

Text: Psalms 145:1-3; 150:1-2 (Pew Bible pg.621)

Title: “Faith Sings ... God is Great!”

INTRODUCTION

ILLUSTRATION – Remember the little prayer some of us were taught to pray at a meal: “God is great, God is good, now we thank him for our food. Amen.” I learned that little prayer, as did many of you. I did not have a clue what it meant to say, “God is great.” I had no idea. Well I hope that by the time we’re finished this morning you and I will be absolutely gripped by the unfathomable, unequalled, unrivaled greatness of God.

Our worship is going to flow a little differently this morning, but let’s start by opening our Bibles to Psalm 146 (page 621 in the pew Bible). The greatness of God is a popular theme in the Psalms. Psalms are “Faith Songs.” And many of the psalms are psalms of praise to God. They describe God’s character and work, and offer praise for them.

Whether we know it or not, what we all need most and are most hungry for is a vision of our great God and to have a relationship with Him. The human soul is an amazingly barren place and we spend a lot of our time and energy trying to stuff things in there to fill it up. Someone has said that God created us with a God-shaped vacuum inside, a vacuum that only He can fill.

Let’s just start with a simple sentence and build on it.

1. GOD IS GREAT.

Psalm 145:1 - I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever.

Psalm 145:2 - Every day I will praise you and extol your name for ever and ever.

Psalm 145:3 - Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom.

I love the translation that says, “Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised.” God is great and is worthy of great praise. Don’t offer to God anything but the greatest you have to give Him in praise.

We throw that word “great” around, and use it on things that don’t compare to God. When we call a piece of art great, we may mean that it is extremely beautiful. When we look out over a mountain scene and call it great, we may mean we are thinking about the grandeur of that scene. When we call a person great, we may mean that they are important or influential. When we compliment a hostess and tell her that her meal was great, we may mean that the meal was very tasty and satisfying.

ILLUSTRATION - Suppose a friend calls you to say, “Hey man, I have a new car and I want to take you on a ride. Be by in five minutes to pick you up. So your friend picks you up and you go for a spin in his car. It’s fast, it’s responsive, it’s got every feature you could imagine, the leather seats are sleek. And when your friend drops you off at your house, you say to him, “Man that’s a great ride.” Now suppose he calls you the next day and says, “I don’t think you really got the full experience of the greatness of my new car. Let’s go for another ride.” You might politely say to your

friend, “Yes, your car is great. But I pretty much got that from one ride. I don’t think another ride is going to show me much more.”

So when we talk about the greatness of God, it isn’t like your friends great car. You pretty much exhaust the greatness of that car in one ride. But the Bible says here that no one can fathom the greatness of God. You can’t exhaust it in a single song or a single sermon. You can spend your whole life exploring the greatness of God and die without getting anywhere near the full picture of Him. You can never get to the depths or the height of it. You can never get to the width or the length of it.

Now another one of the praise psalms is the very last psalm:

Psalm 150:1 - Praise the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens.

God’s people praise him in the sanctuary. And God’s angels praise him in heaven. Everywhere God reveals Himself He is to be praised.

Psalm 150:2 - Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness.

God’s greatness is surpassing. That means that He’s in a category all by Himself when it comes to greatness. And we are summoned to praise God for his surpassing greatness. Now there’s another psalm I want you to see in this regard.

Psalm 34:3 (NIV) - Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together.

Note: Great is a noun and a verb. It’s a noun when it describes God. It is a verb when we use it to describe our worship of God ... we glorify Him ... literally, we “great” Him.

“Glorify” means to “make great.” God is great all by Himself. But then we get the opportunity to show God to be great. In the way we live and the way we worship, we are to glorify God.

ILLUSTRATION – Sometimes the word “glorify” is translated “magnify.” Now there are two ways to magnify something. We can use a magnifying glass, like I have here, to make something appear to be greater than it really is. Put this magnifying glass on an ant and it looks like an animal. The other way to magnify something is make what seems to be small appear to be as great as it really is. Now that’s the work of a telescope. I have here on the platform with me a telescope that Nan gave me for Christmas several years ago.

So when we are called to glorify or magnify the Lord, it doesn’t mean that we take a small God and making appear to be big. It means that we make a big God to look as great as He really is. So the entire calling of our lives as believers is to believe and behave in a way that makes God look as great as He really is.

ARE YOU GRIPPED BY THE GOD’S GREATNESS?

And don't think you can't do this. This telescope is really pretty small compared to the vast universe out there. But it helps me see incredible details about great things out there in our solar system. So be a telescope that magnifies the greatness of God.

8:30 SERVICE – LET'S STAND TOGETHER AND LET GLORIFY "OUR GREAT GOD"

11:00 SERVICE – LET THE CHOIR GLORIFY GOD AND MAKE HIM GREAT IN OUR EYES ("ALMIGHTY ONE").

Psalm 150:2 - Praise him for his acts of power...

The next thing I want you to see is that

2. GOD IS GREAT IN POWER.

Look at Psalm 147 ... another of the praise psalms.

Psalm 147:4 - He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name.

Psalm 147:5 - Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit.

ILLUSTRATION - There's a children's book by Robert Wells called "Is A Blue Whale The Biggest Thing There Is?" This book helps little ones see just how big the universe really is.

The largest animal on earth is the blue whale. Just the flippers on its tail are bigger than most animals on earth, but a blue whale isn't anywhere near as big as a mountain. If you could put one-hundred blue whales inside of a huge jar, you could put millions of those whale jars inside of a hollowed-out Mt. Everest.

But Mt. Everest isn't anywhere near as big as the earth. If you stack one-hundred Mt. Everests on top of one another it would be just a whisker on the face of the earth. The earth isn't anywhere near as big as the sun. You could fit one-million earths inside of the sun.

But the sun isn't anywhere near as big as a red, super-giant star called, "Antares." You could fit 50 million of our suns inside Antares. But Antares isn't anywhere near as big as the Milky Way galaxy. Billions of stars, like Antares, make up the Milky Way.

The Milky Way galaxy isn't anywhere near as big as the universe. There are billions of other galaxies in the universe. Yet filled with billions of galaxies, the universe is still almost totally empty. The distances from one galaxy to another are beyond human calculation.

So God created all this from the blue whale to the entire universe. That's evidence that there are no limits to His understanding.

And as we observe the universe we understand something very important about God.

Romans 1:20 - For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

No one can say, "Well no one told me about God. I'm not accountable to Him."

But that knowledge isn't enough to save us. We can see the vast universe and know that God exists, but still have no relationship with Him. So here's what God did: He bottled every bit of His greatness inside a human body, the body of His Son Jesus Christ.

The Bible says that all the fullness of the Godhead dwells entirely in Jesus. The greatness of God is seen in the life and ministry of Jesus. When Jesus delivered a demon possessed boy, it says...

Luke 9:43a (NIV) - And they were all amazed at the greatness of God.

8:30 SERVICE – LET'S STAND TOGETHER AND PRAISE GOD FOR HIS GREAT POWER AS WE SING "INDESCRIBABLE"

11:00 SERVICE – LET'S STAND TOGETHER AND PRAISE GOD FOR HIS GREAT POWER AS WE SING "HOW GREAT IS OUR GOD"

God is great. He is great in power. But also...

3. GOD IS GREAT IN HOLINESS.

Psalm 90:11 - Who knows the power of your anger? For your wrath is as great as the fear that is due you.

Wrath is the outpouring of God's holiness. And holiness is the absolute uniqueness of God. There is none like Him. His holiness separates Him from everything and everyone that isn't holy. And God's holiness flashes in His wrath against all that is evil.

Ezekiel 38:23 - And so I will show my greatness and my holiness, and I will make myself known in the sight of many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD.'

ILLUSTRATION – Believers are not the only ones who say, "God is great." Muslims have a phrase "Allah Akbar." That phrase is one of the most significant sayings in Islam. They use it in their prayers, and it is also shouted by Muslims when they are engaged in Jihad, or holy war. Then they go and blow up something or shoot somebody. It means "God is great."

Is that the way the greatness of God is proclaimed? No. That's why we believe that the Allah of Mohammed is not the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Psalm 135:5 - I know that the Lord is great, that our Lord is greater than all gods.

The Allah of Mohammed is a half-god. And a half-god is just an idol, not Almighty God. I say that the Allah of Mohammed is a half-god because he is known as a holy god, but he does not possess this next quality we see about God.

4. GOD IS GREAT IN LOVE.

Let's flip back a few pages to...

Psalms 57:10 - For great is your love, reaching to the heavens; your faithfulness reaches to the skies.

This is the OT equivalent of the *agape* love that we find displayed in Jesus in the NT.

Just think of that. God's great love reaches to the heavens. There's nothing in our human thinking that can compare with the vast expanse of the universe. Only if you could somehow wrap your head around the vastness of the universe you could wrap your head around how much God loves you.

Lamentations 3:22-23 - Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

This love is what caused Him to make a sacrifice that staggers our imagination:

John 3:16 - For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

8:30 SERVICE – LET'S STAND TOGETHER AGAIN AND PRAISE GOD FOR HIS GREAT LOVE: "HIS LOVE ENDURES FOREVER"

11:00 SERVICE – LET'S STAND TOGETHER AGAIN AND PRAISE GOD FOR HIS GREAT LOVE: "GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS"

God is great. He is great in power, in holiness and in love. But also, the Psalms tell us that...

5. GOD IS GREAT IN GOODNESS.

Back a few chapters to:

Psalms 31:19 - How great is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you, which you bestow in the sight of men on those who take refuge in you.

Now we're going to talk about this next week. But I want you to just think about this. God is awesome in His power, unapproachable in His holiness ... and yet He is great in love and goodness. He does good things for us. He is good and kind to us in big and little ways.

It's the realization of the great goodness of God that causes us to release back to Him all that we are and all that we have.

8:30 SERVICE – “HOW GREAT IS OUR GOD”

11:00 SERVICE – OFFERING AND “YOU HAVE BEEN GOOD”

CONCLUSION

I said at the beginning that whether we know it or not, what we all need most and are most hungry for is a vision of our great God and to have a relationship with Him. The human soul is an amazingly barren place and we spend a lot of our time and energy trying to stuff things in there to fill it up. Someone has said that God created us with a God-shaped vacuum inside, a vacuum that only He can fill.

Someone has written:

If we saw the greatness of God, we would not be so greedy and covetous.

If we saw the greatness of God, our eyes wouldn't stray after lustful images and thoughts.

If we saw the greatness of God, we wouldn't get angry at our children so easily.

If we saw the greatness of God, we wouldn't pout and get hurt so easily in our marriages.

If we saw the greatness of God, we wouldn't worry about our looks so much.

If we saw the greatness of God, we wouldn't spend time watching mindless and sordid and defiling television programs.

If we saw the greatness of God, we wouldn't get so discouraged with the evil and godlessness of our culture.

If we saw the greatness of God, we wouldn't give in to our appetites and overeat in boredom and depression.

Friend, it may absolutely astound you that such a great God would want to have anything to do with you. But today, if you will lash your life to this great God, great things will happen in your life.

Ephesians 2:4-5 - But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.