

# True Worship

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[ 0 : 00 ] There we go. All right. You need to open up to Psalm 145, please. Psalm 145. That's our reading this morning.

As you're finding it, I'll read this great quote from St. Augustine, one of the early church fathers. He wrote this about the Psalms. And it'll be our prayer this morning after we've read it.

It's how I lifted up my voice to God by reading the Psalms of David. These songs of belief. These sounds full of devotion that drive out my own pride.

As I sang them with love, I used them to lift my voice to you, to the Lord. And the Psalms kindled in me and kept a fire burning.

Let's hear the word of the Lord in Psalm 145. A song of praise of David. I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever.

[ 1 : 05 ] Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever. Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised. His greatness is unsearchable.

One generation shall commend your works to another and shall declare your mighty acts. On the glorious splendor of your majesty and on your wondrous works I will meditate.

They will speak of the might of your deeds and I will declare your greatness. They will pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness and sing aloud of your righteousness.

The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The Lord is good to all and his mercy is over all that he has made.

All your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord, and all your saints will bless you. They will speak of the glory of your kingdom and they will tell of your power to make known to the children of man your mighty deeds and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.

[ 2 : 07 ] Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and your dominion endures through all generations. The Lord is faithful in all his words and kind in all his works.

The Lord upholds all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down. The eyes of all look to you and you give them their food in due season.

You open your hand, you satisfy the desire of every living thing. The Lord is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works. The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.

He fulfills the desire of those who fear him. He also hears the cry and saves them. The Lord preserves all who love him, but the wicked he will destroy.

My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord. Let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever. This is the word of God. Let's pray.

[ 3 : 12 ] O Lord, with David. And in the words of Augustine, we pray this morning that we might lift up our voices to you. That we might fix our eyes on your truth.

Meditate on them in our hearts. And that that might show in all of our lives. We pray that you would use your word and by your spirit this morning.

Not only to reveal yourself to us, but to ignite in us. A flame, as Augustine put it. That you might kindle it and that it might burn a great desire for you.

As we've already sung this morning. For you meet all our desires. And in Jesus' name we pray it. Amen. Amen. Sorry, I realize I didn't greet you.

My name is Graeme. And I'm part of the Union Chapel. And yeah, it's good to see people. So a few faces I don't recognize this morning. And I'm sure Stephen said it, but don't rush off afterwards.

[ 4 : 12 ] We go across to the hall there. There's tea and coffee. And it'd be good to meet you. If it's your first time. Now, you're going to need to keep that psalm open.

We're going to look at it and jump around a bit. But there is a famous exhortation in the Old Testament. Towards the end of the book of Joshua. Which will be familiar, I'm sure, to many of you.

It's when Joshua says to the people of Israel. Choose today who you will serve. And while this line is originally delivered to God's people in the land of Canaan.

As a warning against worshipping the gods of the Canaanites. Or against diluting their worship of the one true God. It really stands as a word to all peoples and in all times.

Even to you sitting here this morning in Cape Town. Some three and a half, four thousand years later. Joshua's exhortation rings true. Because you must choose this day, this week, and indeed with all of your life.

[ 5 : 16 ] Who or what it is that you are going to serve. To use different words, you might say, Choose today what it is that you are going to give your life to.

Choose this coming week what it is that you are going to devote yourself to. Where you will spend your time and invest your energy and your attention.

Where you will invest your love and your affections. Choose today whom you will serve. As David Foster Wallace put it in his now quite famous university address 20 years ago already.

He said this. He said there is no such thing as not worshipping. Everybody worships. The only choice that you get is to decide who or what it is that you are going to worship.

And that sentiment, as I said, going back all the way to Joshua, can be read and heard and seen across human history and culture. For example, quite recently, Jordan Peterson said this.

[ 6 : 23 ] He said, All of us possess something that constitutes our highest value. This thing regulates our emotions. And our motivational states.

It determines our thoughts. All people serve something. Whether that's an ideology or an ambition. And in that matter, he continues, There are really no atheists.

There are only people who know and people who don't know what God it is that they serve.

Similarly, Christian writer James K.A. Smith said this.

He said, To be human is to have a heart. And this means that you can't not love something. The question isn't whether you will love and treat something as ultimate and give your life to it.

The question is, The question is, What will that be? You know this. Even if you don't like Jordan Peterson. Even if you've never read the Old Testament book of Joshua.

[ 7 : 25 ] And it's unlikely that you've ever heard of James Smith. All of us worship and praise. All of us devote our lives to something.

All of us serve. We all love something. Our highest value. Our absolute. Something we give ourselves to.

And unsurprisingly, And we'll get to the psalm now. Unsurprisingly, The Bible repeatedly exhorts us to make that the Lord. To make God the person whom we give our lives and ourselves to entirely and absolutely.

To worship him alone. The first two of the ten commandments are taken up with this charge. To worship the Lord God and to worship him as he has commanded us to. Jesus will then summarize the law in the gospels.

The whole law. Not just the ten words. And he'll say that the law means loving the Lord your God with all your heart. With all your soul. With all your mind. With all your strength. With all of you.

[ 8 : 36 ] And that's precisely how our psalm begins and ends this morning. So if you have a look at it. The first two verses and the last verse are really topped and tailed with this exhortation.

This call to worship the Lord. Verse 1. I will extol you my God and King. I will bless your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever.

Verse 21. My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord. Let all flesh. Let everything bless his holy name.

In case you missed it. Forever and ever. Forever. This bracketing. This kind of top and tail. Really structures the psalm. It tells us what David is aspiring to do.

That his purpose in writing. But more than that. His purpose in living. Is to extol God. It is to proclaim his glories.

[ 9 : 37 ] And it is to fix his heart and his attention on the Lord. In a word. In a word. It is to worship the one true God.

God. And so this morning. Looking at this and thinking about it. I want you to notice what that looks like. According to Psalm 145. Just three short points.

About what we might call true worship. Three aspects. Not the whole thing we can say about it. But three things. That we can say about what it might look like.

To truly worship. The one true and living God. Three things. Firstly. Worship involves recognizing. That the Lord is great.

And that we are not. Worship involves ascribing to the Lord. What he is due. As the one who makes. And gives life.

[10:33] And so trusting in him. That wouldn't fit on a slide. That's why we just have the true worship there. And that's a long point. But worship recognizes God. For his greatness and worth.

Look at verse three. Great is the Lord. Writes David. Greatly to be praised. And his greatness. Is unsearchable. No points for spotting.

The repeated word. In that verse. God's greatness though. Here. And throughout the Bible. Is much more than simple might. Or power.

And strength. Although it includes. Those things. When we speak about. The greatness of the Lord. And when the psalmist. Praise the Lord. For his greatness. They are referring. To his character.

To his works. To his goodness. To his kindness. As we see later in the psalm. To his mercy. Towards all the things. That he has made. How he sustains.

[11:29] Life. One commentator said that. When we speak about. The greatness of the Lord. We ought to be moved to awe. For. Not only because he is great. But because he is good. And reliable.

And trustworthy. And we can place our confidence. And our hope. In him. You notice that language. As you work through verses four. To seven. David says.

One generation. Shall commend the works. Of God. To another. And they will declare. His mighty acts. In verse five. The splendor. And glory.

Of his majesty. Verse five still. His wondrous works. His awesome deeds. Verse six. And then in verse seven. His abundant. Goodness. His righteousness.

This sort of language. Is repeated throughout. Psalm 145. And as you read it. As is so often the case. When you read the psalms. It is almost as though. David cannot help.

[12:24] But praise God. As he sits down. To write his psalm. He is bursting. At the seams. With reasons. To celebrate the Lord. To celebrate.

His goodness. To reflect on how he has been kind. To him. How he has sustained him. David can't but delight. In God. In who he is.

And in what. He has done. Jim Packer. Was a. A British theologian. He wrote this. He said. To worship. Is the due.

Response. Of the creature. To his creator. And then he unpacks it. That little statement. In a great book. He writes this.

He says. To worship God. And notice the words. That he uses here. He says. To worship God. Is to honor him. To glorify him. To express.

[13:21] Our gratitude. To him. To grow. In our knowledge. Of his greatness. And his graciousness. Worship involves.

Praising God. For what he is. To thank him. For what he has done. And to desire. With all of our being. That he might get more glory.

For himself. As he does. That work. Worship is trusting him. With our own concerns. And our concerns.

For others. A little more. Concisely. One catechism. The New City Catechism. Asks. What does it mean. To glorify God. And the answer is.

We glorify God. By enjoying him. By trusting him. By loving him. And by obeying him. Those four words.

[14:15] Sum up. Packers quote. Quite well. And from those definitions. As you think. About praise. As you think. About worship. Or true worship. I'm sure you can see.

Very quickly. That it isn't limited. To belting out. Your favorite. Hillsong song. While you're showering. It isn't singing along.

To page CXVI. On your way to work. In the car. Praising God. Isn't even limited. To worshipping him. As we have done. Already this morning. On Sunday morning. As we have sung.

And professed our faith. And heard his word. And prayed. It's not that those things. Aren't important. Sundays. And showers.

But. If we narrow worship down. To songs. And hymns. Of praise. Or even to prayer. And devotional reading.

[15:11] And maybe to meeting. With Christian community. On Sundays. Or in our city groups. We very quickly. Separate worship out. From all of life.

If worship becomes. An activity. That we do. And then stop doing. At some point. Well then. We start to. Compartmentalize. And we forget.

That we should. Glorify God. In all. In every part. Of our lives. Or as Jesus would say. With all of our heart. And soul. And mind. And strength.

Notice the language. Again. Of Psalm 145. Every day. David writes. In verse 2. Every day. I will bless you.

Every day. I will praise you. In verse 7. Now turning. To the believing community. He says. They. Pour forth. The fame. Of your abundant goodness.

[16:08] Not a tap. That one turns on. And off. Or that trips. Occasionally. That a pouring forth. A pouring out. An overflowing.

Of worship. And praise. And delight. In God. These are the words. Of someone. Whose affections. Are fixed. On God. And who hasn't simply.

Fixed times. In their week. When they might do that. These are the words. Of someone. Who delights. In him. In all of life. For whom. Praising God.

And worshiping him. Is both an instinct. And a priority. Sometimes one. Sometimes the other. And often. A blend. But someone who is. As we see in verses 1 and 2.

And at the end of the psalm. Who is committed. And devoted. To worshiping God. Because that is appropriate. And right. Jonathan Edwards.

[17:04] Wrote this. Worshiping God. Is vigorous. And sensible. Exercise. Of all of ourselves. Inclining ourselves.

And the soul. To God. In all. Of life. That's the first thing. To notice about true worship. And linked with it. The second thing. Is that this worship. Cannot be private.

Or individual. Matter. It cannot be a private. Individual. It is. Something that is done with. And before. Other people. And this in verses 4. To 7.

Look at verse 4. David says. One generation. Will commend your works. To another. One generation. Will declare. Your mighty acts. Verse 6. They will speak. Verse 7.

They will pour forth. And verse 7. They will sing aloud. Not just that. But all of those things. In verses 10 to 12. The psalmist writes. All of your works.

[17:59] Give thanks. To you. O Lord. And all your saints. Will bless you. They will tell. Of your power. To make known.

To the children. Of man. Your mighty deeds. And the glorious splendor. Of your kingdom. Friends. Worship. True worship.

Is not a private matter. It is a corporate one. And it is concerned. With testifying. To the goodness of God. Before other people.

It is to share. In the wonders. Of God. And the truths. That have moved you. None of us.

Are unused. To this sort of thing. This. Sharing with others. What it is. We love. And delight in. And enjoy. We're constantly. Testifying.

[18:52] In all of life. To all of those things. Whether it's. Our pets. Our children. Or the latest series. On Netflix. We love. To tell people. About the things.

That we love. And the things. That satisfy us. We love. To bear witness. To the things. That we enjoy. And the things. That give our life. Shape and structure.

And meaning. I've joked. In the past. And you've probably heard me. Quote it before. But I. If I did a tally. I think I've probably. Given away. More copies.

Of the novel. Watership Down. Than I have Bibles. In my life. It's a wonderful book. Watership Down. And the Bible. That was a joke.

But. It wasn't in here. And you know. I love to talk. About books. And literature. And fiction. If you. Get me started.

[19:47] I don't stop. I love. To speak. About them. What am I reading? What have I read? What author. Am I really enjoying. Getting to spend more time with.

At the moment. All of us. Do this. We speak to people. About what we treasure. About what we value. And therefore. About what we prioritize.

And. I'm not telling you. This morning. That you can't. Do that. Okay. I'm not going to stop doing that. I'm going to keep. Quoting. Watership Down. From the pulpit. But the question is.

Are we quick. Or as quick. To testify. To the Lord's goodness. To us. You read how David. Pours forth.

In praise. For the abundant goodness. And kindness. The righteousness. The trustworthiness. Of God. He bears witness. To the ways. And you read the Psalter.

[ 20 : 46 ] The ways in which. The Lord has carried him. Protected him. Provided for him. Corrected him. And he does that.

Almost. At an instinct. And so the question is. Why do we. Why do we. So naturally. And effortlessly. Talk about all those. Other things.

That we love. And then. In our lives. Find it. A bit awkward. Perhaps. And uncomfortable. To speak. About the Lord. I mean.

After all. If you read the Psalm. And you believe. Just half. Of what David says. He is. Worth. Testifying to. He is. Great. And good.

And gracious. And full of mercy. And worthy. Of praise. And so do we. Bear witness. Verse four. Do we. Pass on.

[ 21 : 41 ] Those truths. To the next generation. And this isn't limited. To parents. With kids. But to the church. And to the believing community. Do we testify. To the greatness. And goodness. Of God.

His character. His works. In wonder. And awe. Do we praise him. Before others. I know. Myself. That I'm. So much quicker. To talk about. All the other things.

And so this. Comes as a challenge. I think. For all of us. And that brings us. To one. Third. And. Final. Point. True worship.

Worship. As we've seen. Involves recognizing. The greatness. The greatness. Of God. And secondly. Proclaiming that greatness. To others. To testify to it. But thirdly.

And perhaps a little bit. Strange. Compared to those two points. Is that true worship. Involves obedience. And submission. To God. If you're reading.

[ 22 : 37 ] Psalm 145. Closely. What you notice. At verse 10. Is a shift. The psalmist. Goes from praising. The Lord. And who he is. And what he has done.

To speak. Quite a lot. About. The Lord's. Kingdom. About his reign. And his. Rule. If you look at verse 11. David says.

They will speak of the glory of. Your kingdom. And in verse 12. We read of the glorious splendor. Again. Of. His kingdom. It's repeated.

In verse 13. And now described. As an everlasting. Kingdom. And then. His dominion. We're told. Still in verse 13.

Endures. Through all. Generations. Friends. The. The creator God. The glorious. And good. And gracious God.

[ 23 : 31 ] The creator. The one who's deserving. Of all praises. And to have. His goodness. Proclaimed. Naturally. This God. Reigns. And rules.

He is. A king. To whom. We must. Submit. To whom. We must come. In obedience. And to whom. We ought to serve. Those who worship.

God truly. Again. In all of life. Will work. To submitting. To him. As well. Again. Here. Praise. Then. Can't be something.

That's kind of. Privatized. Or individualistic. In fact. By coming here. On Sundays. And singing. Songs. Of praise.

To God. And then spending. The rest of our lives. Living. As though. He weren't king. Is in the words. Of John Colvin. To rob God. Of his glory.

[ 24 : 27 ] It is to soak. Infusion. Between people. Who are watching. And looking on. As I sing. To God here. And then the rest. Of my life. Suggests something. Completely different.

About what I believe. To build. On the analogy. Of kingship. To do this. Is to be like. The subject. Who comes into the royal court. And says the right things.

Makes the right gestures. Bows at the right times. And does all those things. When they're told to. And when it benefits them. And yet goes out. Of the royal court. And scratches graffiti.

On the wall. About how much they dislike. Or don't respect. That king. True worship. Must extend. To how we live. In all of life.

In submission. To God. And in reverence. And respect for him. Because he is. A king. Whose dominion. Will endure. Forever. Praise.

[ 25 : 23 ] And worship. Cannot come apart. From submission. And trust. And obedience. In permitting God. To be God. God. And recognizing.

That we. Are not. The trouble is. When you go through. Those three points. And perhaps you've sat here. This morning. And thought. Sheepers. Who worships God like that?

I mean. David didn't worship God like that. Have you read some of the other psalms? This was not David. Yeah. He was a man. Full of failings. And.

And. Extreme folly. I mean. Who could truly say. That the greatest treasure. And prize. Day in. Day out. Moment in. Moment out. Is the Lord. You know. Like to your drive. To work. With your hand out the window.

Praising God. As you sing along. To. You know. To whatever it is. That's coming through your. Your airpods. Who can truly say. That their greatest. Ambition.

[ 26 : 19 ] For all of life. Is God's greater glory. Rather than. My own glory. And my own comfort. Who readily.

And regularly. Testifies. Before others. In all of life. To the goodness. And graciousness. Mercy. And wonder.

Of God. And which of us. Doesn't resist. And push back. Against. His claim. To be Lord. Over every part. Of my life.

I mean. You may be convinced. Of the psalm. You may be convinced. Of those three points. Great. Great. Yeah. Sure. And yet. So often. The gap. In our lives. Between what we believe.

And even between. What we profess. And how we then go on to live. Is often. Very wide. I mean.

[ 27 : 15 ] The psalm speaks. Of. These many witnesses. To God's greatness. His might. His splendor. His majesty. His glory. His goodness. And yet. You know. And I know.

That in my life. I am not fixated. On the Lord. I do not spend my days. Testifying to his greatness. And glory. Before others.

And I know that there are parts of my life. That I do not want to submit to him. As king. I do not truly worship God. I can't do what Psalm 145 says.

Of course. There are good moments. You have them too. You know. Perhaps even this morning. Through our worship service. You have had your heart stirred. And your heart reoriented.

Towards God. And that's great. Because that's one of the purposes. For meeting together. But what about when you go from here. You wake up tomorrow morning. What about Thursday.

[ 28 : 14 ] And you're three days deep into the week. When things are tough at home. Will you glorify God there and then? Will you truly worship him?

I think this Psalm. At least on one level. Moves us to wonder. To ponder. As we stand back. And ask.

How. Or what. Will move me to worship God. Like this. To a greater. And consistent. Praise. To a life. That delights in him. And in telling others. Of his. Wonders. And friends. The answer is embedded. In the Psalm itself. It's a verse I've.

Jumped over a few times. And you might have noticed it. Right in the middle. In verse 8. David takes up. This line. Which had become. A kind of anthem. For the people.

[ 29 : 13 ] Of Israel. He takes it up. It's from the book of Exodus. Verse 8. And he says. The Lord. Is gracious. The Lord. Is merciful. The Lord. Is slow to anger.

And he has abounding. Instead. Fast. Love. And so though it is. Entirely appropriate. That we glorify God. In all of life. It is his grace.

That stands behind. And that will enable. And empower. True worship. And not the other way. Around. You see. Left to ourselves. Left to my own devices.

Left to yourself. During the week. You will not. Praise God. It is simply not. Our instinct. We don't want to. We don't have time to. We are not interested in it. We are busy. We are taken up with other things.

Why would I worship God? There are so many other great things. That I can give my life to. During the week. Left to ourselves. We will not worship. And yet. Verse 8. Tells us. That in his great mercy. And his grace.

[ 30 : 12 ] In his abounding. And steadfast love. The Lord meets people. Who are not. True. Worshipers. And he saves them. And he saves them.

So that they might glorify. And worship. Him. So often we make the mistake. That we have to come. Here on a Sunday. Or something. We have to kind of. Cobble up enough. Cobble together enough.

Worship. That we might please God. But verse 8. Tells us. That you can't. If we truly sit down. And assess our lives. And our hearts. We can't do it. We need that grace.

Of the Lord. To empower. And to save. To reorientate ourselves. Back to him. So that we might offer up. True. Worship.

Friends. The greatest wonder. And awe. The best songs. And hymns. The most obedience. And testimony.

[ 31 : 09 ] In all of life. It isn't born from sitting down. And just considering the facts. And going. Yeah sure. God is great. We should worship him. Because we know that. And we don't. The greatest wonder.

And awe. The most full-throated. Singing. And praise. And worship. Is born. Verse 8 tells us. From redemption. Not from reasoning our way. To glorifying God. As if. Yeah it's probably the thing we should do. No.

But from recognizing. That God. Saves us. Even though our worship. Is so half-hearted. And poor. And inconsistent. Look at verse 18.

The Lord is near. To all who call on him. To all who call on him in truth. Verse 19. He fulfills the desire. Of those who fear him.

[ 32 : 07 ] He hears their cry. And he saves them. God doesn't look around. Our world. Or our city. And pick out.

The best worshipers. And go. They'll do. I need that. Because it's always. Mixed at best. And hypocritical.

And insincere at worst. No. By his grace. God. Creates. Worshipers. Those whom he has. Saved. In closing then. Very briefly.

If we turned back to our points. With that verse 8 in place. What might it look like? What might true worship. Look like. In all of life. Well firstly. It must be empowered.

By grace. It is not something. That we. In the first place. Come and give to God. But rather. We recognize. That we have received. Abundantly from him. In the person and work.

[ 33 : 03 ] Of Christ. So that we can. Now worship him. And so firstly. What might it look like. To recognize. His greatness. Well David gives us. Part of an answer. In verse 5. He says. On your wondrous works.

I will meditate. In many ways. This throws us. All the way back to Psalm 1. Where David says. That the blessed life. Is the one who meditates.

On the Lord. And on his word. And on his works. On his wondrous works. I will meditate. And this describes. In a deliberate. Reflecting on.

A consistent. Commitment. To hearing. What it is. That God has done. And being directed. By it. So that we might. Turn truths over. Into praise.

And wonder. And glorifying. God. Secondly. What might true worship. Look like. In the sense of. Testifying to others. Well.

[ 33 : 59 ] If we're going to do it. Before others. It involves a commitment. To being with them. To being in. Community. To being here. On Sunday. To being part.

Of a group. Where you can hear. From others. How God has been at work. In their lives. That you might. Praise him. As well. This isn't something.

You can read Psalm. 145 verse 4. And think. Oh that's the next generation. That's obviously something. Older people do. With younger people. Or parents do. For kids. But it's not. It is something.

That is meant to be shared. As we. Tell one another. Of the wonder. Of God. I've said a few times. The faith. Is not something.

We can do. Alone. It is something. That must be done. Together. Persevering together. Proclaiming his wonders. Together. Praising him together. Finally.

[ 34 : 55 ] Obedience. And submission. As I've already said. This is the appropriate. Response. To those. To those. Who know God. That is to those. Who aren't content.

With saying. I'll take God. As a savior. And a gracious God. But I'm not that interested. In living. In how he has. Told us.

To. But friends. God saves us. So that we might submit to him. And what you find. As you do that. In submitting to him. We learn how to love.

And serve. Others. And as the psalmist says. Again and again. In the back half of the psalm. We find our desires. To be met. In God.

Surely the one who made us. Knows how to satisfy us. Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[ 35 : 52 ] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Lord you are gracious. And merciful. And slow to anger.

And abounding in steadfast love. You uphold those who are falling. And raise up those who are bound down and humble. We ask this morning.

That we might look to you. That we might be filled with wonder. and all and that by your grace you might send us from here as those who long to worship you in all of life we pray these things in Jesus name Amen