

Psalm 115

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Preacher: James Lapping

[0 : 00] Good evening, my name is James and I'm on staff team here at St. Silas. And let me add my word of welcome to Rob and others. And as we begin, let's pray.

Father in heaven, capture our hearts. Let us listen to you, hear you, and obey you. Because you love us. Amen.

And as we begin, let me ask you, who was your teen idol? And by teen idol, I really mean that person that you looked up to as a teenager. That you copied and emulated.

The person that you worshipped and adored more than anyone else. And growing up as a beach bum and a surfer in South Africa, there was really only one person that could be.

And that was Sean Thompson. And Sean Thompson, at that stage, was South Africa's only world surfing champion. And he was a great teen idol to have. He actually lived just around the corner from me.

[0 : 58] So whenever we'd go to the beach, me and my mates would quite often get lifts home from the beach with him. And he was the coolest of cool. He knew how to throw the coolest shakas.

He had the coolest way of speaking. He had the coolest dress sense. He surfed cooler and radder than anyone else on the beach. And so whenever I hung out with my mates, the only thing that we'd talk about was Sean Thompson and how we could be more like him.

And looking back, it was a bit sad, really. It sounds sad. Don't get me wrong. And I think Sean Thompson was a great idol to have growing up.

He was well-spoken. He was a clean athlete. He didn't really drink. Drink. Didn't do drugs. He was a genuine nice guy. But it was really sad that we simply worshipped a surfer.

But to be honest, I think most of our parents are quite happy that we tried to be like him because he was just such a nice guy. And the theme that drives the psalm that we're looking at this evening is that you have to be careful who or what you worship.

[2 : 11] Because in the end, you'll end up exactly like them. You become what you worship. So choose what you worship carefully. And if you've closed your Bibles, just open them up again and look at verse 8 of Psalm 115.

Where the psalmist, he's speaking of idols. He says here, Those who make them will be like them. So will all who trust in them.

And so the question that the psalmist asks us is, Will we worship the unseen God who is in heaven, who does whatever he pleases in the language of verse 3?

Or will we worship idols that we can see and hold and touch, but that are ultimately mute and deaf and powerless in the language of verses 4 to 7?

And I wonder if you've noticed as you've walked around Glasgow, particularly the west end of Glasgow, that Glasgow is absolutely filled with idols.

[3 : 15] We love to worship things in Glasgow. And so I think of the cars that I've seen this week. The McLarens, the Teslas, the Ferraris, the Porsches.

And they all look very impressive, very shiny, lovely to touch, lovely to hold. But ultimately, they're cold and feelingless.

And I'm sure you know the experience of going to dinner with someone. And all they talk about is what they have. And it's generally pretty dull. It's a really boring evening.

And that is because they're idle. What they can have, what they hold, are dull and boring. They can't speak. They can't do anything. Cars can only sit there and rust and need to be maintained.

Maybe, if you're in the west end of Glasgow, your big idol that you're tempted to follow is wokeness. And by woke there, I really mean someone who's an activist, who's someone who's very politically correct and who enjoys cancelling speakers who they disagree with.

[4 : 24] And this idol is the idol of moral one-upmanship that brands any viewpoint that is different to theirs, not simply as different, but as morally wrong.

And so those who follow it become so morally certain that they lack any kind of mercy. They think they're always right. And so they don't think that they need forgiveness.

And they lack any kind of forgiveness and redemption. And so here's Nick Cave, the musician. Maybe you heard this comment this week writing on the news.

As far as I can see, a cancel culture is mercy's antithesis. Political correctness has grown up to what? To become the unhappiest religion in the world.

And then he goes on to say, it doesn't have any of the beauty of religion, of redemption and forgiveness and mercy. And so the challenge for us of the psalm is to choose who you worship carefully.

[5 : 30] Because ultimately, you'll end up becoming just like them. And the psalm then goes on to give four reasons why God is worthy of our worship over any other little gods.

And so what I want to do for the rest of this evening is really drive our hearts to worship the God in heaven. And the plan is to work through the psalm backwards.

So hopefully that won't be too confusing. And the first reason that we see for worshiping God is that God is the giving God. Worship the giving God, verses 16 to 18.

And in the final verses of the psalm, we see God's diversity and abundance in giving. And so if we want to be a people who gives to others, and I hope we do, then we need to worship this God.

And the reason that the Lord can give so abundantly and with such diversity is that everything belongs to him. Just look at what he says in verse 16.

[6 : 36] The highest heavens want they belong to the Lord, but the earth he has given to the human race. He gives it out like he might give pens when you leave a conference center or something.

And everything that we see, the families that we enjoy, the food that we eat, the air that we breathe, the summer holidays that we enjoy, all of those have been given to us by our heavenly Father.

And it's not only that he gives us all of creation, but God gives us a reason for giving us that gift. So just continue to look at verse 17 and 18.

We're going to have to work slightly harder to see this here. It is not the dead who praise the Lord, but those who go down to the place of silence. But it is we who extol.

And that's simply another word for praising the Lord. When do we praise him? Both now and forever. Praise the Lord.

[7 : 40] And notice there, not everyone praises the Lord. The dead, for example, who have departed creation, they don't. But all those who are physically and spiritually alive, they have an opportunity to praise the Lord who's given them everything.

And so the psalmist implores us to do this. And it's a praising that is meant to last forever. It's meant to begin now and continue forever and ever. So what does the psalmist say?

He says, both now and forevermore. And so the challenge for us this evening is, are we thankful to God for all that he has given us?

Or are we so obsessed with the gifts that we ignore the giver? And then if praising God is the serious business of this life now and the serious business of heaven, of eternity, have we made it our business now?

Are we busy with praising God, declaring his praises to others? The next reason that we see for worshiping God is that he is the blessing God.

[8 : 49] He blesses us. So worship the blessing God, verses 12 to 15. So if we want to be a people who experience God's blessings, and if we want to be a blessing to others, then we need to worship this God and not the idols that are incapable of blessing.

And to be blessed is simply a fancy way of saying for things to go well in life. That God has been exceptionally kind to someone and looked after them through everything.

So you've heard the expression, someone lives a blessed existence. And I wonder if you'll just look down at verses 12 to 15 there and count how many times the word blessed is used there or repeated.

And I think I got five times. And the reason that the Lord blesses is because he has made everything. Just look at verse 15 there again.

May you be blessed by the Lord. What? The maker of heaven and earth. Here's the one. He's the only one who can bless because he has made everything.

[10:04] Here's our maker. And then notice that the Lord blesses every group of people. So verse 12 there. We read, he will bless his people, Israel.

And that's God blesses his people of old. The Hebrews, the Israelites. And then notice he goes on to say verse 13 or end of 12.

He will bless the house of Aaron. That is those people who have been set aside specifically for his service. The priests of his people of old.

But not only that, he also goes on to bless who? He will bless those in verse 13 who fear the Lord. That is anyone throughout creation, wherever they may be.

Maybe in the Solomon Islands. Maybe up down in Africa. Maybe in South America. Whoever has come to the Lord in repentance and trust who fears the Lord.

[11:01] The Lord will bless them. And notice then that the Lord blesses every type of person. Verse 13 goes. They're small and great alike.

It doesn't matter if you're a king or a street sweeper. If you're trusting the Lord, the Lord blesses you. He looks after you. No one is too insignificant to be blessed.

No one is too great to be blessed by God. All of us need his blessing. And then next we notice that the Lord blesses every generation.

So verse 14. Both you and your children. May the Lord cause you to flourish. And the Lord blesses them. And the Lord is the super abundant blessing God.

And so if we want to flourish in this life and the next. If we want to be a blessing to others. And I trust we do. Then we need to worship this God.

[11:58] And the truth that this psalm is commenting on. Is that for most of us we worship our gods. Because we think that they'll give us good gifts. That they'll bless us.

And look after us. And so we worship our job. Because we think if we do well in that. That will give us meaning. And success in life. And make us happy.

Or we worship money. Because we think that will give us security. Then we won't have to worry about the future. And then we can do whatever we want. And then we'll be happy in life.

Or we worship sport. Maybe it's tiddly rinks or football. We want to be a really good sports person. And we think that will give us the status. And success. That we're craving in life.

And the fame. That will make us happy. Or we worship a relationship person. Because we think that that person. Will complete us.

[12:53] And make us happy. And that we worship these things. Because we can see them. But all they do. Is they turn us into poor imitations. Of themselves.

So if I worship my job. I become overly task orientated. Everything is about that job. Everything is about getting production up. And I forget to enjoy life. Or if I worship money.

Everything comes about the bottom line. Pennies and cents. And so I never enjoy life. I never show thanks to God for that. Or if it's sport.

I become overly cultish about my sport. Everything is about that. Or if it's a person. I become overly dependent on that person.

And I copy them. And I get filled with all their insecurities. And I do all the bad things. That they do as well. You become what you worship.

[13:52] And so the psalm says. We should worship the true and living God. Who is in heaven. And who is the only God. Who can give us good gifts. And bless us. Unlike our idols.

And any other thing that we may worship. And not only is God the giving God. And the blessing God. That he is the saving God. So worship the saving God.

In verses 9 to 11. So if we want to be saved. And if we want to be a people. Who are concerned about others. And saving others. Then we need to worship the God of the Bible.

And I'm really getting that expression there. Saving from that. Those couple of words there. That God is our help. And our shield. And so the psalm was perhaps sung liturgically.

A call and response. By God's people of old. And so the leader of the choir leader. Whoever would have said. All years right. Verse 9. Trust in the Lord.

[14:51] And then the people would have responded. Here's their help and their shield. And then House of Aaron. Trust in the Lord. And he's calling on them to trust in the Lord. And then the people would respond. Here's their help.

And their shield. And it brings to mind really that old hymn. We trust in you. Our shield. And our defender.

And the difference between God and the idols. Is that God is in heaven. And he is powerful enough. And he sees everything. And he can intercede. To help.

And defend us. And to save us. All those who trust in them. Something that deaf dumb idols. That we can see in totaled and touched.

And that are stuck in this life. Can't do. They're powerless. To save us. They need rescuing. That car that I have. It needs to be taken to the mechanic. To be fixed.

[15 : 48] I have. That house that I buy. I need insurance for it. It needs to be saved. And the Christian. Is someone who trusts in God. To save them.

And gives up. On trying to save themselves. By their own efforts. And their own good works. They worship by faith. And not by sight. And so the Christian is. Someone who comes to God.

Open handed. With empty hands. And says save me. For I'm helpless. And hopeless. And I'm stuck. I need saving. I can't save. Myself. And the reason that God gives us.

That God saves us. Is that when we turn to him. And the reason that God gives us good gifts. And the reason that God blesses us. And this is the fourth and final reason. That we have in the psalm. For worshipping. And loving the Lord. Our father in heaven. And why he's the only God. Worthy of worship. And it's the reason for worship. That drives the psalm. And that I hope.

[16 : 46] Would drive our spiritual lives. Wherever we are. Is that God is the loving God. So worship. The loving God. And we're looking at verse one here.

And so. If we want to be a people who. Love others. And if we want to know God's love. Then we need to worship. The God of the Bible. And not the gods.

Of our own. Imagination. So just look at verse one there. The psalmist writes. Not to us Lord. Not to us. He's emphatic. He repeats it. He says.

Not to us. Lord. But to what? But to your name. To God's name. To who God is. And then one word. And then what?

Glory. To God. Be all glory. And so. The psalmist is so caught up. In his experience of God. That only one word.

[17 : 43] Summarizes God for him. And that's glory. And it's a glory. That eclipses all other visions of God that we might have. And it's a glory that deserves our worship alone.

Not to us. And the temptation for us. And for all of us. Is to want to slice a bit of that glory off for us. And make life about us. And so that glory.

We want the praise. And adulation. And the polite applause. Of people. But the psalmist says. Not to us. To God. Be the glory.

And the reason that. That the psalmist has come to this revelation of God's glory. The thing that's brought this on. Is right at the end of verse one.

Is because of the love. And faithfulness. Of the Lord. And that love there. Is that promise. Sure. And certain. Kindness.

[18 : 42] And love of God. That is. As steadfast. As a mountain. Will never be shaken. As unshakable as the heavens. As high. And as broad. And as.

So massive. That it eclipses. Everything. And the message of the psalm. Is that the greatest love in the universe. Deserves.

The greatest. Worship. And so. At the psalmist. He feels. And experiences. The love of the Lord. And he's driven to praise in God. For his gifts. For his blessings.

For saving him. And for. God's love for him. And he's given. And he's driven. To give God glory. For all of us. So William Wilfoss.

When he had finally passed. His anti-slavery bill. The story goes. That he retreated. Into his home. And he sat. And he meditated. On this verse.

[19 : 37] On verse one. He saw all that God had done for him. How he had blessed him. How he had loved him. How he had saved him. How he had given him good gifts. And he meditated. On how glorious God is.

And how. None of it. Was his. How he deserved no praise. But everything. All the glory. Needed to go. To God. And I think the temptation.

For us a lot. Is to separate us. Giving God glory. And declaring his praises. From God's love. We try to separate those out. But the message of the song.

Is that. If you have experienced. The love of God. If you've. Have known. What it is to be loved by God. Then you'll be compelled.

To give him glory. And declare his praises. Wherever you go. In life. The greatest love in the universe. Deserves. The greatest.

[20 : 37] Worship. The message of the gospel. Is an invitation. To worship the God. Who gives good gifts. Who blesses us. Who saves us.

And who loves us. With surety. And certainty. And we see this God. Most clearly.

At the cross. For God. So what? So loved the world. That he what? He gave. His one and only son. That whoever believes in him. Will not perish.

But have. Eternal life. That as Jesus died on the cross. And was resurrected. God gave us. His greatest gift. His one and only son.

That at the cross. God blesses us. By giving us. Jesus' perfect. Righteous life. Even though we don't deserve it. That at the cross.

[21 : 34] God saves us. Because he takes away. The sin. And our rejection of. Of God. And the punishment. That that deserved. Death.

For rejecting our maker. And by laying it on Jesus. And so Jesus dies in our place. For our sin. God saves us. Through. Jesus.

And at the cross. God demonstrates. His love for us. In the clearest way possible. And that his one and only son. Dies for us. No greater love. Has.

Any man. Than to lay down his life. For his friends. John 15. Paraphrased. And the only reasonable response. To the cross. Is to sing with the psalmist.

Verse 1. Not to us Lord. Not to us. But to your name. Be the glory. Because of your love. And faithfulness. And to worship God.

[22 : 32] Because of his great love. For us. To give him the glory. That is rightfully his. And to declare. His praises. And so. My hope and prayer.

Is that. Wherever you go this week. You'll join with the psalmist. In singing that verse. In praising. God. In giving God glory. Because of his love.

And faithfulness. For you. Wherever you go. This week. So let me close. In prayer. Our father in heaven. We thank you. For your gifts to us. Thank you.

For blessing us. For saving us. For loving us. Thank you. For Jesus. Please turn our hearts. To worship you. More. Day by day. Through your son.

Amen. Great. We're going to. Continue with our service now.