

## Psalm 145: “omg, I don’t understand”

For the 21 days we’re in this series, I have challenged you, if you don’t already have a daily time of prayer, to commit to praying 10 minutes a day... Today I want to talk about how part of that daily time with God needs to be worship. The Psalms say we should “come into his presence with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise.”

**Worship is the fuel of our relationship with God...** it’s what makes our relationship with God enjoyable. It’s the only way to really enjoy prayer. (If you really have trouble praying for a while... like the guy in the video, it is because you don’t really worship during prayer). You see, **many of us find God useful**, and that’s why we discipline ourselves to pray... **but when we find God beautiful**, that’s when we love to pray.

Do you know the difference? **Say you have a business partner who you don’t really like...** but you make a lot of money together... so when you talk to them, conversations are all business. Compare that to when you have a lover you’re just infatuated with—no agenda, you just love being together. **I dated a girl in high school...** I used to have come up with a list of things to talk about... handwriting was on the wall for that relationship. Compare that to Veronica, and we’d get together and talk about nothing until 3 a.m. “What do you want to talk about next?... (snort) I don’t care, I just like to hear the sound of your voice and I like the way your nose flairs when you talk...” When you love someone, you love being in their presence...

Some of you are like, “Well, what does worship during prayer look like?” You get in your mind this awkward, obligatory recitation... like that Ben Stiller scene in Meet the Parents, “3 things we pray of you, O Lord... to love thee more dearly; see thee more clearly; to follow thee, more nearly...” We make fun of stuff like that, but when I hear people pray... Listen, I think a lot of people are **socially awkward** with God... O Lord, God thanks for being God... O Lord...just be with us today and give us travelling mercies... be with all the missionaries over

there.” I feel like all the angels in heaven are going (awkward turtle).. When I first became pastor here... Prayer circle, 4 of us... (I’m going to repeat this exactly like he said it, so, give me grace)... “Lord, uh... Oh, God uh... Oh, Great Spirit... wait... no... &^%&^!” Me and the guy sitting there... Probably never prayed since.

So, what does it look like to worship as you pray? David shows you in **Psalm 145...** <sup>1</sup> *I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever...* <sup>2</sup> *Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever...* <sup>14</sup> *The Lord upholds all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down.* <sup>15</sup> *The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season.* <sup>16</sup> *You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every living thing.* <sup>17</sup> *The Lord is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works.* <sup>18</sup> *The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.* <sup>19</sup> *He fulfills the desire of those who fear him; he also hears their cry and saves them.*

Amen? Liar! *Kind in all his ways? All his works?* How many of you have been through a place where you felt like God was not kind to you? *What about unanswered prayers?* How many of you have some prayer God didn’t answer, and you don’t know why (David says, he is near to all who call on them, and he hears them and saves them... you’re like, “But it didn’t happen for me”)? See the dilemma this passage presents? David declares the goodness of God to be everywhere. But sometimes we look at our lives, or at the world, and we don’t see or feel the goodness of God. And we have a hard time worshipping... You think “Well, David just lives in a different world than I do... I don’t see God’s goodness everywhere like he does.” But that’s what’s odd... this Psalm is quite different than some of the other Psalms David wrote...

**Psalm 88:14** *O Lord, why do you cast my soul away? Why do you hide your face from me? 15 Afflicted and close to death from my youth up, I suffer your terrors; I am helpless. 16 Your wrath has swept over me; your dreadful assaults destroy me. 17 They surround me like a flood all day long; they close in on*

me together. **18** You have caused my beloved and my friend to shun me....

**Psalm 44:23** Awake! Why are you sleeping, O Lord? Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever! **24** Why do you hide your face? Why do you forget our affliction and oppression? **25** For our soul is bowed down to the dust; our belly clings to the ground." (so you know this is not rhetoric... David knew pain: at one point he was falsely accused by the gov't and driven out of the country; 2 of his sons got murdered; one of his daughters got raped; one of his children died in infancy... he knew pain)

**Psalm 89:49** Lord, where is your steadfast love of old, which by your faithfulness you swore to David? **50** Remember, O Lord, how your servants are mocked, and how I bear in my heart the insults of all the many nations. I am mocked worldwide...

**Psalm 39:13**, "Look away from me, that I may smile again, before I am gone and exist no more." (In other words, "God, pay attention to someone else, because... you are killing me!") "God, get away from me and let me die in peace!" And that's how the Psalm ends!

These prayers almost border on disrespectful, don't they?

One of the things I love about the Psalms is how earthy they are... they're unfiltered... (I can hear David's editor saying... You sure we should put this in here? "Uhhh... this is inspired by the HS; yes.")

These are cries almost of desperation. Now, how many of you have been there? (Raise your hand.) At some point in your life, you've felt like praying something like this... Look around. **A lot of times people who aren't Christians look at Christians**

and say, "They must just not see the world like I see it." They're not realists... Look around! We've been there...

**Katie... Friends overseas with baby, born with a defect...**

So, my point is, David knows what it's like to wonder where God is. So, in Psalm 145, when it's all praise, what has changed? BTW, Psalm 145 marks a turning point in the whole book of Psalms... the previous Psalms, as I showed you, have recorded a lot of frustration with God. but starting with this Psalm, all the rest of them are nothing but praise. Why?

**Well, there's no indication that David's circumstances had changed.**

In fact, we know from the history of David's life that his life really just got harder as he got older. It's not like David just went through rough patch out of college where he wrote all the angry Psalms... and then i got better and so now he's feeling positive and encouraging. Situations haven't changed. So is it inauthentic? Does he just slap a happy face on... paper over his pain with pious platitudes?

**What's happened? How can David worship in the midst of great pain?**

Oh, this is a GOOD question. The answer is probably not what you think, but it is wonderful and it is satisfying. What David finds, and shares with us, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is not **explanation but revelation; not answers, but Presence.**

**You ready?**

**<sup>5</sup> On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate. <sup>6</sup> They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds, and I will declare your greatness. <sup>7</sup> They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.**

- David grounds his worship in the works, or the acts of God. The “works of God” David here refers to are the official acts and words of God in the Bible by which God revealed Himself in history. In those words and works, God shows us who He is. It’s like a veil, really quickly, is pulled back and we, for a moment, see into the heart of God. In those works, God’s love, His beauty, His compassion, His tenderness, His control over the details of things is often so great it’s surprising to us. It’s like we’re in a storm, and every once in a while, in these revelatory acts of God, the storm clouds part...
- Let me give you some examples (we’ve been over recently, that David would have known too)...
  - **The story of Joseph:** In the story of Joseph, recorded in the book of Genesis, Joseph’s brothers unjustly sell him into slavery, and Joseph ends up as a slave in Egypt working for a guy named Potiphar, where he is then unjustly accused of raping his boss’ hot wife (...what was her name? “hottiphar”), and because of that he ends up in prison, where he meets a servant of the Pharaoh and interprets a dream for him; guy promises to get Joseph out of jail, but, cruelly, the guy forgets about Joseph, but because of that, 2 years later when Pharaoh himself has a dream, this guy remembers and because Joseph is still in prison they know right where he is at so Joseph is able to interpret Pharaoh’s dream and Pharaoh is so pleased with him that he places him as second in command over all of Egypt, and because of that he is able to save the entire nation of Israel from certain starvation.
    - And so, David, knowing this story, this “marvelous work of God,” realizes that even when it seemed like Joseph was forgotten, suffering abuse, that God was working and God had a better plan—in fact, the very things that others tried to use to hurt Joseph, God was using to work His perfect plan.
      - But this, you see, leaves David in a dilemma... Because he looks at his life and says, “I don’t see your working your plan in my life...” (See the dilemma? Story of Joseph... then my life. Which one is correct?)
  - Or let me come at it from another angle... Last week we looked at Abraham and God’s discussion of Sodom and we saw how compassionate God was, to even a wicked city like **Sodom**... how He is so willing and ready to forgive...
  - that’s how God really feels; or the story of the **prodigal son** where you’ve got God longing over every lost sinner like a loving father aches over a lost son; or Jesus saying that He cares so much for his creation and is so tender toward it, that not even a **sparrow falls out of the sky** without His knowing... but then you look around and say, “I don’t see the justice and mercy of God. Why all the pain and destruction? Why don’t more people know about Jesus?”

You see, I have these two sometimes conflicting pictures... these revelatory works of God, where God shows Himself, and they say one thing about God, and then I have some of the experiences of my life, which seem to say another... And we have to make a choice... which one do we believe? Let me give you one more...

- The greatest act of God is the cross! What does the cross show you about God?
  - First, it shows you that God’s love for us is nearly immeasurable... The picture of God’s love, given there is staggering... There is God, receiving our insults, mocked by us... yet on the cross, He is praying for our forgiveness; forgiving the Roman soldier stabbing a spear into His side; and the perverted, guilty thief dying beside Him. Think about the picture that gives you of God’s love for you. There may be a few people in our lives that we would die for... but imagine the

love demonstrated by a father who loves the son that has rejected him, shamed him, and tried to murder him. That's what the cross shows that God feels about you.

- The cross also shows us that God takes the malicious acts of others and uses them for good. Think about it, if there were ever an act where evil seemed like it was in full control, where the situation was totally out of control and God was nowhere around, it was the cross. Injustice was winning (Christ was completely innocent but being crucified by wicked people and God wasn't stopping it); Satan was winning.... Yet, it turns out, that even in this God is fully in control and His will is perfectly being done. **Here's a trick question:** Was it God's will that Jesus die? Yes and No... Yes, God was working in and through the injustice to perfect His loving, good plan.
- But you look at your own life and you say... I don't see all things working for good. "I don't feel the love of God." That's the question, *What do you believe?*

**What David does at this point in the Psalms is he makes a choice... he says (again) <sup>5</sup> *On your wondrous works, I will meditate.* <sup>6</sup> *They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds...*** In other words, I will determine what God is like and how He feels about me based on how He has revealed Himself in these revelatory works, not just through my life circumstances at the moment... And I'm going to choose, he says, to believe in your greatness, even when it seems unsearchable to me... see vs. 3? <sup>3</sup> ***Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable.***

That means he is going to see his world, and all that is going on in his life, in 3 ways, and seeing these things about God are hard for us sometimes...)

## **1. God is in LOVING CONTROL: even when His ways seem unsearchable to me, I know He's in loving control (v. 17-20)**

<sup>17</sup> *The Lord is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works...* <sup>20</sup> *The Lord preserves all who love him.*

- David says, "Even when I can't see it, God... I'll trust that you are close, that you hear all my prayers, and that you are exercising loving control over all the events of my life. I'll believe that all things are happening according to your purpose and according to your will.
- When I think about it, I can already see God working through a lot of pain in my life...
  - I can look back and see those places that were so disappointing for me... how God has used those for good. Never made sense at the time, only as I look backwards... **Malcolm Muggeridge**... friend and hero of **C. S. Lewis**, said when he was 75 "*Contrary to what might be expected, I look back on experiences that at the time seemed especially devastating and painful with particular satisfaction. Indeed I can say with complete truthfulness that everything I have learned in my 75 years in this world, everything that has truly enhanced and enlightened my existence has been through affliction and not through happiness...*"
  - Ever feel like that? See, if I can look back now... from a limited distance and see the good from some of the painful chapters in my life... **Don't you think given enough perspective, God's perspective, I might see a reason for all of it?**
- That's hard. I know. But that's what the cross assures you God is doing. Because of the picture of God given in the cross, I know that the injustices of others, and even the oppression of Satan, doesn't have the last word in my life. God has declared loving control over my life... so He takes even what Satan intends for evil and uses it for my good!
  - Steven (Acts 11:19). Antioch became a center.

- Satan's attempts to attack God's people only served His purposes...I think that's why Satan is so mad... He's never come up with a plan yet to which God hasn't said, "That's perfect. That will suit my purposes exactly."
- **Martin Luther** said this: "As soon as God's word becomes known through you, the Devil will afflict you and make a real theologian of you and will teach you by his temptations to seek and to love God's word even more...for I myself owe my persecutors many things for so oppressing and frightening me, for through the devil's raging, they have turned me into a fairly good theologian, driving me to a goal I would otherwise have never reached." In other words, I'm a great theologian, thanks to Satan!
- This is what this Gospel is all about...Satan's strategy to defeat the son of God only serves to provide salvation for the sons of men.

or now, some of what God does is still unsearchable—why is this happening? Why did I lose my job? Why am I sick?... and I know it's hard, but because of the cross, I believe in God's goodness... So, if you look at your life, and you can't see it... take a long, hard look at the cross. And believe! You don't have to doubt His goodness working in our life... **A.W. Tozer**: "With the goodness of God to desire our highest welfare, the wisdom of God to plan it, and the power of God to achieve it, what do we lack?"

And by the way, the fact that it's unsearchable shouldn't surprise you. **God's is all wise**, wouldn't it make sense that there are things that we can't comprehend yet?

- A lot of people say... "If God is all powerful/all-loving," why doesn't He stop injustice? But, here's the thing, God is also all-wise, and if He is all-wise, then there are going to be things that don't make sense to us now. You can't have it both ways. You can't have God all powerful and not all-wise!

- If you have trouble believing in God, I would plead with you... look at the cross! That's where you see His love and power. I know there are things that you can't understand, but that's just because God's ways are so infinitely higher than ours.
- **Here's what you should do... do what David did.** Be emotionally honest about your pain, but intellectually humble enough to accept that God has some purposes you may not understand. Both sides are important: without emotional honesty you are inauthentic; without intellectual humility, you'll go toward unbelief. And grasp the God revealed in His "works."

## 2. God acts according to great MERCY: (vv. 8–9)

<sup>8</sup> *The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.*

- 3 words... "**Grace**" and "**Mercy**": Mercy is God not giving us what we deserve; and grace is Him giving to us what we don't deserve. God has withheld from us the judgment that we deserve, but given to us goodness and blessing that we do not deserve. David saw, in God's works, that God had removed any of David's sin, any reason David had to be punished... and looked at him now only through the eyes of grace and mercy.
- See the phrase "**steadfast**?" It means "sure," or "unchanging." David was sure of God's favor and blessing... he had no doubt even when his life was going wrong... He didn't wonder if God was mad at him or had rejected him... and, see, this was really important for David, because David really struggled with guilt... committed adultery with his best friend's wife and then had him murdered... Varsity stuff... and then, because of his bad example, some of his sons would reject him. Bad husband, bad father, bad leader... I'm sure when things went bad for David he thought, "Oh, God is rejecting me and punishing me." But because of the cross, David knew that God wasn't punishing him. David knew that God treated him only according to grace and mercy.

- This is really important for some of you to realize... Some of you are going through a hard time. You've lost your job... something's gone wrong, God is not healing you... and you are asking, "God, are you mad at me? God, something wrong with me? Do I not have enough faith?" Here's the thing... if you think you deserve God's anger, you're going to have a guilt complex, and withdraw... Like when my daughters think I'm mad at them... they kind of slink away... but when I am excited, "Oh, look... when I am delighting in them... how cute...get the camera." They want to be around you... and if think God is angry at you, you're going to withdraw from Him. On the other hand, if you don't think you deserve God's anger, and that you're suffering unjustly, you're going to be mad at God. "God, Why are you doing this?" And you are going to resent God. In other words, if you aren't assured of God's mercy, when you suffer, **you're either going to hate yourself or hate God.**
- But if you know that God has poured out all the wrath He would have over your sin on Jesus at the cross, and looks at you with only steadfast love and grace and mercy... then when pain comes, you'll see God's loving hand behind it!
- Sticking a knife in your chest? Good or bad? Good if to put a stint in... Difference in murder and life saving surgery is a matter of millimeters and intent.
- **<sup>9</sup> The Lord is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made...** Through the cross (and its foreshadowings), David sees that that how God is treating the world with great mercy.
  - When people question how there could be a God with all the suffering... the idea is that a lot of innocent people are suffering and a loving God would stop it. I want to be sensitive, because our world is filled with evil and innocent people do sometimes suffer... but the Bible actually presents the question in a different light.
  - Think about the cross for a minute... what does it say about what the human race deserves. Judgment. So

what we deserve is judgment, that means that God's goodness to us is grace!

- Tsunami! Jesus was asked about this in Luke 18... The sun on our faces, the food in our stomachs, the air that we breathe... all of it screams God's mercy!
  - I talked to a guy one time who said, "Why doesn't God just leave me alone! I won't bother Him..." Fine, give him His air back." We have taken things that God gave us, created for us, and used them not for Him, but for ourselves. The fact that God lets us live another second in opposition to Him is sheer mercy.
- Some of you have a problem with the idea that there could be a loving God behind all the junk going on in the world... but what if your fundamental assumption about the world was wrong? What if, because this is God's world, we deserve judgment for stealing it for Him and using it for ourselves... if that were the case, wouldn't we look at all the goodness of the world as God's grace to us? God sharing His goodness with us everywhere, calling us to repent?
- We think, "This bad world is worse than we good people deserve; the Bible says, this good world is probably better than the wicked human race deserves."

### **3. God is TENDER toward us: When David looks into the face of God He sees tenderness (vv. 14–19)**

- **<sup>14</sup> The Lord upholds all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down. <sup>15</sup> The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. <sup>16</sup> You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every living thing. <sup>17</sup> The Lord is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works. <sup>18</sup> The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. <sup>19</sup> He fulfills the desire of those who fear him; he also hears their cry and saves them.**

- When I go through a difficult time... I can look into the face of God and know that He cares.
- How do I know this... the cross shows me
- Jesus says, not a sparrow falls from the sky... and I think, but God, I feel like I am falling from the sky... don't you care about me. But the cross shows me that He does. But, it's like the song says, "If His eye is on the sparrow, I know He's watching me."
- I feel wounded; I say why? Not explanation, but the assurance that He was wounded for me.
- I feel rejected; but I know it's not true, because He was rejected for me.
- We want explanation; God gives us revelation; we want answers, God gives us presence.

o, how do you worship? You meditate on the works of God, and then *worship* the God revealed therein. Worship, you see, is a statement you make about the character of God. You **believe** His works in the past; **worship** Him in your situation in the present; and then **trust** Him with your future.

are you falling? He will uphold you! Are you bowed down? He will raise you up! Are you lonely, broken, empty? Call on Him! He is close, tender and merciful.

told you... we want explanation, but God gives us revelation. We want answers, but God gives us presence.

o, you have to make a choice. Do you believe what the cross tells you about God?

- To unbelievers... this is why I call you to believe.
  - You may not find my arguments about homosexuality... who was Jesus? What was happening on the cross? Do you realize the staggering picture it gives you about how merciful God is, and how much He loves you...

- Too much injustice in the world to believe in a loving God... Honestly, what are the better alternatives?
- My friends who had the baby born a defect... Secularism says, that's just natural selection. It's just the state of progress... there is no imago dei (no image of God, just an organism not strong enough to survive getting weeded out of the gene pool). I'm not trying to mock you... but let me just poke at you for a little bit... Southpark does it all the time to us as Christians, let me do it to you... According to you... Why are we in Darfur trying to fight oppression? Isn't this just the mighty oppressing the weak and will eventually progress into a higher species. Isn't that how we got here?

- I see things wrong with the world, just like you, and I have questions... and then I see the cross and God's goodness. So I believe in God's goodness expressed in His works, and trust Him for the things I don't understand, and labor to bring His healing to the world.
- Church, this is our witness! This is what we say to the world... don't want to just say to the world, "Hey, look... our families are stable and we're moral and happy. I want to say, '2000 years ago there was a man who died on the cross... it was a great, inexplicable act of generosity and love. He claimed to be God. *Who was He?*'"

Finally, when you pray... you should worship the beauty of God that you see in His works... so part of my prayer time each day is to thank God for the cross... I say, "God, all that the cross tells me about how you feel about me is TRUE."

**Communion:** Believe the cross... meditate on the cross each day!

## ullpen:

- Hebrews 13:5, 'I will never, ever, leave you or forsake you.' English screws it up... Greek has a double negative and a triple negative... the word for forsaken is the same word Jesus used on the cross... "My God, why do you forsake Me?" He was forsaken for me, so I know He will never forsake me.
- Some of you are in a place, life has beat you to death... you need to look in the face of God and see that He has not forsaken you, that He feels your pain, that He cares, and that He intends good for you. This is how Corrie Ten Boom could say from deep within a Nazi prison camp, "No matter how deep our darkness, God is deeper still."
- Job asks God for answers, God hits him with 64 questions. Your suffering is one mystery among 10,000 others.
- Prov 3:6... trust God with all your heart; don't try to figure it all out on your own. You have to trust God.

ometimes I hear people pray and I think, "What if you talked to me like you talked to God?" "Oh, dear J.D., just wanted to thank you for being J.D., oh J.D., just be our pastor, oh J.D." God's like, "What's wrong with you?"

here's the dilemma... Are you going to believe what God reveals of Himself in His revelatory acts, or you going to let your current experiences and what you currently see determine what you think about God?

<sup>17</sup> *The Lord is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works;* <sup>18</sup> *The Lord is near to all who call on him...He hears their cry and saves them* <sup>20</sup> *The Lord preserves all who love him.*

toward the end of his life, one of his sons betrayed him, murdered one of his other sons and then was himself murdered; one of his slaves died; one of his daughters got raped

or the **story of Jonah**, where you've got a picture of God's compassion and tenderness for a wicked city like Nineveh, such that at the first sign of repentance he forgives... book of Jonah says He cares even about the cows (Jonah 4:2, 11)—