

“Who is God and Why Should I Praise Him?”

Psalm 147

Guest Speaker

Scripture Introduction

Please open your Bibles to Psalm 147.

For most of us, you can open your Bible to right in the middle and you'll be in the book of Psalms, then just turn until you get to Psalm 147 just before the section of Psalms ends. We'll be reading the entire Psalm.

Scripture Reading

Let me read our text and pray and we'll dive right in.

Psalm 147

¹ Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting. ² The Lord builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the outcasts of Israel. ³ He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. ⁴ He determines the number of the stars; he gives to all of them their names. ⁵ Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure. ⁶ The Lord lifts up the humble; he casts the wicked to the ground.

⁷ Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving; make melody to our God on the lyre! ⁸ He covers the heavens with clouds; he prepares rain for the earth; he makes grass grow on the hills. ⁹ He gives to the beasts their food, and to the young ravens that cry. ¹⁰ His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the legs of a man, ¹¹ but the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love.

¹² Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem! Praise your God, O Zion! ¹³ For he strengthens the bars of your gates; he blesses your children within you. ¹⁴ He makes peace in your borders; he fills you with the finest of the wheat. ¹⁵ He sends out his command to the earth; his word runs swiftly. ¹⁶ He gives snow like wool; he scatters frost like ashes. ¹⁷ He hurls down his crystals of ice like crumbs; who can stand before his cold? ¹⁸ He sends out his word, and melts them; he makes his wind blow and the waters flow. ¹⁹ He declares his word to Jacob, his statutes and rules to Israel. ²⁰ He has not dealt thus with any other nation; they do not know his rules. Praise the Lord!

Sermon Introduction

What is a Christian today? I want you to close your eyes and imagine a Christian. Not a famous one or someone you know, just an average Christian..

- What are they wearing?
- What are they doing?

What image comes to mind?

- What *about* the person you imagined reveals that they're a Christian?
- You might say, they believe the Gospel. Or they believe that Jesus is the God the Son, or something similar to that.

While that is certainly the case, what I mean with that question is, how can you spot a Christian in the world?

- When I was first asked that question some years ago, a list started to form in my mind. I started to think through my list:
 - Clothing... no, Christians don't have their own kinds of clothes. You might be able to say some are more or less modest, but we don't have special clothes.
 - What about food?... no, Christians all around the world eat different things.
 - And how about art, or traditions, or how they celebrate birthdays... Christians have these things but not all do and they certainly don't look the same all around the world as if *that is the thing* that makes a Christian stand out.

The answer to my question, "What is a Christian today?" Drives us to wonder what noticeable impact does Christianity have on *all* of its followers, regardless of where they live?

- I want to suggest to you today that at least one thing is true of Christians all around the world...they sing!
- Everywhere in the world where you find Christians, you find people who sing.

The One Thing

Praise God because it is good to praise God.

From Psalm 147, I want to show you why and how it is that Christianity turns any people into a people who sing.

The reason this Psalm gives is because it is good to praise God, as you can see in verse 1.

- The Psalmist writes, "Praise the Lord! || For it is good to sing praises to our God; || for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting."
 - As Hebrew poetry often does, they use the second line or second section to give a second look at the same thing, but from another angle.

Here the 2nd line in the pair expands on and shows another angle on the meaning of the word "good."

- Naturally, if you stop to think about it, you might ask what does "good," or "baik" if you're reading in Bahasa, mean here. In what sense is it "good"?
 - In both the ESV and the TB, you can see that the Psalmist explains the sense he intends for the word "good" or "baik" in the next line.
 - Both the word "good" in English and "baik" in Bahasa can mean a few things. Good versus evil; good as opposed to bad, like a bad apple. Good can mean well, or appropriate too. \
 - The author wants us to understand he's using it in two ways: "pleasant" and "fitting," "indah" dan "layak," atau "cocok."
- When he says it's "*good*," he means that it is both "pleasant" or "pleasing" *and* ... "fitting."
- And *these two terms* reveal a lot about the God we praise and about us as His worshipers.
- And, I believe, when we understand what the Psalmist is saying here, it has the potential to *revolutionize* how we "sing praises to our God," as verse 1 says.

Overview

To understand this, I want to ask 2 questions with you and let Psalm 147 answer:

- I. Who is God?
- II. Why should we praise Him?

For those of you who like to take notes, I'll say these questions again as we work through the text.

But, hopefully you can see, if you haven't already, that these questions flow right from verse 1, which is really the thesis, the point, of this entire psalm.

Starting in verse 1, the Psalmist opens with a command to *Praise the Lord*.

- Then comes 19 verses which tell us who God is and why we should praise Him.
- Perhaps you noticed that the opening command of verse 1 to "Praise the Lord!" is repeated 4 times, verse 1 and 20 like bookends, but also in verse 7 and 12.
- These four commands to praise or sing reveal the structure of the psalm
 - This is important to see because of the way Hebrew people wrote their poetry.
- [Hold up 4 fingers]
- If you hold up 4 fingers and turn them sideways, your hand will look like the structure of the psalm: 4 commands to praise the Lord with three sections in between.
- Now, Hebrews often structured their poetry in a way that emphasizes what is at the center.
 - In Psalm 147, while the first and third section are not identical, they are very similar, and they function to highlight the middle section, verses 7-11.
 - Think about martabak, martabak manis, it's the flavor of the coklat or the pisang which stands out.
 - or imagine an hourglass, two larger sections filled with sand that point our eyes right to the center where one or two grains pass at a time.
- It's not that what is on the outside is unimportant, but the center is being emphasized.
- And that is how a lot of Hebrew writing and poetry works.

Now, it is obvious by the repetition we see of this command to "Praise the Lord!" that it is the purpose of the Psalm.

- He's writing so that we praise God, right? He is writing to command us to worship.
- But after studying this text, I believe that the reason he goes on for 19 more verses is to *convince us to worship*.
 - Why do I say that?
 - Well, any Hebrew of his day or any Christian of ours will not disagree with this point.
 - But agreeing with this statement is not what the author is aiming at.
 - Rather, the Psalmist wants us to sing!
- So, what does it take to get people singing? What does it take for people to stop worrying about what they sound like or what the people around them might think of them, and actually stand up and lift up their voices and praise the Lord?
 - It usually takes more than stating that praising God is a good thing.
- So, I want to spend our time looking at Psalm 147 with these two questions in mind. And I want to do this so that we *want* to start singing.

I. Who is God?

The first question we want to ask and answer is “WHO IS GOD?”

Everyone has an idea about who God is, whether it is true or not.

But who God is, is not for us to decide.

Instead, God alone can tell us who He is and what He’s like.

- The Bible testifies about itself that it is God’s Word. He used human authors to write out exactly what He wanted to be said. *And* it tells us what we need to know about who God is and what God is like.
 - If there’s anything we need to know about God, God has said it in the Bible.

[Section 1 – Psalm 147:1-6]

And as we look at Psalm 147, we learn that God is both the Sovereign Creator *and* the Gracious Lord.

That God is the Sovereign Creator means that He made everything and He’s in charge of everything.

- We see this point highlighted in different ways in each of the three sections of this Psalm.

In verses 4 and 5, we read about God’s greatness and power by taking a look up and considering the stars.

Psalm 147:4⁴ “He determines the number of the stars; || he gives to all of them their names.”

It’s not enough for the psalmist to remind us that God chose how many stars to make, we’re told he gave each of them their own name.

[Illustration]

- *If you’re married, you’ve likely had the “how many kids do we want” conversation.*
 - *My wife and I keep having that conversation. We struggled with infertility for a number of years so it still feels unbelievable and kind of weird to pick a number.*
- *But now that I’ve had three, I can tell you that determining the number of kids you want is a lot easier than picking the names of those kids.*
 - *Choosing a number of kids is a lot easier than sifting through all the potential names for boys and girls and considering if you need to name them after someone or if you should choose a traditional name or how their names sound together.*

In the same way, choosing to create a certain number of stars is easier than assigning each a name, humanly speaking.

- And the Psalmist wants us to recognize that God didn’t just make the stars, he’s intimately involved in their existence and has a name for each one.
- You’ll remember in the Garden of Eden, the Lord made all the animals pass before Adam so he could name them – and how many more stars are there than animals? AND GOD KNOWS THEM ALL!
 - And we have no idea what He names them! Those are names that only God knows.
 - He knows them one by one and *WE can’t even count them all.*

So I think we can agree then with verse 5.

Psalm 147:5 “Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; || his understanding is beyond measure.”

- If the stars are beyond measure, the one who made them and named them certainly has understanding beyond all measure, amen?

But then take a look at verse 6.

Psalm 147:6⁶ not only does he know the stars, which are significant parts of His creation and not only does He know them with precise detail,

- He knows us. He knows all the people He’s made.
 - And with people, it’s personal enough to know our names.
 - But *GOD* knows and acts towards us according to who we are in the heart - whether we’re humble... or wicked.
- He *determines* who is raised up and who is cast down. And it’s not as though He writes a list and someone else does it. *He* lifts them up; *He* casts them to the ground. Therefore, *He knows* who is humble or wicked – not just your name, *but your heart*.

The Sovereign Creator has concern for people that goes *far beyond* even their names.

And, if you look back up with me to verses 2-3, we see how God being the Sovereign Creator intersects with the idea of God as Gracious Covenant Lord.

Psalm 147:2² “The LORD builds up Jerusalem; || he gathers the outcasts of Israel.”

- The city where He chose to dwell among His people had been destroyed by this point in Israel’s history.
- But the Lord rebuilds it.

Psalm 147:3³ “He heals the brokenhearted || and binds up their wounds.”

- Our God is a gracious God and cares for the people He’s committed himself to.
 - He heals their hearts from sin, and from suffering, and from sadness, like a nurse wrapping a bandage around a burned or broken arm.

[Illustration]

A couple of years ago now, when we lived in Canada during the pandemic, I had to take my wife to the hospital because she fell and sprained her ankle. She was 6 months pregnant and in a lot of pain.

- *So we drove to the hospital emergency room with our 2 year old daughter in the car and I went in to ask for some help.*
- *Well, that was not what I got. Instead of someone coming to help this 6 month pregnant woman who couldn’t walk, they told me I needed to go and get her a wheel chair and wheel her in the door myself. It didn’t matter that I had to leave my 2 year old daughter in the car on a cold winter night, they thought it too risky to help.*
- *Likewise, I was not allowed to help her past the door, she had to wheel herself in the hospital because I was not allowed in with her because that was too risky.*
 - *The story doesn’t get any better after that, but I think I made my point.*

Brothers and sisters, God isn’t like that. He’s not playing it safe or dismissive;

- Rather, He “heals the brokenhearted || and binds up their wounds,” because He is both Sovereign Creator *and* Gracious Lord.

[Section 2 – Psalm 147:7-11]

We see these two themes in the next section too.

This is *the central section of this 3-part poem*. The author highlights it for us by putting it in the center. [*Hold up fingers again*]

In verses 7-11 we have another command to Sing to the Lord!, followed by another picture into who God is as Sovereign Creator and Gracious Lord.

And here we see God as not just Creator but the Sovereign Ruler of his creation.

- Again, as we look down at verse 8, our minds are pointed up, this time to the clouds of the heavens.
 - Then, to the rain prepared for the earth, which makes the grass grow on the hills, becoming food for the animals including down to the little helpless baby birds.
- And it's God who covers the heavens with clouds
- It's God who prepares the rain
- It's God who makes the grass grow,
- And it's God who gives food to the beasts of the field and the baby birds in their nests.
 - It's God who does all this!

But why does Psalmist tell us all of this?

Well, verses 10-11 give us a clue.

Psalm 147:10-11 ¹⁰ His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor his pleasure in the legs of a man, ¹¹ but the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love.

- The point is not that God doesn't find pleasure in His creation; we know He cares for it very well.
- Instead, the Psalmist is working from lesser to greater.
- Yes, God takes care of all creation but what God *delights* in, above all the rest, are "those who fear him," (verse 11).

And again, like verse 1, the author uses the second line of the verse to explain what He means in the first.

- By "those who fear Him" he does not mean those who scream and run when they encounter God.
 - This is not a fight or flight type of fear
- Instead, what it means to *fear God* is explained as "those who hope in his steadfast love."
 - He delights in those who likewise don't hope in the strength of horse or man, but those who trust in God.
- The word "hope" here comes from the idea of "waiting for" something or someone.
 - It's the same word as found in Psalm 130:5-8 which gives us a good picture of this:"

Psalm 130:5-8 ⁵ I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, || and in his word I hope; || ⁶ my soul waits for the Lord || more than watchmen for the morning, || more than watchmen for the morning.

⁷ O Israel, hope in the LORD! || For with the LORD there is steadfast love, || and with him is plentiful redemption. || ⁸ And he will redeem Israel || from all his iniquities."

[Illustration]

Picture an old walled city or fort. Maybe you've seen one or maybe you can picture one from a movie.

- *Now picture a man, a soldier perhaps, stationed on top, told to stay awake all night, keeping watch to make sure enemies didn't attack at night.*
 - *It's quiet. It's dark. He can only see so far. But he must stay awake.*

- *He must stay awake so that he can alert the city if an enemy approaches, but he must also stay awake because he's the target on the top of the wall if an enemy does come.*
- *He watches all night, waiting for daybreak. For that first glow on the horizon, and then for that first ray of light to make its way across the land and to his city.*
 - *He can breathe. He can rest. The night has come and gone, and now the day has come to relieve him of his duty.*
- Like a watchman on an old city wall, keeping watch intently over his city until the break of dawn, is how psalm 130 describes waiting in hope.
- And it's the person who eagerly expects and trusts in God *LIKE THAT* that God delights in in Psalm 147.
 - This is not the God who helps those who help themselves; not God delights in when you do your best and he'll make up the difference;
- No, God takes pleasure in those who, in the right respect for God, wait for His gracious covenant love to show up and rescue them.

God orchestrates heaven and earth, but delights in those who trust in Him.

- He delights in those who are confident that God is going to take care of them. For those who turn from trusting other things and trust in God alone.
- He is our Sovereign Ruler, but also our Gracious Lord.

[Section 3 – Psalm 147:12-20]

In verses 12-20, these truths show up again, but this time the Psalmist wants to highlight the role of God's Word.

Like section 1, the Psalmist begins with a call to worship and then shows how God is in control over all his creation but cares particularly for his people.

- He is a Sovereign Creator and Gracious Lord.

Both verses 13 and 14 illustrate how, in accordance with the promises of the Old Covenant, God gives his people both peace and prosperity.

- He strengthens their gates, and then fills the city with children.
- He gives peace at the borders, and fills the people with the finest wheat.
- Peace and prosperity; peace and prosperity.

Then in verse 15-20, He focuses on God and His Word.

- There are at least 7 references to God's Word in these 5 verses.

And the point is that just as God as Sovereign Creator runs the world by his Word, so too God as Gracious Lord relates to his covenant people by his Word.

Do you see that?

- First, we see that God "sends out his command," verse 15, and it "runs swiftly," meaning nothing gets the way of his Word or hinders His command from being accomplished.
- Then, we have a comparison that shows off God's power, in verses 16-17

Psalm 147:16-17b "He gives snow like wool; || he scatters frost like ashes. || ¹⁷ He hurls down his crystals of ice like crumbs;"

- The picture is that of snow, frost, and ice.

[Illustration]

Being from Canada, I have a lot of experience with snow.

During the winter, we get a lot of snow. Sometimes between 10 cm and 1 meter of snow at a time, or even multiple times a day. Can you imagine that?

- *When you go outside, you have to dress right.*
- *You can see the moisture in your breath like steam coming from a pot.*

Or sometimes, it doesn't snow. Instead, things just get covered in a layer of ice. Tree limbs get so heavy with ice they often break off and your house and car look like they are covered in a shield of glass.

This happens somewhat regularly, but we still go outside.

- *We put on our thickest clothes and jackets, our tallest boots and warmest hats, and we still go to school and go to work.*

But, when it's too cold to snow, even Canadians don't go outside.

- *This is when the weather is about -40C. When you come to realize that you have those little hairs in your nose because even they start to freeze after just a couple minutes and it's very uncomfortable.*

- It's that "too cold to go outside" kind of cold that comes to mind when I read the last line of verse 17, when the Psalmist asks, "who can stand before His cold?"
 - *What do you picture?*
- The point is that God is Sovereign over the cold; the cold is, as the psalmist writes, "His cold."
 - And we humans, despite our best efforts, and our thickest jackets, cannot endure being exposed to the cold for long.

But the point is not to say we are weak, but that His Word is strong.

- Verse 18 continues the lesson by explaining that, though we can't stand before His cold, *His word* melts it, like an ice cube on a Jakarta sidewalk.
- As the Sovereign Creator, He runs the world by his Word.

So, verses 15-18 show off how God runs the world with His Word, and then verses 19-20 show how by His Word God relates to his people.

Psalm 147:19¹⁹ He declares his word to Jacob, || his statutes and rules to Israel.

- That's a reference to his giving of the Torah, the Law of Moses, the Old Covenant, to Israel.

Psalm 147:20²⁰ He has not dealt thus with any other nation; || they do not know his rules.

- This is almost a direct quote from Deuteronomy 4, which is the second giving of the law to the people of Israel.

God not only redeemed his people from Egypt and preserved them through the wilderness years.

- He graciously entered into a committed relationship with them called a *covenant*.
- And it's in Deuteronomy 4 where God says He gifts His people with his statutes and rules and his Word.
 - And if they obey the covenant the world will be amazed at the wisdom and righteousness that comes from being God's people.

God's covenant people were established by His swift moving, ice melting, all powerful Word.

- And it was having this Word that set God's people apart.

Psalm 147 picks this concept up to say, Praise God, because He's given Himself to us in and through His Word!

Conclusion

The answer to our question, "who is God?" is this: God is our Sovereign Creator and Gracious Lord

- He creates with abundant power and yet is mercifully just.
- God orchestrates heaven and earth, but delights in those who trust in Him
- God rules the world with His Word and by His Word, relates to His People.
 - He is both Sovereign Creator and Gracious Covenant Lord.

Life Application #1

When the Psalmist penned his Psalm and declared it both pleasant and fitting to sing praises to our God, this is the God he has in mind.

He reminds us of Who God is to motivate us to Praise His Name.

- That's where the psalmist begins. And you see, that's the logical conclusion.

Knowing God is the foundation for Praising God.

Now, who thinks that this is everything the Bible says about who God is?

- So can I encourage you today, if you want to know who God is, spend some time reading the Bible – if you don't have a Bible – please come and see me after this gathering and we will get you one – but take it upon yourself to understand God on his own terms, as He reveals himself in the Scriptures.
 - Don't rely on who other people tell you God is and isn't; rather, find out for yourself who He is by going to His Word.

Now, we still have one more question to look at. The Psalmist calls us to Praise the Lord and we pay attention to who this God is.

But we have one more question to look at in our time together. A question sometimes we don't let ourselves ask. This question, let me remind you, is: Why *should* we praise the Lord?

II. Why *should* we praise God?

And here I want to let Psalm 147 press a little deeper into our hearts.

And my intent here is to help us to grow in thankfulness towards God for being *our* God.

If we appreciate and cherish *OUR* God, we will want to sing His praises.

- Did you notice the personal pronouns used throughout the psalm?
 - Verse 1 says "it is good to sing praises to *our* God";
 - Verse 5 says "Great is *our* Lord"
 - Verse 7, "Make melody to *our* God"
 - Verse 12 says, "Praise *your* God"

- Unless *the* Creator becomes *our* Creator, until the Gracious Lord becomes *our Gracious Lord*, we will not sing in a way that is pleasant and fitting. It will not be “good” to praise the Lord.
 - If you’re a visitor here this morning and not a Christian; maybe you’re interested in learning more about Christianity or maybe you’re just here because a friend invited you, but you know that this God of whom we speak is not *your God*.
 - I want you to reconsider that today.

[Illustration]

This past January, I was in Penang, Malaysia, during Chinese New Year.

While I was there I witnessed something new, that is, new to me. It is actually something very old... It was a traditional dragon dance.

- *It was happening on the lower floor of a mall, at the base of a 100 foot tall, probably 10 floor atrium inside of the mall.*
- *I walked into the mall wearing headphones, but the clanging of instruments – cymbals and drums – was so loud I couldn’t even hear my headphones.*
 - *All around the glass-wall railing stood crowds of people*
 - *It felt like an observation deck overhanging an exhibit at a zoo,*
- *The group of performers made up of young boys and men dressed in brightly colored outfits were clanging cymbals, beating drums, and crashing a gong.*
- *Meanwhile, two pairs of “dancers” sporadically performed their routine in yellow dragon costumes.*
- *Between lunging at onlookers and tossing out oranges, these dragons happily received small red envelopes with cash from everyone, from scared children and entranced tourists, from the superstitious and devout to those seeking entertainment from what they considered an exotic cultural moment.*
 - *I’m sure many of you know what I’m talking about.*

And at that moment, I began to wonder... For those participating in this event, believing that they will be better off or have more luck this next year, *who* or *what* is *their* god, whether they use that word or not?

- How could giving money to a person in a dragon costume affect their year? How could loud cymbals and fabric dragons ward off bad luck and evil spirits?
 - How “strong” could those spirits really be if that’s all it took to scare them? How easily manipulated are they, if just a little money can buy you fortune?

The Bible paints a different picture of the World, one where you are not so great, but God is.

- *Our God* cannot be bought, and that is *good news*.

Those dragons I saw are cheap and the spirits they scare are rather cheaply manipulated.

- But the one true Living God, abundant in power, is just and good.
- Could you imagine how dreadful the alternative is? If He lifted up the wicked and cast down the humble, for just a little money?
 - But *our God* is stronger than dragons and money. He’s stronger than dukuns and spirits
 - He’s the Sovereign Creator, who’s will cannot be thwarted and who’s steadfast love never fails.
 - It is *Good News* that God is all powerful and just – and that the bribes of arrogant sinners have no power over Him.

God is just with all his power but He’s also gracious in His love.

Consider how small God would be if we could buy his love with our little money.

- Consider again verse 10-11.
 - God is not delighted in our strength, or you could say our “buying power.”
 - He’s the Creator of the WORLD!
 - How much buying power do you have over the One who owns and orchestrates all things?
- You cannot buy God off with money and that’s a good thing and it’s sinfully arrogant and idolatrous to suggest otherwise.
 - We live in a world where corruption is a daily reality and in a world plagued with corruption whoever has the biggest wallet wins.
 - But not so with God.
 - And this is good because even the richest among us can’t wield their buying power over God. Our God is bigger than that and His Love cannot be bought.

Rather, the Bible tells us that God delights in those who fear him, those who hope in His steadfast love.

- His steadfast love means His secure covenantal love.
 - It is a *good thing* that you don’t need to buy your way into God’s love.
 - Instead, the Bible says, if we repent and believe, if we turn from trusting in horse and man (verse 10), or in money and dragons.
 - If we turn and trust in God alone, we will be His delight.
- While this is true in the Old Testament and of Old Testament saints who hope in God’s steadfast love, this reality is even more clear in the New Testament.
- [GOSPEL]
 - In the New Testament, God’s steadfast love is revealed in the person and work of God the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - In the incarnate Son, we have the embodiment of God’s steadfast love towards sinners like us.
 - Phil 2 tells us Jesus, though being equal with God, humbled himself, added to himself a human nature, so that he could die on the cross for his people.
 - And in Romans 5:8, Paul writes that “God shows his *love* for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”
 - We don’t just bribe away God’s wrath towards our sins like a corrupt cop or judge.
 - No, instead, the same steadfast love that rebuilds Jerusalem and binds up His people’s wounds, *through His Son*, has satisfied God’s justice and justified God’s love, that we might be forgiven and made new.
 - When we are forgiven by God through Christ, we’re also remade by God as new creations, we’re given new hearts with new affections.
 - Things that we once found pleasant, we no longer do; we turn away from sinning because our hearts have a greater desire, one that sin can no longer satisfy.
 - As sinners, the Bible says that “For although they knew God, *they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him*, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened” (Rom 1:21)
 - But now, as Christians, we love to praise God and it is actually one of the jobs of a Christian.
 - We used to refuse giving thanks and honor to God, but with new hearts what we’re commanded to do in Psalm 147, we love to do.
 - We CAN sing praises to God and it’s pleasant to do so.

IF you’re here today and not trusting in Christ, you can’t buy God off with money or religion. You are both commanded by God, not to make up for past wrongdoing and sins, but to simply turn away from all your sin and follow Him with all your life.

- AND because of Christ, you will be welcomed by God, forgiven and delighted in, not because of what you can offer him, but because of what His steadfast love has done for those who fear Him.

It's good news that Christianity is about more than money, luck, oranges, and dragons. It's about being reconciled to God by grace through faith in Christ alone.

- It's about God being *OUR GOD* and us being *His People*.

And this is true for the whole church, not just as individuals.

- The New Testament makes it plain: A singing church is the result of being filled with the Spirit and the Word.
 - Colossians 3:16 and Eph 5:18-19 show how the Word and the Spirit produce singing!
- And singing is also part of God's plan to build up the church!

1 Corinthians 14:26²⁶ What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.

- So brothers and sisters, we are meant to be singing people!
- We have a great and gracious and generous and glorious God to praise! We need not be ashamed of Him or of singing to and about Him.

Life Application #2

If all this is true, then *what* gets in the way?

1. The first thing that comes to mind is...suffering

When we experience suffering, we struggle to worship.

When we suffer, we lose sight of God's goodness as it's eclipsed by a dark providence. The clouds of pain block the light of God's steadfast love.

- And instead of looking past the present experience with hope, we can't help but focus on the throbbing cause of our pain and suffering.

Brothers and sisters, if that's you today, don't feel guilty for feeling that way.

- But also, let the word remind you that God is gracious to lift up the humble and the downcast and he delights in those who wait for his redeeming love.
 - As Psalm 126:5 says, "Those who sow in tears || shall reap with shouts of joy!"
 - And in my home we like to say, He is going to wipe away both the big tears *and* the little tears. He will do it!
 - And this trial will not have the last word. God will!

2. When insecurity gets in the way

Perhaps you come to church, and you want to sing – the heart is there – but you hold back. Why?

One reason for this could be insecurity. Are the opinions of those around you weighing more heavily than God's?

- Hear that God wants you to express praise from the heart.

- But if you're holding back because you fear the people all around you, you're not just withholding from God, you're also withholding from your fellow church members.
- We're supposed to do this together!
- So, know the love of God, put off the fear of man, and love others by singing.

3. I think that for some people, inability – or at least *perceived inability* - gets in their way.

I was this way. Before my wife and I were married, I could not sing at all! But she comes from a family of singers.

- So, what was I going to do? Just *not* sing because I couldn't sing well?
- No, that's not an option. I am commanded to sing AND I wanted to sing... and I wanted to sing well!
- So, I asked my wife for singing lessons.
 - It was humbling that I couldn't stay on tune, but she was patient with me.
- And now I can sing better. I'm no professional but at least I can sing with confidence with my family and at church without being distracted by my own inability.

But I had to take the time to learn.

- So if you feel unable to sing, can I encourage you to humble yourself and learn? There are a number of ways to learn
- You can start by taking the time to learn the words of the songs you sing at church.
 - I know people who can speak English who learned entirely through songs. Practice, ask for help, and don't be afraid to try.

I can testify that if you take the time to learn to sing and learn the songs you sing, your sense of inability will vanish and you will find it *quite pleasant* to sing praises to our God.

Conclusion

God commands us to praise, not only because He is the Sovereign Creator and Gracious Lord, but because it is pleasant and fitting for His people to do so.

He's our God and we're His people, if we repent and believe in the gospel of Christ.

We will sing together forever, and we can sing together today!

So let us praise Him, for it is Good to sing praises to our God, for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is very, very, fitting.

Let's pray!

The One Thing

Praise God because it is good to praise God.