

*A Song of Praise. Of David.*

*I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever.*

*Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever.*

*Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and 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 shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds, and I will declare your greatness.*

*They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness and shall 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 shall bless you!*

*They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom and tell of your power, to make known*

*to the children of man your mighty deeds, and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.*

*Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout 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 their cry and saves them.*

*The LORD preserves all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy.*

*My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD, and let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever.*

Psalm 145:1-21

What name would you hear if you asked someone: “Who is the greatest hockey player of all time?” Since we are Canada, we would hear a number of Canadian born names like Wayne Gretzky, Mario Lemieux, Bobby Orr, Gordie Howe, Maurice Richard, Jean Beliveau, Bobby Hull or Guy Lafleur. If we would ask “Which hockey player’s name is most known?” it would probably be Tim Horton’s. But regarding “the greatest hockey player” it most likely would be Wayne Gretzky in that he has earned the nickname “The Great One” because he literally re-wrote the National Hockey League record book during his career. Just one example would be that when he retired, he had 2857 career points, over 1000 more than the next highest player – and to this day, no one else has even reached 2000. We see this same scenario in other professional sports, where certain individuals seem rise up to a level of some kind of greatness above all the rest. But the problem with deeming someone as being “the greatest” in anything depends on the standard by which their greatness is measured. In professional sports it is measured in numbers – in hockey it’s measured by how many points, goals, saves, wins and games. In those terms Wayne Gretzky is, at this point, the great hockey player – until someone, as some point, passes him up.

In our text for today, King David declares that God is the “greatest” in *all categories*, by *all standards* of measurement: “*Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable*” (Psalm 145:3). The placement of Psalm 145 in the Bible reflects this - in that it occupies a significant place in the arrangement of the Book of Psalms, for it completes a section of psalms ascribed to David (Psalms 118-145) - and its placement also introduces the concluding “*Praise Psalms*” (Psalms 146-150) which all begin with the phrase “*Praise the Lord!*” Psalm 145 is self-described as “*A Song of Praise*” which is to be sung in worship. It is a holy hymn that sets it apart from all of the other Psalms, not by thanksgiving or by prayer or by crying out, but by its “*praise*” – exclusively worshipping God in praise for His *greatness* in all He is and all that He does. This psalm of “*praise*” of the greatness of God had a special place in the life of the ancient Israelites, who recited this psalm twice in the morning and once in the evening.

*“Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable.”* While the English word for “great” is defined as “an ability, a quality or a reputation that extends to an amount or intensity or importance considerably above average” – the root of the Hebrew word here, translated as the English word “great”, is vastly different - in that this Hebrew word for “great” speaks of a power and influence that causes an ever increasing growth and power in and of people, and the ever increasing growth of power in and of all other living things - as well as the abundant increase of growth and power in and of everything, tangible and intangible - whether they be objects, sounds, feelings, or authority. This is the fullness of God’s Greatness. He is above and beyond all things - and His nature, deeds and attributes are incomparable: *“Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable.”*

The meaning of Psalm 145 - is that if our hearts are right with God we will be so captivated by God and so overwhelmed by the greatness of God, that we will be passionately fanatical about praising God. This Psalm is King David’s *“Song of Praise”* begins the grand doxology of worshipful praise that continues throughout the greater parts of Psalms 145–150, as the word *“praise”* is used 46 times in these six psalms. In Psalm 145 David praises God for His magnificent greatness in His manifest goodness and in His immeasurable grace and in His infinite glory; in who God is and what God does, in our lives and in the world and all throughout the universe; from the beginning of time to this very moment and on into eternity forever and ever. Praise God that in His greatness our most omnipotent and glorious God is sovereignly and massively and immeasurably worthy of all praise! *“I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever.”*

In Psalm 145 King David is so captivated by God, so overwhelmed by the greatness of God, that he begins and ends the psalm with praise - and in the middle, he describes why he praises God. David wants all the world to know that his *God is the greatest as measured by everything*. David does so by speaking of five different qualities that make God, not just a great God, but the greatest God of all.

I. David praised God as the Greatest God that is seen in His great works. *“Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and 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 shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds, and I will declare your greatness”* (Psalm 145:3-6). God reveals how great He truly is by the works He does. But even in His works we can’t even begin to search how great His greatness is because *“his greatness is unsearchable.”* In Romans 11:33 the apostle Paul declares: *“Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!”* Even though God’s greatness is beyond our human understanding, we should still praise Him because *His greatness is worthy of praise*. And because our God and His work is so great, we should be telling of the great things God has done to the next generation. This doesn’t mean that we are to live in the past, but it does mean we are to praise God for His work in the past – so that the present generation would look to God in the present and future.

No one comes to know God by riding on the coattails of the previous generation. We do not come to faith by means of a group rate. Every person has to have their own experience with God themselves. *But* no one comes to that faith or experience *on their own* - because we were created by God to live out our lives through relationships - first, through our relationship with God, and then second, through our relationships with one another. And so this Psalm tells us that we are relationally responsible to pass on our faith and our experience *by praising God* for what He had done in our lives to those who are young in their faith and experience, so they would grow in their faith and experience when God does the same in their lives. God does not just drop a new Bible down from heaven on every generation; we are called to teach and live out the Word of God to those who will follow us. God does not send a Savior to die on a cross to every generation; we are called to share our knowledge of God and our experience with God with those who will follow us, and then step back and let them have them come to know God, and then experience the power of God in the crucified and resurrected Jesus Christ working in their own lives.

But that doesn't mean those of us who are long on faith and experience no longer have a part of God's work. King David speaks of this in his own life. As he worships God, he proclaims: "*On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate. They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds, and I will declare your greatness.*" In the midst of helping those young in their faith and experience with God, we are to continue to grow and stay focused on praising God for who He is and what He has done and how He works – which will commend and encourage and build up those who are growing in their faith in God and their experience with God. In watching the way we think, speak, talk and walk they will see that God is worthy of all praise because of the greatness of God's works.

II. David praised God as the Greatest God that is seen in His great goodness. "*They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness and shall sing aloud of your righteousness*" (Psalm 145:7). God's great works come out of His great goodness. God is great because God is good. When people speak about the works that God has done, they are revealing the goodness God has done. But we rarely speak of God's great goodness when He does His hard, painful, difficult works in our lives. But the truth is, we should because: "God is Good, all the time – and all the time, God is good. Amen? Amen." I pray that we have said that because we believe it, because when our lives suddenly go sideways - and confusion, struggle and pain hit us between the eyes - our worship of God often changes to frustration with God, as our high ideas about the "*abundant goodness of God*" fade into the shadows of being disappointed with God.

If we are truly believed in the greatness of God, we would take some time at this point and praise God for how good He has been to us. These words should remind those of us who are saints who are also still sinners, that it's only by God's grace that we are not headed for eternal judgment. Yes, these words and all the words of Psalm 145 should also remind us that while sin is still alive and well in each and every one of us, God is not out to get us and punish us for our sins. By the greatness of His abundant goodness God has been gracious and merciful, despite our lack of righteousness. In the greatness of His goodness, God the Father paid the extreme cost to provide a way that He could righteously and mercifully forgive our sins. God is worthy of all praise because of the greatness of His goodness towards us in Jesus Christ.

III. David praised God as the Greatest God that is seen in His great love. "*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*" (Psalm 145:8-9). In His Greatness God shows that He is good - not just by His great works, but also by His love. He is "*good to all*" showing grace, mercy, patience and "*abounding in steadfast love.*" This is God's "hesed" covenant-keeping love towards us, our Great God's never-giving-up, always-and-forever faithful love that tastes better than everything in life. This is the love of our Great God and Father that sent Jesus Christ His Son into the world to sacrifice his life on a cross, so we might be forgiven, rescued, redeemed and restored back into the relationship with God we were created for. John 3:16-17 tells us that "*God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.*" This is the great love of our Great God.

IV. David praised God as the Greatest God that is seen in His great kingdom. "*All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD, and all your saints shall bless you! They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom and tell of your power, to make known to the children of man your mighty deeds, and the glorious splendor of your kingdom. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations*" (Psalm 145:10-13a). Because God is Great, His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. His rule will last forever. In the gospel of Matthew we learned that the phrase "Kingdom of God" refers to God's reign and rule in the hearts of His people. And because God is the greatest God, ultimately everyone will fall under His reign - and in the end, everyone will submit to His rule. God's great works point to God's great goodness, and God's great goodness points to the great love God that He has for the people under His reign and rule in His great Kingdom. God is not a dictator. God is not a tyrant. Our Great God is the great ruler of His great kingdom - where He reigns with His great goodness and His great love.

God's Word here also tells us here that there is a direct link between our heart and our tongue when it comes to praising our Great God who reigns and rules over His Kingdom. We  *speak*  about what is in our heart; in Matthew 15:18 Jesus said: "*What comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart.*" And so some people love to talk about sports or boats or cars; others talk about their family; others about their lawn or gardens or houses; still others talk about the news, money or the weather; some talk about other people; and some love to talk a lot about themselves. What this tells us is that if we want to know what is most preeminent in someone's heart and life, we should listen to what they talk about. And so if our Great God is reigning and ruling in our hearts, our praise for him will come out of our mouths. If our hearts are full of our Great God, then our tongues will not stop talking about Him to others. "*All your works shall give thanks to you, O LORD, and all your saints shall bless you! They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom and tell of your power, to make known to the children of man your mighty deeds, and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.*" Our Great God is worthy of all praise because of He is the Great God and Great King of the Kingdom of God – reigning and ruling in the hearts of His people.

V. David praised God as the Greatest God that is seen in His  *great faithfulness.* "*The LORD is faithful in all his words and kind in all his works*" (Psalm 145:13b). Here we read that King David declared that our good and great God is also great in His "*faithfulness.*" No other so-called gods of our world have claimed to be faithful. But Our Great God alone has shown Himself to be faithful. He has been to every single person on Earth, and He clearly has been faithful to those who choose to make Him their God. The Bible is replete with the number of ways we see the great faithfulness of our Great God. King David, after being overwhelmed by the greatness of God, began this Psalm with praise for God that is seen in His great works, goodness, love, kingdom and faithfulness. And it's here, in praising our Great God for His great faithfulness, that King David then expands on the quality of the greatness of God of God's faithfulness by describing five different ways God's great faithfulness has an effect in our personal lives.

1) God is the Greatest God of faithfulness because of His  *great divine helpfulness.* "*The LORD upholds all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down*" (Psalm 145:14). In spite of what we may want to believe, because of the fall of humanity in the Garden, we are all utterly helpless before our Great God. Jesus said: "*No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him*" (John 6:44); "*I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing*" (John 15:5); "*You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you*" (John 15:16). Paul wrote: "*None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together we have become worthless; no one does good, not even one*" (Romans 3:10-11); "*I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing*" (Romans 7:18-19); "*The Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words*" (Romans 8:26).

"*The LORD upholds all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down.*" In the midst of our constant helplessness, our Great God is our Great help -  *God loves to help His children!* Because of our inherent sinful nature, we desperately need God's divine help. God's Word tells us that because "*man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward*" (Job 5:7) - "*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble*" (Psalm 46:1). "*The LORD upholds all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down.*" God delights in holding and picking us up after our failure. Abraham habitually lied, yet God called Abraham his friend. Moses committed murder, but God used him to free His people. David committed adultery and murder, but God faithfully fulfilled His promise through him. Our failures allow our Great God to display His great help of His great faithfulness in Jesus Christ. Paul learned that and boasted of his weaknesses. He also wrote: "*For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. . . but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. . . . For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Romans 5:6, 8; 6:23).

2) God is the Greatest God of faithfulness because of His *great provision*. “*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*” (Psalm 145:15-16). Our God is great because He faithfully provides for us. He faithfully provides for our basic needs (food, water, shelter) and He faithfully provides for the good and godly desires “*of every living thing.*” God is worthy of all praise because of the abundant provision of His divine compassion toward our needs and our desires - the greatest being the provision His righteousness for us in Jesus.

3) God is the Greatest God of faithfulness because of His *great righteousness*. “*The LORD is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works*” (Psalm 145:17). Despite the reality that we were “*born to trouble as the sparks fly upward*” God faithfully provided Jesus as our Savior - who would sacrifice his life, to pay the penalty for our sin, so we might be forgiven and receive the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:21 tell us “*For our sake he (God) made him (Jesus) to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him (Jesus) we might become the righteousness of God.*” Christ’s death on a cross was act of God’s righteousness and act of God’s grace at the very same time – in order to show the *great grace of God’s Greatness* in restoring the unrighteous who rejected God and rebelled against God, back into the righteous love relationship with God they were created for. In Ephesians 2:1-6 the apostle Paul writes: “*And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*”

4) God is the Greatest God of faithfulness because of His *great intimate presence in our lives*. “*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 their cry and saves them*” (Psalm 145:18-19). God is worthy of all praise because He is always present with us. Yes, God does sit on the throne as the King of the Universe, but He also sits intimately near to us, deep in our hearts, when we need Him. Psalm 34:17-18 tells us that, “*When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.*” King David wrote that God is “*near to all who call on him in truth.*” The phrase: “*To call on him in truth*” means to recognize that “*the truth*” that only way to God the Father is through His Promised Son, the crucified and risen Christ. The Bible calls Jesus, the promised Messiah, “*Immanuel*” which means “*God with us*” (Matthew 1:23). We are never alone once we surrender our hearts and lives to Jesus. The indwelling presence of His Spirit will never leave us. Jesus said: “*Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*” (Matthew 28:20). In Hebrews 13:5 God said: “*I will never leave you nor forsake you.*” God is worthy of all praise because of His great intimate presence in our lives!

5) David praised God as the Greatest God of faithfulness because of His *great protection*. “*The LORD preserves all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy*” (Psalm 145:20). God is worthy of all praise because of *He is the One who will sovereignly preserve us*. King David praises God that God, “*preserves all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy.*” This is statement is both comforting and frightening. If we have truly given our hearts to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, we are forgiven and redeemed, and we can confidently be assured that God will protect us and be with us and will usher us into His glorious presence the moment we die. I am sure that most of us here today can take comfort in that assurance. But if we simply stop there, I am not sure how right with God we really are. What we are reading here is that while God “*preserves all who love him*” at the very same time He is *destroying* those who insist on going their own way without God. Brothers and sisters - that would be most of those who live in Port Alberni. This would be people in our families, many of our friends, most of our neighbors. That would also be most who live in our city, in our country and in our world who don’t know Jesus as Lord and Savior. The truth is, if we truly do love God, then there is no way we can be okay with that.

Its highly significant to note that right after David proclaims: *“The LORD preserves all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy”* he then declares *“My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD, and let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever.”* And so because our Great God is worthy of praise because of His great works, His great goodness, His great love, His great kingdom, His great faithfulness, His great helpfulness, His great provision, His great righteousness, His great intimate presence, His great protection – David longed to share that *“praise”* with every other living person he ever met: *“My mouth will speak the praise of the LORD, and let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever.”* In Mark 16:15-16 Jesus said: *“Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”* When we truly worship God, we will passionately proclaim the Glory of our Greatest God in Christ with and for the joy of all people.

*“Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable.”* The Greatness of our God through the gospel of Jesus Christ is the power and influence of God’s mercy and God’s grace and God’s love to grow with an ever-increasing power in the hearts and lives of God’s people – which causes a life transforming effect of ever-increasing growth in others, as well as in all other living things - as well as the abundant increase of growth and power in and of everything, tangible and intangible – by His great works, His great goodness, His great love, His great kingdom, His great faithfulness, His great helpfulness, His great provision, His great righteousness, His great intimate presence, and His great protection. *“Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable.”*

*Oh sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth!  
Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.  
Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!  
For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods.  
For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the LORD made the heavens.  
Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.  
Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength!  
Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts!  
Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth!  
Say among the nations, “The LORD reigns!  
Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity.”  
Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it;  
let the field exult, and everything in it!  
Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the LORD, for he comes, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in his faithfulness. Psalm 96:1-13*

O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder  
Consider all, the works Thy Hand hath made,  
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,  
Thy pow'r throughout, the universe displayed,  
When through the woods, and forest glades I wander  
I hear the birds, sing sweetly in the trees,  
When I look down, from lofty mountain grandeur  
And hear the brook, and feel the gentle breeze.

Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee,  
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!  
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee,  
How great Thou art! How great Thou art!

*How Great Thou Art, Carl Boberg*