

Every anniversary is special. They're special because we know that nothing is guaranteed, from an anniversary at work to marriage to the existence of a church. We can do all that we can; sometimes things are out of our control and we don't know how many will get to. This is a special Sunday because it's our church's anniversary every year, a gift, but it feels especially significant to recognize today that our church has existed for 50 years. That is a profound gift.

And it is something that is worth celebrating. It's something that is worth gathering together with old members of people who have played a part in our story from those who were here at the very beginning to those who are like me or newer, maybe even those who are still trying to check us out. I think it's worthwhile to pause today of her regular going through for Samuel to just celebrate.

This morning we are going to be in Psalm 117. And we're just gonna take time to remind ourselves all the reasons that we should praise the Lord. This is a short song. There's nothing very complicated in here. There's nothing new or wild. I'm gonna say today that if you've grown up in church or you've been a part of this church that you've never heard before. But as I've wrestled and prayed for a while about what to preach when we came to this Sunday, this was the Psalm God kept putting on my heart.

Turn with me to Psalm 117

I. Everyone should praise the Lord.

This is what the entire Psalm is about.

Is that everyone should praise the Lord.

Then the Psalmist will give us some reasons why.

But I want us to sit with this for just a minute.

I already warned you that I wouldn't say anything new.

This really will be a reminder and a refresher that God is worthy of our praise.

"Praise the Lord, all you nations; extol him, all you peoples."

And twice we see in this first verse that we are to praise the Lord.

Or we are to extol him.

Praise means that we verbally boast in the Lord.
We talk out loud about His greatness.
We describe to others how good He is.
Or we just declare it to the angels and creation.

We use the word praise in other small ways.
We may praise our children.
Which just means we say good things about them.
And we are to do this same thing toward God.
This is something we should be doing.
Because we naturally do this with other things.
If there's something that we really like, we praise it to other people.
We tell other people about how good our children are doing.
We tell people something funny about our grandchildren or pets.
We will praise our spouse or a friend.
We will praise the last movie, television show, or short video we've seen.
We will boast about a book that we just read that was incredible and you need to read it.
After a big win, you get together and we'll clap and cheer and praise the football team and what they just did.

We need to praise God in the same way.
And there's nothing wrong with praising those other things.
Cause the best of them, in some small way, reflect the glory of God and the good things He's made.
But if we claim to be followers of Jesus, then surely we should praise Jesus more than we praise other things.

We need to see where our praise should be directed.
All of our praise should be directed towards God.
We can praise other stuff, and that's fine.
But we certainly must be praising the Lord.
I don't know how you could be a follower of Jesus and not praise him.
If you don't ever praise the Lord.

Then I am not sure that you love him.
Then I'm not sure that you really believe what you say you believe.

And this can look a variety of different ways.
But we should praise.
One of the ways we praise the Lord is through song.
This is why we often call the music portion of our service the praise and worship.
Someone will object and say, well, we can praise and worship in other ways.
Which is true, of course.
But this is usually the part of the service where we will focus on praising and worshiping together.
So we praise the Lord as we sing.
As we sing of His goodness and His greatness.
We should be so moved by the Lord that we cannot help but sing.
That we praise Him not because we like the songs, but because we like the one the song is about.
Anybody can sing along with their favorite song.
That doesn't take being filled with the Holy Spirit.
That doesn't take being born again.
But to praise the Lord, when you don't care what the song is, and you don't care if you even like it or not, but you know that He is worthy of praise.

We also should praise the Lord in our prayers.
When we talk to God, we praise Him.
We don't just praise him to other people when we're on our own, but we praise him when we talk to him.
Our prayers should be filled with a lot of different things.
Often times they are filled with our petitions and our requests.
And we should do that, and God asks us to do that.
But they also should have praise.

The Psalms were the prayer book of the Old Testament and the prayer book of Jesus.

These were not just songs they would sing but prayers they would pray as they read them.

Jesus prayed Psalm 22 while on the cross.

When we pray and talk to the Lord we should praise him and tell him what is worthy of praise.

It can also be small.

It doesn't have to be massive.

Most of the time the way that I praise the Lord.

Is I simply say, "bless you Jesus."

Bless you, Jesus.

Thank you, Jesus.

Or sometimes even just saying his name, Jesus Jesus.

I do that in moments when I'm amazed at the beauty in the world.

When I'm grateful for something the Lord has done for me.

Sometimes we can overthink Christianity.

Or we can get convicted that we aren't praising the Lord enough.

So we can decide "you know what every day I'm going to do nothing but praise God for 30 minutes."

And we do it once and it's awesome and then we kind of fall off the wagon and beat ourselves up and feel worse than we did before.

You do not have to start there.

Just start somewhere small.

But Jesus is worthy of your praise.

And it is everyone who should praise the Lord.

It is not just the really good Christians who should do this.

It is not just people who have a very grateful and joyful personality.

My Wife will tell you I can be a curmudgeon.

I am not naturally joyful and excited and thankful for everything.

That does not give me an excuse.

The Psalm doesn't say praise the Lord if you have a personality that likes to praise.

The psalm does not say praise the Lord if you feel like it.

The song does not say praise the Lord if you're happy and joyful.

It says praise the Lord everybody.

Let me give you some little background into the original languages.

I do my best to study Hebrew and Greek.

My Hebrew isn't the best, but I tried to study and look into this.

And it's crazy, but when you look at the Hebrew when it says all people.

It means everybody.

It means all of us.

None of us get out.

There is no excuse that you get to use or nothing. We get to raise our hand and say I don't think I have to do that. I'm exempt.

Everyone should praise the Lord.

It is not just Christians.

It is all peoples.

Every single person under the sun must praise God.

Every single person was created in the image of God and they should praise their creator.

They should not praise the false gods of their false religions.

They should not praise the demons behind their idol worship.

It is Jesus and the God of the Bible who they should and must praise.

It is the people in every single country on earth.

It is the people and every single tribe.

And every single people group.

Everyone should praise the Lord.

Because he is worthy.

We have special reason to praise him this morning.

As the local body of Christ at Tanglewood Bible Fellowship.

This is a special Sunday.

This is the time that we use a church especially one of just praise God.
Whether we were a part of this church in the past or still are now.
For us, we really gotta praise the Lord today.

But it's not just us every church should praise the Lord this way.
Whether it's their 50th anniversary or not.
Whether it is a great Sunday or a very difficult Sunday.
Whether it's the first Sunday of a new church plant or the last Sunday
before a church closes its doors.
All people and all churches and all places should praise God.

Let's look at two reasons why it's worthy of our praise.

II. Praise the Lord because of his steadfast love.

Here we see why our God is worthy of praise.
We can praise him because his love is steadfast.

First, I want us to see that God loves us.
This is one of the most miraculous things in our faith.
It's something that we can take for granted.
But it's something that doesn't make any sense.

God has no obligation to love us.
God does not have to.
He doesn't owe it to us.
He is the creator.
He made us when he made the world.
And he could not make it whenever he wanted for whatever reason he
wanted.
And this God is beyond our comprehension.
His glory is beyond our sight.
His ways are beyond our understanding.
When even the most ardent atheist goes out on a high place to gaze at
just some of God's handiwork, they are amazed.
Amazed at a tiny reflection of how great and glorious our God is.

And yet this God loves you and me.
He has affection towards us.
He cares deeply about us.
The fact that God chooses to love us, should make us praise him.
Because his love is totally undeserved.
We have done nothing to earn it, and he gives it to us.

The love that He has for us is great.
It is a great love.
Great is his steadfast love.
There are lots of things, all of us love.
I love burritos.
I love my cat.
I love the feeling after finishing a great book.
But my love for all of those things varies.
I don't love burritos in the same way that I love my children.
Even though you could rightly say, I love both.
But great is my love for my three children.

And great is God's love for you.
How do we know his love is great?
Other than the fact that he tells us in his word that it is.
We know his love is great because he sent us only son Jesus to die on the cross for us.
To redeem and rescue us from our sin.
To save us from our own righteousness.
To pull us out of the pit.
To give us new life.
God was willing to suffer greatly and to die on our behalf.
Because he loves us.

We don't make sacrifices for things that we don't love or care about.
We might make minor ones.
But we do not make great sacrifices unless we love something.

Or unless we love the person we're sacrificing for.
God loves you so much that he would give his only son that whosoever believes in him would have eternal life.

His love is great.
And his love is steadfast.
That means that it does not wax and wane with the tides.
It does not go up and down based on his mood.
He does not love us one day and then not the next.
His love is steadfast and faithful.

God does not love you any less today than He did 2000 years ago when Jesus died on the cross for you.
He does not love you less when you sin or when you fail.
He does not love you anymore when you have lots of faith or you read your Bible or you finally get back in the church.

Think back to the kind of love that you experienced when you were young.
Like when you were a teenager and just beginning to discover the opposite sex.
I can remember that some of those early days I fell in love for the first time.
And it felt like it would last forever.
And never felt something so intense.
And you just can't imagine ever feeling any different way about this person.
But the love of a teenager is not steadfast.
They can be hot one day and freezing cold the next.
One day you're with the love of your life in the next day, they can't stand you.

That is not how it is with God.
And we really need to understand and take this to heart.
Because there are so many Christians who say that they believe it, but we don't feel like this is true.

We think that God's love goes up and down.
If we obey a lot and we're good and we don't fall back in our old sin,
habits, and addictions, then he really loves us.
And we think that when we fail and sin, God's love disappears.
That he loves us less.
God's love for you does not depend on your behavior.
God's love for you does not depend on how good you are.
God's love for you does not depend on how much you obey.
God's love for you does not depend on if you stay close to him or run
away from him.
His love is steadfast.

Sometimes and failed marriages, we'll talk about falling out of love with
their spouse.
The other person just changed.
Realized she didn't have stuff in common anymore.
Years of wrongs and bitterness just built and built.
To one day, they looked at the other person just thought I don't know who
this is.
We do that to God he does not to us.
His love is as steadfast as the mountains.
He will not be moved.
That's why we praise him.
He is worthy of it.

III. Praise the Lord because of his enduring faithfulness.

We praise the Lord because he loves us and we praise him because his
faithfulness endures.
These ideas are very similar.
There are some nuances between them.
But the main idea is that God is faithful.

Faithfulness is continuing to show up day after day.

When someone is faithful, it means they do exactly what they say they will do.

When someone is faithful in a relationship, that means that they do not pursue other loves.

And here we are thinking and praising God for the faithfulness of the Lord.

There are lots of different people that are faithful.

We can think of some of the faithful spouses here in the room.

Who for decades have faithfully loved their husband loved their wife.

We can think of people who were very faithful in their work and their loyalty.

And those things are worthy of praise, particularly in an unfaithful world.

But we should especially praise the faithfulness of God.

He is faithful in a way that none of us are faithful.

He is faithful, even when we are unfaithful.

His faithfulness is not conditional on our obedience.

His faithfulness is not conditional on how good we are.

His faithfulness is not conditional on how much we give.

Even when we walk away from him, He is faithful.

Even when we ignore him, He is faithful.

Even when we reject him, He is faithful.

Even when we go after other loves, He is faithful.

Even after we come back from going after loves and say we're really sorry He's faithful.

Even after we go back to others again after apologizing, He is still faithful.

Because His faithfulness endures.

His faithfulness does not go in and out with the tide.

His faithfulness does not rise and set with the sun.

He is faithful forever.

You never need to wonder what He will do.

You never need to wonder if His faithfulness will quit.

His faithfulness will endure till time is no more.

And His faithfulness endures.

As elders, we pray at every meeting.

We often thank God for His faithfulness to our body.

For quite a while, we said Lord thank you for 50 years of faithfulness to us.

God has been so faithful to our body.

He has been faithful in our wives corporately, and he has been faithful in the thousands of Christians to have come through these doors over the decades.

We have seen his faithfulness in countless answered prayers.

This is always been a church that prays and really prays.

We've seen God be faithful and bring the lost to salvation.

We have seen people come to faith in this church and be baptized in our body because they were introduced to Jesus here.

Like Jean and Bob Schalit became believers later in life and were baptized here at this church.

We've seen God be faithful in the years where we prayed for children and for young families to come, and God sent them.

It's been the story in our church has passed and we've seen God in the last few years doing that again still being faithful to answer our prayer prayers.

And that doesn't mean everything's always been amazing and the best ever.

We've gone through our seasons as a body.

There are people that we prayed for that God didn't heal, and it hurt.

Even though it can be painful to remember.

But we know when we proclaim even in those moments, God was still faithful.

He has never abandoned us, and he has always kept his word in his promises.

Our church has a special story.

But our church is not the center of God's story.
We are one small pocket of what the Kingdom of God is doing all over the world for thousands of years.
And the stories of what has happened here are special.
The stories of what God has done among us are incredible.
And there are so many stories like it.
There are a hundred other churches just in our town that God has been faithful to.
There are thousands of churches in our state.
Hundreds of thousands of churches in our nation.
And millions of churches across the globe.
And God is faithful to every one.
What we have gotten glimpses of over the last fifty years is a small drop in the ocean of God's faithfulness.

The Bible describes the Christian life as a race.
And it is not a marathon that we run by ourselves.
It is a relay race.
A relay run through the ages.
Each generation passes down the faith to the next one.
And we pass the faith on to our children and to other peoples, to other nations, and to other churches.
Some of us run incredible the whole time.
Some of us have great spurts.
Some of us run slow.
Some of us get off track or fall on our faces.
But no matter how we run, God is faithful to us.

The main thing I want you to remember this morning is that we should praise the Lord.
For His enduring love.
And for His steadfast faithfulness.