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Series: Summer in the Psalms
Message: People of Praise

Transcribed Message
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Psalm 145

It was actually in the fall of 2017 when we started something that we've now be doing for all of these years. In that fall kickoff, I began a series of lessons that we carried on and each of them started with "The People Of". So we were the people of the Book. We were the people who were directed by the Spirit. We were the people who are on a mission in community, in unity. We were the people who loved the church and people this year of praise. As you look at that list, those were the things that we utilized to kick off each fall season and that became the theme for the year. Well in December 2018, the last Sunday of the year I did a lesson on 10 things to pray for Covenant Community Church, kind of thinking of the year that was ahead of us and just praying those 10 things together. We've been praying those 10 things now for all of these years. It was just this week that I realized that there's kind of a corollary, there's kind of a connection between these two. As I looked through that list, I thought well you know there are really some things that are being answered as we stepped into some of these lessons at the fall season kickoff.

For instance, people of the Book. God, reveal to us the wonders of your word. People in step with the Spirit. That's the umbrella over everything. If you don't have that, then all of the other ones really aren't going to work at all. People on a mission. Deepen our joy and our faith in the gospel. Equip us for our mission. It was very specific to that. People in community. Build each other up in love, walk in love and with each other. People in unity. God protect us. There are all kinds of things that divide churches and cause disunity. People who love the church. That was easy. People who treasure your bride. And then this morning we kick off this season and this particular ministry year with people of praise. God, help us to worship you every time we come together with an undistracted heart. So people of praise is what we are going to launch this morning.

A quick look ahead here for the next two Sundays. Bonnie and I are going to step away for our annual “studycation”. We’ll come back on September 10th and do a baptism. We’ll jump back into the book of Romans in the 14th chapter. If you’re new to Covenant, do not believe any of the stories that are going around about the study in the book of Romans. We will finish it and Lord willing, it may be sooner than some of you even anticipate that it might be. Our big idea this morning is worship and praise are the ultimate purpose of our existence. It is in our spiritual DNA.

A very quick look at Psalm 145. We look at Psalm 145 this morning. This is the last of the psalms of David. There are 150 psalms. David specifically tells us that he has written 73 of them. He has probably written a few more than that, so it’s likely that David has written at least half or more than half of all of the psalms. This Psalm 145 is almost like a prologue to the final five psalms in the Psalter. The final five psalms are called the hallelujahs psalms. Every one of them begins the same way and ends the same way. Praise the Lord or hallelujah. And every one ends with that same phrase. It’s really kind of a prologue in Psalm 145 to the end of the book.

This is the last of the acrostic psalms. Remember we said that there are nine acrostic psalms. David has written five of them in which the writer takes the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet and he begins every verse with a letter of that alphabet. Derek Kidner calls this particular psalm the alphabet of praise. When you look at that 145th Psalm and you say wait a minute, there are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet and there are 21 verses here in this psalm. For whatever reason, and we saw this the last time we looked at an acrostic psalm, the letter N, or in the Hebrew *nun*, is not one of the letters used. If you ask me where is the *nun* I am going to have to say there is none there. I don’t know why that is.

Then the last thing. This is the only psalm that has praise for its title. Isn’t it interesting that of all of the psalms of praise that we have, so many of the psalms are talking about praise, and yet under the direction of the Holy Spirit and giving us the superscriptions these introductory notes, this is the only one of the psalms that has actually the word “praise” in it. It is an amazing summary of the character of God. In this 145th Psalm, you have more references to the character of God than any other chapter in the entire Bible. It is a beautiful picture to us of the character of God. When we think

about thanksgiving and we think about praise in thanksgiving, we're giving thanks to God generally speaking for what He has done. When we think of praise, we're oftentimes thinking of who God is. That's what we're going to see here as we go through this 145th Psalm.

Let's look at this. A matter of life and breath. We start off by looking at the first two verses. What we are to do. "I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever." David begins with a declaration, a vow. He's making a commitment. He's making a vow to God. The first part of that vow is God, I am going to extol you. I'm going to extol you. I wonder out of all of this group this morning how many of you specifically remember using the word "extol" this week. It's not a word we use very often. It means to lift up. It means to exalt. It is not a word that we use very often. We don't talk about extolling. We have other words that we use. As you go through these first seven verses, you don't have to stop with the word "extol" because when you look at the first seven verses there are all kinds of synonyms here for praise. Note them with me. Extol. Bless. Praise. Commend. Declare. Speak. Pour forth. Sing aloud. All of these are just synonyms for the idea of giving praise to God or extolling him.

You look at that and you realize three things. David said I will do this. As I said, this is a commitment that he has made. He is going to use that phrase "I will" four times in just these opening verses so it's a commitment that he is making. He's speaking it. He says this has got to be verbalized. Praise begins in the heart. It begins in the mind but it can't stay there. It has to be verbalized. It needs to be stated. It needs to be sung. That is what the psalmist often is going to bring to us. You can't keep quiet when you think about who God is. People of praise can't keep it to themselves. We're going to see that as we go through this psalm.

Then it's lavish. It's lavish. It's repetition. He is flooding God with praise. That's the beauty of this 145th chapter. He's flooding God with praise. I grew up in a very loving home. I had two of the greatest parents that anybody could have. They loved God. They loved their children. They did all that they could to promote Christ in our life and direct us to God and to be as successful as we could. But in our family, praise was kind of parceled out in tablespoon measures. Even if you did something pretty significant, the

praise was not lavish. It probably was just the German agricultural type of background that my grandparents and my parents grew up in. Then Bonnie comes into my life. Bonnie is a praiser. Bonnie is a lavisher of praise. It's been kind of an adjustment for me to come from my background where you didn't really praise very freely, openly. Certainly you didn't do it lavishly very often, and yet that's what David does here. It's just a flooding of God with praise, lifting up his name.

Secondly, I will praise you every day. Here now it's the frequency. When someone says to you today and every day going forward, you know at least one thing you can say to them is I'm going to praise the Lord. I'm going to be with David and praise the Lord today. I'm going to follow David's pattern. I'm going to frequently praise the Lord. I'm going to do it every day. He tells us here that this is a daily thing. In fact, the Jewish rabbis would say anyone who repeats Psalm 145 three times a day is most assured of life to come of eternal life. Of course, that's not the way it works, but that spoke to their understanding of the importance of praise. We probably find it true in our lives that we ask God for stuff every day. But now here the psalm asks us are we praising God every day too.

The third "I will" that David says: I will praise you forever. So now it's the duration. It is not enough for David to say I'm going to praise you for all of my life. I'm making this commitment, God, and I'm going to praise you for the rest of my life. no, it goes beyond that. It goes to the vision of John in Revelation 5. In Revelation 5 it is John's picture of this myriad, this innumerable host that is singing praises to God. It's almost as if David wants us to look ahead and think we're going to be doing this forever. We'll be praising God forever. Whatever we do now, we're just getting in practice. We're practicing now to be a part of this great, innumerable host that is going to praise the name of our Lord forever and ever. That's what he commits himself to. That's the declaration that he makes. Those are the vows that he offers to God. God, I am going to extol you. I'm going to exalt you. I'm going to lift up your name. God, I'm going to do it every day and I'm going to do it forever.

Now the bulk of the psalm is spent looking at this second part – who we are to praise. Before we even jump into these four major characteristics, again look at verse 1. I will extol you, my God. You could add to that I will extol you my King. This is a very

personal expression of David. This is not some nebulous, some general comment that he's making. No, he is speaking of a God who has made himself known to him. He is speaking of a God with whom he has a relationship and he speaks of it in that way. I will extol you, my God. I will extol you, my King. This is very personal to David.

Now let's look at these four characteristics that David lifts up. We aren't going to go through every verse but we'll take a section and just draw out different concepts that we see. The first one he said is God is great. God is great. Verses 3 and 4: "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts." The very first word that I would put before you is the greatness of God is described by David as being unsearchable. It is just simply unsearchable. The measure of our praise is God's own greatness except we don't have the tools. We don't have the capacity to measure that greatness, do we? We are totally inadequate when it comes to giving the extent, the height, the breadth, the width of the greatness of our God. It was John Wesley who said the ability of a worm to comprehend the man is the same as a man's ability to comprehend God. A worm has no more chance of comprehending you and I than we do ultimately of comprehending a God who is unsearchable. He is unsearchable.

We have we have these discussions that go on occasionally. It is all about the G.O.A.T., the greatest of all time. It happens really in all kinds of areas. It probably happens the most in things that I'm aware of in an area of sports. We're always debating about the G.O.A.T, the greatest of all time. You know, the greatest team, the greatest coach, the greatest football player, but whatever it is the greatest of all time. Everybody is throwing their ideas around and it is generally just a waste of time. But that's what we do because we're trying to figure out who really is the greatest. David would say to us here there isn't any debate.

When you think about the greatness of God, where does your mind go? How do you begin to comprehend, to think, to grasp, to even measure a small portion of the greatness of God? I think of Psalm 19. We did that the fourth week of our study. The heavens declare the glory of God. Then you just think of the vastness of outer space. We have no ability to even comprehend our own universe let alone the creator of that universe who is God himself. The vastness is unsearchable.

I saw this little cartoon. Angels are playing baseball in heaven. We know it's angels because they've got wings and halos and they're running around on clouds. The baseball game is going on. The catcher runs out to the pitcher as they do to confer. He says I know you think you've got your best stuff tonight, but I think we should walk God. He is going to hit a home run. He is going to hit it out of the park. He's going to hit it out of the universe. You're not going to be able to stop him. He's too great. It is the greatness of God that is in view.

Look at verse 4. God's greatness and then at the end of verse 6: "One generation shall commend your works to another and shall declare your mighty acts." Verse 6. "They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds, and I will declare your greatness." Now it's the idea of something's been declared. Something is now needing to be made known. That's what David says. God's greatness is unsearchable, but he has made himself known. We've been in the same arena before. The transcendence of God. The fact that he is unsearchable, that he is in so many ways unknowable, yet he is also imminent. That he has come to us and he has revealed himself and he has made himself known. With that, we're called upon to declare that greatness, to declare who he is.

Praise doesn't stop with us. It has to be passed on. It has to include other people. In fact, specifically it has to include the next generation. God does not zap one generation with the gospel and with his truth and then wait for the next generation to come up and zap them with the gospel and zap them with the truth. No. he's entrusted it to us and this is what he says. It's up to us to declare to the next generation what that truth is. Who God is. The greatness of God. This unsearchable God that we worship and serve. It's our responsibility. It is the greatest responsibility that you have as a parent. It's the greatest responsibility that you have as a grandparent. The greatest responsibility that you have as a church family is to take his truth of the greatness of God and the mighty acts of God and pass them to the next generation. If we fail at that place, my friends, we fail ultimately, miserably, and totally. This is the call that he puts on us. We want our children he says to know the mighty acts of God. Go to Deuteronomy chapter 6 and about verse 7 Moses reiterates that very thing. As they're getting ready to leave and go into the land, he tells these parents, these grandparents,

it's on you. this next generation isn't going to be zapped by God. They're going to have a transference of truth because you're committed to that. That's what you do as a parent. That's what you do as a grandparent. That's what we do as a church.

God has blessed this church with lots of young families even as we heard this morning. God has blessed us with more children than we've ever had in the history of our church and we are using every square inch to its fullest capacity. In fact, just as a side note we've engaged an architect who specializes in church space to help us think through what does it look like, what will we need to do going forward to be able to keep what he calls on us here to be able to keep doing, passing on this truth from one generation to the next. Paul wrote to Timothy and said it is the Scriptures that you received as a child that make you wise unto salvation. I remind us all again that yes, it's truth that is taught, but ultimately oftentimes it's truth that is caught. We can go through all of the exercises of teaching, but if they don't see in the adults, if they don't see in their dad and mom, if they don't see in their grandparents and the people who are discipling at this church a passion for the gospel and a passion for Christ, then it becomes just so many words. We have to have a passion that can be caught and we have to have truth that can be taught. So first God is great.

Now second God is good. Verses 5-9: "On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate. They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds, and I will declare your greatness. They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness and shall sing aloud of your righteousness. The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The Lord is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made." now I look at that and the first thing that comes to my mind is this is good news. This is good news. God is great but God is also good. That's good news. It would be very bad news, it would be frightening news if we were to know that God is great but that God isn't good or in fact that God is bad. If he was anything other than good, as great as he is, as powerful as he is it would be frightening. It would be scary to have a powerful God who is not a good God. But our God is good. He is good in all of his ways. He is good in all that he does. He is good to the core of his being. We may not always understand what God is doing in our lives or

in the lives of people that we love, we may not always understand that. But whatever it is that he's doing, he assures us that he is good.

Make a note. Genesis 18:25. It is a verse I go to often. It tells us as God interacted with Abraham, his response to Abraham was shall not the God of all the earth do right? The answer is yes. He will always do right, even if we don't understand it, even if we can't comprehend it. He can't do anything that isn't right, that isn't good by his definition.

And then it's illustrated. It's displayed. David stacks up these descriptive words about our good God. Look at verses 7 through 9. He says our God is righteous. Our God is gracious. Our God is merciful. Our God is slow to anger. abounding in steadfast love. There's that word *hesed*. We saw it last week. This beautiful Old Testament word *hesed* is translated in numerous ways because the translators can't always understand the full width and breadth of this word. But it is the loyal love, this steadfast love, this unchanging love.

Then he says his mercy, verse 9, flows to all. In Exodus 34 and verse 6, this is again Moses speaking and he says as he talks about God. It's going to sound very familiar. "The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin'". He goes on to describe this God. This is one of the most quoted verses in the Old Testament about the character of God. It is the verse that Jonah called on when he brought the gospel, he brought salvation and the message of repentance to Nineveh. Then he was mad at God because the Ninevites repented and Jonah quotes this verse to say God: See! this is exactly who you are. You went and saved these people when they repented and I hate them. I didn't want them to repent. Jonah quotes this same one. For eternity we're going to sing about the greatness of God and about the goodness of God.

Now look thirdly in verses 10 through 13. Our God rules. Our God rules. "All your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord, and all your saints shall bless you! They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom and tell of your power; to make known to the children of man your mighty deeds, and the glorious splendor of your kingdom. Your kingdom is

an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations.” I look at that and it is the glory of the reign of God that comes to the forefront. Our God is glorious. When we encounter God, we encounter the glory of God. That is consistently what happens all through Scripture. When Jesus came in the form of a man, when the son of God broke in to the human race, Jesus presented himself. He looked just like every other man except for a couple of occasions. In Matthew 17 on the Mount of Transfiguration before Peter, James, and John, he gives them a glimpse of his glory. Peter wants to build some tents and stay here forever. This is awesome! We don't want to ever leave! He saw the glory of God in a way that he never had seen before. In a little different way, in the garden of Gethsemane, the soldiers come to arrest Jesus and he gives them a glimpse of his glory when he says I am the man. They fall down on their face as dead men, the Bible says, because they got a tiny, tiny glimpse of the glory of God. That's the thing that David lifts up here. Ezekiel says that he fell as a dead man on his face when he saw the glory of God filling the temple. His reign is a glorious one.

Then it is eternal. God is in office for life. God is in office for eternity. There are no term limits with God. We don't have to worry about the vice-God and the qualifications. We don't have a Jehovah 1, Jehovah 2, Jehovah 3 as we do down through kingly history when fathers conferred their name on their son and their grandson. No, we don't have any of that. There's one God and he reigns and he will reign eternally. He alone is the Alpha and the Omega. He alone is the beginning and the end.

Lastly, God provides. God provides. In verses 13 all the way to the to the 20th verse David just lists off the ways that God provides for us. I just want to lift up two things. He says to us that God is faithful. God is faithful to us. He is faithful in meeting our needs. “The Lord is faithful in all his words and kind in all his works. The Lord upholds all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down. The eyes of all look to you and you give them their food in due season.” God is faithful.

In verses 18 and 19 he talks about the fact that God is near. He's near. It's just very similar to what Jesus said at the end with his disciples. I will never leave you. I will never forsake you. Our God listens. Our God hears. Our God answers. Always in his

time and in his perfect will and way, but our God is great. Our God is good. Our God rules. Our God provides.

How then do we respond back in praise? How are we to praise? Walk with me through these four points. The first one that we note in this. There isn't any mention of the kind of songs that we're to sing. There isn't any mention of the kind of songs that we're to sing. The Scriptures have numerous descriptions of songs. David doesn't mention any of them. He doesn't say we should sing hymns. He doesn't say that we should sing psalms. He doesn't say that we should sing worship choruses. He doesn't say we should do Gregorian chants. He doesn't say we should do rap. He doesn't say we should do country. Probably we shouldn't do country, but his point is we're to sing. We're to sing. Don't say to somebody I don't sing because I have a terrible voice. God gave you that voice however good or not good it is, and he wants you to sing. He wants you to lift your voice in praise. The point is there is description here of the specifics of what this is to look like other than the psalmist consistently telling us sing, lift your voice, let your praise be heard.

Secondly, there's no mention of any instruments. Even though we have instruments mentioned in many places in Scripture and certainly there's all kinds of ways that they're described to us. Many times they're described as being played loudly but there's no mention of instruments here. There is simply the idea again to engage. Be involved in praise. No mention of physical posture. He doesn't tell us how it is that we're to do this. The point that David is making to us is it's not about you. It is not about me. It's not even about our surroundings per se. It is about him. The one who is great. The one who is good. The one who rules. The one who provides. David begins this declaration this vow to praise God and God alone.

I say to you in point 4. Just do it. Just do it. Start by getting ready before you get here. That means you start getting ready on Saturday. You plan your Saturday night knowing that you want to be your best when you come together.

Secondly, be on time. Translated that means to be early. I am convinced that if your favorite artist was going to be here and play and sing for us on a Sunday morning, you would not be walking through those doors at 9:30 or 9:35 or 9:40. You would be here trying to find a place to sit at 8 o'clock. If we were bringing in a nationally known

speaker that you thoroughly enjoyed, you would not wait to walk in at 9:30. You would be here early. Listen. We're coming to worship the King. We're coming to worship this great, ruling, providing God. We need to be here in here, not out there, or somewhere else. This is the gathered community. This is where we lift our voices in praise. This is how we do it together as the people of God. Participate. Sing. Pray. Listen. Engage. Do all of the things that create the very thing that David has called us to here in Psalm 145.

What do we take away? Verse 21: "My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord, and let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever." Let all flesh bless his holy name. praise God now and get others to join with you. that's what his point is. Praise God now and get others to join with you. that's what we were created to do. In John 4 when Jesus is having that amazing discussion with that woman at the well as that chapter progresses along about verse 23 he says to her, "The time is coming and now is here when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him." That's it! That's the Great Commission in a sense. That's the goal of all of our discipleship. We want to bring people to Christ who are going to be worshipers of God, who are going to be pointing others to become worshipers of God. Paul said it in Ephesians chapter 1 verse 12. We were created to live to the praise of his glory. That's why we're here. We are here to live to the praise of his glory. Three hundred years ago they were grappling with what is the chief end of man and they came up with that classic statement. The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. That's who we are. We're people of praise.

We want you to join this company. If you've never put your trust in Jesus as your Savior, if you've never experienced the forgiveness of your sin, that's why Jesus came. That's why he died on the cross. That's why he rose again. That's why he has entrusted us this gospel so that we can share it with you and that you can join us and be people of praise in lifting up and extolling the name of our God.

Let's pray. Father God, we're grateful for your Spirit. We're grateful for your word. We're grateful for this truth that calls us to be people of praise. Lord, we just want to commit and dedicate this coming ministry year to you and that you will do just as we have been praying – that you will bring us together, that we will worship you with an undistracted heart, that our focus will be upon you, and that you will live out within us

this great calling and this great truth. Father God, if there's someone here this morning who has never put their faith and trust in Christ, we pray that you would open their hearts to the gospel even now. Give to them, Father, the willingness to seek someone, to talk to someone, to reach out and learn more about the glory and wonder of who Jesus is and what he's done in his provision for us. We ask in Jesus's name, amen.