

Psalm 135

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 08 November 2020

Preacher: Reverend David MacLeod

[0 : 00] Well, if you could have your Bibles open at Psalm 135, that would be helpful. One of the things that we're blessed with in Harris, whatever part of Harris that we stay in, is the beach.

We were at the beach yesterday for a while and most of us find that we are walking on beaches and enjoying time on the beach. And after a trip to the beach, you know you've been there.

The car knows you've been there. The house, the carpets know that you've been there because the sand, it gets everywhere. Everywhere you go after you've been out on a trip to the beach, you see the evidence of that.

The sand is everywhere. And this psalm, Psalm 135, it's a psalm that gets everywhere. When God's Word is open, we read these verses of this psalm and they're ringing bells.

They're familiar to us because they're coming from all kinds of different places within Scripture. It connects with, it's quoted all over the Bible. One of the commentators, Derek Kidner, says, Every verse of this psalm either echoes, quotes, or is quoted by some other part of Scripture.

[1 : 29] So you want an exercise tonight and the evening after you go home, you can draw lines from this psalm all over the Bible. Because it takes us on a journey far and wide through Scripture.

And I think that illustrates for us just how important this psalm is and how much it's key to the big picture of God's Word and God's plan and God's purposes.

So we ask the question, what is the purpose of this psalm? What does the psalmist hope to help us to do through this psalm? And the answer to that question is not hard to see.

It's a psalm that teaches us the importance of praising the Lord. And it's a psalm that teaches us how to praise the Lord.

Psalm 135, it's the last section within the Psalter. And it takes us into a section where we find what's called Hallelujah Psalms.

[2 : 36] So if we've got this psalm by the end of it, if we've understood it, if it's achieved in us what God designed it for, by the end of this psalm we should be saying from our hearts, Hallelujah.

Praise the Lord. So let's look at this psalm briefly. There's three points. First of all, we hear a call to praise the Lord.

Secondly, we're given causes, reasons, causes to praise the Lord. And the final point, very briefly, is we see a community of praise united in their voices as they praise the Lord.

So first of all, there's this call to praise the Lord. And that takes us from verse 1 into verse 2. Praise the Lord. Praise the name of the Lord.

Praise Him, O you servants of the Lord, you who stand in the house of the Lord, in the courts of the house of our God. So this is a clear and it's a loud call to praise.

[3 : 49] It's a call to praise. It's our first point. And I want to ask two questions on this point. First of all, who are we to praise? And then who of us is to praise the Lord?

First of all, who are we to praise? Well, we're to praise the Lord. It's crystal clear. We're to praise the Lord. The Old Testament writers, they didn't have bold and underline.

They didn't have highlighter pens to be able to make things jump out within the text of a psalm. And so in the opening two verses, three times we have that call to praise the Lord.

And through the psalm, as it progresses, seven times we have this repetitive call to praise the Lord. So we're to praise the Lord.

And the name, the Lord, is carefully used. It's the personal name for God.

[4 : 51] It's the name that highlights the fact that God wants us to know him. It's a name that highlights to us that God, in his great mercy, has reached out to us.

And made it possible for us to know him. And in verse five, the psalmist, connecting with that, he speaks personally. And he says, for I know that the Lord is great.

Psalmist is not speaking here and sharing with us some theory that he's discovered in some far-off book that he's never experienced. He is speaking from his own personal life.

He's saying, I know that the Lord is great. He knows the Lord. Because he knows the Lord, he praises the Lord and he wants others to praise the Lord.

And this is something that should never cease to amaze us. The fact that we can know the Lord. The God who made everything.

[5 : 59] That we see the majesty of the creation that we are surrounded by. The God who made us. The God who made the stars. Who made the sky. Who made the heavens.

Who made the earth. We can know him. You know, there are low-level celebrities in this world.

People who can play golf and football and sing pop songs that are popular for about two years. We can never know them. Because people will be pushing us back. No, no, you can't get near.

But the wonder is that the God of heaven and earth, we can know him. He calls us to know him.

And he has opened up the way for us to know him.

And the cost of that is immense. The cost of us being able to enter into this relationship where we can know and praise the Lord is huge.

[6 : 55] And we see this side of the cross what the psalmist couldn't see. We see that Jesus had to die. To make it possible for us to know and praise the Lord.

Sometimes when we're on the road, we meet obstacles. We should have been in Garibos last Lord's Day. But the weather was fierce, as you know. The roads were flooded.

The bribe was closed. There was an obstacle. There was no way through. And our sin is an obstacle. That stops us from being able to know the Lord.

But Jesus came into this world to take our sin away. He came to remove the obstacle. He came to open up the way so that we can know God.

And as Jesus died, remember the curtain in the temple. That place where God's presence was known in that awesome, powerful way. The curtain, as thick as a man's hand, was torn from top to bottom.

[8 : 07] Showing us that the way was open for sinners like us to come to know and to praise the Lord. And so that's where the psalm begins.

With that call to come to know God. And to praise the Lord. So who are we to praise?

We're to praise the Lord. The God who wants us to know Him. The God who has made us for Himself. And the second thing to look at here under this point is who is to praise the Lord.

Because sometimes we hear a call and we dismiss it as a call that's for somebody else but not for us. You know, when we're in the airport, if we can remember these days when we used to be in airports.

You can be waiting in the lounge for the flight time. And there's constant calls coming over the tannoy system. But most of these calls we dismiss.

[9 : 11] We have a ticket that says that we're heading from Edinburgh to Stornoway. We're hearing calls to Barbados and France and Germany and Spain and hot, far off countries.

And we're thinking, if only, but no, that call's not for me. We're waiting for this particular call. And maybe there's someone here this evening or maybe there's someone who's watching online.

And you're hearing this call from God. But quickly dismissing it. And saying, well, that's for other people. It's not for me. And yet God, through the psalmist, he quickly deals with that.

And he says to each one of us, this is for you. Praise him, O you servants of the Lord. You who stand in the house of the Lord, in the courts of the house of God.

And so, yes, this was a call to the priests and to the Levites, to those who were in full-time ministry. They were to praise the Lord. But it wasn't just for them.

[10 : 19] This was a call to all who were in the house of God. One of the commentators, Wilcox, says, the Lord's servants, as we see them in the psalm in verse 2, verse 1, the Lord's servants are all his people.

So it's for all of us. And we could go from here, where this psalm addresses those who are in the courts of the Lord, and we can go from there out into a much wider sphere.

We can think about Psalm 100. What does it say there? It says, The call for us to come to know God and to praise God is for everyone.

This is for everyone inside the church and outside of the church. Everyone who's tuning in and everyone who's not tuning in. This is a call to those who are in ministry.

This is a call to those who are in church membership. This is a call to those who come to church but aren't yet professing to be Christians. It's a call to those who are respectful, who are God-fearing but are not yet believing.

[11 : 43] It's a call to the agnostic. It's a call to the most antagonistic atheist. All people that on earth do dwell are called to sing to the Lord, to praise the Lord.

So this is for us. It's for us. Before we move on from this point, let's just ask the question in application for ourselves.

Are we praising the Lord? Perhaps before we even ask that question, let's ask the question, do we know the Lord? Have we come to the Lord in faith?

To the way that God has opened up for us in Christ? Have we come and sought simply for our sin to be taken away? Have we entered into this relationship that God calls us into?

Are we Christians? The invitation is extended. The call is sounding out loud and clear in the gospel.

[13 : 06] But we need to come in response to that call. Are we giving the Lord, whom we know, the praise that he is due?

Because the reality is we know that there is much conflict in this world. There are other people, there are other things that call us to praise them.

We are people who want praise for ourselves. But what we're taught here is that the only one who is worthy of our praise and worship is the Lord.

So we're called to praise him. It's the first point. A call to praise. The second point is we're given causes for praise.

We're given reasons why we should praise the Lord. I can think of a man whom I knew in past years.

[14 : 14] His name was John Maxwell. None of you would have met him, I don't think. He was from over, torrid in direction. And he was always saying in conversation, even in church, I would be halfway through a sermon, and he would shout out, praise the Lord.

It alarmed me at first. But he was a man who, through his life, he was always praising the Lord. He always seemed so full of joy.

He was always ready to share with other people about the Lord. And yet he had such a hard life. He suffered from polio as a teenager.

He lost the use of his legs. He was in constant pain from his teenage years until the Lord took him to glory in his 70s.

But in spite of all that he had to suffer, he never stopped praising the Lord. And so we could say that praising the Lord is not dependent on our circumstances.

[15 : 28] Our circumstances are not the thing that causes us to praise the Lord. Sometimes our circumstances would fight against us doing that. But John Maxwell taught me that praising the Lord is not conditional on having an easy, comfortable life.

Praising the Lord is caused by having a clear vision of who God is. And so the psalmist here in the next section of this psalm, he focuses our attention on who God is.

God, through the psalmist, through the psalm, he reveals himself to us. So what do we see? Who do we see as we look to the Lord who calls us to praise him? Well, we see, first of all, that God is good.

Why should we praise the Lord? Point number one within this, because God is good. Praise the Lord, verse 3, for the Lord is good. That's something that's important.

That's something that we must never lose sight of. Because if we go back to the very beginning, if we go back to Genesis 3 where we touched on this morning, we can see that the first thing that Satan sought to get Adam and Eve to stop doing was praising the Lord.

[17 : 00] And the first seed that Satan sowed in the mind of Eve as he went to tempt her and attack her was that God was not good.

Satan shows her the tree and says, look at that tree that God's holding back from you. All this knowledge of good and evil that you could have that God has that he's holding back from you. And as the serpent attacked Eve, this thought began to grow within our mind that God was not good. And as this thought developed in our mind, the praise of God ceased.

So the first sin, you could say, was to doubt God's goodness. And for us, when we doubt the goodness of God in terms of who he is and what he's done for us, our praise of the Lord is suffocated.

And once we stop praising God, once we lose sight of the fact that he is good, sin rushes in. The devil launches a fierce attack.

[18:18] Ligon Duncan, the commentator says, one of the enemies of praise is ingratitude. If we are not sufficiently grateful for who the Lord is and what he has done for us, our praise will be anemic and weak.

We know that, don't we? But we could take that quote and we could turn it around and say, one of the friends of praise, one of the drivers for praise, one of the causes for praise is gratitude. When we see who the Lord is, when we see what the Lord has done for us, we will be grateful. We will see that God is good and our praise of him will be full.

And strong. So where do we see who the Lord is? Well, we see something of who he is and his beauty and his majesty and his power and creation.

And we see it in amazing tones around us here. And we see more of who God is and his goodness as we open his word.

[19:30] And as we are in scripture, he reveals his character to us and his attributes to us and his works to us. And then as we look from the word of God to the word made flesh, Jesus, we have a million reasons.

Many causes to see the goodness, the grace, the mercy of God. So for our praise to be genuine and heartfelt and spirit-filled, we need to be looking to the Lord.

We need to be looking to Jesus. If we look around us, as Eve did in the garden, we'll always see something that annoys us.

We'll always see something that isn't the way that we want it to be, something that we want to have that we can't yet grasp. And that stops us praising the Lord. When our eyes are all around us.

Of what's wrong with the world. And when we look at ourselves, we very quickly become self-obsessed. And when things go wrong, we're absolutely flooded with self-pity.

[20:48] We lose sight of God and his goodness. Praise dries up. But when we look to who God is, as we are encouraged to in this psalm, when we see who he is and his goodness and his grace and his mercy and his power and his justice and his righteousness, we focus on him.

Our hearts begin to respond in praise. And when we look at what he's done for us. When we take time to remember his death as we are called to.

When we revisit Calvary. As we must each day. Our hearts surely respond in praise of God and his goodness.

It's the message of that hymn that we know well. When I survey the wondrous cross. On which the Prince of Glory died.

My richest gain I count but loss. And poor contempt on all my pride. Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast. Saving the death of Christ my God. All the vain things that charm me most.

[22:07] And catch my eye. I sacrifice them. To his blood. See from his head. His hands, his feet. Sorrow and love flow mingled down.

Did ever such love and sorrow meet? Or thorns compose so rich a crown? Then the response of praise. Where the whole realm of nature mine.

That were an offering far too small. Love so amazing. So divine. Demands my soul. My life. My all. See a survey of who God is. And what he has done for us. Enables us to see. Even when life is not easy. That God is good.

And the reality is. Contrary to what many people think. Praising the Lord is not a duty that we have to endure. It's actually a delight.

[23:12] It's actually a delight. That we cannot get anything better than. Psalmist says there. Sing praises to his name.

For it is pleasant. It's good. And for Christians we know that. For Christians we know that when we are in that close fellowship with God.

When we are praising the Lord. Amongst his people. From our hearts. It's a taste of heaven.

There's nothing in this world that compares to the sweetness.

The pleasantness. Of knowing. And proclaiming in praise. That God is good. Causes for praise of God.

Well. His goodness is the first that we see within this section. The second thing that we see here. Another cause. Where we are. Where we praise God. Is with that realisation.

[24 : 14] That he has chosen us. God has chosen us. Verse 4. For the Lord has chosen Jacob for himself. Israel for his special treasure. Now the fact that God has chosen us.

Is something that's crystal clear. In the Bible. We can jump from text to text. To see that God is the God who chooses us. He elects us. He takes the initiative.

And he is the one who calls us to himself. Ephesians 1. At verse 3. It says. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Who has blessed us. With every spiritual blessing. In the heavenly realms. In Christ. Just as he chose us in him. Before the foundation of the world.

He chose us in him. In Christ. Before the foundation of the world. John 15. Verse 16.

[25 : 15] Jesus says to these disciples. Who were such a disaster. So many of them so often. And Jesus says to them. You did not choose me. But I chose you.

God has chosen us. It's a staggering thing. And when we think about who we are. The fact that God would choose us.

Surely has to amaze us. Because if we have any kind of. Spiritual awareness. We surely see how. How bad we can be.

Samistone verse 4. Talks about. The fact that God has. Has chosen Jacob. Now. Who was Jacob? Well he was a sneaky. Scheming. Untrustworthy thief.

Who tricked his father. Who double crossed his brother. He's full of deceit. Many failures in the life of Jacob.

[26 : 23] And yet God chose him. Not because Jacob was good. He wasn't. But because God was good. And gracious. In verse 5.

God chose Israel. For his special treasure. So we ask. Well what was so special. About Israel.

Were they a big. Powerful nation. And the answer is. No they weren't. They were far from it.

Were they a faithful. Loyal people then. Again. No. Far from it. They were cantankerous. They were quarrelsome. They were unfaithful. And yet God chose them.

For his special treasure. Why? Because he loved them. Why? Because God is good.

And when we look at Jacob. As an individual. And when we look at Israel. As a nation. And the salvation history. That we have in the Old Testament.

[27 : 26] There are many failures. And what we're doing. Is we're looking in the mirror. And we're seeing ourselves. We are Jacob.

Israel was an Old Testament picture. Of the church. Of Jesus Christ. If we are. And if we are Christians. We are part of it. And so we have all.

The same. Ugly. Sinful. Tendencies. Of Jacob. And Israel. We are as unattractive. As they. So often. Were. And yet. If we are Christians. It's because God.

Has chosen us. To be. His special treasure. God the Father. Sent his son. To die for us. In spite of who we are.

Whilst we were still sinners. Not when we were sorted. Christ. Died for us. And when we think on that.

[28 : 27] It should humble us. It should fill us. With all. And it should drive us. To our knees. In worship. And cause us. From the heart.

Out. To say. Praise the Lord. Cause us. For praise. Of God.

His goodness. He is good. The fact that he chose us. Thirdly. The. The fact that he is sovereign. Verse five. For I know that the Lord.

Is great. And. Our Lord is above all gods. And if we rewind back to. Old Testament times. There were many false gods.

We read of them in. In scripture. So the psalmist. Contrasts. The one true God. With all these other false gods. And he says.

[29 : 25] In the psalm. Our God. Does not sit. Alongside. All these other gods. As another deity. No. He's. He's above. Far above.

All. Gods. And in verses. 15 to 18. The psalmist. He drives that point home. And he makes clear. That all these other so-called gods.

Aren't gods at all. They're just bits of metal. That have been beaten into shape. With hammers. By. By men. The idols of the nations.

Verse 15. Are silver and gold. The work of men's hands. They have mouths. But they do not speak. Eyes they have. But they do not see. They have ears. But they do not hear. Nor is there any breath

in their mouths.

Those who make them. Are like them. So is everyone who trusts them. But the Lord. Says the psalmist. The one true God.

[30 : 25] He cannot be beaten. Into the shape. That we want him to be. He won't be molded. Into the image. That we are comfortable with. He won't sit alongside.

The other religious gurus. Of our day. He is the powerful. Sovereign. Living. God. And whatever the Lord.

Pleases. Verse 6. He does. In heaven. And on earth. There is nothing. That he cannot do. There is nowhere. That he is not able.

To overrule. In the seas. And in all. Deep places. Verse 7. He causes the vapors. To ascend. From the ends of the earth.

He makes. Lightning for the rain. He brings the wind. Out of his treasuries. Such as the sovereign. Power. Of God. And again.

[31 : 20] That should humble us. As we look. To this God. Who reveals himself to us. In this psalm. It should humble us. That such.

A God. Would condescend. To us. Psalmist.

In Psalm 8. It says. What is man. That he is remembered. By thee. And yet.

The wonderful. Truth. Of scripture. Is that. We are remembered. By this God. We are called.

We are. We are chosen. By this God. And that should. Thrill us. It should cause us. To praise the Lord. And it should steady us. And we need that steady.

[32 : 15] In a world. That seems. So chaotic. Whether we are looking. Around us. Or whether we are looking. To the US. Or whether we are looking. Anywhere. The world. Seems to be. In such turmoil.

But we can be assured. Through. Psalms like this. That. We are not living. In chaos. God is in control. His ways.

Are higher. Than our ways. His thoughts. Are higher. Than our thoughts. We cannot understand. What he is doing. But he is doing. He is working. Out. His purposes.

And the. Reality is. That sometimes. He has to use. Extreme. Circumstances. That we find hard. To live through. In order to turn us.

Away from sin. Turn us away. From ourselves. And back to him. To praise his name. Causes of praise.

[33 : 15] The fact that God is good. The fact that God chooses us. The fact that God is sovereign. And finally here. We see. The fact that God is savior. We have.

In verses. Eight. Through to verse. Verse 14. A snapshot. Of the salvation. History of. Of Israel. How God. He. Saved his people.

From Egypt. He released them. From Egypt. He took them. Through the wilderness. And he brought them. Into. This land. Which he had prepared. For them. They had enemies.

That were against them. That they had no hope. Of overcoming. But with God's strength. They overcame them. Until we see. In these verses.

Just this picture. Of the salvation. History of Israel. As the psalmist. Looked back. Yes. There were loving judgments. Yes. There were hard days. But there was such.

[34 : 14] Great compassion. That God showed. To his people. So many times. That God came alongside. His people. As a savior. He released them.

From the bondage. They could never escape. In their own strength. He took them. Through the wilderness. That they could never. Hope to survive. If it wasn't. That he was with them. He gave them.

A freedom. And a victory. That they could never. Have enjoyed. Apart from him. He gave them salvation. And we can look back.

To these same events. As. As they did. We can look back. To these same events. As the psalmist did. Because. This God. Is the same God. The one who was with us.

This evening. But we can also look. To where the psalmist. Could not yet see. We can look back. To a cross. Where God.

[35 : 12] The son. Died in our place. To give us. Freedom. Not from Egypt. But from sin. And Satan. And death. And hell. He gave us. A victory. That we could never.

Earn. Or win. In our own strength. He gave us. Salvation. Not just for time. But for eternity.

And as we take. Time. Time. To remember that. As we focus. On that.
Rather than ourselves. And rather than all that's going on around us. As we focus on that. The fact
that. This God. Is our saviour. We have many causes.
To praise him. And can it be. That I should gain. An interest. In the saviour's blood. Died he for me.
[36 : 09] Who caused this pain. For me. Who him to death. Pursued. Amazing love. How can it be.
That thou. My God.

Should die. For me. What a reason we have. To praise him. So we have a call. To praise.
We have causes. To praise. And finally. And it's just one minute. Or two minutes. We see here. A
community of praise. And just note. In the closing verses.
19 to 21. This gathering. That we have. Recorded. Of tribes. And people. And they're united. In that
desire. And determination. To praise. And bless the Lord.
Bless the Lord. O house of Israel. Verse 19. Bless the Lord. O house of Aaron. Bless the Lord. O
house of Levi. You who fear the Lord. Bless the Lord. Blessed. Be the Lord.
[37 : 03] Out of Zion. Who dwells. In Jerusalem. And Spurgeon. As he looks in on this. Says. Each
tribe. From Reuben. To Benjamin. Has its own special cause.

For blessing the Lord. And the nation. As a whole. Has substantial reasons. For pouring out.
Benedictions. Upon. His name. We see a community.
Of praise. Here. As the psalm finishes. And what we see. And what we can say. Of them. We can
see. Surely. And we can say. Of ourselves. Each family here.
Each family out there. Each person. We have our own. Special causes. For blessing the Lord.
We can think back. To experiences. We can think back. To days. We can think back. To times in
our lives. And say that we have. We have. Special causes.
[38 : 03] For blessing the Lord. And then. When we come together. As a gathering. Of God's
people. As we do. This evening. To come together.

As a whole. We have. What Spurgeon calls here. Substantial reasons. For praising. The Lord. If we
consider.
Who he is. What he has done. For us. What he is still doing. For us. Day by day. How many
reasons. We have. As a community. Of God's people.
To praise. The Lord. Spurgeon says. Let reverence. And adoration. Spread from man. To man.
Until the whole. Lump.
Of humanity. Shall be leavened. With this praise. Of God. And that's. One of the. The main
purposes. For our. Our gathering together.
[39 : 00] Something that we've been. Starved off. In past days. As we. Gather together. We're to
be like. Leaven. Going through the dough.

The leaven. That causes the. The dough. To rise up. And as we gather. As God's people. In
reverence. Before him. Our adoration.
Of God. Should rise up. From within us. And spread. From person. To person. As together. We
praise.
The Lord. God. And so. The psalm. Ends. Where it began. Praise. The Lord.
And let's close. With. Prayer now. Our heavenly father. Once more. We. We thank you. For this call.
[39 : 59] That you. Place. Upon us. That you. Open our. Ears. To hear. This call. To come. To
know you. And to praise you. We thank you. That you're the God. Who reveals.

Yourself. To us. As we consider. Who you are. In your goodness. As we consider. Who you are.
And in your. Electing power. That you would choose. To. To speak.
To and to call. Even us. As we consider. Who you are. In your. Your sovereign power. The God of
heaven. And earth. And who you are. As our savior. We see Lord.
That we have many. Reasons. To praise your name. Yes. We may have difficult times. We may go
through. Difficult things. But none of that. Should silence. Praise.
Help us. We pray. To fix. Our eyes. Upon you. To never drift. From the cross. Of Calvary. And
enable us. Even as a community.
[40 : 54] Of your people. As we gather together. Somewhat this evening. And as we connect. With
each other. Through the phone. And. Walks outside.

And whatever means. That we have. May we not. Waste these. Opportunities. These encounters.
But may we. Encourage each other.

To persevere. In the faith. And to praise. The Lord. And now. May the grace. Of our Lord. Jesus Christ. And the love. Of God. The Father. And the fellowship.
Of God. The Holy Spirit. Be with us all. Both now. And forevermore. Amen. Amen.