

# High God for Lowly Men

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[0:00] I'll read it out loud first, Psalm 113. Praise the Lord. Praise, O servants of the Lord. Praise the name of the Lord.

Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth and forevermore. From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of the Lord is to be praised. The Lord is high above all nations, and His glory above the heavens.

Who is like the Lord our God, who is seated on high, who looks far down on the heavens and the earth? He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes, with the princes of His people.

He gives the barren woman a home, making her the joyous mother of children. Praise the Lord. It's a very simple psalm. Really the main point is that we should praise the Lord on high, who looks upon the lowly.

And in verses 1 to 3, we see the command to praise God. And then in verse 49, we're given the reasons to praise God. And the exhortation to praise the Lord is repeated three times, just in verse 1.

[1:12] And what makes us wonder, what does it mean to praise Him? What's the kind of praise that befits His glory? And verses 2 to 3 give us the answer. It says, Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth and forevermore, from the rising of the sun to its setting.

The name of the Lord is to be praised. The Lord is so worthy of our praise that His praise should extend from today to forever.

That's what it's saying. And it should last from the rising of the sun to its setting all day long, all day long and every day unto eternity. And I've heard a lot of Christians wonder, you know, like, would it be kind of boring if we go to heaven and we're just praising God, you know, all eternity, you know. But people kind of don't wonder the same thing about getting married, you know. They're like, I'm going to be with the same person for the rest of my life, you know. Like, they don't wonder if that's going to be boring, right. Because relationships are really, it deepens.

You get to know the person. And, I mean, even after decades of marriage, I hear from older folks that you still learn and you still get to know and appreciate and grow in love for the person.

[2:25] And I think it's the same. If that's the case and if for a finite and sinful human being, a lifetime of marriage is not long enough to get to know a person's life, then eternity is not long enough for knowing and loving the eternal God.

And so that's why the only prayer that befits him is to praise forever, all day long. And then we're given the reasons to praise God in verses 49. The first reason is that our God is highly exalted. He sits on high. Verses 4 to 6. The Lord is high above the mountains, I mean above all nations, sorry, and his glory above the heavens, who is like the Lord our God, who is seated on high, who looks far down on the heavens and the earth.

It's frequently said, right, that God's dwelling place is in heaven and he looks down on earth from heaven. And that's true in a figurative sense, but technically God dwells far above the heavens, right?

He's, as 2 Chronicles 2, verse 6 says, heaven, even highest heaven cannot contain him. And so that's why verse 6 says that God looks far down, not merely on the earth, but he looks far down on the heavens itself, heavens and the earth.

[3:39] There's a distance between God and man that we can never hope to cross. But, of course, being above something isn't referring merely to a spatial category of where he is.

It's really not. That's just a figurative language. But it's a statement of God's authority and glory, right? That he's above all nations means he exercises sovereign rule above all the nations of earth,

all the kingdoms of earth.

And he's sovereign not only over the people of earth, but he's also sovereign over the spirits of heaven. He reigns above the heavens. And we are often fascinated in our lives by people who are extraordinarily gifted or have accomplished extraordinary feats on earth.

But all human glory is dwarfed by God, whose glory is above the heavens. And for that reason, God Most High deserves our praise more than any other being in the universe. And what's amazing is that this Most High God is our God, it says in verse 5.

That's why we should praise him. He's our God. He's the Most High God. But that's hard to get our minds around. The second reason is even more baffling. The second reason given is in verses 7 to 9.

[ 4 : 50 ] He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with princes, with the princes of his people. He gives the barren woman a home, making her the joyous mother of children.

Praise the Lord. And this second reason is surprising because of the first reason. The first reason is that God sits on high.

High above all nations, his glory above the heavens. Yet instead of dwelling detachedly on some lofty mountain somewhere like those gods of Greek mythology dwelling on Mount Olympus, far from the people, aloof and uninterested in the affairs of lowly men.

Instead, verse 6 says that he looks far down on the heavens and the earth. God cares about his creation. He cares about the details of our lives. He looks upon the lowly.

And verses 7 to 9 are actually taken from Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 2, verses 1 to 10. And verse 8 is a direct quotation of 1 Samuel 2, verse 8.

[ 5 : 58 ] He raises up the poor from the dust. He lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor. You guys know the story, right? Hannah was a barren woman and her rival, Penina.

The other wife of her husband, Elkanah, provoked her grievously to irritate her, it says in 1 Samuel 1, 6. And our society frequently views motherhood with disesteem and even contempt.

But throughout Scripture, bringing up children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord is seen as a crowning achievement of a woman's life, joy and achievement of a mother.

And as a result, barrenness throughout Scripture comes with great shame. It's not until Christ fulfills what marriage points to in the New Testament that singleness becomes something of a lofty ideal to aspire to.

But so in this Old Testament context, God saw Hannah's grief and he gave her a child. And this child grew up to become Samuel, a great prophet of the Lord, right? So that's the background of this prayer when it says he raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap.

[ 7 : 10 ] And the song of Hannah really was the basis for Psalm 113, also is the basis for the song of Mary later in Luke 1. And where Mary praises God after hearing the announcement of the angel that she will give birth to Jesus, she says in Luke 1, 52 to 55, He has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate.

He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped his servant Israel in remembrance of his mercy as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.

So the pattern again and again we see throughout Scripture is that God opposes the proud, but he gives grace to the humble. And the ultimate example of that is seen in what he does through Jesus, his life, death and resurrection and ascension.

That through Jesus, God chooses to save not a proud people or a self-righteous people or a moral people, but those who are humble and contrite in heart, those who acknowledge their sinfulness, repent of it, and cling to God with their desperate need for his gracious redemption.

And that's why Paul writes in 1 Corinthians, right, God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise. God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are.

[ 8 : 30 ] So that no human being might boast in the presence of God. I hope this is an encouragement to all of you guys, because when you feel unworthy of God's presence, when you feel unworthy because of how high he is and how low you are, when you feel your sinfulness keenly because of how holy God is, when you feel small and unimportant in the scheme of life, and you maybe think to yourself, well, God doesn't care about these details of my life.

You can be sure that God, who is the cosmic ruler of the universe, is looking down on you, not looking down on you, looking on you with care, looking on you with love, with affection, with tenderness, because he's the one who raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash sheep, to make them sit with princes.

And we will sit with Christ on high. That's our destiny as God's people. And we can find comfort in that when we're in the low places in life. And I'll see you next time.

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