

## Hallelujah! Praise the LORD!

### Message #1: Praise the LORD because he is Far Above Us

You know that expression: “Can’t see the forest for the trees”? It means that you get so caught up in the details that you lose sight of the bigger picture. It’s almost as if you have blinders on while you look through a microscope, ignoring any other information or outside ideas or comments other than the little slice of the world that you can see from your perspective.

When assessing what is going on in total, you have to have a bigger perspective than just one narrow, completely focused idea. Husbands, ever wondered why your wife gets upset with you when you don’t do a little thing like take out the trash? It’s not really about when you take out the trash; it’s about the bigger picture of your relationship with your wife. Is this one more request that you don’t jump to or do right away? Is this a pattern when your wife asks you to do something? Do you listen to her? Do you tend to her needs? Does she *feel* like you do those things? If your head is too wrapped up in your business, in your activities, in your projects, you may not be giving your wife the attention she deserves or needs. You have to look at the whole picture of your marriage and your relationship with your wife and how well you are fulfilling all those aspects, not just one specific chore.

Now, take into consideration that there are more people other than just your spouse in your family that you need to care for. Can you focus solely on one family member day in and day out? Sure, but not if you are supposed to take care of them all. If you do everything for the sake of just one person, keep that person as the sole focus of everything you do, you will neglect all the others who look to you for care. But once we start trying to take care of more people we start to get overwhelmed. People are a lot of work. You need to take care of them in a way that helps everyone and not just one person.

Think of having to take care of 7 billion people as God does. Give thanks to our God for being so far above us. He sees the forest for the trees. He sees our whole world, every single individual all at once. No one escapes his sight because he lives from the place where the sun rises to the place where the sun sets. He is enthroned on high ruling over all things. He sees the big picture and thus can care for everyone with the big picture in mind, tending to the whole forest for its good instead of for the good of just one tree.

For us, that means when God answers our prayers, he does it knowing how it will affect the whole world, all of humankind. When he looks to provide for us, he provides not just for us but for everyone on a global scale. When things enter your life, all you can see is your little sliver of the world. You think all his attention should be on just one tree when in reality he has a whole forest to care for. We get caught up thinking that God should favor us to the neglect of others. But because he is far above us, enthroned on high, he can make sure that no one is neglected. God sees the big picture so that he can rule for the good of all people.

A reading from Psalm 113, verses 1, 3-5: **“Praise the LORD. Praise the LORD, you his servants; praise the name of the LORD. From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, the name of the LORD is to be praised. The LORD is exalted over all the nations, his glory above the heavens. Who is like the LORD our God, the One who sits enthroned on high.”**

M: Praise the LORD because he is far above us!

C: **Hallelujah! Praise the LORD enthroned on high who sees all and cares for all!**

We sing **Hymn 615**.

### Message #2: Praise the LORD because he is Near Us

Thinking of God being so far away, seated on high on his heavenly throne, it makes him feel distant. He’s so far away. Is God involved in my life? Can he be? If he is ruling over all nations, can he focus on the individual? I want him to, but he has so many others to take care of. Things go wrong, and I wonder, “Where are you God?” “Did you fall asleep at the wheel?” “Do you even care about me?”

“Who is like the LORD our God who stoops down to look on heaven and earth?” Our God is not a distant God. Yes, he sits enthroned over all nations, high above the heavens, but he also comes down to look at the individual, to tend to the individual. This is not the unapproachable Father figure who just as soon yell at you than acknowledge your existence. He comes down to the level of a child. If you want to talk to a kid, do you do so from your height advantage? Do you talk down to them? Or do you go down to their level and look them in the eyes?

God lowers himself to take a look at our lives, to tend to our needs. And he does more than just learn what’s going on. He stoops down to check in you, the individual, and then he raises you up. He sees our poor spiritual state. He sees that we are nothing but dust and ash because we have sinned, we have done wrong. We deserve to be disregarded by the LORD on high. But instead the LORD on high stoops down to us, comes to our level.

This is what Jesus, the Son of God, did by taking on human flesh. He came down on our level in order to raise us up. He lived perfectly for us when we never could. He suffered the pains of hell so that we never would. In this way, God has raised us poor sinners from the dust. Us, the ones needing salvation, the LORD lifted up from the ash heaps. He has given us a place in his kingdom, in paradise with him, in heaven. It's like a homeless, destitute man being exalted to eat at the royal banquet with princes, equal to them, no one looking down on him. It's like a woman who never got to be a mother now reveling in having the family she always dreamed of. She is happy. She is blessed.

The God who is far away is also the God who is near. He stoops down and sees our needs and he tends to them, whatever they are. The most important need he already tended to by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We are lifted from our state as sinners to now being saints before God, holy and pleasing in his sight because we are clothed with Christ's righteousness. God sees you. He takes interest in you. He stoops down and cares for you.

A reading from Psalm 113 verses 5-9: **"Who is like the LORD our God, the One who sits enthroned on high, who stoops down to look on the heavens and the earth? He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes, with the princes of his people. He settles the childless woman in her home as a happy mother of children. Praise the LORD."**

M: Praise the LORD because he is near us!

C: **Hallelujah! Praise the LORD because he sees me and stoops down to take care of me!**

We sing **Hymn 610**.

### **Message #3: Praise the LORD Forevermore**

What will you be doing for all eternity in the afterlife? We all ponder this at some time, hopefully with some frequency, actually. Do we think that we will be floating on clouds, playing golden harps? Will we be hanging out with Moses and Adam and Abraham and Peter and Paul and Jesus just shooting the breeze? We will be basically having an unending Thanksgiving meal while being joyously surrounded by all our loved ones?

There are pictures in the Bible of what heaven will be like. We know that we won't need any lamps or the sun because God will be our light. We know that there will be a new heaven and a new earth and that our bodies will be made immortal never to hurt, never to decay, never to ache again. There are some things we know, but then there's the moments when we stop trying to describe what heaven will be like because we don't really know how to describe perfection. This life is not perfect. We see shades of it, a shadow of perfection in the good gifts that God gives us, but we don't know what true perfection looks like.

When we come together to worship, we gather around the Word of God that has been the hope of thousands of generations. The Psalms were written nearly 3,000 years ago. Believers from 3,000 years ago praised the LORD and thanked him for who he is and what he had done for them in the same way that we are praising him and thanking him tonight. When we gather around the Word of God, we are connected to those believers of the past as we praise the LORD for the same things.

What you may not think about when you come to church is that you are also at the same time being connected to the future, to what is to come. When the Last Day arrives and Christ returns to judge the world, the praises that we offer to the LORD will not stop. In a sense, our praises are just beginning. When we come together here around the Word of God to praise him for what he has done for us, we are getting a little preview of what we are going to be saying and singing when we are in heaven. You can rightly say that our worship is a little slice of heaven – not because we have lovely singing voices or a beautiful sanctuary, but because we have the Word of God that so beautifully tells us who our God is and why we will never stop praising his name. Because our God on high stooped down and lifted us up, we look forward to praising his name not just here in worship, but forevermore in our heavenly home with him.

A reading from Psalm 113 verses 1-2: **"Praise the LORD. Praise the LORD, you his servants; praise the name of the LORD. Let the name of the LORD be praised, both now and forevermore."**

M: Praise the LORD forevermore!

C: **Hallelujah! Praise the LORD now for all the great things he has done! Praise the LORD now as a preview of how we will praise him in heaven always and forever!**

We sing **Hymn 609**.