**HALLELUJAH!: A LEADER WORTH TRUSTING**

**Psalm 146 (ESV)**

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***1*** *Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul!* ***2*** *I will praise the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.* ***3*** *Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation.* ***4*** *When his breath departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish.* ***5*** *Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord his God,* ***6*** *who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, who keeps faith forever;* ***7*** *who executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free;* ***8*** *the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous.* ***9*** *The Lord watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.* ***10*** *The Lord will reign forever, your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the Lord!*

As soon as it had begun, it was over. William Henry Harrison was elected as president of the United States of America in 1840. He took the Oath of Office on March 4, 1841. He was the first head of state to be photographed and was a promising candidate with an impressive military history. He won a landslide, 234 electoral votes, and had this heroic wartime battle victory slogan. His party was filled with people that had high hopes for this leader. But three weeks later, a sickness developed into pneumonia. Just a month after his inauguration, he suddenly died. It was one of the most disappointing presidencies in American history and the nation fell silent.

Israel did not really feel like singing. Not very often, at least. They had been conquered so many times. They had been led astray by leader after leader, taken advantage of by treaty after treaty.

Their warriors had fallen. Their homes had been burned. Their temple destroyed. Their dignity stolen. And yet, they’d been given this collection of prayers, this book of Psalms, this hymnbook of praise. And they were to use it as a book of prayer and to sing to God. But spread out in these foreign lands, and even after their temple had been somewhat reconstructed, there was certainly times of difficulty for many of them to sing a song. And in a way, there were times where Israel had lost her voice.

You don’t have to live long before someone in authority or a leader disappoints you. Some of us experience our first disappointments at home with abusive parents, neglectful parents or family members. Some of us are disappointed at school by bad situations by critical teachers with unclear standards. Others are picked on in sports by athletic coaches who have favoritism or parent politics. Others have disappointment at work professionally where colleagues are unethical and yet they are promoted unfairly. Legal and civil battles don’t resolve themselves in court sometimes and they are unable to bring about real justice. Decades after decades of political leaders all across the world fail to deliver what they promise. And even in the church, people disappoint. It doesn’t matter what ministry you’re in, whether it’s an usher or a pastor or a Sunday school teacher or a deacon or an elder. Someone is bound to let us down and even hurt us.

And after all of these blows, our youthful idealism and romantic optimism give way to a bitter sort of pessimism. We grow cynical. We stop trusting. We don’t feel safe, and so our singing turns to skepticism and we lose our voice. We stop having the strength to sing. It’s like when the star player jumps onto the court and crowd begins to cheer. And then they get injured and the cheering just stops. Our hope is gone. Life is too dark.

I don’t know if you can remember a time when you lost your voice, when you didn’t feel like singing, when you just lacked the strength. How did you get it back, if you got it back? Some of you might not have found your voice again. Or some of us might have never actually found our voice and never felt drawn to sing at all. How do we discover our reason to worship? That we can join in with this kind of praise in such a broken world. How do we find and maintain a voice of praise?

We’re parachuting right into the end of this book of Psalms. Psalm 146 is the beginning of the end. The last five of these chapters in Psalms is a group of five songs that are made to call us to praise. It’s sort of the crescendo. This book, even though a lot of the miracles and celebrations that they're having are things that have long since passed and they don’t see them presently, it still crescendos into this declaration and call to praise God. The psalms are filled with people who understand that life is hard. Many psalms begin that way. But they lead us to another truth, which is that God is good. When life gets overwhelming and the waves seem too big and God seems too small and far, this book is a great place for us to turn to take our eyes off of ourselves and learn to put them back on God. Because there really is a leader worthy of our trust. There is! But there’s only one. There is only one leader truly worthy of our trust. And we’re going to spend this morning fixing our eyes on Him. And hopefully by the end, we’ll gain a fresh breath and reignite our reason to sing.

So here are four ways to respond to this world of broken trust. Four ways to find your voice, in this example of Psalm 146.

**I. Sing out with Joy: Celebration**

**A Command to Obey: Praise God’s Awesomeness**

We’re called to sing out with joy and praise God’s awesomeness. This first action is a command to obey.

***1*** *Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul!*

God’s people are called to celebration. To take our inner sense of joy, of pleasure, of happiness over God’s awesomeness and then make it known publicly through appreciation, honor, and sing out and praise God’s awesomeness.

In our culture, celebration takes many forms. We sing at birthday parties. We chant names at athletic events. We join the wave in stadiums. We belt lyrics at concerts. We cheer on New Year’s Eve. We have standing ovations at performance theatres. We march in parades and release fireworks. We’ve all enjoyed lots of celebrations. Maybe one in recent memory: Last year, November 4th was this news-covered celebration when the Chicago CUBS celebrated the end of a 108 year drought with this parade in Chicago. Millions of people gathered in. It’s hard to estimate how many. It was estimated as one of the largest gatherings in U.S. history. This massive celebration!

But many of these secular kinds of celebrations are designed for and enjoyed by a very specific group or very unique personality types. And that marks one big difference between secular and spiritual celebration. You can avoiding attending parades or decline to support a team. You might not even know what that celebration last year was talking about. Probably not, but maybe you don’t know. You can refuse to stand in stadiums or skip a concert. But in this Psalm we realize that when it comes to the celebration of God, praise is not an option to consider, it’s a command to obey. And this relates to all men to praise the Lord.

What does this kind of praise look like? What qualities does it possess? What marks it? Here are some qualities, three qualities that gush forth from obedient singing, from biblical praise. How do we sing out?

Quality # 1: Out Loud— true celebration aims to be vocal (146:1)

When we praise God, the standard practice for us is to praise Him out loud. True celebration aims to be vocal. It’s a command repeated.

***1*** *Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul!*

This is the ancient word ‘Hallel’ meaning ‘to praise.’ It’s used to talk about songs or crying out or shouting. These readers would have understood that this is a call to make noise. The first time in this verse, it’s used with the name “the LORD.” When you see “the LORD” in all caps, he’s talking about Yahweh, the Hebrew word Yahweh, ‘I Am.’ This is God. And actually in this specific sense, it’s the shortened form of that name, ‘Ya.’ So it’s ‘hallel, ya.’ And you know this term that we hear and that we just sang before, “Hallelujah!” We get this term, “Praise Yahweh!” “Praise the LORD!” And this “Hallelujah!” this phrase is actually the opening and closing phrase of this chapter and the rest of the chapters until the end of the book of Psalms. They open and end with “Hallelujah!” This is a sort of Hallelujah chorus. It’s calling us to praise and celebrate who God is. It ends with

**Psalm 150:6** Let everything that has breath praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!

Hallelujah! Make noise out loud. This is an effort that has to be intentional. It takes work. We make noise in the best way we can, in the way that God has made us. We make noise and praise God. It’s intentional and it’s universal. It lacks exception. This is a call for everything that has breath to praise God.

There are often many excuses that we use as to why we don’t sing. One of the ones that I’ve used before and felt in my own heart is that I don’t have the skill or I feel a little bit embarrassed. And this call to praise God is telling me that I need to sing out. I need to make noise. This command extends to us all. Even if our voice is not in key and it’s maybe not the voice we like to share, it’s the voice that God wants to hear. He’s worthy of the praise of each one of us. He is worthy of the praise of Josh Beakley. He made my voice and He knows its limitations. He’s entrusted me with what I have. I’m the only one who has access to Josh Beakley’s lungs to give God the praise He deserves from them. No matter how skilled the musicians are on stage at singing, there is one thing they can’t offer to God: the praise of your voice. God deserves it and He’s worthy of it. It means something to Him that each one of us use our lungs and our breath to praise Him and to sing out loud, to make noise. So we sing out loud.

Quality # 2: Up Close— true celebration is personal (146:1)

***1*** *Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul!*

This is up close, relationally. This is the specific name of God. It’s personal. We address Him by name. It’s specific. We know who we’re talking to. We’re responding to Yahweh. And this command to praise up close means we address God for real, by name and for real. It’s not only specific, it’s dynamic. He is a real Being. This is God, Yahweh! He actually hears us and knows us. So when it comes to praising Him, we have to zoom in and draw near and recognize we’re up close. We’re not just singing to the walls. We’re singing to a God who is listening.

It’s easy to kind of slide into the excuse of “I’m not worthy” or “I don’t deserve to sing.” The issue is not our worth, but God’s worth. He deserves it. And we’re in this relationship called to sing and praise God, Yahweh. Who is this God, Yahweh? We’ll zoom in and have a close-up in verses 6-10 when we get there.

Quality # 3: Deep Down— true celebration is thorough (146:1)

***1*** *Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul!*

Who is being commanded to do the praising? The recipient of this command is his own soul. He’s talking to himself. He’s speaking to his very own soul. It’s the same concept we see in Psalm 103 and 104. We understand it and we sing it in our own lyrics in other songs. “Bless the Lord, oh my soul, o my soul, worship his holy name.” We’re talking to ourselves. Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones was famous for emphasizing this from the Psalms, this encouragement for Christians to stop listening to themselves and start talking to themselves. This command for deep down praise means there’s a level where this is a choice because we’re people of complexity. There’s a sense where we can come in to church and we can feel simultaneously that we don’t want to sing, yet we can tell ourselves to sing, because we do want to sing. There’s complexity within and there’s this choice where God tells us we’re not like the movie *Inside Out*. Maybe you’ve seen it. Where emotions rule our lives and they make choices for us and we’re just victims to whatever we feel. Our emotions are not in control. We’re complex beings and your will can tell your soul to praise God. And this command for deep down praise means we can be empowered by God’s spirit to sing the praise He deserves even when we don’t feel like it, even when it feels not real. He’s showing us how to dig deep and praise God thoroughly despite the moment.

What’s the difference between putting on a fake smile and saying “Oh, I’m being a hypocrite. I’m wearing a plastic face,” and then on the other hand, courageously giving God the praise He deserves even when we don’t feel like it? What’s the difference between those two approaches? Maybe the most simple way to think about it is just that one is for people and the other is for God. When we come and we don’t feel like it maybe, but we decide, “I’m going to sing for the Lord,” this isn’t hypocrisy. This is obedience. This is love. The other is consumed with what people think about us. The other is to choose despite how we feel and is consumed about what God deserves and our love for Him and what He’s done.

It’s easy sometimes to look at other people and maybe make a judgment on them. To look on someone and see them smiling and singing and say, “Oh, that’s hypocrisy!” Or, we look at other people who are just struggling and we think, “Oh, you know. They’re not being obedient.” We don’t know what’s going on in each other’s lives. For some people it is the essence of faith for them to get here to church and to just be able to whisper out the words. Life is so heavy and their praise could be so pleasing to God. And other people are singing even though their lives are hard, even though they’ve struggled with sin. But they are praising God because they’re choosing to be obedient. And we do not know what’s happening in each other’s heart, but we know God does. And we sing for Him. It’s a joy!

This is less like the kind of concert that we feel like attending and more like the wedding anniversary where maybe it was a hard week. Maybe we feel tired and maybe a husband may not feel like celebrating at a particular moment. But it would be a mistake for him to say, “You know what? I’m not excited about our marriage right now. I’d just kind of rather celebrate some other time when I feel more real about it.” That would be a mistake (Laughter!) because his wife is a gracious gift of God and she is worthy of that time. And he, when he’s feeling that way, he’s actually not connected to reality. And what he does is he chooses to celebrate and says, “Soul, it is time to celebrate this gift and to enjoy this marriage and this spouse that God has given me.” And as he does celebrate, his heart begins to warm and connect to reality. When we come to praise God, we don’t wait until we feel like it, because we believe His worthiness is so real, it is more real than our feelings. Our feelings are out of alignment with reality and we will ponder Him until our feelings conform to the reality of his greatness.

You know what’s kind of overrated is chicken soup. Your soul doesn’t need more chicken soup. There were some inspirational speakers who gathered these motivational stories to help people feel better. They called it *Chicken Soup for the Soul*. And suddenly there is a second helping of chicken soup for the soul. And then a third serving and a fourth course and a fifth portion and a sixth bowl. And now there’s twelve books a year. There have been over one hundred books published about chicken soup for your soul. What your soul doesn’t need is to stay home and to drink more chicken soup. Sometimes we have to get up and come to church and we take the ladle and we smack the chicken soup off the table and we say, “Soul, it is time to sing!” Sing out and praise God because He is awesome and His awesomeness is worthy of being celebrated!

We can imagine Jesus, sitting there hearing this Psalm as a boy, read. He’s hearing these commands to praise Yahweh. He is the first person in history to truly praise Him the way He deserves. He’s a Savior who sung, and not just in the good times. Jesus, on the night when He was looking toward a torturous execution, toward total betrayal, pondering the wrath of His Father, His soul was sorrowful Matthew 26:38 says, “to the point of death.” And on that night, only eight verses earlier, He gathered His disciples together and sang. It’s amazing! And yet He is the one we celebrate, the radiance of God’s glory. He is the one who has been given the name above all names. This is Yahweh! We sing because of the good news made possible by Him. And here’s the good news. No matter what you’ve done this week, this day, this morning. No matter how wicked or evil or dark or repeated these sins may be. No matter if anybody else on earth or in this room could ever forgive you, because of what Jesus has done, if you believe in Him, He has suffered God’s wrath for your sin and you can be cleansed completely and changed completely. And by the power of God’s Spirit, through the person of Jesus, even if you feel like you’ve lost your voice forever, God can give you reason and strength to sing to His glory.

There’s no celebration like the song of salvation. Salvation like the Israelites saved from the Egyptians after crossing the red sea. Or, like David and the Psalmists saved from the hand of the Philistines. Or, like Paul and Silas. Even though they were in prison, they were celebrating being saved from the chains of their sin. And God is coming, like the song of the early church who longed to be saved from the persecution of Rome. Like the angels in heaven who rejoice with awe when even one sinner repents and is saved from God’s wrath. Crossing the sea on dry ground is nothing compared to changing a person like me! That’s nothing! Of all the things, the last thing you could do on this earth is change someone like me! And you look at this church and say, “Wow! God could save a group of people like this? God could save a guy like this? He could save a nation like Israel? This is crazy! This is amazing! Wow!”

Isn’t one of the most exciting times for us to sing is when we celebrate Baptisms? When someone gets up there and they’re saying, “Can you believe God saved me? He saved me!” And we see a life change. And we all say, “Whoa!” And then here comes another one, and another one. And here’s these people who recognize “God saved me!” And it’s like with every baptism we’re saying, “Yahweh! Yahweh! Yahweh! Yahweh! He did that! Yahweh!” Yahweh saves! This is the person of Jesus and we celebrate.

We want to be known as a church not where we have some kind of great building or some great programs or some great preacher or some great music leader or some great anything. We want to be known as a church where Yahweh saves! We want to be known as a church where people’s lives change, where people say “When God’s Word is preached there, people change! They respond.” Or “When music is played there, people sing! It may sound crazy, but they sing because they’ve been saved by Yahweh.” We sing out with joy. We praise God’s awesomeness. Out loud. Up close. Deep down. Make noise. Zoom in. Dig deep. And we praise Him in this broken world. That’s a light shining, this command to obey.

**II. Press On With Resolve: Devotion**

**A Commitment To Make: Pledge Your Full Allegiance**

***2*** *I will praise the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.*

God’s people are called to devotion, to be completely given to this celebration. To press on and pledge this allegiance to lift God’s name high. It’s a rare quality these days: devotion. True commitment. It’s actually a statement on our culture that when you search for examples, most of them come up about entertainment, the devotion of fan bases. There are some that I know and some that I don’t. Oakland Raider fanatics. Dr. Who die-hards. Star Wars movie-buffs. Lord of the Rings enthusiasts. People who are devoted, and so much so that they get their own names and they’re called cult followings.

In one article, they rated fan-bases with the most devotion. There were supporters of a young music performer and his fans helped carry this young man to peak celebrity status as a teen. They helped him release three straight #1 albums. They viewed his videos online 750 million times. They purchased $60 million worth of his perfumes. These are devoted fans. But then it seems strange because some of their commitments with time seem to fade. They begin to kind of hide some of those old posters and turn away from the devotion to this performer in embarrassment. It may be a change in age or maturity or even a drift of the behavior and popularity of the performer, but their loyalty begins to wane. And their unwavering pledge of allegiance at age 12 that was so committed, doesn’t seem to hold.

It’s the same with tv shows sometimes. We love to find new seasons of shows to get hooked on. We want to be obsessed. We want to find something worthy of our devotion. We want to find hobbies worthy of our devotion. We want to find a spouse worthy of our devotion. We want to be committed because it’s from that, that we get such joy and fulfillment. But there are very few things worthy of your full allegiance and devotion. But here’s one. Yahweh! Jesus Christ! The person of God! Here’s someone to whom you can make a lifelong commitment, that you will never be embarrassed about. He is a figure worthy of the utmost devotion, that you will find utterly fulfilling. Here’s what celebration looks like in this devotion.

Pledge # 1: You’re All In— true devotion is total

It is to be committed, all in. It matters big time here. It’s central because of the repetition we see here four times.

***1*** *Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul!* ***2*** *I will praise the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.*

This central allegiance is communal. He is making public statements that people would recognize. “I am committed, devoted to Yahweh.” And he’s inviting us to join him and dive in. All in. And not only are you all in right now, but you plan to stick it out.

Pledge # 2: You’ll Stick it Out— true devotion is perpetual

This is ongoing. It’s saying, “I am committed to this God and to praising this God and it’s never going to run dry. That’s how good I think He is.” It’s never going to run dry or run out of reasons to praise Him.

***2*** *I will praise the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.*

He’s inviting us to this kind of extravagant devotion, to let loose because God is awesome and celebrating His awesomeness is worth any kind of commitment you can give. He deserves that kind of devotion. We don’t have to fear our own age, or some kind of drifting passion like a hobby that goes out of style or like He goes out of popularity. He is worthy and better than we think. And He’ll never get boring. The true devotion and praise that we can offer are not the result of just cultural Christianity. This is the deep, committed praise of people devoted to God no matter the cost.

Now this kind of commitment, it’s not to say that this is all you need. We know David was lavish in his commitment, but failed miserably. We know Peter was committed even to die with Jesus, but also disappointed. Jesus was clear that the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. (Matthew 26:41) This is one reason why marriage and that vow is so sobering. You’re making this promise that in some sense you feel like “I’m not going to be able to keep all of this.” But it doesn’t mean that you don’t make it. You recognize that “I want to.” And I want to pray for God’s grace to dive in and let loose with all of the love I can pour into this because it’s worth it and it will never run dry. And I pray that God empowers me to keep these commitments. And when I fail, I praise God for Jesus who celebrated God when no one else did. He kept the law and commitments that everyone else broke. And He did so by the power of the Holy Spirit which He entrusts to me. That I would by His power, bear the fruits of His righteousness in my life. And I pray that God would help me to press on with resolve, to go all in, to stick it out, to dive in and let loose and commit because He’s worth it. So we don’t hold back. We press on.

**III. Watch Out With Wisdom: Precaution**

**A Caution to Heed: Beware Man’s Weakness**

Here is perhaps one of the most memorable parts of this chapter.

***3*** *Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation.* ***4*** *When his breath departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish.*

We’re called to avoid trusting in and celebrating people and objects in the place of God, things that would not fulfill in the same way that God does. Caution comes with wisdom. It’s a value that foolishness rejects. When you’re young and foolish, you’re invincible. You know everything. You can do anything. But wisdom begins to understand that things can give out. At some point, your body will give out. At some point your back will give out. At some point, that railing will give out. Wisdom kind of has caution, but foolishness rejects that caution. Those of you who have been in earthquakes, you know that the very land beneath your feet that seems stable beyond all comparison can actually betray you.

It was three years ago, February 21, 2014, in Bowling Green, Kentucky, around 5:30 in the morning. In the middle of the sky dome of the national corvette museum, the ground began to open. No one knew that the sky dome had been built on this underground cave and that it was slowly expanding and had finally given way. The hole that cracked open was about 40 feet wide and about 30 feet deep. It opened right beneath a display of eight rare corvette’s. They had a 1962 black Corvette, a 1 millionth-built Corvette, a 1.5 millionth-built Corvette, some never-built design studies and show cars. Luxury vehicles were just swallowed into the earth and destroyed like matchbox cars. It all happened because this extravagant showcase was built on a sinkhole. It was an unstable, unreliable foundation which seemed fine at first glance, but beneath the surface, it was weak and untrustworthy.

God tells us how we are supposed to celebrate, but also how not to. He warns us against the devotion. He cautions us against trusting in lesser things and to put our trust fully in God. This caution that we’re called to heed is to not place our hope in man. He gives us two reasons here to beware these earthly kind of hopes.

Reason # 1: People Fall— wisdom sees men as mortal

People fall. People die.

***3*** *Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation.*

I think they would understand this. Israel trusted in a lot of human leaders, foreign and domestic. They had abandoned God’s rule, begged for an earthly king and got Saul, who disappointed them. In Isaiah’s day, God said “Trust Me” and they turned to foreign rulers and turned to Egypt and were disappointed. There were lots of ways that they trusted in leaders, but I think the same implications extend to all earthly hopes. There is a way that human hopes will eventually fail. Even the Pharisees trusted in their heritage as children of Abraham, or customs and rituals of circumcision, these things that they hoped in. And there’s this sense of mortality, of death, in all things human. Whether it’s forgetfulness, or selfishness, or weakness, the falleness of mortality means that we’re on our way to death every day. No leader is free from the stench of the curse.

We turn to doctors and sometimes they make mistakes. Sometimes they don’t have the answers. We hope in circumstances. We trust in our physical abilities. Sometimes our strength fails. Our intellect gives way. Sometimes we hope in political parties and we trust in our spouses or our jobs or bosses or bank accounts or investments or school curriculums and on and on. We rely on parents and church leaders. If you live long enough, eventually everyone in some way will fail.

What does it look like to trust in a prince? What are some symptoms? Well, maybe if you hear yourself using phrases like, “If only…” “If only I get married…If only I get a raise…If only I make it to Friday…If only I make it to lunch…” Here’s another one, “All I want…” “All I want is some peace and quiet…all I want is a little respect…all I want is to not be alone…all I want is a friend…” Maybe another symptom could be anxiety. You get worried that these sinkholes might collapse because you know they can’t hold forever. So we stress and we think about them and try to reinforce the ground that is inherently unstable. It doesn’t mean that these things are bad. God helps us with means. Oftentimes, princes are a great blessing. He sends us friends when we’re lonely. He gives us raises when we need them sometimes. But we don’t trust in princes. We’re thankful. We appreciate them, but we trust in God. And its tested and revealed when those sinkholes open up and those things fail us. But we still have a reason to praise because our trust is in God. No matter who these people are, the best of men are men at best. And we recognize that we need a kind of salvation that we cannot find in each other and in what we see around us. So we’re cautioned against people who fall.

Reason # 2: Policies Fail— wisdom sees plans as temporal

***4*** *When his breath departs, he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish.*

There’s an abruptness, a suddenness, a brevity about this kind of help. There is no silver bullet, no plan that’s perfect, no policy that doesn’t fail. We’re not going to find safety in the plans of men. And sometimes trusting in princes looks like overconfidence. We don’t pray, we don’t seek God, we don’t read because we’re trusting in our marriage or our job or our finances or our social life. We’re overconfident in these things, thinking they’ll hold us. On the other hand, sometimes trusting in princes looks like complaining. And it’s more subtle. If certain leaders take over we descend into despair. We say, “There’s no hope now.” Which is to say, “If another prince had taken charge, we could trust in them. I trust in princes, just not that prince.” Or we just become disillusioned and say, “They’re not who I thought they were…Marriage isn’t what I thought it would be…Parenting isn’t what I hoped it is.” And sometimes that can be code for, “My prince failed.”

We recognize that life is hard. The world is broken. But as it breaks around us and all the ground around us begins to sink, we find refuge, we find our trust and safety in the Lord, not in these earthly hopes. God is awesome and He’s worth trusting! We don’t focus on things that are shaky ground, that are bubbles destined to pop.

**Psalm 118:8–9** It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man. It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes.

**Psalm 20:7** Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.

Every leader will fail in some way. Human solutions fail, save for one. Jesus never fails! In His name alone we trust. And he showed us how to trust God, even by submitting to fallen human leaders in a broken world. This God who saves perfectly and finally and He exposes our complaining and our misplaced confidence and He gives us something greater to trust in and a reason to sing. So He warns us to watch out with wisdom. Beware man’s weakness and where you are placing your trust. This trust is going to be tested. It’s going to be challenged to the breaking point. And you’re going to have to remember and truly savor who it is that you are trusting. Who is it that we are trusting? And to do that, we have to remember this God who saves.

**IV. Think Back With Awe: Adoration**

**The Characteristics to Savor: Cherish God’s Greatness**

This is the idea of adoration, of thinking about who God is and just soaking in it. God’s people are called to a life of adoration, to a deep worship and respect for God. To think back and cherish who He is and what He does. It’s an attitude that we have to cultivate. It’s a response to a revelation of God.

If you would have visited our home growing up, you would have seen these glass jars and inside were piles of rocks. It was the result of a practice my mom instituted when I was younger. We would travel around and we would go to different places and pick up rocks. When a prayer was answered or something that we saw was a sign that God was really kind here in a certain way that we want to remember, we’d write it down, date it, put it in the jar. We would have jars filled around the house, rock jars. Just looking at them was a reminder of what God had done in our lives. Every once in a while we’d take those jars and get them out and start to look at these rocks. We’d start to think, “Wow! God has done a lot! How did I forget all of this?” Somehow these old stories would move us to cherish God in fresh ways. Old stories can move us to cherish God in fresh ways. Lots of families have creative ways of remembering what God does. It doesn’t take a jar of rocks, but it takes something. It takes something to savor who God is and remember. When it comes to God, satisfaction is guaranteed 100%. He never disappoints. So if our praise is lacking, it’s not the problem of the object of our worship. It’s with our eyesight. Somehow we need to see who God is. Our response is dependent on the revelation that He provides. We need to look and savor who God is.

Verse 5 opens with this promise that we can cherish of Yahweh, who He is. There’s this sweet promise, these effects that we get to cherish.

Effect # 1: Present Help— blessing now

***5*** *Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob...*

We have this God who is the God of the living, of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He wrestled with Jacob and gave him a blessing. He delivered him from Easu, and the nation of Egypt. He helped this nation conquer kingdoms. The God of the army of the lord of hosts. This present help, blessing now is available in Yahweh.

Effect # 2: Future Hope— blessing forever (146:5b)

***5****…whose hope is in the Lord his God,*

Help now; hope forever. This promise that we can cherish reminds us of the Beatitudes that Jesus would teach in many years. And we keep that in mind as we continue to move through the passage, because he moves on from this promise that we can cherish to a proclamation about God we can savor, about who God is. He lists these 12 quality traits of God that we can enjoy. It’s just kind of a strip of praise of who God is and the different traits that He embodies.

I don’t know if you’ve ever eaten a “Fruit by the Foot.” There are two ways to eat it. Maybe you can unroll it as a long strip of candy and break it off piece by piece and eat it inch by inch and just kind of savor it bite by bite. Or you can just roll it all up into a big ball and just kind of eat it in one bite. And it’s like a blast of flavor and it’s over real quick. But your jaw hurts. (Laughter!) We’re about to roll all twelve inches of these attributes into a giant ball and just chew them in one bite. Your jaw may hurt and it may be sore, but later on, you can come again and just go through one bite at a time. It’s kind of intended to be overwhelming, so don’t get stressed out if you’re taking notes and your jaw gets sore. “I can’t fit all of this on one tiny half page of notes. God is too awesome. I can’t fit it all in this little…” You’re right! He is too awesome to fit on your little note sheet. He’s too amazing! But we’re just going to try to enjoy what we see of God quickly. Awesome qualities of God to savor:

1. God is the universal creator. He made everything.

***6*** *who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them…*

The Milky Way galaxy bursting with stars, the Amazon rainforest filled with insects, the Great Barrier Reef teeming with plankton, God made it all. He is the universal creator. His authority is one that we can trust.

2. God is a loyal promiser. He never lies. He always keeps His word, follows through.

***6****…who keeps faith forever;*

His promises are truth and they last forever. Have you ever had a leader change their mind? Or maybe move the finish line out of reach? They just keep changing the objective? Or not follow through on a promise? God is not like that. He is a loyal promiser. He’s not like the parent or the friend that breaks a promise. He never lies. And His Word is one that we can trust.

3. God is a just deliverer. He helps those in trouble.

***7*** *who executes justice for the oppressed…*

Superman has his kryptonite. The best of governments and organizations get corrupt. Even the most unbiased of judges will make mistakes. And sometimes the court even refuses to hear cases. But God is a just deliverer. His timing is one we can always trust.

4. God is a generous provider. He meets our needs.

***7****…who gives food to the hungry.*

I don’t know the last time that you were ever truly, deeply hungry, or if you’ve ever experienced the pain of true hunger. But God knows what we need and He can provide generously. His care is one that we can trust.

5. God is a merciful savior. He frees us from bondage.

***7****…The Lord sets the prisoners free;*

We think of prison. If you look at Psalm 107, it’s spoken of that they sat in darkness. These prisoners had afflictions because they rebelled against God’s Word and He sent them to prison. And they had spurned Him, and so they were down in prison. And yet they cried to the Lord and He delivered them from their distress. And their bonds burst apart. He set them free. He shattered the doors of bronze and cut the two bars of iron. They deserved the prison, but He set them free. He is a merciful Savior to those of us who deserve to be imprisoned. All of us are in bondage to sin.

6. God is a powerful healer. He helps the helpless.

***8*** *the Lord opens the eyes of the blind.*

This is something that the greatest doctors in the world cannot cure. He comes with the power to do the impossible, not only healing blind eyes but also raising the dead. He has an ability we can trust.

7. God is a compassionate helper. He comforts the discouraged.

***8****…The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down…*

He’s like the kind parent. He stoops down and lifts us up when we’re weak and fallen and our heart is broken. He’s a compassionate helper. His is a comfort we can trust.

8. God is a loving rewarder. He affirms those who are righteous, who trust in Him by faith.

***8****…the Lord loves the righteous.*

Righteousness is a gift that comes through faith in Jesus Christ. And because of Jesus, we get the rewards He deserved as a perfect Son. And all of the beauty of God as a loving, just rewarder, we get to enjoy through Jesus. And so the fruit of righteousness that He produces through His Spirit through us, we enjoy the pleasure and reward of God. We can trust His plan.

9. God is the common protector. He guards those who can’t defend themselves.

***9*** *The Lord watches over the sojourners…*

I don’t know if you’ve been in a foreign country. You can’t speak the language. You can’t even order food. You can’t get a job or own land or defend yourself. You’re helpless. Here is the common protector, a God whose guidance we can trust.

10. God is the sovereign sustainer. He cares for those for whom no one else cares.

***9****…he upholds the widow and the fatherless…*

He brings relief to those who are vulnerable and defends them. His wisdom is one that we can trust.

11. God is the righteous judge. He pays the wicked back for their evil.

***9****…but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.*

There is no escaping Him. His justice will find you out. He is the great and fearsome avenger. From the very first Psalm, He makes a promise He intends to keep. It is never wrong. Wickedness will pay. He has a justice that we can trust.

12 God is the eternal king. He’s in charge forever.

***10*** *The Lord will reign forever, your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the Lord!*

Hallelujah! He’s the ruler of the entire universe and His throne is never given to another. His is a tenure we can trust.

When you group these actions together you discover that God is worthy. He helps, He gives hope, He made all things, He keeps faith, He executes justice, He gives food, He sets free, He opens eyes, He lifts up, He loves, He watches over, He upholds, He ruins wicked ways, and He reigns. And when you group the objects of these verses together you discover the people that God helps prove that man is needy. We’re needy. We’re the oppressed, we’re hungry, we’re prisoners, we’re blind, we’re bowed down and we’re sojourners, widows, fatherless, all generations. We’re only made righteous because of Jesus Christ. It sounds a lot like these Beatitudes that we read in Matthew isn’t it? God is worthy, man is needy, and this is what you see when you savor the character of God. He’s awesome and His awesomeness is worth savoring. These qualities are all embodied for us to enjoy in the perfect person of Jesus Christ.

It was through Him that the universe was created. It’s through Him that all promises are fulfilled. He delivers in perfect justice. He is the most generous provider that ever lived. He is the Savior of the world by whom anyone can receive mercy. He healed and will heal with power. He helps those in need with compassion. It’s through faith in His righteousness that we receive reward. He protects, He sustains, He will judge, and He will reign forever. This is our God, a leader worth trusting. And we can say, “Hallelujah!” We think back and cherish His greatness.

As soon as it had begun, it was over. Perhaps the most disappointing of religious revivals in history. No leader had ever shown more promise. His teaching was unparalleled. He burst onto the scene and He rocked the nation with His words and His works. Never before had anyone seen such miracles. He healed the sick. He multiplied food. He calmed the sea. He gave sight to the blind. He raised the dead. The multitudes gathered to make Him king. And just like that, He was betrayed by one of his own. There was a mock trial and a sudden execution. He was the only leader worth trusting. But when the time came, nobody believed and trusted in Him and He died. Perhaps the most disappointing leader of all time. Except, was He? Somehow through that death, He became more trustworthy than anyone else that ever lived. Through Him, when you return to the dust, it is only to rise again. In Him is salvation. His message changed the world. Millions have had their lives changed by this man who rose from the dead and one day will come to prove He rules over all the earth.

We are a needy people, desperate for salvation. And there is only one leader who is worthy of our trust, worthy of our praise. Hallelujah! Oh, is that leader worthy! He is worthy! And we think about this God and it just might be that in the darkest times of the world’s brokenness, that when we feel we’ve lost our voice, it’s the very ledge of worship. The breath before the shout. The place where we are about to see worship unleashed. The place where like never before, as we experience faith and trust in God, we’re about to cry “Hallelujah!” because Yahweh saves when we need it most. We keep our eyes on Jesus!