

Praise God with Music

Harriet's smile grew larger as she was wheeled into the activity room. It was Sunday morning, and church service at the nursing home was about to begin with the weekly ministry team.

This morning, the ministry team had brought a keyboardist. The service started about 10 minutes late. When it was time to sing, Harriet lifted her voice in praise. Her voice wasn't as strong as it once was, mainly because she was on 4 liters of oxygen. Still, she sang directly from her heart.

After the service as Harriet was being wheeled back to her room, one of the nursing home residents snarled at her.

"I heard you singing," said the man whose face she knew but name she did not. "What do you have to be happy about?"

Harriet smiled, reached out her hand, and covered one of his. "I'm glad to see you! Maybe next week you can come in and sit with me."

The young aide pushing Harriet said, "If I'm ever in a nursing home, I hope I can still be happy and grateful."

"All of my life, God has loved and taken good care of me," said Harriet. "The Lord hasn't stopped now because I'm in the nursing home."

"You have a great attitude, Mrs. Harriet," said the young man.

Harriet looked up at the young nurse's aide and said with a smile, "Next time, why don't you attend the church service?"

1. What are some things we do or should prize about God?

2. How should this be expressed?

3. Why is it important that we do this?

Praise the One Who Causes Things to Be

Psalm 149:1-5, KJV

1 Praise ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints.

2 Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.

3 Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp.

4 For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation.

5 Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds.

Psalm 149:1-5, NIV

¹Praise the LORD.

Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of his faithful people.

²Let Israel rejoice in their Maker;

let the people of Zion be glad in their King.

³Let them praise his name with dancing

and make music to him with timbrel and harp.

⁴For the LORD takes delight in his people;

he crowns the humble with victory.

⁵Let his faithful people rejoice in his honor

and sing for joy on their beds.

One thing that helps in understanding today's psalms is noting the first and last verses: Psalm 149:1 and 150:6. Both are translated in the NIV, "Praise the LORD." But the English translation doesn't do the original Hebrew justice. The Hebrew word actually means, "Hallelu Yah," a shortened version of "Hallelu Yahweh." A more literal translation of this would be, "Praise Yahweh." By associating "Yahweh" with God we see Him as, "The One who causes things to be." He not only has the power and willingness to act but does so. He is the psalmist's "Maker" and "King" (vs. 2).

Psalm 149 provides a brief glimpse of how Yahweh worked in the lives of the Israelites and what response the psalmist felt was warranted. The psalmist encouraged those

blessed by God to respond to His great deeds with praise. The direction of this praise was initially to be upward, not horizontal. At the outset, it was to focus on who God is by acknowledging God's character, which is represented by His name. We honor Yahweh, the One who causes things to be.

One place this praise was to occur was "in the assembly of his faithful people" (vs. 1)—anywhere God's people gathered to worship Him or to remember His wonderful acts.

The psalmist noted that his Lord delighted in His people and crowned them "with salvation" (vs. 4, KJV). Salvation here is best understood as rescue from a physical threat, not being saved from eternal damnation. As verse 9 (not in our lesson text) indicates, God had given the people of Israel the "glory" of bearing the sword as the Lord's army. The praise the psalmist encouraged was prompted by the way God had blessed Israel with military might.

The psalmist urged his people to accompany their praise of Yahweh with music and dancing, with every resource available. All who are Yahweh's people were urged to praise the Lord in this fashion. The NIV calls these God's "faithful people" ("saints," KJV). Both mean those who have been blessed by God or have been saved by Him, those God calls His own and who are or should be devoted to Him.

The psalmist's reference to the faithful singing with joy on their beds not only acknowledges another place where rejoicing should take place. It is often by acknowledging and praising God for what He does in the day that we can rejoice and sleep peacefully at night.

4. *What is the significance of the name of the One the psalmist was praising?*

5. *What did the psalmist praise Him for?*

6. *How and where did he say that should God should be praised?*

7. *What is the significance of his call for the faithful to rejoice and sing with joy in their beds?*

Praise Him with Every Instrument Available

Psalm 150:1-6, KJV

1 Praise ye the LORD.
Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power.

2 Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness.

3 Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp.

4 Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs.

5 Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.

6 Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.

Psalm 150:1-6, NIV

¹Praise the LORD.

Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens.

²Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness.

³Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre,

⁴praise him with timbrel and dancing, praise him with the strings and pipe,

⁵praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals.

⁶Let everything that has breath praise the LORD.
Praise the LORD.

Psalm 150 elaborates on who should praise the Lord as well as how and why it should be done. It also provides an apt ending for all the psalms recorded in Scripture.

Psalm 150 begins as Psalm 149 did with a call to praise Yahweh. It also notes that this praise ought to begin in the places where God's people meet, even to the "heavens" (vs. 1). It is any place where God's handiwork is evident or that reminds one of God's character and His greatness.

Like Psalm 149, the writer of Psalm 150 noted that God ought to be praised for His acts of "power" and

“greatness” (vs. 2). It is what God does that provides evidence of His character and nature. Psalms 150 and 149 both suggest that praising God often begins by recognizing and acknowledging the great things He’s done for our benefit.

The writer of Psalm 150 mentions many instruments that ought to be included as God’s people praise the Lord. He also encouraged dancing as well as verbal expressions of praise. Some have suggested that the reference for “everything that has breath” to “praise the LORD” (vs. 6) indicates that the psalmist was adding choirs to the means God’s people ought to use when praising the Lord. But it could just as well be a statement that all who have benefited from the great acts of God should respond to Him with praise.

What praising Yahweh ought to incorporate is all the artistic and musical talents or instruments available including, but not limited to, percussion instruments, horns, stringed instruments, dancers, and voices. Perhaps it ought to include any artists who portray the glory of God and the wonderful things He’s done.

The final verse of Psalm 150 provides an apt conclusion for the psalm as well as for the entire psalter. The 150 psalms included in our Bibles vary in their content as well as the context under which they were written. But they all have one intent. They are meant to convey that no matter our circumstances, we always have reasons to praise the Lord, who is worthy of honor and praise due in no small part to all the wonderful deeds He performs on our behalf.

8. *Where does the writer of this psalm say we should be praising the Lord?*

9. *What does he say God should be praised for?*

10. *How should He be praised?*

11. *In what way does the final verse of Psalm 150 provide an apt ending for all the psalms in our Bibles?*

Make Time to Praise the Lord

I don't often stop what I'm doing during the day so that I can spend time praising the Lord. It's not that I'm not thankful for what God's done for me or that I don't appreciate how great He is. I just don't seem to have time in my "busy" schedule to praise Him.

I put "busy" in quotes for a reason. In reality I'm not too busy—just too distracted. I get so focused on some task I want to accomplish that I forget to take time to praise the One who has given me the resources to finish that task.

One thing I learned from today's psalms is the importance of setting aside a specific portion of each day to praise the Lord for who He is and for what He's done for me. This can be expressed through a song sung softly in my heart, by verbally articulating my praise for Him, by listening to music that draws me closer to Him, or by writing in my journal what I appreciate about Him.

Another thing I learned is how critical it is when I meet with my fellow Christians for study or prayer to set aside some time to praise the Lord for who He is. When we are together, it seems that we often spend more time describing our pains or talking about our needs than in praising God for who He is.

I also need to be more willing to express praise for God in secular settings. It's easier with my unchurched friends to talk about the latest crisis rather than noting what God is doing all around us. What a wonderful testimony of God's greatness it would be if my friends could see through my words and actions how much I value the Lord. I have many reasons to praise Him. I just need to find ways to do it more often and more visibly.

12. *What do you find personally praiseworthy about God and your relationship with Him?*

13. *How, where, and when can or should you be praising Him for this?*

14. *Why is it important that you do this?*

Tell Him So!

There is never a lack of reasons to praise the Lord. What is often lacking is a sense of how critical it is for us to take time to do so. Sometimes we get so caught up in the “now” that we forget Who makes “now” possible. That’s not a good thing, as we never want to forget the One who causes things to be. We have a great and wonderful God. He is good all the time. And because this is so, we ought to take some time each day to tell Him so.

► *Set aside some time each day in the upcoming week to praise the Lord for who He is or for what He’s done for you. Each day write out what you praised Him for. Bring this to class next week so that you can share what you found praiseworthy about God during the week.*

KEY VERSE

Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD.

—Psalm 150:6a, KJV

Let everything that has breath praise the LORD.

—Psalm 150:6a, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK’S LESSON

Week of November 1 through November 7

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross devotionals* on these passages.)

Mon. Psalm 67—May God’s Ways Be Known.

Tues. Isaiah 2:1-5—The Nations Flock to Mount Zion.

Wed. Matthew 28:16-20—Make Disciples of All Nations.

Thurs. Zechariah 8:18-23—Gentiles Seek the Lord.

Fri. Psalm 86:1-11—All the Nations Will Glorify God.

Sat. Revelation 7:1-8—God’s Servants Sealed.

Sun. Revelation 7:9-17—Multitudes Praise God.