

Psalm 117 - A God Worthy of Global Praise

Good morning, my name is Matthew, one of the pastors here. If you are a visitor, a special welcome to you. It's a joy this morning to bring Christ to you through the Scriptures this morning. If you would, please turn to Psalm 117. We are on the backside of a sermon series going through what is called the Hallel psalms, which are praise psalms. Psalm 117 is the shortest chapter in the bible, but one that packs a powerful punch. Though brief in words, it's expansive in its depth and reach.

Priorities are important. They are what give shape to your life. In our day of endless distraction, reminders of what we are supposed to do are important. Even the secular world recognizes this increasing distraction, with numerous books on productivity coming out. There's a trend toward less is more, isolating tasks, like the recent One thing that came out, focused on eliminating distractions to do what you are supposed to do. Why? Because we are always giving ourselves to things that don't align to our purpose. And this is true for our walk with Christ. If not careful, we naturally drift towards the not important and not priority. Even if it's in the subtlety of our hearts. We drift into pride, we drift into self-glory, we drift into religious performance detached from the fellowship with God.

Psalm 117 is one of those reorienting passages, that reminds us of what we need to be doing. It's very simple. And I love simple directions. Let's take a look.

117:1

Praise the LORD, all nations!

Extol him, all peoples!

**2 For great is his steadfast love toward us,
and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever.**

Praise the LORD!

Our message this morning will draw 3 applications from this text. Praise God, Enjoy God, and Live on Mission For God. Let's pray.

1. Praise God

The main theme of this text and the main exhortation is obvious—praise the Lord. Three times the idea is repeated. Praise the Lord. Extol Him. Praise the Lord.

Have you ever thought of “praising the Lord” as a command of God? I think we tend to relegate affectionate and song type exhortations as somehow not commands. Or we put them in the advice or suggestion category. I'm not sure why we do this. They are all over Scripture, and I would submit to you this morning, that praising God and glorifying God is central to the Bible. We see this most notably in the giving of the Ten Commandments. The first commandment is what, “You shall have no other god before me.” and Great Commandment from Jesus, “Worship the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, and soul.”

That is the same as saying, another god shall not have a higher place of pre-eminence in your heart.

But this can be jarring to our notion of self-centeredness, our repulsion of praise. Doesn't that make God narcissistic and self-consumed? God wouldn't be loving if He was asking us to praise Him?

The reverse is true, God wouldn't be loving if He didn't ask us to praise Him. If He asked us to praise something else, that would mean something else would have more value than Him, which would make Him not

God. And that something else does not exist, so to ask us to praise something other than God is to ask us to commit idolatry.

That's the nature of God. God is not committing idolatry when He prizes Himself. He is rightly esteeming and valuing the most precious thing in the universe, Himself. For God to do otherwise, would be idolatry. So when God tells us, we shall have no other gods before Him, He is giving us the most loving command He could possibly give.

What God is after is our hearts. He wants us to enjoy Him, be satisfied in Him, receive all His many blessings. That is what causes our hearts to burst with praise. God desires and demands our worship for our own good and for His glory, they are the same thing. God commanding us to enjoy Him like a river is glorified when the panting deer stops for to drink, so God wants us to drink deeply from Him, and to worship Him in and through our enjoying of Him.

"I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation. It is not out of compliment that lovers keep on telling one another how beautiful they are; the delight is incomplete till it is expressed. It is frustrating to have discovered a new author and not to be able to tell anyone how good he is; to come suddenly, at the turn of the road, upon some mountain valley of unexpected grandeur and then to have to keep silent because the people with you care for it no more than for a tin can in the ditch; to hear a good joke and find no one to share it with. . . . The Scotch catechism says that man's chief end is 'to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.' But we shall then know that these are the same thing. Fully to enjoy is to glorify. In commanding us to glorify Him, God is inviting us to enjoy Him." C.S. Lewis

Praise is the natural release and fulfillment, or as C.S. Lewis puts it, consummation of enjoyment. Glorifying God and enjoying God are linked. The thing we most enjoy is the thing we most glorify. But there's a problem.

We are incapable of enjoying and worshiping God because of sin

Though we are commanded to praise God, none of us have the ability to do it, at least naturally. We have become, what the Bible says, enslaved in our sin. We have become, as Ephesians 2 says, objects of wrath. Our first man Adam sinned, and since then all humanity has been affected with a sin nature. It's not just that we can't worship God, it's that we don't want to. What's enslaved us is our own hostility toward God. We don't want to praise God because God rivals our praise. We view God as the one trying to steal our glory. We want to be on the throne, and God is our rival. That's the sickness of what sin has done to the human heart. It has so perverted and deformed us from God's original intention.

Romans 1:20 "For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. 21 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. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things."

Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

How have you not glorified God, and turned to broken cisterns? We are all held accountable. We are told to praise God, our praise flows from what we enjoy, we enjoy things other than God, and will be condemned for it. That's a problem. A massive problem. But thankfully, God provides the answer...

2. Enjoy God in Jesus

The command in psalm 117 that the gentiles should praise the Lord arises because of something. It's not empty praise, or praise that is coerced. This is where we see what God is calling us to enjoy about Him. Here's how we move forward into enjoying God. Praise of God begins with enjoying the blessing of God...

1. For great is God's steadfast love toward us, and 2. God's faithfulness endures forever.

The idea great, is like "mighty over Israel, intensity and fulness superabundance in covering human sin and infirmity." It's a prevailing type of love, like talking about one army prevailing over the other. A love that covers and protects and defends and conquers Israel's enemies. There's possibly a sense here that the psalmist is looking back, appealing to history, recalling all that God has done. There's an immediate awareness of how God has been their victor. From God leading the people out of Egypt, to passing through the waters, to sustaining them in the desert, to the conquests of Joshua, and the establishment of the dynasty through David, and the prosperity through Solomon. Yahweh is the One who shows up time and time and time again to establish, defend, and prosper us.

And if steadfast love is a looking back and recognition of the present, we see the psalmist move toward worshipping God because of His faithfulness forever. Faithfulness for the garden of Eden, blessing forever.

The idea I believe that the psalm is trying to get us to see is that there is no space for deficiency in God told us now and toward us forever, we are completely wrapped up in the measure of his blessing and in the enduring quality of that blessing.

BUT the Israelites could not see the full picture of God's love and mercy and deliverance. They knew of God's love and deliverance well in a physical sense, but they had a much greater enemy than the Philistines and surrounding nations. Their enemy, as well as ours, is ultimately spiritual, it's sin reigning in our hearts. They would keep sinning, and keep praising other gods.

The love and deliverance that they had experienced was pointing to a greater battle that was to be fought. That battle and fulfillment of all the promises of God comes in the form of God's own son, Jesus. Jesus comes to rescue and deliver His people, and it would take Him going to a cross. In the death of Christ the death blow was given to death. Jesus bore the full weight of punishment for sin, and those that believe in His work have their sins forgiven. Then in the rising of Jesus out of the grave, His new life declares us alive and righteous.

This is the true measure of God's great steadfast love, and this is the final, sure testimony that God is faithful to His promise, and He will remain forever faithful to His people forever.

He who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us or how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?... In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Soak in this truth this morning. In Christ, You cannot let God down, you have already been pleasing to Him. You can't do anything to make God love you more, and you can't do anything to make God love you less. He loves you because he loves you because that's who he is.

When we believe in the work of Christ, something remarkable happens.

Jesus gives us a new heart so that we can enjoy God. We are born again.

2 Cor. 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

We are made new in Christ. His life becomes our life. His heart becomes our heart. We are justified and sanctified through His blood. We are hidden in Christ and Christ's Spirit indwells us. His Spirit is an indestructible seed within us. When God looks at you He sings over you, rejoices in you, why? Because you are righteous in His eyes. Because your heart praises Him and gives Him glory.

It's Christ who perfectly praised God with every ounce of his being, and every drop of blood, standing in our place. It's His life of praise that becomes our praise of God.

3. Live on mission for God

We see this application both in the what the psalmist is doing, and what the psalmist is declaring. The first is obvious, he's doing what? Calling the nations to praise God. Twice repeated. It's outward focused. It's nations focused. It's people group focused. It's global in purpose to the glory of God.

And secondly, a more subtle but just as real connection is the Lord's steadfast love and faithfulness. Which has roots back to the promise of God given to Abraham for the Israelites.

Genesis 12:1 Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. 2 And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

God said that He would bless Abraham and his offspring, the Israelites, and through the nation of Israel all the nations of the earth would be blessed. God would restore and redeem the whole world. The Israelites rightly saw themselves as the key agent in the redemption of all things. It was through going to happen. God wouldn't abandon His promise, He would come through. No matter how dark or unlikely it might seem, God would show up. He would be faithful.

The Israelite is calling out to the nations, saying, praise God, come into this blessing! This blessing that completely wraps us up, past, present, and future, the blessing of God. God's steadfast, unquenchable, all-powerful love, and His enduring faithfulness to be true to His word, for all eternity.

Romans 15:8 For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, 9 and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.

Then Paul would quote Psalm 117 as he's making his case that God is for the Gentiles. That God through Israel is to a blessing to the nations. It's this mission that has been given to the True Israelite, Jesus, and to true Israel, His people the church. Psalm 117 becomes our cry as we are the fulfillment of the promise given to Abraham.

The climax of Paul's argument on the devastating effects of sin by the Israelites is tied directly to the glory of God among all the people of the earth.

Romans 2:24, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you." The glory of God is not worshiped. That is the problem!

John Piper goes on to articulate what this non-worship looks like.

"The glory of God is not honored. The holiness of God is not revered. The greatness of God is not admired. The power of God is not praised. The truth of God is not sought. The wisdom of God is not esteemed. the

beauty of God is not treasured. The goodness of God is not savored. the faithfulness of God is not trusted. The commandments of God are not obeyed. the justice of God is not respected. The wrath of God is not feared. The grace of God is not cherished. The presence of God is not prized. The person of God is not loved."

2 Cor. 5:18 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.

Our mission is global, praise the Lord all nations extol Him all peoples. And our mission is to get the people of the earth to praise God, that's our mission. It's a worship-centered, God-centered mission, as John Piper makes very clear, "*Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exist because worship doesn't.*" - John Piper

Mission is the overflow of joy in God. We are on mission because we have tasted and seen how great God is, because we are so satisfied in Him, we can't help to tell others, to bring others into this same blessing. We aren't driven by duty, we are driven by delight. Delight in God and delight in others.

You cannot be too far off from God. God loves you, and your addiction God loves you and your wing religious performance God loves you God loves you God is gracious towards you guys part is for you God holds his hand out to gods eyes are filled with love for you.

The second way to receive this this morning is this if you were the speaker you are calling the nations to God, you are God's mouthpiece to the nations. God has designed you and called you and invited you to go and speak and proclaim and demonstrate the gospel of Jesus Christ to the nations.

**Revelation 5:9 And they sang a new song, saying,
 "Worthy are you to take the scroll
 and to open its seals,
 for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God
 from every tribe and language and people and nation,
 10
 and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,
 and they shall reign on the earth."**