

Praise the Lord

Celebration Sunday

Scripture: Psalm 135

Sermon Series: Celebration Sunday

Topic: Praise

I. Introduction

The book of Ecclesiastes teaches us that there is a season and time for everything. There is “*a time to mourn and a time to dance.*”¹

Two days ago was the 25th anniversary of one of the saddest and darkest days in our nation’s history. September 11, 2001 is a day that ought never to be forgotten and ought rightly to be mourned for it was a day on which 2,977 people were murdered. That day is a sad and sobering reminder of the depth of evil to which a human heart enslaved to hatred and sin can sink. Truly we are reminded that sin and evil ought to be mourned.

But today, in the life of this church, is a day to—in a manner of speaking—theologically *dance*. In the life of our church calendar, today is *celebration Sunday*.

Today is the one day we set aside each year to celebrate what the Lord has accomplished among us over the past ministry year (see Annual Report) and to look forward in faith and hope at what He may do among us in a new ministry year.

Therefore, I invite you to choose to worship the Lord with joy today. No matter what may be happening in your life, let today be a day to rejoice in the Lord with gladness and praise. Lay aside any sorrow and lift up your heart in praise.

Is this too much to ask? Is such a thing even possible? I am reminded of Job. After hearing of the loss of all his wealth, all of his property, and all 10 of his children, Job responded by falling before the Lord in *worship*, saying,



¹ Ecclesiastes 3:4.

"The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."
Job 1:21 (ESV)

Job was certainly not dancing when he spoke those words, but the words, "*Blessed be the name of the LORD,*" are words that declare the greater satisfaction in God than in anything that Job possessed. *These are words of worship.* Such words are words of praise. Therefore, let us even now, no matter what is happening in the wide world or in the narrow world of our own personal experience, choose to celebrate and *praise the Lord.*

Father, this world is in fact a broken world. There is much wrong with our world, but You are sovereign over this world. Your kingdom reigns supreme. You, Lord Jesus, hold "all authority in heaven and on earth,"² in the world that we see and in the world that we do not see. You alone are God. Therefore, we pause to praise you. We gladly declare our faith in You. We choose to rejoice in You and in the true righteousness and true justice that one day You will reveal to all the earth. We cherish your great name. We rest in You, Lord Jesus. We rejoice in You. We praise You! Amen.

II. Main Idea: Praise the LORD

The Bible contains about 200 commands to praise, bless, and glorify the Lord. One example of these commands is the psalm that was just read to us. The main idea of this psalm is easily discovered. It is written in both the first and last verses;

"Praise the Lord."

The command to bless, praise, or sing to the Lord is repeated in this Psalm no less than 10 times! The aim is clearly to put the people into an attitude of praise!

The psalmist gives two reasons to praise the LORD, which are found in the 2 purpose clauses contained in v.3. Each of these clauses begin with the word '*for.*'

Praise the LORD, *for* the LORD is good;
sing to his name, *for* it is pleasant!
Psalms 135:3 (ESV)

The first reason to praise the Lord is because "*the LORD is good.*" The second reason to praise the Lord is because "... *it is pleasant.*" Let's briefly consider both reasons.

A) The LORD is Good

The Lord ought to be praised "*for He is good.*" You'll notice that LORD is written in all capital letters. This is the translators way of alerting the reader to the fact that this is the

² Matthew 28:18.

tetragrammaton, the greatest four letters in the Hebrew Bible, the four letters YHWH, which reveal God's personal name, *Yahweh* (or *Jehovah*). The beginning of God's goodness is the fact that He is a personal God. He has a personal name and relates personally to his people.

- 1) **LORD Chose Jacob** (v.4). The first reason God is good is because he "*chose*" Jacob.

⁴ For the LORD has *chosen* Jacob for himself,
Israel as his own possession.
Psalms 135:4 (ESV)

God chose the nation of Israel to be a people who enjoy a special covenant relationship with Him. This is what theologians call "the doctrine of election," which is the teaching of Scripture that relates to God's act of choosing whom he would save, not based upon anything they have done, but solely based upon his own "sovereign good pleasure."³ Moses explained this.

⁶ The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. ⁷ It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, ⁸ but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers... Deuteronomy 7:6-8

God chose Israel not because of any quality in them, but rather because of *His own loving decision*. God chose to love a small and weak people. Israel was not mighty and numerous when God chose them. They were nothing and numberless. God chose to *lovingly treasure* Israel for His own reasons, not for any reason found in them. Rather, He chose to love them. He chose to bless them. He chose to treasure them, "*out of all the peoples on the face of earth.*"

This *choosing* of the weakest and fewest people on earth reveals God's goodness. It does so because it reveals that God is not impressed with greatness, or strength, or special ability. He prefers the helpless, the weak, and the unimpressive. *God sees the ordinary and these He chooses to love*. This was true in Israel's case and it is true in all cases, because He is the same God today as He was then. AND, He always keeps His promises!

- 2) **LORD Created and Controls a Good world** (vs.5-6). The second reason given for why God is good is because he *created* and *controls* the world.

³ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, Second Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 818.

⁵ For I know that the LORD is great,
and that our Lord is above all gods.
⁶ Whatever the LORD pleases, he does,
in heaven and on earth,
in the seas and all deeps.
⁷ He it is who makes the clouds rise at the end of the earth,
who makes lightnings for the rain
and brings forth the wind from his storehouses.
Psalms 135:5-7 (ESV)

It is the LORD who did the *great* work of Creation. He *created* this world. He *alone* created it. He is "*above all gods*" because He *alone* is God. He alone "*does whatever He pleases, in heaven and on earth; in the seas and all the deeps.*" How breathtaking are the unseen wonders that God has created in the deeps.

Australian photographer Matt Deakin caught one of those unseen wonders.⁴ He was using his drone to photograph a group of sea turtles when a large endangered green sawfish swam through them. The milky water makes the image look AI generated but its real for this image, which he calls, "Ethereal Encounter," he recently won the 2026 Australian Geographic Nature Photographer of the Year award.

This shot is amazing. But Matt didn't create the milky water, the green sawfish, or the turtle. Those things God did. If we praise a beautiful photographer, then how much more amazing is the God who created what the photographer captured?

Not only did God create this world, but He also *controls* it. He presently "*makes the clouds rise*" from the earth. He "*makes the lightning and rain.*" God alone orders the "*wind from his storehouses.*" God controls the clouds, the rain, and the wind. He controls the oceans and the weather. In heaven and on earth He does "*whatever He pleases.*"

God is good because He is great and powerful. In the past He *created* this world and in the present He *controls* it.

- 3) **LORD Saved Israel** (vs.8-9). The third reason God is good is because he *saved* Israel. The psalmist takes us back to the beginning of the Exodus.

⁴ Source: <https://people.com/south-australian-museum-announces-2026-australian-geographic-nature-photographer-of-the-year-12074061> accessed 12 September 2026.

⁸ He it was who struck down the firstborn of Egypt,
both of man and of beast;
⁹ who in your midst, O Egypt,
sent signs and wonders
against Pharaoh and all his servants;
Psalms 135:8-9 (ESV)

God himself saved Israel from the horrible experience of suffering and oppression they were enduring in Egypt. God poured out on Egypt terrible plagues. He entered into their suffering and saved them. He revealed that His power was greater than all the false gods of Egypt. He demonstrated his superior might through “*signs and wonders*.” He saved Israel by delivering them from the “*iron furnace of slavery*” (Dt 4:20).

God is good because he *saved* Israel from their desperately oppressive slavery.

- 4) **LORD Gave Promised Land** (v.10-12). The fourth reason given for why God is good is because He *gave* Israel land. God not only saved them from slavery, but He also *gave* them a place to rest in this world.

¹⁰ who struck down many nations
and killed mighty kings,
¹¹ Sihon, king of the Amorites,
and Og, king of Bashan,
and all the kingdoms of Canaan,
¹² and *gave* their land as a heritage,
a heritage to his people Israel.
Psalms 135:10-12 (ESV)

God removed the Amorites and gave Israel the land on which they previously lived. [The land belonged to the Lord, not to them, for “*the earth is the LORD’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein...*” (Ps 24:1⁵).] He did this not because Israel was righteous, but because the Amorites and Canaanites were so wicked.

“Do not say in your heart, after the LORD your God has thrust them out before you, ‘It is because of my righteousness that the LORD has brought me in to possess this land,’ whereas it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is driving them out before you.”
Deuteronomy 9:4 (ESV)

⁵ See also Psalm 50:11-12.

Israel was not given the Promised Land because they deserved to receive it, but rather because the Amorites and Canaanites did not deserve to remain on it. This point is so important that Moses repeats it in the very next verse. The Amorites and Canaanites were so wicked that God passed judgment on them and destroyed them⁶ (for they did such things as roast their children in the fire and many other things that the LORD hates).

It is good and right to justly judge sin, and it is also good to give land to a landless people. Israel was birthed as a nation while inside another nation, Egypt. They had no land of their own. God promised to give the land to Abraham, but at the time that he made the promise the Amorites and Canaanites were not so wicked that they deserved to be removed. Thus, God waited 400 years until their evil was so repugnant that they deserved to be completely removed. Only then did God give that land to the people of Israel (Gn 15:13-16).

God is good because He graciously gives land to a landless people and He is good because he always keeps His promises—even if it takes 400 years.

Summary: Why is the Lord Good? Because He *chooses* to whom he will love and be gracious, He *created* and *controls* this world, He *saves*, and He *gives*. Therefore, praise the Lord for He is good!

B) It is Pleasant to Praise the Lord

The second reason offered to praise the Lord is "*for it is pleasant*" (v.3).

1) **It's always Pleasant to Praise True Greatness** (v.13). Praise is pleasant which is why all things that are great receive praise. When we encounter something great, we can't help but praise.

- When our favorite team pulls off the greatest comeback in NFL history, we can't help but praise them (2017 down 28-3 in 3rd qtr).
- When you read a great book, or hear a great poem, or see a great movie, you can't help but praise.
- When on 9/11 a 24-year old equities trader, named Welles Crowther (a.k.a. "the man in the red bandanna"), saves the lives of 18 people in the South Tower, we can't help but praise him.⁷

⁶ See Deuteronomy 18:9-12.

⁷ Source: https://people.com/trump-says-volunteer-firefighter-who-died-saving-9-11-victims-more-famous-than-him-12111322?utm_source=chatgpt.com accessed 12 September 2026.

And when you think about a God who sent His only Son to save a whole nation of people, you can't help but praise Him. Why? Because praise is pleasant.

Praise the LORD!
For it is good to sing praises to our God;
for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting.
Psalms 147:1 (ESV)

This was true of God when this psalm was written and it is true of Him today. We should praise Him at all times for at all times He is praiseworthy and at all times it is pleasant to praise Him.

¹³ Your name, O LORD, endures forever,
your renown, O LORD, throughout all ages.
Psalms 135:13 (ESV)

If praise is pleasant, and the inhabitants of heaven will be praising the Lord there, then heaven will be filled with pleasantness forever and ever. Therefore, praise Him today, for it is pleasant!

- 2) **Pleasant to Receive Compassion** (v.14). The Lord God pours out compassion on His people and it is pleasant to receive compassion.

¹⁴ For the LORD will vindicate his people
and have *compassion* on his servants.
Psalms 135:14 (ESV)

Receiving compassion is pleasant. When a kind person enters into your suffering and brings relief, that is a pleasant experience.

- When a mother puts a cool, damp cloth on the heated forehead of a sick child, that is pleasant.
- When a you receive kind note written by someone who heard you were having a hard time, and it contains a gift card and confirmation of their prayers, this is a pleasant experience.
- When your lawnmower is broken and you've been working a lot of overtime, and you're stressed about how your going to get your grass cut and then you come home late one day to discover that your neighbor cut your grass, that is a pleasant experience.

It is good to praise the Lord because he has compassion on his servants.

3) **Pleasant to Receive a Response** (vs.15-18). Finally, it is pleasant to receive a response from the Lord.

¹⁵ The idols of the nations are silver and gold,
the work of human hands.

¹⁶ They have mouths, but do not speak;
they have eyes, but do not see;

¹⁷ they have ears, but do not hear,
nor is there any breath in their mouths.

¹⁸ Those who make them become like them,
so do all who trust in them.

Psalms 135:15-18 (ESV)

God actually responds to His people, whereas the false gods do not. They have mouths, but they cannot speak. It is very unpleasant to speak to someone and then not speak to you back. But when you have a request and you speak to God about it and He answers! This is very pleasant indeed.

This church commits to give 20% of all income to the work of missions. Last week as Financial Administrator was closing the fiscal year budget, she told me that we needed to disburse \$12,200 in order to hit that 20% mark.

During the time we were emailing about this, I also received an email from one of our deacons whose family has been funding the construction of a new Christian school her home country. They were running short on funds. She asked if Hope could help in any way. We elders discussed this and came to the conclusion that the Lord would have us donate the \$12,200 toward the construction of this Christian school. This dear lady prayed and the Lord responded.

When you pray and God's responds, it is very pleasant. Therefore, praise the Lord!

Summary: Why is it pleasant to praise the Lord? Because it is pleasant to praise that which is *truly great*, it is pleasant to receive *compassion*, and it is pleasant to receive a *response* (i.e. to know when God has spoken).

III. Conclusion

What should we conclude? It is good and pleasant to praise the Lord. He is worthy of being praised and it is a pleasant experience to praise Him. Therefore, we should praise the Lord.

We should praise Him for He is *good*. He is good because has *chosen* us for salvation through His only Son whom He sent to save us from our sins. If it is right to praise and honor “the man in the red bandanna” who saved 18 in New York, then how much more should we praise and honor the man who shed his own red blood in Jerusalem to save countless myriads upon myriads of people from every tribe, nation, people, and tongue? Praise Him!

God is good because he *created* and *controls* this world. He created this world through his own spoken word and we now know that Jesus himself is the Word of God spoken. Jesus is the one who carries out the command of God and who has been given the authority to create and control this world. Praise Him!

God is good because he offers salvation to anyone who will come to Him through Jesus. God is good and gracious, both of which flow to us through Jesus. Praise Him!

God is good because he gives a place to rest to His children. God gave the Promised Land to Israel and Jesus promised that He would go and prepare a place for us and then He would return to receive us to Himself. Praise Him!

Praise Him for it is pleasant.

¹⁹ O house of Israel, bless the LORD!
O house of Aaron, bless the LORD!
²⁰ O house of Levi, bless the LORD!
You who fear the LORD, bless the LORD!
²¹ Blessed be the LORD from Zion,
he who dwells in Jerusalem!
Praise the LORD!
Psalms 135:19-21 (ESV)

O Hope church, praise the Lord Jesus!

IV. Discussion Questions

1. Psalm 135 begins and ends with the command, "Praise the LORD." Why do you think Scripture so frequently commands us to praise God? What can prevent us from naturally wanting to praise Him?
2. The sermon asks us to choose to worship and praise the Lord even when life is difficult, drawing attention to Job's response to devastating loss. What does Job's example teach us about the relationship between our circumstances and our worship?
3. Psalm 135:3 gives two reasons to praise the Lord: "the LORD is good" and "it is pleasant." What does God's goodness mean to you personally? What are some specific ways you have experienced His goodness?
4. The sermon identifies several reasons that God is good: He chooses, creates and controls, saves, and gives. Which of these truths about God most encourages you, and why?
5. Psalm 135 emphasizes that God created and controls the world and does "whatever" He pleases. How should God's sovereignty affect the way we respond to uncertainty, suffering, or events that seem beyond our control?
6. The sermon connects God's deliverance of Israel from slavery with God's salvation through Jesus Christ. How does remembering what God has done to save us give us reasons to praise Him today?
7. Psalm 135 contrasts the living God with lifeless idols that "have mouths, but do not speak," and "eyes, but do not see." What are some modern "idols" that people are tempted to trust instead of God? What happens to us when we place our confidence in them?
8. The sermon says that praise is pleasant because it is pleasant to praise what is truly great, to receive God's compassion, and to receive His response. Which of these three reasons most resonates with your own experience of God?
9. The sermon gives a concrete example of God responding to prayer through the church's gift toward the construction of a Christian school. Can you think of a time when you recognized God's response to prayer? How did that experience affect your faith and your praise?
10. Personal application: If you intentionally made praise a greater part of your life this week, what would that actually look like? What specific truth about God could you intentionally remind yourself of each day as a reason to praise Him?
11. If you had to give God one sentence of praise right now based on Psalm 135, what would you say—and why?