

# “Praise the Lord!”: Learning to Praise in Prayer

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## Introduction

- A. The church is always called to be praying and seeking God together, but sometimes it is good to set aside special time to do so.
  - 1. That's what we have made a habit of doing during the first week of every new year. We call it our Week of Prayer. I believe this is our fifth year now doing so. It's been great!
- B. And to kick it off, one of the things we do on the front end of this week (today!) is we always try to prepare and deliver a sermon that will, in some way, set us up for this week and encourage us as we attempt to seek God in prayer together. So that is what I have for us now.

## The Text

<sup>1</sup> Praise the LORD! Praise, O servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD!

<sup>2</sup> Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and forevermore! <sup>3</sup> From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of the LORD is to be praised!

<sup>4</sup> The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens! <sup>5</sup> Who is like the LORD our God, who is seated on high, <sup>6</sup> who looks far down on the heavens and the earth? <sup>7</sup> He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap, <sup>8</sup> to make them sit with princes, with the princes of his people. <sup>9</sup> He gives the barren woman a home, making her the joyous mother of children. Praise the LORD! (Ps. 113:1–9)

## “Enter His Gates with Thanksgiving”

- A. If you haven't already noticed, in the Prayer Guide you've been given, we divide up the days according to our church's mission and values and we pray along those lines.
  - 1. Our mission statement, you may recall, is as follows: “Mercy Hill Church exists to help restore us to God, neighbor, and city through the good news of Jesus Christ.”
    - a. And we'll spend a lot of time later in the week praying through the ideas of “restoring us to God” (e.g. Faith), “restoring us to neighbor” (e.g. Community), and “restoring us to city” (e.g. Mission).
    - b. But we actually first begin with a focus on that last part, the part from which all this other restoration stuff flows: namely, “the good news of Jesus Christ.”
      - i. In other words: we focus on the grace of God given to us in Jesus. And, therefore, we begin with gratitude for what we've already have in him.
- B. That is why you'll read this for tomorrow in the Prayer Guide: “As we fully dive into this Week of Prayer together, let's begin with a focus on the gospel—the good news of Jesus Christ! Too often we come into prayer with our laundry list of demands instead of our adoration and gratitude. His grace

is all around us. Can you see it? God is and has been on the move for good. Let's identify what he's already been up to and give thanks for that before we start asking him for more!"

1. Now, I read you this, because, in many ways, this is what this Psalm (and, therefore, this sermon) is meant to set in motion.
  - a. It's meant to get the engine of your thanksgiving and praise humming.
  - b. It's meant to set a fire in your heart with love for God.
    - i. If this Psalm is the flint, then I pray this sermon be the steel.
    - ii. And, as I attempt to strike at this text, verse by verse, it is my hope that sparks will fly, tinder will catch, and praise will inflame . . . in you . . . to the glory of God!
- C. It seems to me that, though we often neglect it, praise in many ways is presented in the Scriptures as the starting point of prayer.
  1. As the psalmist exhorts us in [Ps. 100:4](#): "Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name!"
    - a. That's how you come in. That's where this starts.
    - b. But I know it's often not where we are. It's often not what we feel like doing.
      - i. We come in, as I've said, with our "laundry list of demands." We don't have time for praise. There's too much going wrong right now. Too much burdening me. "I need your help. I need you to fix this."
      - ii. But even if he does help or fix, still we often don't stop to praise. Why? Because there's a new set of issues that have already begun to hound us.
- D. Maybe that's where you're at this morning. It almost feels rude and uncaring to you that I would even suggest we ought to be first praising God here this morning. You're under the waves. How do you praise when you're drowning?
  1. Well, hopefully this psalm will help.
- E. I've got four points for us to consider regarding this idea of praising God: (1) That He Is to Be Praised ([v. 1](#)); (2) When He Is to Be Praised ([v. 2](#)); (3) Where He Is to Be Praised ([v. 3](#)); and finally (4) Why He Is to Be Praised ([vv. 4-9](#)) (we'll spend the most time here). Let's go!

## (1) That He Is to Be Praised (v. 1)

### Repeated and Framed

- A. The first thing that we need to be clear on here at the outset, however obvious it may be, is simply this: as his people, we are to be praising God.

B. Look again at the exhortative language of v. 1: “Praise the LORD! Praise, O servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD!”

1. Three times you see it there: “praise . . . praise . . . praise”!

C. But, more than that, I wonder if you noticed, this whole psalm is actually framed by that same exhortation:

1. So it begins in v. 1: “Praise the LORD!”

2. And, likewise, it concludes in v. 9: “Praise the LORD!”

a. There is your frame.

b. And everything in between is meant to be an unpacking and unfolding of this master theme.

c. This is the keynote to which the whole song of this psalm is tuned.

i. “Praise the LORD!” Or as we transliterate the Hebrew: “Hallelujah!”

## “Servants of the LORD”

A. I wanted to quickly point out just who it is that’s doing the praising here. Did you notice?

1. The Psalmists refers to them as “servants of the LORD . . .” And that is very important.

a. We see in this the posture that we ought to have as we approach God in prayer from the outset.

B. But, as I’ve been saying, too often we come to prayer and we totally invert this.

1. We set ourselves up as the master barking orders and God is made to be (in our own minds at least) our servant. “Do this. Do that. I need this. I need that. Not tomorrow. Not some time off in the future. Now. Serve me!”

C. And when we get it backwards, when we get it upside-down, do you want to know what happens?

1. Ironically, we gut our prayer lives of any praise.

2. In fact, the opposite begins to set in motion. We actually feed a sort of grumbling entitlement.

a. I say it’s ironic because we tend to think that being the master is what will make us happy.

b. But it’s not. It’s being the servant, getting beneath God, seeing him as the one above all, as the one above us.

i. You come into that place, you come back into reality, your heart comes back into order. And with that posture of humility, you’re able to rejoice, you’re able to praise!

- D. Before we move on here, let me ask you: Is that where you're at?
1. Is praise for the Lord erupting from your heart these days? Are you his servant, submitted to him, trusting him, delighting in him?
  2. Or are you playing the master? Has there been more grumbling and criticism, demands and discontent than anything else?
    - a. I struggle with this myself. But, brothers and sisters, it ought not to be so. Here we see, first, "That He Is to Be Praised."

## (2) When He Is to Be Praised (v. 2)

### "From This Forth and Forevermore"

- A. But now, honestly, it gets even more searching at this point. As we come to v. 2, we see, not just that he is to be praised, but when. Look at it again: "Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and forevermore!"
- B. Perhaps you thought under that last point: "Okay, I realize that as a Christian I should be 'praising the Lord' more than I am. I think I can muster up a little gratitude today and I'll sing some songs during the service and all this. And that should be good, right? That should take care of it for a little while, shouldn't it?"
1. Well, if that's where you're at, I'm sure you mean well with it, but you're missing the point entirely.
    - a. We don't just praise him here or there, at this time or that.
    - b. We praise him "from this time forth and forevermore"—every day, all the time.
- C. What makes this even more challenging for us is that this idea put forward by the psalmist here ("from this time forth and forevermore")—
1. it doesn't just include your good days: when everything's going well, when all is as it should be, when God seems to be turning all you touch to gold;
  2. it also includes your bad days as well: those days when you feel like all is lost, like the clouds won't break, like your dreams have gone up in flames, when you're left lying in a heap of ashes, and God is the one who seems to have lit the match.
    - a. Even on those days, even when you don't particularly like what the Lord is doing (or not doing!) in your life, you praise, you bless his name.
- D. I thought of that well-known response of Job in the opening chapter of the book that bears his name. You remember, he gets word that he's lost everything—his property, his possessions, and even his own children. Satan was given free rein by God to wreak havoc in this poor man's life.
1. And how does Job respond? Job 1:20-21: "<sup>20</sup>Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. <sup>21</sup>And he said, 'Naked I came from my

mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.”

- a. “[F]rom this time forth and forevermore!” That’s what it means.
  - i. It’s the apostles in Acts 5, getting beaten by the Jewish council, and then going on their way “rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name [of Jesus]” (v. 41).
  - ii. It’s Paul and Silas in that Philippian jail cell: “praying and singing hymns to God” (Acts 16:25).

E. But, again, I ask you: Is that you? Is that where you’re at?

1. Do you see reason to praise in the good and the hard?
2. Or are you sporadic, even fickle, with your praise?
  - a. When God gives you something, when he does what you want . . . you praise him.
  - b. When he doesn’t . . . you don’t.

### (3) Where He Is to Be Praised (v. 3)

#### From East to West

- A. Building on this same idea, we come now to v. 3. And here we see not just when he is to be praised, but where. Look at it again: “From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of the LORD is to be praised!”
- B. Now, on first read, I would have thought this still fit under the last heading “when he is to be praised.”
  1. When? Every day—“from this time forth and forevermore!” (v. 2). All day—“From the rising of the sun to its setting . . .” (v. 3) (i.e. “from morning to evening”).
- C. And, while this is still biblically true of course, every commentary I read said that the Hebrew here is referring, not so much to the temporal span of our praise, but to the spatial span of it.
  1. In other words, the idea isn’t so much “from morning to evening,”
  2. it’s “from East to West”—from where the sun rises to where it sets.
    - a. So, bringing the last verse together with this one now:
      - i. the notion isn’t so much every day, all day (although, again, of course that’s true);
      - ii. it’s actually every day, everywhere.

#### Corporate and Personal

A. Now, I should say . . .

1. It may very well be that the psalmist has in his mind the fact that people all over the globe are to be praising the name of the Lord, in a corporate sense.
  2. But I do think it's still something we can consider on a personal level as well.
- C. What I mean is this: we are personally, as God's people, to be praising God, not just at all times, but in all places.
1. Of course the two ideas relate, but this brings out an important nuance for us, doesn't it?
    - a. Don't you find there are certain places where, when you're there, it is easier to praise the Lord.
    - b. And, on the other side, aren't there places where it's easier to forget that and drift into grumbling or something else?
      - i. So maybe you come to church and you hear the gospel and you sing and you praise, oh it's so wonderful.
      - ii. But then you go home and there are dishes in the sink from last night, and the kids have gotten in another tussle in the back room, and lawn still needs to be mowed, or whatever. And you don't so much feel like praising.
        - (1) Ah, but God is still worthy of it, even here. It doesn't matter where you are. *"From the rising of the sun to its setting [from east to west], the name of the LORD is to be praised!"*
          - (a) Whether in your happy place, or you're in a hard place.
          - (b) Whether on vacation at the beach, or you're in a cubicle at work.
- D. So, again, I ask you: Is that where you're at?
1. Do you have times and places where you find you're able to praise,
  2. and other times and places where it just stops up? You give into stress or unease or despondency or self-centeredness?

## (4) Why He Is to Be Praised (vv. 4-9)

### Too High a Bar?

- A. It sure feels like, in all this, we've really set the bar quite high, have we not? I recognize that, to this point, I've not really offered you much help. In fact, I've probably only added burden to you.
1. "Okay Nick, so I have to praise God, every day, everywhere, at all times, in all places. This sounds near impossible. This sounds borderline crazy. I can't do that. I don't even know if I want to do that. It feels fake. It feels forced. I'm not a puppet on a string . . . I'm a person."
- B. If that's what you're feeling, I get it. And I think this psalmist gets it.

1. That's why he spends the number of verses that remain helping us understand not just that we should be doing all of this, but why, why God is worthy of it.
    - a. When you see him—when you get who he is and what he's done—that's what turns this praising from a sense of duty to one of delight; from something that feels forced, to something that feels reflexive, instinctive, appropriate, natural.
  2. And that's why I said I would spend the majority of our time this morning on this fourth point: "Why He Is to Be Praised."
- C. For this we'll look at vv. 4-9, but I'm going to break them into two parts. I think the psalmist gives us two reasons why he is to be praised at this point . . .

### Reason #1: Because He Is So High above Us (i.e. glorious) (vv. 4-6)

- A. Look first at v. 4: "The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens!"
1. The Hebrew for "high" here [Heb. rum]—it doesn't just mean high in terms of altitude or elevation, or something like this. It also, and especially here, means high in terms of dignity and majesty.
    - a. In other words: He is not just above us spatially. He is above us in every possible way—he is exalted, lifted up, supreme, sovereign.
- B. This is the reason for the psalmist's question that follows in the first part of v. 5: "Who is like the LORD our God . . . ?"
1. It's a rhetorical question. He knows the answer. No one!
- C. That's why he goes on to give this staggering image of God, where he's not just high above nations or people, but he's shown to be high above all things, and infinitely so. Did you catch it? Start back up in v. 5 and read to v. 6: "<sup>5</sup> Who is like the LORD our God, who is seated on high, <sup>6</sup> who looks far down on the heavens and the earth?"
1. Notice, he doesn't just look "down," he looks "far down."
    - a. The implication is simple: He's so high up that he has to look so far down. He is seated so high above us it would seem he almost has to stoop and squint just to see us down here beneath him.
  2. But notice further, he doesn't just look far down on "the earth," he looks far down on "the heavens" as well.
    - a. This multiplies all we've been saying to the power of infinity. It's not just our planet that is puny before him, it's the whole universe that is as nothing.

- i. We're so small, we can't even get a person on Mars—one of the closest planets to us, within our little solar system.
      - ii. And our solar system is just one planetary system of seemingly thousands within our Milky Way Galaxy.
      - iii. And our galaxy is just one of the seemingly trillions upon trillions of galaxies in the universe.
      - iv. And even that number is likely way undershooting it, because, so far as we can tell, the universe seems to have no end. It just goes on and on. There is no end to the heavens. It just sprawls out forever in all directions.
    - b. And yet our God is somehow still outside of it, seated over it, looking down upon it—and not just looking down, looking “far down”.
      - i. He's leaning over, squinting, pulling out his magnifying glass: “Oh, is that the universe. I can barely see it!” He looks at the vast cosmos the way you and I look at a grain of sand!
- D. This is why he says of the stars in that famous passage in *Isa. 40*: “<sup>25</sup>To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One.<sup>26</sup> Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name; by the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power, not one is missing” (vv. 25–26).
- 1. “I stand over and superintend the heavens.
  - 2. You can't get to Mars. I'm already there.
  - 3. You can't figure out how many stars and planetary systems and galaxies there are. I've named them all.
  - 4. Therefore, again, ‘To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him?’ (v. 25).”
    - a. Or, in the words of our text: “Who is like the LORD our God . . . ?” No one! He is so high above us. He is glorious. It's true.
      - i. And because of that he is worthy of our praise, full stop.
- E. But this is not the full picture, is it? Indeed, I fear if we were to stop here, God still seems a bit distant from us, a bit aloof.
- 1. He's so high above us. He has to stoop and squint to see us.
  - 2. But is he with us? Does he even care about us?
    - a. You see, this is what really catalyzes our eruption of praise.
      - i. When we see that God is not just so high above us, but that he is also down low with us.
      - ii. In other words: he's not just glorious. He's also gracious.
- F. When these two are brought together it's like Mentos and soda, have you ever done that? Your heart just explodes!



1. So we've got the soda prepared, now it's time to drop in the Mentos!

## Reason #2: Because He Is Down Low with Us (i.e. gracious) (vv. 7-9)

A. On this point, we're essentially given two case studies here in [vv. 7-9](#).

1. One is concerned with the poor and needy person.
2. The other is concerned with the barren woman.
  - a. Both find themselves in terrible states.
  - b. And yet both experience this transcendent God descending from the heights and drawing near to them in the doldrums . . . with compassion.

### Case Study #1: The Poor and Needy Person (vv. 7-8)

A. So [vv. 7-8](#): “<sup>7</sup> He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap,<sup>8</sup> to make them sit with princes, with the princes of his people.”

B. The Hebrew word for “[poor](#)” here can refer to financial hardship. But it can go beyond that, referring to a person who is low, helpless, powerless, insignificant, downcast, sullen.

1. All those words just come straight out of my Hebrew lexicon.
  - a. But maybe they fit as a description of your own life and how you feel.
    - i. You're down in the dust, licking your wounds, overlooked and unable to pick yourself up.
    - ii. So he comes down and picks you up himself.

C. This image of an “[ash heap](#)” is particularly vivid for us. It can refer to an ash pile, but it can also refer to a pile of trash, refuse, or dung. You're lying in crap. Anyone feel like that?

1. But, interestingly, the two images actually conflate into one:
  - a. In ancient cities like Jerusalem, you'd often bring your trash and your dung and all this outside the gate of the city and pile it up. (By the way, this word translated “ash heap” here is the same word used to refer to the “dung gate” we heard about back when Joey was preaching through Nehemiah [cf. Neh. 2:13].)
  - b. And every so often, it seems, when the trash and rubbish all piled too high, they would burn it, reduce it to ash.
2. The picture here, then, is of a person so poor, he's having to sift through the ashes outside the city, looking for something to eat or wear or sell or whatever. It's a picture of extreme destitution.
  - a. We see this sort of thing happening around the murkier parts of our city—people rummaging through trash and all this. And often we pass by on the other side. We shuffle our kids in the car and try to get on out of there.

- b. But not God. Though he is King above all kings, with his throne set above the cosmos, he gets down in the rubbish pile with us. He gets crap on his own hands as he comes to get us out.
- D. And, when once he's got us in his arms, look at where he sets us: "<sup>7</sup> He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap, <sup>8</sup> to make them sit with princes, with the princes of his people."
  - 1. He doesn't just get us out of the dirt. He sets us on thrones.
    - a. I love how Steve Lawson puts it: "By his sovereign grace, God raises them from the pit to the pinnacle" (HBC). From the pit to the pinnacle.
      - i. And now hear me: that's what God wants to do with you!

## Case Study #2: The Barren Woman (v. 9)

- A. Look at the beginning of v. 9 now: "He gives the barren woman a home, making her the joyous mother of children."
- B. The *New Bible Dictionary* describes barrenness in its biblical context like this: "To be a wife without bearing children has always been regarded in the East, not only as a matter of regret, but as a reproach which could lead to divorce. This is the cause of Sarah's despairing laughter (Gen. 18:12), Hannah's silent prayer (1 Sam. 1:10ff.), Rachel's passionate alternative of children or death (Gen. 30:1) and Elizabeth's cry that God had taken away her reproach (Luke 1:25)."
  - 1. It was seen as a sign of God's curse upon a person.
  - 2. It was a mark of disgrace, a cause for great shame.
  - 3. But, more than that, it was concerning because your future provision and protection and all this depended upon bearing children who could work and serve and care for the family as you aged.
    - a. So barrenness at this time in particular was a whole mixed up bag of hardship.
- C. And here we see again, God rescues and reverses. The lofty one gets low. He gives her a home. He makes her a mother. He removes her reproach and her shame. He lifts the curse, as it were.
  - 1. And, again, he wants to do the same for you.

## The Kind of God He Is

- A. That's the kind of God he is.
  - 1. As one commentator puts it: "God's majesty never implies his remoteness from those who look to him; it implies instead his exhaustive attention to detail, and his inexhaustible ability to care for his faithful" (ESVSB).
  - 2. Another commentator attaches his own title to this psalm: "Nothing too great for him, no-one too small" (TOTC).

## B. Don't you see?

1. He is not only sovereign, he is also benevolent.
2. He is not only transcendent, he is also imminent.
3. He is not only strong, he is also sympathetic.
4. He is not only glorious, he is also gracious.
5. He is not only high above us, he is down in the dirt with us.

## C. And it has always been so!

1. I read to you earlier from [Isa. 40](#), let me complete the thought, for you now: “<sup>25</sup> To whom then will you compare me, that I should be like him? says the Holy One.<sup>26</sup> Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name; by the greatness of his might, and because he is strong in power, not one is missing.  
<sup>27</sup> Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, “My way is hidden from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God”?<sup>28</sup> Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.<sup>29</sup> He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength.<sup>30</sup> Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted;<sup>31</sup> but they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint” (vv. 25–31).
2. Hannah, referenced earlier, as a barren women, experienced this care personally when God miraculously made here a mother of child. Indeed, our Psalm explicitly quotes from her words back in [1 Sam. 2](#) (perhaps you'll recognize them): “<sup>1</sup> Hannah prayed and said, ‘My heart exults in the LORD; my horn is exalted in the LORD. . . . I rejoice in your salvation.<sup>2</sup> There is none holy like the LORD: for there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God. . . .<sup>8</sup> 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’” (vv. 1-2, 8).
3. And, of course, her words are a mere preamble to the words of Mary, the mother of Jesus, in that song of hers we now call the Magnificat ([Luke 1:46-55](#))—where she's praising God, not just for coming in grace and giving her a child, but for coming in the flesh to redeem us from our sin. That's what we just celebrated at Christmas, right?!

## The Cross of Christ

- A. Here is where the light of the cross begins to shine out from our Psalm. And we realize that Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of it for us in the gospel.
  1. So Derek Kidner writes of how these last verses “anticipate the great downward and upward sweep of the gospel, which was to go even deeper and higher than the dust and the throne of princes: from the grave to the throne of God (Eph. 2:5f.)” (TOTC)! In Jesus, God is going lower than is even here depicted in our Psalm, and he takes us even higher.

B. Kidner references Eph. 2 at this point to make his case. Listen to this: “<sup>1</sup> And you were dead in the trespasses and sins<sup>2</sup> in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—<sup>3</sup> among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.<sup>4</sup> But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,<sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—<sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,<sup>7</sup> so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God” (vv. 1–8).

1. Do you see what’s being said here? We aren’t just spiritually poor—struggling in the dirt, trying to get by in our own strength. In our sin, we are dead.
  - a. And, therefore, we don’t get back to God on by leveraging our own resources or something.
  - b. The only way we get back is if he comes down (in mercy!) and gets us. And that’s what he does.
2. And, again, because we are lower he has to go lower. He doesn’t just go down into the dirt to get us, he goes into the grave. He has to pay for our sin, take our curse, suffer our death.
  - a. Don’t you see, he doesn’t just pull us out of the “ash heap”, the burning rubbish pile . . . he does a nosedive into it!
    - i. That’s why the author of Hebrews tells us he’s crucified “outside the gate” (Heb. 13:12), where the unclean stuff goes, where the garbage is burned.
    - ii. You realize, don’t you, that the most infamous garbage heap was outside the southern gate there in the valley of Hinnom. In the Greek it’s *Geenna*, which is the word used in the NT as a synonym for hell. Because it’s burning trash. It’s a picture of God’s wrath against sin and sinners.
      - (1) And on the cross Jesus goes there! He doesn’t just get a little dirt on his hands. He drowns in it.
3. And he’s doing it for us. So that when he rises up from the dead, we can rise up with him—we can be born again, forgiven, free, and set with him, not on earthly thrones, but on his throne.
  - a. He has “raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus . . .” (v. 6). Why? “. . . [S]o that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (v. 7). What kind of grace and love is this?

C. In Jesus, God goes down lower and takes us up higher than this psalmist could have ever imagined at the time. It’s always been who God is, but never before and never again will the world see it with such striking clarity as at the cross!

1. The God who is so high above us is right here with us. He's got us. He loves us.
  - a. Is life still hard? Yeah. But no matter what you're dealing with, you realize: he's already beaten death for you; he's already suffered judgment for you; he's already secured glory for you.
- D. And that is why we can, in the closing words of our Psalm, "[p]raise the LORD!" (v. 9).
  1. So here's my final encouragement: as we set out to pray this week, let's not forget to praise!