

**FIVE FORKS BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH**  
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**SCRIPTURE: Psalm 148**

**DATE: July 31, 2022**

**SERMON: "I Want To Join the Praise"**

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*(Acknowledgement to The Bible Project for their video commentary series on Creation)*

Good morning! This morning's message is titled **"I Want to Join the Praise"**, and our Scripture text comes from **Psalm 148**, so go ahead and turn there or pull it up on your phone if you would. While you're looking that up, isn't it true that for all of us, there are things hold a special place in our hearts, things that we have **A Deep Appreciation** for.

## **1. A DEEP APPRECIATION**

For instance, I have a deep appreciation for **music** and the words that go with it. I'm not very emotional by nature, but music can move me in ways that few other things can and a lot of you are right there with me on that.

At the same time, I have a deep appreciation for what I'll call nature...this world in which we live. When I'm out and about, I find myself continually marveling at the complexity and the beauty of God's **creation**.

And finally, I have a deep appreciation for **God's word**...I love the various ways that He goes about revealing Himself in His Word, so we come to see who He is and what He's doing in this world *and* in our lives. And all three of these have come together to help bring about the message for this morning.

Just by way of background, when I say that I have a deep appreciation for music, I mean many different forms or styles of music. I came across this group – actually a family from Kentucky called the Esh’s, who sing acapella...and there’s one song that they do that I found just really capturing my heart, and one reason for this is because the words express this deep appreciation for God’s creation, and how all nature sings out a song of praise to Him. For example, here’s how it starts...

**“I see the sunrise reflecting off the dew,  
the tiny prisms sings out a song of You.  
I see the river awash in dazzling spray,  
all nature worships the one who made the day.  
The vibrant meadow aglow in vibrant bloom,  
may I reflect them, whose simple theme is You.”**

Isn’t that great? All of nature, all of God’s creation united by one simple theme: God Himself.

And then here’s the chorus:

**“So here’s *my* song to Thee, O God of Majesty,  
though I can’t even sing like a lowly sparrow.  
My trembling voice I raise; I want to join the praise!  
I lift my joyful soul...**

And it’s at this point that we come to the last line, where the one giving praise uses six simple but profound words to identify himself or herself: ***...the one that You made whole.”***

It’s that last line that has caused this song to capture my heart because I realize just how incredibly blessed I am, how good God has been to me.

And so ***I want to join the praise***...and I want the theme of my life to be a simple one: *Him.*

My hope is that by all of us dwelling on this here today, you will find yourself - today and throughout this week - wanting to join all of God's creation in giving Him praise...for all kinds of reasons, but most of all, because you recognize how good He has been to you. It doesn't mean our lives are perfect, doesn't mean we don't have blemishes and in some cases, scars. But many of you recognize the work He's done in your life.

You know you've been made whole and you're actively participating in God's story as it unfolds all around us.

Now, you remember that I said there were three things that brought this message together...my appreciation for music *and* for God's creation...and so how does this third one - my appreciation for God's word - enter into this morning's message? Well, with this song by the Esh Family at the front of my heart and mind these past few months, wouldn't you know that about 2 months ago our BibleProject video of the week was based on Psalm 148.

And for those of you who are participating in this year-long discipleship journey, you may recall that the theme was how all of creation is being invited to praise the Lord.

So let's read it together...Psalm 148: 1-14

**Praise the LORD.**

**Praise the LORD from the heavens, praise him from the heights above.**

**Praise him, all his angels, praise him, all his heavenly hosts.**

**Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars,**

**Praise him, you highest heavens and you waters above the skies.**

**Let them praise the name of the LORD, for he commanded and they were created.**

**He set them in place for ever and ever; he gave a decree that will never pass away.**

**Praise the LORD from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths,**

**Lightning and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds that do his bidding,**

you mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars,  
wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds,  
kings of the earth and all nations, you princes and all rulers on earth,  
young men and maidens, old men and children.

Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted;  
His splendor is above the earth and the heavens.

He has raised up for his people a horn, the praise of all his saints, of Israel, the  
people close to his heart.

**Praise the LORD.**

What we find here in Psalm 148 is...

## **2. A SIMPLE THEME**

The Lord...and the praise He deserves. Notice that the Psalm begins and ends with  
the same three words - **Praise the LORD** - that serve as the invitation:

*Psalm 148:1a - "Praise the LORD."*

*Psalm 148:14b "Praise the LORD."*

And in between this opening line and closing line we are told who all is being invited to  
"join the praise." Did you happen to pick up on the fact that **Psalm 148 is an  
invitation for inhabitants of two realms - the skies above and the land below – to  
praise the Lord.**

So let's look at both of these, beginning with...

### **A. The Realm of the Sky**

As we look at the **first 4 verses**, we're told...

#### **1. Who is to praise the LORD**

*Praise the LORD.*

*Praise the LORD from the heavens, praise him from the heights above.*

*Praise him, all his angels, praise him, all his heavenly hosts.  
Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars,  
Praise him, you highest heavens and you waters above the skies.  
(Psalm 148: 1-4)*

It's easy to see that we're talking about what's "up there"...it says, **"from the heavens...you highest heavens."**

And we're given specifics...the things "up there" that have been invited to praise the Lord...some of which are unseen by you and I - the **angels**, the **heavenly hosts** – but then other things that you and I *can* see: **the sun, moon and stars**.

But notice we're not only getting to see who (or what) is being invited to praise the Lord, but look at **verses 5 and 6** and we're told *why* the inhabitants of this realm up there are to praise the Lord...

## 2. Why Praise the LORD?

*Let them praise the name of the LORD,  
for he commanded and they were created.  
He set them in place for ever and ever;  
he gave a decree that will never pass away.  
(Psalm 148: 5-6)*

The reason for their very existence is because of Him...He spoke...and they were created and set in place. And from our perspective, that's exactly what it seems like, everything seems so stable "up there." There's the moon in its position, and up there's the sun in its position, and while it *appears* to be moving across the sky, we don't really notice it.

And yet what we call "in place" and what God's word calls "in place" are two vastly different things. The sun and the moon and **everything in this solar system** is circling the Milky Way galaxy at an incredibly fast rate...over 800,000 miles an hour, or

**140 miles per second.** That can boggle our mind, and yet from God's perspective, the sun, the moon and every star up there are right where God intends for them to be.

And we know from walking outside on a clear night that there are a lot of suns – we call them stars – that are up there. But he set *our* sun in *its* place in order for life to exist on this planet, and for His plan - His story and our story - to be carried out.

And so because God created the sun, moon and stars, they are invited to give Him praise. But how? That's a good question, right? These aren't living, breathing objects, and so I wouldn't blame you for asking how the sun, moon and stars are to praise the Lord.

And I think the best answer would be this: **These objects that inhabit the realm above praise the Lord when they carry out and fulfill the purpose for which they were created.**

To help with navigation. To provide us with warmth. To make things grow. To fill us with awe and wonder...and remind us a simple theme: God Himself.

And then as we keep reading, we see that we come to a second realm that's called to praise the Lord...

## **B. The Realm of the Land**

Look at **Verses 7 through 12** and just as with the realm above, we see...

### **1. Who is to praise the LORD**

Praise the LORD from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths,  
Lightning and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds that do his bidding,  
you mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars,  
wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds,  
kings of the earth and all nations, you princes and all rulers on earth,  
young men and maidens, old men and children.

*(Psalm 148: 7-12)*

And it would be the inhabitants of this realm around us, starting with **creatures of the sea**, as well as what we might refer to as the elements: **lightning, hail, snow, clouds, wind**.

Now these elements serve as a reminder that there are some things in God's creation that don't seem to be praising God. Lightning is spectacular to behold, but it has killed people, hail has damaged property and crops, lives have been lost in blizzards and hurricanes. I think this section serves as a sobering reminder that even in all of the beauty, there are elements of creation that are "groaning", is the word the Scriptures use.

Just as humanity is broken and does not always accept this invitation to praise God, we acknowledge that while there are aspects of these things which inspire awe in us, there are elements of God's creation that for now, are broken as well.

Reading on, we come to the **mountains, hills, fruit trees and cedars**.

You know, fruit trees or bushes that produce fruit provide an excellent example of how God is praised by things that do not have the ability to think as we think. It comes back to the fact that when creation fulfills its purpose, it is an act of praise.

I don't like going on and on about my raspberries (well, maybe I do), but some of you know they are "my fun." I thoroughly enjoy pruning the bushes, weeding in between the bushes, and ultimately picking the berries themselves.

Picking season is short, about 2 weeks total, and it usually starts in late June or early July, and so it just got over not too long ago. The first couple of days they're just getting started...I'm picking one from here and one over there, and getting enough for my oatmeal in the morning and ice cream in the evening...but then about the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> day, they just explode. I come to not just one here and there, but there before me are clumps containing 6 or 7 ripe berries. I move aside some leaves or branches, and it

exposes more clumps over here, and more clumps over there. And sometimes I find myself in awe of how many there are, and how sweet they are.

And because I was working on putting this message together during prime picking season, I was able to have a front row seat as these raspberries of mine were giving praise to the Lord, because they were fulfilling the purpose for which they were created. And it served to remind me as I'm out there in the garden picking, to praise the Lord with my voice, but also by being committed to fulfilling the purpose for which I was created. Following Jesus.

Okay, what – or who – comes next? **Wild animals, cattle, small creatures, flying birds.** And finally, humanity enters the picture: **kings, all nations, princes, rulers, men and women, old and young.** Everyone from everywhere is invited to praise the Lord.

Now take a **look at verse 13**, and just as with the inhabitants of the realm above, we see *why* inhabitants of the realm of the land – including you and I - are to praise the Lord...

### 1. *Why* Praise the LORD?

**Let them praise the name of the LORD,  
for his name alone is exalted;  
His splendor is above the earth and the heavens.**

*(Psalm 148:13)*

This is easy enough to grasp, right? Let the inhabitants of this realm- including us - praise the Lord for His name alone is exalted. That makes sense to us, doesn't it? Even though we sometimes exalt ourselves or others, those of us who follow Jesus know that the Lord is the One whose name is to be exalted. He's God, we're not. And we see His splendor all around us. So this we can grasp.

But there's another reason – a very important reason - why inhabitants of this realm are invited to praise the Lord, and it has *nothing* to do with the creatures of the land or sea, nothing to do with the fruit trees and cedars, but *everything* to do with you and me. It's found in verse 14 which says...

**He has raised up for his people a horn,  
the praise of all his saints, of Israel, the people close to his heart.**

**Praise the LORD.**

*(Psalm 148:14)*

His people – You and I – are invited to praise the Lord because He raised up for us a horn. But what does that mean? And what it means is that God has made a way for you and I to be...

### **3. MADE WHOLE**

Bible scholars believe that what God wants us to see here is this **image of a bull**, defeating another bull in battle and then lifting up its horns in victory. They say that these raised horns are a common symbol of victory referred to at other times in the Bible.

Here is Psalm 148, we see that God is bringing about a victory of His own, a victory for the people of Israel, and not just for Israel, but this reaches down to you and I, because *all* of humanity is broken and in need of victory...in need of healing and restoration We need to be made whole, as God intended for you and I to be in the first place.

And so we read here that God is going to raise up a horn in order to bring about victory for all of us, which for Israel, pointed ahead to the coming of Jesus.

So a thousand years pass, and then one day, here's Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist...who, after holding his infant son in his arms began blessing God, saying...

**Luke 1:68-69 “...He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, And has raised up a horn of salvation for us...”**

You see, God is aware of our brokenness, but we’re told here in Psalm 148 that victory will come – redemption, healing, restoration, salvation will come, and it *has* come in the person of Jesus.

And if this is *your* experience, this is why *you* praise the Lord, right? You know who you were, I know who I was...and we know that Jesus has made us whole. Not perfect, I’ve still got chips and cracks and rough edges...there’s plenty of stuff for Jesus and I to be working on...but I’m well. I’m whole. I’m His. I’m participating in His unfolding story, and many of you are as well, and we’re praising Him for it.

And if this is something you can’t relate to, then this morning, it’s right here in front of you. You too can begin to participate in God’s story by taking that first step towards Jesus, and then just keep walking with Him. He’s an excellent teacher, He will guide you throughout the rest of your life. Read what He says, learn from Him, and then walk through life as He walked through life. And then join in on the praise that all of creation is giving Him, and rightly so.

Before we close, I’d like to do two things yet, first, I’d like to play the song that I talked about back at the beginning of the message because it ties in so well with Psalm 148.

And while I don’t want in any way to take your focus off of the song or of Jesus for that matter, I feel I need to share with you a little more of the background.

The Esh Family consisted of a number of young adults: husbands, wives, brothers, sisters...and their voices blend beautifully, but at the same time this song was capturing my heart, I became aware of this unbelievably tragic story surrounding this family.

They were from Kentucky, and early one morning back in March of 2010, 11 of them were in a van headed to a wedding in Iowa. While traveling down this highway a tractor trailer headed in the opposite direction went out of control, crossed the line, hit

the van head on. 9 of the 11 in the van died in the accident. Two very young children were the only survivors.

And so on the one hand I found myself taken in by beautiful blending of their voices and the words behind this song, but it was also very sobering, knowing that many of the voices I was listening to belonged to young adults who were now with Jesus, having experienced the ultimate victory.

All that being said, I invite you to just allow their voices and these words to resonate in your heart, and fill you with a desire to join the praise because it's taking place all around us...*and* because Jesus has made you whole.

***PLAY: THIS IS MY SONG TO THEE***

I said I'd like to do two things before we close, play the song, and the second is this: If you want to join the praise that is taking place throughout God's creation, I'd like to make some practical suggestions on how you can do that this week.

As we've seen, Psalm 148 gives us numerous examples of who all is invited to praise the Lord...inhabitants of the sky and inhabitants of the land. And we've said that even though they can't think like we think, they praise the Lord as they fulfill the purpose for which they were created.

And so in the bulletin and out at the Connect Station is a list that will guide you through this week.

Monday	Sun, Moon and Stars
Tuesday	Rain/Clouds/Wind
Wednesday	Trees (and their fruit)
Thursday	Mountains/Hills
Friday	Cattle, small creatures
Saturday	Birds
Sunday	All nations

Every day select one of the seven inhabitants listed below the days of the week. I'm not going to assign any of these to a specific day, because we don't know which day it might rain, or which nights will be cloudy, and so go with whichever one works for you for that day.

Take time to consider how these things created by God are in fact praising God by fulfilling their purpose, and then join their praise by praising God yourself...the work that He's done and continues to do in your life...and then end your time of praise by humbly acknowledging to God who you are: "The one that You made whole."