

Psalm Playlist

Week Nine | Psalm 150

This week's Engage God Daily was written by Jake Potter, one of CF's amazing student ministry interns.

Day 1

Psalm 150 (ESV)

- 1 Praise the Lord!
Praise God in his sanctuary;
praise him in his mighty heavens!*
- 2 Praise him for his mighty deeds;
praise him according to his excellent greatness!*
- 3 Praise him with trumpet sound;
praise him with lute and harp!*
- 4 Praise him with tambourine and dance;
praise him with strings and pipe!*
- 5 Praise him with sounding cymbals;
praise him with loud clashing cymbals!*
- 6 Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord!*

Reflect

When I was growing up in church, worship wasn't something that people got excited about. I mean, sure, a certain group in the church got pretty excited for the Sunday evening hymn request night, but it was mostly pretty rigid. You stood up when you were told, and sang the words with your hands at your sides to avoid even the appearance of moving to the rhythm. You sat down when the music minister said "please be seated," and you listened to whatever special performance or solo was prepared for the "special music" section. (This is usually when I needed to get up and "go to the bathroom.") Then we would listen to a sermon, and have a closing song (no matter how brief) where we all held hands. It was like clockwork; it's just the way things were, and no one was very keen on changing up the status quo.

I distinctly remember one Sunday when a woman sitting near me dared to raise her hand during worship. I remember it being a rare moment and I felt something tugging

on my heart during the worship, but raising your hands just wasn't done, especially not in the main worship service with the adults. Sure enough, someone came up behind her and abruptly told her to put her hand down. I remember the upset look on her face, and I remember the sinking feeling in my stomach telling me that what just happened was wrong—not that someone raised their hand when it was uncommon, but that someone went out of their way to stop a woman from worshipping God with her whole heart.

I share this story because I think there can often be a disparity between what we think worship ought to look like in our minds or according to our traditions, and what the Bible describes. Raised in a very structured church environment, I started trying to discover for myself what worship should look like. It was then that I discovered Psalm 150. Psalm 150 talks about dancing and every kind of instrument from wind, to strings, to percussion, even “loud clashing cymbals”! Psalm 150 was describing a celebration of praise that I was unaccustomed to, and I wanted to get in on it.

As we spend this week going over Psalm 150, I would like to invite you on a journey of praise – to be fully intentional each day to worship the LORD and experience the power and presence of the God in worship.

Respond

A specific way I would like to invite us all to prepare to receive this Psalm throughout the week is to listen to Psalm 150 sung in its original Hebrew, using the instruments and methods listed in the psalm. The following video is by a Hebrew worship band called Miqedem, and features people from around the world singing Psalm 150 in Hebrew while in quarantine. (You can put English captions on by pressing the CC button on the player). I hope that as you watch and listen to this song, you will feel at a whole new level the final verse of Psalm 150, “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qqmKsAtFyNc>

Day 2

Psalm 150 (ESV)

- 1 Praise the Lord!
Praise God in his sanctuary;
praise him in his mighty heavens!*
- 2 Praise him for his mighty deeds;
praise him according to his excellent greatness!*
- 3 Praise him with trumpet sound;
praise him with lute and harp!*
- 4 Praise him with tambourine and dance;*

praise him with strings and pipe!
5 *Praise him with sounding cymbals;*
praise him with loud clashing cymbals!
6 *Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!*
Praise the Lord!

Reflect

Jake Potter, author

Psalm 150 is the final psalm in the book. Up to this point, there have been 149 psalms in the book ranging from praise, lament, and thanksgiving, to expressions of wisdom. There are psalms used in royal processions and those that praise of the Word of God itself. A rabbi's footnote in the Hebrew text of Psalm 150 reads "The praise of God, the eternal creator, is finished and completed." Commentator John Goldingay says that having arrived at the end of the book of Psalms, Psalm 150 is encouraging us to react accordingly. It's as if those ancient Israelites who compiled the book are saying, "We have said a lot about God in all these psalms; in light of what we have said, you know all the reasons to praise God. Just do it." This psalm is not proposing some new theological insight. But, please enjoy this loud, clashing cymbal. Praise the Lord.

Psalm 150 is not one for in-depth metaphors and complicated language or nuance, but it is poetic. Every line begins with the word "praise," with the exception of verse 6a, where praise is moved to the end of the sentence. If you were to break down Psalm 150 into a kind of structure, you could see that verse one talks about where the praise takes place, verse two gives a reason for the praise, and the rest of the psalm is about how to express that praise with a series of direct commands.

For today, the opening verses give us insight into the heart of the final psalm. We are called to "praise God in his sanctuary, praise him in his mighty heavens." The thing to notice is that his sanctuary is a place on earth, where heaven meets earth. Contrasted with his mighty heavens, another way to say this could be "let every corner of the universe resound with the praise of the LORD."

But then in verse two it explains why we should give God his praise – "for his mighty deeds... according to his excellent greatness." These are certainly summative statements, encompassing all of who God is and all of what he has done. Combined with verse one, these verses work together to show how all of creation, heaven and earth, should praise God for all he is and has done. These verses establish a universal pretense for the call to praise the Lord – it is not just for one place or one people, or for one act of God – the praise of God is a holistic endeavor that will fill the entire universe.

But interestingly, "praise God in his sanctuary" is the first full command, a subtle way of indicating that praise begins in God's sanctuary, where heaven meets earth. I point this out because it is so important to have the correct view of where praise starts. Praise really begins with God – he comes to meet with us, and then we respond to who he is and what he has done

with praise that will extend through all of creation. Ultimately, this is the heart behind Psalm 150. It starts with God, but we have a call to take action. And if praise is our calling in Psalm 150, then we have a responsibility to lift our voices, our lives, and praise the Lord.

Respond

Meditate on verses one and two of Psalm 150. Think about where God's sanctuary is, and how unlimited his heavens are. Think about specific mighty deeds and specific ways he exudes excellent greatness. Then spend time praising God out of that meditation.

Day 3

Psalm 150 (ESV)

*1 Praise the Lord!
Praise God in his sanctuary;
praise him in his mighty heavens!
2 Praise him for his mighty deeds;
praise him according to his excellent greatness!
3 Praise him with trumpet sound;
praise him with lute and harp!
4 Praise him with tambourine and dance;
praise him with strings and pipe!
5 Praise him with sounding cymbals;
praise him with loud clashing cymbals!
6 Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord!*

Reflect

Jake Potter, author

As we continue to look at Psalm 150, we come to the middle section of the psalm, verses 3-5, where there is a series of commands regarding praising God, using various musical instruments and dancing. Psalm 150's list is culturally informed, listing a wide variety of instruments available in the ancient near east. There are some really interesting instruments listed here, like the shofar (often translated as "trumpet" in Psalm 150) which can still be seen and heard as it was thousands of years ago.

You could focus on the distinctions among the instruments. Some instruments like the shofar were for sacred occasions. Others were for celebrations, while others were for common use. You could also focus on the variety among the types of instruments. Psalm 150 lists woodwinds, horns, strings, percussion, and dance. But these distinctions are not truly the point. Like in verses one and two, verses three through

five establish a universal nature of praise. All of creation praises God for all he is and all he has done, using every possible musical expression.

To get more personal, this passage has been a huge influence and encouragement in my life. Ever since I was a teenager, I have always been drawn to the loud, aggressive worship of Christian metal. It influenced me so much that I went on to form my own Christian metal band, and I still make heavy worship music to this day. I think it is so cool that we worship a God who wants all kinds of worship – loud, soft, fast, or slow. It includes everything ranging from classical songs, to hymns on a piano, gospel with a choir, drums and electric guitar of contemporary worship, the beats of Christian hip-hop and rap, or the double bass and down-tuned distortion of heavy metal. And it doesn't stop there! God desires all the varieties of worship from around the world, from the Canaan hymns of the underground Chinese church to the energetic dance of African praise songs.

I remember when I was growing up, church had endless debates regarding worship. From arguing over hymns or contemporary worship, to including instruments like drums and guitar, people had very strong opinions. So often churches become overrun with endless debates about musical styles in worship, yet Psalm 150 serves as a harbinger of peace that shows how God desires it all. Ethnodoxologist Ron Man perhaps summarizes this best:

“Like any art form, Christian worship allows for much creative expression, but within defined parameters. The Bible provides for those parameters, as well as that freedom... ‘Man looks at the outward appearance; but the Lord looks at the heart’ (1 Sam 16:7 NASB). We squabble about so many little things related to worship, but God is looking for people who will worship him in spirit and truth. The externals are not nearly as important to him as they are to us! God is not as worried about which songs you sing as he is about you ‘making melody with your heart to the Lord’ (Eph 5:19 NASB). In today’s raging worship debates we desperately need to see that there are biblical constants and principles that we can really agree on. And then we need to have the grace and maturity to allow for the flexibility that God seems to allow for... We must learn to give grace to other churches choosing to apply principles differently to their situations.”¹

Respond

As we respond to Psalm 150 today, I would like to challenge us to expose ourselves to worship that we normally wouldn't listen to. This could include a different musical style or even different languages. Instead of focusing on how different it is, listen for the same heart of worship that resounds with different believers from around the world.

¹ Man, Ron. “The Bridge: Worship Between Bible and Culture” in *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology Handbook*

Day 4

Psalm 150 (ESV)

*1 Praise the Lord!
Praise God in his sanctuary;
praise him in his mighty heavens!*
*2 Praise him for his mighty deeds;
praise him according to his excellent greatness!*
*3 Praise him with trumpet sound;
praise him with lute and harp!*
*4 Praise him with tambourine and dance;
praise him with strings and pipe!*
*5 Praise him with sounding cymbals;
praise him with loud clashing cymbals!*
*6 Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord!*

Reflect

Jake Potter, author

We have now come to the concluding verse of Psalm 150, “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!” The whole psalm has been building towards this. We have discussed over the past few days how each line of the psalm works together to paint a universal picture of praise. All of creation praises God for all he is and all he has done, using every possible musical expression.

Verse six serves as an invitation for everything that has breath to praise the Lord. There is no one who is omitted from being able to praise the Lord. But this is not a declaration, however, as there are those who can and will refuse this invitation. This is because when we praise God, we don’t merely talk about God’s good qualities – we are declaring the truth of who God is and aligning ourselves with that truth. God desires that all would come and do this, and the invitation is sent. But like the parable of the wedding feast in Matthew 22, “Many are invited, but few are chosen.”

There is something so poetic and beautiful about God desiring the worship of everything that has breath. As a worship songwriter, I become increasingly aware of how small and shallow I am in contrast to how big and great God is. When I write songs, I often feel that it is never good enough. Many artists feel this about their work, but the reason I feel that my art is never good enough is because no matter how good it is, it pales in comparison to how good God is. I realize that I could spend all eternity

singing God's praises and it would still come short of the praise he deserves. Christian rock band My Epic has a song called "Liturgy" that describes this:

"For years I've tried to speak
But words always fail and my voice never seems
To say what I mean to about You
As hard as I've tried to write
To shuffle the notes and to structure the lines
They're never as lovely as they should be
For all of my singing, I've still never sung
A melody worthy or perfect enough for You
But there's an anthem that wells up within
It echoes Your heart till I'm bursting with it
Perfectly still and completely silent
Your voice flows like music
Overwhelmed and speechless
I lose my breath then
And how do I sing this?
For all of my singing, I've barely begun
To tell of Your beauty to fathom Your love
And I'll fail to attain it but I'll never give up
Cause Your deep calls to deep, and rings out to me, and I just sing along
No single song could say it all
I used to think that I was writing these songs for You
But I see the truth
You fill my soul till I overflow
And pour it all back out to You
So I'll sing with You"²

I feel this is why God desires the worship of everything that has breath, because even if the whole world were to praise the Lord, it still would not amount to his infinite greatness. This is why when we see a glimpse of what worship looks like in heaven in Revelation, we are shown "a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages." It all comes back to the universal picture of praise that Psalm 150 has painted. Our response to his infinite goodness is an infinite amount of praise.

Respond

Meditate on how big God is. Think about it until it hurts a little bit. Then try to think about the kind of worship God deserves. Ask God to fill you with Himself and empower you to praise him even more than before.

² My Epic, "Liturgy" (Facedown Records, 2013).

Day 5

Psalm 150 (ESV)

*1 Praise the Lord!
Praise God in his sanctuary;
praise him in his mighty heavens!*
*2 Praise him for his mighty deeds;
praise him according to his excellent greatness!*
*3 Praise him with trumpet sound;
praise him with lute and harp!*
*4 Praise him with tambourine and dance;
praise him with strings and pipe!*
*5 Praise him with sounding cymbals;
praise him with loud clashing cymbals!*
*6 Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!
Praise the Lord!*

Reflect

Jake Potter, author

When we started Psalm 150 this week, we talked about how Psalm 150 closes the book of Psalms by almost saying, “We’ve said a lot about worship. Now let’s just do it!” For our final day walking through Psalm 150, I want to follow in that same spirit. We’ve talked a lot about this Psalm, and now it’s time to act it out!

Respond

Today, spend extra time just in worship. You can use any worship music you prefer, but if you need a starting place, you can check out our student ministry’s Spotify worship playlist below.

https://open.spotify.com/playlist/38ZihSmjGT0dmy9ImdxRu5?si=OmdaVyDdQ1-Fs_pzswqmNA