

What We Were Made For

Elizabeth Elliot, the widow of martyred missionary Jim Elliot, once stayed in the farmhouse of a Welsh shepherd and his family high in the mountains of North Wales. One summer morning, she stood watching as the shepherd on horseback herded the sheep with the aid of a Scottish collie named Mack.

Listen to these words from Elizabeth Elliot as she describes the scene. She writes: “Mack ... was in his glory. He came from a long line of working dogs, and he had sheep in his blood. This was what he was made for; this was what he had been trained to do. It was a marvelous thing to see him circling to the right, circling to the left, barking, crouching, racing along, herding a stray sheep here, nipping at a stubborn one there, his eyes always glued to the sheep, his ears listening for the tiny metal whistle from his master that I couldn’t hear. (That day) I saw two creatures who were in the fullest sense ‘in their glory.’ A man who had given his life to sheep, who loved them and loved his dog. And a dog whose trust in that man was absolute, whose obedience was instant and unconditional, and whose very meat and drink was to do the will of his master.”

As Elizabeth Elliot reflected on what she had seen that morning, she would later write: “To experience the glory of God’s will for us means absolute trust. It means the will to do His will, and it means joy.”

Just as that dog joyfully worked the sheep, our very “meat and drink” must be to do the will of God.

Today, we begin a new series from Psalm 150. This psalm can teach us many things about the joyful worship of and obedience to God. Just as Psalm 1 begins Book 1 of the Psalms but also begins the entire Psalter, Psalm 150 ends Book 5 of the Psalms but also ends the entire Psalter. Therefore, the man whose “delight is in the law of the Lord” and who “meditates on God’s law night and day,” as we see in Psalm 1, is also the man who heeds the command to worship God every day of his life as we see in these praise and worship Psalms from 146-150.

Again, worshiping and obeying God is what people made in the image of God are meant to do. This includes every man, woman, and child born of natural generation since the fall of Adam and Eve into sin. Because it’s true that we’re created to worship and obey God, we want to give our time and energies to the things of God — not the idols of this world.

Let’s begin our psalm today by looking at how we *can praise the Lord everywhere*.

Psalm 150, like Psalms 146-149, begins and ends with a command to “praise the Lord.” And yet, this psalm not only begins and ends with this command, Psalm 150 has 13 separate commands to praise God. Some scholars have divided this psalm into several questions about worship: where, why, who, what and how? These are very obvious as you look through the passage.

The first section teaches us that the “where” of worship is everywhere! Look with me in verse 1: “Praise the Lord! Praise him in the sanctuary.” The Hebrew word that’s translated “sanctuary” can mean “holiness” or “holy place,” and almost every English translation that I’m aware of translates this as “sanctuary.” This is the special place where God’s people gather together in Lord’s Day public worship in the presence of almighty God! But there’s more: We need to look at the second phrase of verse 1 to get a fuller picture of what’s being taught here. “Praise him in his mighty heavens!”

Scripture is clear that when God’s people gather to worship in the sanctuary on earth, they’re also gathered with worshipers who’ve gone on to heaven, including the worship of the heavenly angels! We see this same truth in Hebrews 12, where we read: “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven and to God the judge of all and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant.”

But there’s still more! The phrase “mighty heavens” is literally his “powerful expanse” or “powerful firmament.” By using the phrase “powerful firmament,” it’s likely that this is also speaking of the fact that “the heavens declare the glory of God!” We see this same type of thing in Psalm 148:3-4. This is an absolutely amazing concept to try and wrap our minds around, but it’s true!

Let’s move on now to *praise the Lord for who He is and what He’s done.*

This next verse touches on “why” we’re to worship God. Two aspects that connect to the “why” of worship are listed in verse 2. Speaking of God, we want to praise him, first of all, for “who” he is. This is reflected in the second phrase of verse 2: “Praise him according to his excellent greatness!” We could go on and on speaking of God’s “excellent” or “surpassing greatness.” His character and all that he is must necessarily be enfolded in the phrase “excellent greatness.” We know that God is good and therefore, everything truly good comes to us from God.

Now, from the first phrase in verse 2, along with praising God for “who,” he is, we praise him for “what” he’s done! “Praise him for his mighty deeds.” Again, like the category of “excellent greatness,” we cannot exhaust the category of “mighty deeds” or “mighty works.” What are these “mighty deeds?” We can think initially of all that God has done in his creative acts as well as the fact that he continually upholds the universe by his powerful word (Hebrews 1:3). Along with the creative acts of God in the universe — and I would suggest, more importantly, that we need to include all the wonderful things that God has done and continues to do for his covenant people! This list would include his work of redemption in Jesus Christ, including freeing us from our bondage to sin; it includes our justification, our adoption, his ongoing work in our lives, guiding us by the Word and Spirit to use the gifts and opportunities that he’s given us toward growth in holiness for ourselves and others in the church and so much more!

We cannot exhaust all that God is or all that he's done! There's never going to be a time — and this will include throughout all eternity — that we could ever say that we've run out of things to praise God for.

This is what we were made for!

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