

Breathe!

Scripture used: [Psalms 150:1-6 \(NLT\)](#)

OVERVIEW

Pastor Hurmon gave a special sermon built on America's Independence Day. 4th of July is like a second national day of thanksgiving. We gather with family and friends and reflect on what's right about our nation, not what's wrong. This is a wonderful opportunity for us to reflect on gratitude, and how we can better integrate it into our daily lives. The Israelites also have a attitude toward giving thanks. The Book of Psalms is their national hymnal, and it has two major themes: adoration and gratitude. The final Psalm is our scripture for this week, and it captures how to live a life that boasts about God's great works. The Israelites suffered a lot, yet never gave up on their God. Today, scientific evidence supports that having an authentic relationship with God is good for our health. Active service in a faith community both extends lifespan and improves quality of life. God has built into our physical, emotional, and spiritual nature the tangible benefits of praising God and being grateful for His goodness!

KEY POINTS

- 1) **The Psalms capture how Israel praised God.** There is a deep sense of love, respect, and awe in every Psalm. Despite the many obstacles facing the Israelites, they never stopped praising God. The consistent practice of gratitude helped the Israelites recognize God's presence even in difficult times. They focused on what they had already received, even when they were waiting on God in times of need. Contrast the attitude of the Israelites to what so many of us struggle with today. Especially as a result of social media and non-stop feeds of the highlights of other people's lives, we can so often focus more on what we don't have than on what God has already provided for us.
- 2) **Praising God should not depend on specific circumstances.** Every person's life is full of ups and downs. No one is free from sorrow, anxiety, fear, and pain. This is especially true of the Israelites. They have suffered constantly throughout history, but their spiritual leaders knew to always trust in God and to boast about His greatness publicly. Through their praise and boasting in God, parents transmitted the framework of faith to their children, and one generation cultivated faith in the next. Praising God helped everyone to know that their God cared about them and had a place for them in His plan.
- 3) **The Psalmist gives us three key insights about praise.** Our attitude toward God should be "I'm going to praise Him no matter what happens!" but that is very hard to do in practice.
 - a. **Every place is suitable for praise.** God is Lord over everything. That means that we are always in either His "sanctuary" or His "mighty heaven." The entire created universe is a worthy place to boast about God, because God's presence is everywhere.
 - b. **There is always something worthy of praise.** There are reasons to be grateful even in the midst of health problems, or ending a relationship, or losing a job. Maybe it's a warm meal, or a roof over our head, or a favorite set of shoes, or a longstanding friendship. We need to fill up our minds with these specific things, and thank God for each and every one of them. As this "gratitude" list grows, so will our faith in Him and our resilience during difficult times.
 - c. **Don't block out praise from the secular world.** There is no distinction between the "spiritual" and the "secular" to God. We have to combine every part of our lives, just like the Psalmist combines every instrument with singing and dancing. No part of us is separated from God. Whether we're at church, at work, or at home, we can and should worship God and honor Him at all times. We shouldn't expect to be perfect, but we should try to be faithful.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - Pastor Hurmon described two people: one who was serious about their relationship with God; and another whose faith was limited to Sundays. Which one describes you?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Praising God requires us to use the whole self. We can't compartmentalize God into the "sacred" parts of our lives and leave Him out of the "secular." Where could you praise God in the "secular" parts of your life? What would that look like? How would it make you feel?

- 3) **DO** - Either by hand or digitally, write out your unique gratitude list. List all the things - big and small - that God has done for you throughout your life. Each day this week choose one thing to share with another person. Use each opportunity to praise God!