the three elements to go. The first song, *The Greater Song*, has a high degree of repetition. It's a wonderful song that is simply saying, "God, I wish there was yet a greater song for you". It's kind of a metaphor, saying, "God, I wish there was yet a better way for me to say how much I love You.... a better way for me to say how much I want to serve You. There's got to be yet a better song for that". With a great deal of repetition, it goes around and around and around. Some people love that; some people don't like it very much. Some people will say afterwards, "You know, I counted how many times that song repeats itself; it was so many times". That's a good time to say, "You know, you probably need to go read Psalm 130, 'His mercy endures forever! His mercy endures forever! His mercy endures forever! His mercy endures forever!' There's a point to that. It's actually a technique to say it over and over and over again till finally we quit daydreaming, finally we quit drifting in our minds and finally it settles in. Man, 'His mercy endures forever!'" And that's the point of that song; it's driving it home, that that is really the cry of our hearts.

And then finally, (the song) "*How Great is our God.*" There's a line in there,"that all the world will know, how great is our God". We've said it before, that it may be possible that our greatest witness is our worship. In a world where gas prices are soaring, the world is very unstable, things are falling apart, we have a hundred things that we could worry about. And yet we, as the people, gather together and, with joy in hearts, we say, "Man, our God is awesome"! That may be our greatest witness to the world, that all the world may know that our God is great!

And finally, there's one more time through the *Psalms*... to kind of bring it all together, and to settle it in our hearts before we walk out those doors. So, let's worship together.

(read by a young person)

Praise the LORD!

**Sing to the LORD a new song,
And His praise in the congregation of the godly ones.
Let Israel be glad in his Maker;
Let the sons of Zion rejoice in their King.
Let them praise His name with dancing;
Let them sing praises to Him with timbrel and lyre.
For the LORD takes pleasure in His people;
He will beautify the afflicted ones with salvation.
Let the godly ones exult in glory;
Let them sing for joy on their beds.
Let the high praises of God be in their mouth,
And a two-edged sword in their hand,
To execute vengeance on the nations
And punishment on the peoples,
To bind their kings with chains
And their nobles with fetters of iron,
To execute on them the judgment written;
This is and honor for all His godly ones.
Praise the LORD!**

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