

¹ Praise the LORD! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and praise is beautiful. ² The LORD builds up Jerusalem; He gathers together the outcasts of Israel. ³ He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. ⁴ He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name. ⁵ Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite. ⁶ The LORD lifts up the humble; He casts the wicked down to the ground. ⁷ Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praises on the harp to our God, ⁸ Who covers the heavens with clouds, Who prepares rain for the earth, Who makes grass to grow on the mountains. ⁹ He gives to the beast its food, and to the young ravens that cry. ¹⁰ He does not delight in the strength of the horse; He takes no pleasure in the legs of a man. ¹¹ The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His mercy.

Text: Psalm 147:1-11 A 4-26-26 Isaiah 40:25-31 1 John 3:1-3 Psalm 30 Resp. Psalm: 111
Hymns: 39, 41, 53, 200 (1, 5-7)

IT IS GOOD TO SING PRAISES TO OUR GOD

Dear fellow believers in Christ,

When we think about problems in our lives, problems in the lives of those we care about, and problems in the world in which we live, it can get us down. Today we're reminded that **IT IS GOOD TO SING PRAISES TO OUR GOD**. As we'll hear, God certainly deserves our praise. We're reminded why God deserves our praise. As we think about those things and thank and praise God for them, it lifts us up.

We're told, "[God] does not delight in the strength of the horse." The strength of a horse doesn't mean to us what it meant to people not so long ago. Horses were an integral part of warfare for thousands of years. Horses were absolutely necessary for heavy lifting and heavy pulling. Now we have cars and trucks and all kinds of machines to do what horses were used for. But the basic idea still stands that we are to trust in God and His strength and power. Where horses and vehicles and machines are limited, God is not. We're told, "Great is our Lord, and mighty in power." Paul urges us, "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." (Eph. 6:10)

We're told, "[God] takes no pleasure in the legs of a man." We thank God for our health and strength. We are to use the strength and abilities God gives us. But it's a mistake to look only to ourselves and what we can do. Aging, disease, injury, and more take away human strength. God says in His Word, "I am the LORD, I do not change" (Mal. 3:6). God's strength and help are always dependable. Rely on Him. We say with the psalmist, "In God is my salvation and my glory; the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God. Trust in Him at all times." (Ps. 62:7-8)

We're told, "The LORD builds up Jerusalem; He gathers together the outcasts of Israel." Many times God allowed enemies to defeat the stubborn, proud, unrepentant Jews. Many times the defeated Jews were taken captive to foreign countries. But those who humbled themselves

before the Lord and repented, He forgave. He enabled those who wanted to come home to return. We stray from God in various ways and to various degrees. We may stray far from God. But when we humble ourselves before Him and repent of our sins, God forgives us and restores us. We're told, "[God] heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds." "The LORD lifts up the humble." God says to us, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you" (Jer. 31:3). "Come now, and let us reason together," says the LORD, "though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (Is. 1:18)

We're told, "[God] counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name." We look up into the night sky out in the countryside, or we look at pictures from a space telescope, and we are speechless before our awesome God! And to think that God just said, "Let there be...", and it all came into being in an instant (Ge. 1:14-19). God knows exactly how many stars there are, and has names for each one of them! We say with the psalmist, "My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth" (Ps. 121:2). The God who made everything can help us with whatever problem or need we have.

We're told, "[God] covers the heavens with clouds, prepares rain for the earth, [and] makes grass to grow on the mountains." God makes the clouds in the sky, and controls them. When there's a cloud that gives you shade on a hot day, thank God for it. Right now in spring we see how the rain is making everything so pretty and green. We have God to thank for it. Farmers are absolutely dependent on God to send rain for their crops. God sends clouds and rain all around the world!

We're told, "[God] gives to the beast its food, and to the young ravens that cry." God feeds all the animals on earth! Jesus tells us, "Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?" (Mt. 6:25-27) (or, "Which of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?")

We're told, "[God's] understanding is infinite." Isaiah says, "Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, or as His counselor has taught Him? With whom did He take counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of justice? Who taught Him knowledge, and showed Him the way of understanding?" (40:13). Who of us is going to tell God what to do? And yet, sometimes we think we know how God should direct things in our lives and in the world. God does things, or allows things to happen, and we wonder why: "Why me?" "Why now?" "Why this?" We don't know why God does some of the things He does, or allows to happen some of the things He allows to happen. It's not our place to question God or tell Him what to do. "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Ro. 8:28). We ask God to help us humbly trust Him. Whether we understand it or not, God knows and does what's best for us. "Trust in the LORD

with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths” – Proverbs 3:5-6.

We’re told, *“The LORD ... casts the wicked down to the ground.”* We wonder why so many of the unbelievers seem to be prospering and succeeding. Keep in mind that Adam and Eve brought sin into the world. There’s a lot of evil going on in the world because this is a sinful world. It’s not God’s fault. Peter says, *“The Lord ... is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance”* (2 Pet. 3:9). God is patiently working to rescue unbelievers and save them. But if an unbeliever willfully continues in his unbelieving ways, He will answer to God, in God’s own way and in God’s own time. The psalmist tells us, *“Do not fret because of evildoers.... Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him.... The salvation of the righteous is from the LORD; He is their strength in the time of trouble. And the LORD shall help them and deliver them; He shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in Him.”* (Ps. 37:1, 7, 39-40)

Several times in our text God is referred to as *“the LORD,”* Jehovah, emphasizing that God saves us. This is the greatest reason we have to praise God. God knew that we were headed for hell, and had no way to save ourselves. So He sent His Son, Jesus, who paid for our sins by dying in our place. Jesus rose from the dead. Our sins are forgiven. Jesus rescued us from hell. Jesus says, *“Because I live, you will live also”* (Jn. 14:19). Jesus will take us to live with Him forever in heaven.

We’re told, *“The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His mercy.”* The Bible says, *“Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him”* (Ps. 33:8, my emphasis). God doesn’t want us to fear Him in the sense of being afraid of Him. We fear God by holding Him in reverence and awe. Psalm 130:4 says, *“There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.”* We are in awe of God who doesn’t punish us as we deserve, but forgives us instead! The Bible says, *“The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. ... He has not dealt with us [as we deserve because of our sins], nor punished us according to our iniquities.”* (Ps. 103:8, 10)

We’re told, *“Praise the LORD! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and praise is beautiful. ... Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praises on the harp to our God.”* When we think about problems in our lives, problems in the lives of those we care about, and problems in the world in which we live, it can get us down. God certainly deserves our praise for all of His help and blessings to us in Jesus. **IT IS GOOD TO SING PRAISES TO OUR GOD.** Amen.