

Year-End Praise

by Jim Cymbala

God invites us to praise Him, and when we do, He inhabits our praises, rebuilds our lives, and gathers us from the farthest places.

Duration: 28:51

Scripture: Psalm 147:1-3, Psalm 150:6, John 4:23, Hebrews 13:5

Topics: "Praise"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of praising God and not being negative or complaining. He shares three reasons why praising God is beneficial. Firstly, praising God makes us attractive to both God and other people. Secondly, witnessing others praising God can uplift and minister to our souls. Lastly, the speaker encourages the people of Israel to praise God because He has rebuilt Jerusalem and can also rebuild their lives. The speaker concludes by highlighting the transformative power of God in rebuilding and restoring broken lives.

Transcript

Psalm 147 says this, listen, it's just three verses. Praise the Lord, or literally in the Hebrew here, it's hallelujah. Praise the Lord, that's what hallelujah means.

How good it is to sing praises to our God. How pleasant and fitting to praise Him. The Lord builds up Jerusalem.

He gathers the exiles of Israel. He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. Listen, praise the Lord, or hallelujah.

Everyone say hallelujah. How good it is to sing praises to our God. How pleasant and fitting to praise Him.

The Lord builds up Jerusalem. He gathers the exiles of Israel. He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

For the emphasis that we need for this passage, because then we won't refer to it again, let's just look up at the screen, okay? This is Psalm 147 verses 1 through 3. Let's look at it. Let's read it out loud together. Ready? 1, 2, 3. Praise the Lord.

How good it is to sing praises to our God. How pleasant and fitting to praise Him. The Lord builds up Jerusalem.

He gathers the exiles of Israel. He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. Not just in the Psalms, but especially in the Psalms, but throughout the whole Bible.

How many appeals are made by God through the inspired writers of scripture to try to get us to praise God? I mean, how many times over and over and over again do the Psalms and other places tell us, praise the Lord, worship God, say hallelujah. Jesus said the Father seeks those that would worship Him in spirit and in truth. The Bible says God inhabits the praises of His people, which means, that word inhabits means He sits down as a king on His throne and He starts doling out blessings.

When does He do that? When He inhabits and sits on the praises of His people. Worry, depression, complaining, negativity, get nothing from God. It just hurts us.

But over and over again, God says to us that the best testimony that we could give the world, that we're believers, is to be a people of praise and worship. We're going to go out of 2011. I'll promise you right now.

We're going to be praising God when this clock strikes 12. And when the new year begins, we're going to be praising God as He helps us tonight. But the word to us from the scripture here is that 2012 has to be a year when we're praising God as never before.

Now, all of us have praised God at one time or another, but we want more praise, more hallelujahs, more blessing of God, less worry, less complaining, and more joyful praise. What kind of testimony is it to the world if we're not praising God? If we're sour and negative, what does that say about this God that we serve? But oh, if we're just praising Him and glorifying Him and bragging on Him. I hear people brag on the country they came from.

I hear people brag about America. I hear people brag about the race that they are by accident. They woke up, they were black or white or whatever.

They brag on that like it's something that they achieved. No, you are what you are because you woke up and that's what you are, right? We brag on a new car, a woman gets a sale in a store, and she brags on the bargain she got for Christmas. Everyone brags on everything.

So few people brag on God. And that's what praising God is all about. It's bragging on Him, extolling Him, not only by saying hallelujah, but by telling other people, let me tell you the great things God has done in my life.

Why, Pastor Simba, don't you have problems? I have problems. I know we all have problems, but how many have much more to bless God than to complain? Wave your hand at me, and let's put our hands together and clap. It must make the angels weep when God has done so much for us, and we're so slow to praise Him.

We're so quick to complain, worry, fret, get anxiety ridden about things, and yet we've been reading in Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. I will never leave you. I will never forsake you.

Here's what I've done for you. Now, the psalmist says here, this is one of those invitations for the people of Israel to remember to praise God. They're found over and over again.

It seemed like one of the problems Israel had was they would forget to praise God, and why we're all quiet is because we've forgotten to praise God. Haven't you forgotten to praise God? At one moment, you're high and praising God, and then two days later, you can't get a one little hallelujah out of you. God hasn't changed.

God hasn't changed for me, but we forget. So the psalmist here is encouraging the people. It's a command.

It's an encouragement. Bless the Lord. Hallelujah.

Praise the Lord. Come on. Get with it and praise God.

Get with it and praise God. What builds your faith is praising God, not worrying about things. Now, praise is good, and it makes us especially lovely.

There's nothing more beautiful than when a Christian, man or woman, nothing more beautiful than when we're praising God. That's the most beautiful you can be is when you're praising God here on earth. It's beautiful.

It's comely, and it's good because praise is worship is good. It's good to God because God's worthy of it. It's good for us because when you praise God, it actually edifies you.

When you worry, you hurt yourself, but when you praise God, you actually do yourself good in every way, physically, emotionally, spiritually, and it's good for other people. Praise is good for God. He's worthy of it.

It's good for yourself. If you're feeling down one day, just start praising God. Yeah, but I don't feel anything.

Don't worry. The feelings will come later. Just start praising God.

Just praise God when you don't feel like praising God. Just start saying hallelujah and blessing God. It'll do you good, but it's also good for other people.

How many times I've walked into this building and in the other building we were in, so discouraged, so distracted, so troubled, so weighted down by one problem or the other, and no one knows when I open those doors and I come in and I would see those people right over there. I'd catch them from the side, and they would be praising God, and just me watching them praise God does something for my soul. It's like God ministers to me through people praising God.

How many have ever had that happen? Lift up your hand if you know what I'm talking about. To see someone praise God, this is one of the great ways that God uses the choir and their CDs and their videos. Just watching them praise God just like makes you want to praise God.

So the psalmist here is trying to encourage the people of Israel, don't complain and don't be negative. That dishonors God. Praise God.

Bless the Lord, oh my soul, and all that is within me. Bless his holy name. And then he gives some reasons why they should praise God.

Many times we hear about praising God in this situation, that's good, but he's trying to do something basic here. He's trying to say, let me remind you of why you should praise God. And he says three things which

are connected, and he says here's three reasons why you should praise God, Israel.

It's beautiful when you praise God. It makes you comely. It makes you attractive to God and to other people, not gnarly faced and negative and all of that.

Have you ever met someone who's so negative that you spend 10 minutes with them or have lunch with them and you feel like you need a revival just to get away from them, right? How many know what I'm talking about? Have you ever been with someone, they just, their spirit pulls you down. Never a good word about anything. Everything, the glass is always half empty.

It's never half full. Never God's going to do anything, just negative. Well, he says, praise the Lord.

Lift his name up. Exalt him. How good it is to sing praises to God.

Notice, not just praise him, but sing it. Sing praises. How pleasant and fitting to praise him.

For the Lord builds up Jerusalem. The Lord builds up Jerusalem. And secondly, he gathers the exiles of Israel.

The Lord builds up Jerusalem. What would that mean? Not so much to you and me, but here's what it meant to the people that he wrote it to. Jerusalem was the city that David captured and set up his throne there.

And that's where the temple was built by his son Solomon. And Jerusalem became as it is to this day, the center of Judaism. But this says the Lord builds up Jerusalem.

It's not speaking of a simple thing. You buy 20 acres and you build up into the air. And you just bring in new building materials and up goes the structure.

That's difficult work, but it's much easier than what this verse is referring to. This verse is the Lord takes the rubble and the mess that Jerusalem had become, and he's able to rebuild the mess. How did it become a mess? Well, God put the people in the land.

Jerusalem became the capital. The temple was built under Solomon. And then the kings started to succeed Solomon.

And first there was Rehoboam, and then King Asa, and all these, King Abijah, and then all these other kings that came after that. But the people started to drift away from God. They didn't serve God.

They didn't trust God. They didn't put God first. They didn't honor God.

They turned their back on God. They began to worship idols. They took their eyes totally off of God.

They not only took their eyes off of him, the Bible says they turned their back to God. Instead of their face toward him and praising him, they turned their back. So God, what did he do? He sent prophets.

He gave them warnings like he's given people in this room today. He gave warnings and he said, you're going the wrong way. You better turn around.

Don't go that way. It will not go well with you. And I love you, but there's certain laws of sowing and reaping.

You keep doing that, it's going to come down on your head. But they didn't listen. They killed the prophets. They rejected the prophets. There was a prophet like Jeremiah. I'm reading through the book of Jeremiah in my devotions.

And what a job he had. No wonder they call him the weeping prophet. The people rejected him, threw him in jail.

Once they beat him up, humbled him. And he was delivering the word of the Lord, but the people didn't want the word of the Lord. They wanted what they wanted to hear.

That's like people are today in America and around the world. Don't tell me what God says. Tell me what I want to hear.

But a true prophet can't do that. He has to say what God says. So then God said, okay, you're going to reject the prophets.

You're going to not listen to my warnings. So here's what's going to happen. I'm sending the Babylonians and they're going to pull down Jerusalem and they're going to destroy the temple that you have so much pride in.

You keep saying the temple, the temple, the temple, and you keep going there and doing your animal sacrifices at times as if that's going to satisfy me. I don't want your animals. I want your heart.

You won't give me your heart. So I'm going to get your attention. I'm going to send judgment because you won't repent.

You won't turn back to me. So then what happened was the Babylonians marched in under Nebuchadnezzar and they devastated the place. They leveled the place.

They destroyed Jerusalem. They broke down the walls of the city and they destroyed the temple. This was not the destruction of the temple by the Romans in 70 AD.

This was hundreds of years before that. And the Jews were sent into captivity. They were scattered, especially the brighter ones and the leaders and the high IQ guys and the women.

They were sent all over the Babylonian empire and the northern kingdom had already been scattered into the Assyrian empire. So now there were hardly any Jews in the land and the temple was no more. It was a bunch of rubble.

Jackals were running in it. And now the psalmist says, this is one of the later psalms, the psalmist says, praise the Lord. Say hallelujah to God for he rebuilds Jerusalem.

God specializes in taking messes and blessing them. Because under King Cyrus of the Persian empire, after 70 years of captivity, God sent a word through Cyrus and Cyrus was, his heart was moved by God. And he said to people like Ezra and Nehemiah, go back to your land and rebuild the temple.

Go back and rebuild that mess. And remember when you rebuild it, pray for me. I was just in Turkey this past year and I was ministering to Iranian Christians and pastors.

That's Persia. Those are the people that sent them back to rebuild the temple. And they were so proud to tell me it was our King Cyrus.

These Iranians who have been chased out by the Ayatollah and some of these other leaders in Iran, the very dangerous place to be a Christian, how brave those believers are. And they told me, Daniel was one secretary of state here and we're the ones who said, go back and rebuild the temple. Imagine what a mess that was.

Jackals, everything broken down, everything's a disaster. You know, to build up into empty air, that's simple. But when you got rubble and a mess, and you remember the great building it once was, to rebuild things is always harder than to build a new, to rebuild, to renovate.

And the psalmist is now saying, you say hallelujah to God and you praise him because God rebuilt Jerusalem. Now that's a physical thing that they were to thank God for. But I'll tell you tonight why this building is filled and a thousand people are across the street, because God has not rebuilt a city.

He's rebuilt our lives. How many of us here could give a testimony, Pastor Simbala, my life, forget the temple, forget jackals running in it. I was a disaster area.

I didn't know what to do. I was ready to quit. I was ready to give up.

I wanted to start anew, but I had all this scar tissue, had all this luggage and baggage and mess in my life and mistakes. And instead of throwing me away and saying, I'm sorry, you've gone too far. God has the ability to reach down and take messes and make them into a blessing.

Come on, let's all say amen to that. That's why we should praise him. How many were once messes and now he's blessed your life.

Lift your hand. Come on. That's our testimony.

We don't look down on anyone, anyone who's a mess. That's just us. Oh, what a reason to praise God.

I'm thinking of people. I happen to notice just someone in passing here. It doesn't matter who behind me.

I look at some faces out here, people I've counseled, people I know more about. Oh my goodness, a mess, a mess. And it could have been even messier.

And God stepped in just before a person was going to really seal their doom. If it wasn't for God, where would some of us be today? Why can't you praise God? Why can't I sing to God tonight? He doesn't have to do another thing in my life. He already took my mess.

Oh, he rebuilds Jerusalem and we're the living stones that he's put together. And he's taken broken lives, shattered lives, messed up, dysfunctional, whatever psychiatrists can call us, whatever names they want to us. We know we're trophies of God's grace.

Come on one more hand up, clap of praise. He takes some messes in 2012 when you got a mess and some break. So you're trying to help someone.

Always remember, whenever you see a mess, you remember this, hallelujah, the Lord rebuilds Jerusalem. Every time you see a mess, you say, here's a chance for God to do his specialty. This building is like a

picture of that.

This building that used to be a quad cineplex was in here at once was a beautiful theater when it was built in 1917. And we restored it to the way it looked in 1943. But I had a picture of it and that's how basically this is the way it looked in 1943.

We didn't try to make it look like a church, but when we came in here, you asked pastor Brian, who he said he's here 15 years. He was here doing yeoman work, helping to get this thing renovated. What a mess.

What a mess. We'll show you some pictures of the before and after you talk about, he rebuilds Jerusalem. Oh my goodness.

We had rats running around here. So big they carried out of shake cases in the New York times, but God can drive the rats out of our lives and he can rebuild the mess. Amen.

So he gathers the exiles of Israel. This is why the people were told to praise God, praise God, because he rebuilds the mess. He rebuilds Jerusalem.

And by the way, here's a beautiful point. Why was the temple knocked down? Why was it a mess? Because of the people's sins. See, a lot of us think if somebody does something nasty to us, oh God, you'll stick in there and you'll intervene and you'll stick up for me and you'll help me.

But you know how great God is? When the mess is your own making. He's so full of mercy. He rebuilt the temple that was smashed and the only reason it was smashed because the people weren't listening to him.

But his mercy endures forever and ever. So even if the mess is your own making, don't let the enemy scare you away. God specializes in fixing up messes and he gathers the exiles of Israel.

What does that mean? Well, I just told you they were scattered all over the place. There was no Jewish strong nation in Palestine. They had all been sent all over the place and they had no political power.

They were despised minority then. Anti-semitism is as old as dirt. It's always been around since the days of Abraham.

The slaughter of the children in Egypt. So here they were scattered all around. No more Israel.

You know, there's a lot of old empires that you can read about in history books. They don't exist anymore. The Phoenician Empire, the Philistines, whatever happened to them, they're gone.

And the Jews could have been gone, but God gathered them back. He took them from the furthest places and made it possible through amazing means and power that he exerts in the most incredible ways. He gathered all the people back so there would be a nation and he gathered them back again in 1948 so that they're in Israel now.

In Psalm 147, the psalmist is saying, now you praise the Lord because he not only rebuilds Jerusalem, the mass, the walls, the broken temple, but he gathered all the people who were scattered so far away that you would say, no, they're scattered so far away. They were the first dispersed people, the diaspora, diaspora, the people who were just cast out of Israel to the wind. And God has the ability to bring people who are very far away back to where he wants them.

And that's why the buildings filled tonight. How far has he brought some of us? Not geographically. Oh no. How far has he brought us? You're in God's house tonight. If somebody would have told you that 20 years or 10 years ago, they would have thought that person was crazy because you were so far out there. Come on, weren't some of us so far out there? And now we're in the house of the Lord on New Year's Eve.

Come on. Can we not thank God that he gathers the captives? He gathers the exiles. He gathers the exiles of Israel.

He gathers the people that are far away, brings them back home. Again, I'm thinking of some people behind me that I know their story. They should not only not be in the choir, they shouldn't be alive.

Some of you here, if it wasn't for God's grace and his reach, wouldn't some of us be dead? We give you praise. We give you praise, Lord, now and always. We give you praise.

No, God gathers people. And can I just say this about the week of prayer? I saw it happen in my own daughter, oldest girl's life all those years ago. I've seen it countless times with friends of my own.

I've seen it recently in the lives of people. I was in Dallas, Texas, and I run up to buy a woman who sang in the choir at this well-known church, First Baptist Church of Dallas. She told me, Pastor, do you remember a year ago you were here and you preached the message about God recovers stolen property? I said, I remember that.

She said, I came to the altar for my daughter, Christy, and I thought, boy, your daughter was Christy and mine's Christy. How close is that? I said, how's it going with her? She said, look up at the choir risers. And I look and there's this beautiful daughter.

And now the mother and daughter are standing together, singing in the same choir. And her daughter was gone. I'm talking about gone.

So this week in prayer, if you know someone who's way out there, you remember this. God recovers the exiles of Israel. God can bring someone, not geographically, someone can be a million miles from God and they could be living in your house.

God can bring people back. How will he do it? That's not your business. That's not my business.

But how many believe he can bring them back? Come on. Can we say amen to that? He can bring them back. Come on.

He can bring them back. He'll bring them back. So the Psalmist is telling the people, now you praise God this year and you praise God all the time because remember, he took your mess and made it a blessing.

He took broken walls and he established them again. He took a rundown temple and he made it a place of worship again. And he recovered the exiles, the people that everybody had said, well, we'll never see them again.

And they'll never be a nation again. He brings them back and he does what nobody else can do. So praise the Lord for that.

Just don't marvel at it. Praise the Lord for it. And then finally, he heals the broken hearted.

He's the doctor who specializes in, in heart cases. This God who rebuilds Jerusalem, gathers the exile. He heals the broken hearted and he binds up their wounds.

Aren't we testimonies of that? How many have ever had your heart so smashed and so broken by life, by people that you didn't feel you could go on and somehow God healed you and patched you up and you're still trucking. Is he not the mender of broken hearts? He touches us in places no doctor or psychiatrist can get to. I don't know how God does that.

I just stand on the fact that he heals the broken heart. And I would like to suggest to you that this coming year, it's most likely, if I understand life or right, and I understand the word of God, even though we love God, our hearts could very well be broken again by somebody, by something this year. And you're going to feel that, that tearing inside, but we're able to praise God because he heals the broken hearted.

Sometimes the brokenness comes from our own sin. My worst brokenness has come in my life. How about you? From my own mistakes, my own failures.

Sometimes people break your heart. Sometimes people close to you break your heart. Sometimes people in your family break your heart.

I've counseled people, their mother broke their heart. I've had people, their father broke their heart. I grew up having my heart broken over and over again by an alcoholic father.

But instead of being bitter and instead of giving up, we have a God who we can praise because he heals the broken hearted. You don't have to live in bitterness this year. You don't have to live cynical.

You don't have to have an edge. You ever meet people, they say, no, nothing's, everything's fine. Everything's just great.

And you know, they have an edge. We can let it go and let Dr. Jesus take care of it. And you know, when he does his best healing, he does his best healing.

When you do what the Psalmist says, praise the Lord, bless the Lord, Israel, people of God, praise him. For he took your mess and he made it into a blessing. Can't you praise him for the rest of your life just for that? Does he have to do something new for you and I today for us not to remember all the way that he has brought us from and all the great things he has done? If it wasn't for the Lord, where would I be today? Oh my goodness.

When I think of the goodness of Jesus and all that he's done for us, how many have a lot of memories of God bringing you through stuff? How many have a testimony that he healed your broken heart? Just lift up your hand and where he's brought us from. We don't even want to go into that. He has brought us such a long way.

You know, I'm not even, it's not even allowable for me to tell you some of the testimonies. Sometimes it's appropriate that people give their own testimonies, but it's not even appropriate sometimes to tell you what some of the folks in our church were involved in. And now they're saints of God, saints of God.

Oh, bless the Lord and praise him. Can we just lift up our hands? Look up to heaven now. Open your mouth.

I don't care how old you are. Begin to praise him right now. God, we praise you who builds up Jerusalem, who takes our messes and has made them into blessings, who gathers the exile of Israel.

Where you have brought us from, nobody knows. No one knows, God, how far you have brought us from. No one knows, but we praise you today.

Everybody stand. Lord, we thank you that you take our messes. That's why we're here tonight.

We've all been messes, but you rebuild Jerusalem. You rebuild broken, shattered, messed up, dirty things. I praise you for that.

That's why I'm here standing with the microphone. We thank you that you gather the exiles of Israel. No matter how far we drift away, your love can still grab us and bring us back where we belong.

Lord, this week, we're going to be praying for people that we know who have drifted far, far away, and we love them, but you're going to bring them back. We thank you, Lord, that you heal the broken heart. No matter what happens this year, as long as you're holding my hand, it's going to be a good year, Lord.

Keep us close to you. Keep the people of God loving each other. Ask all these blessings in Jesus' name.

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