

Yes and hello and welcome to Valley Creek Church. From wherever you are joining us from, let's take a moment and welcome each other together today. Glad to be together as one church. Hope is here, everyone is welcome and Jesus changes everything. And can I just tell you, he is still in the business of changing lives. We got to see that on full display today and this is what it's like to be a part of a family on mission and this is what a movement of hope looks like. Can I just say one more thing about that? This is a good life. When Jesus leads you, it's a good life. You get to be a part of amazing things and see amazing things and be part of his Kingdom that's forcefully advancing. It is a good life and a great day to be together as we get to finish up 60 Days: Songs of Life.

For the last 60 days, we've been taking a deep dive into the Psalms, we've been reading through them. We've been meditating on a verse a day, we've been praying that verse back to God and we said that the Psalms have all the real things that real people really experience. All the prayers and the pain and the praise, the cries of humanity, the longings of our hearts, the real things that make up real life. And we've been digging into those kind of, just a few chapters every single day. And so I believe that God has done a deep work inside of our family. I'll tell you on a personal level, He's done a deep work inside of me. I can feel a healing, a renewal inside of my soul. I believe that God's word will not return void. "My word that goes out from my mouth, it will not return to me empty. It will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it." I believe that God's word has been speaking to us through the Psalms and it's achieving the very purpose for which He sent it. And I think you're going to have access to that word in the future.

The next time you have a prayer to pray and you don't know what to pray, may you remember the prayers and the Psalms. The next time that you have, like, deep-seated pain that you're experiencing in your life, may you draw from what you read in the Psalms, and let that comfort you in your pain. The next time that you want to praise the Lord, may you declare some of the praises of God over your family and over your life. May it not return empty. May it accomplish the purposes for which He sent it. You see, if you joined us over the summer, you have now read 150 chapters in the Psalms. If at the beginning of the summer, I said we're going to read 150 chapters together, you'd be like, how about no? But if I said, every single day, we're going to do one or two chapters, little by little, and by the time it's all said and done, we'll have made it through 150 chapters in the Psalms, can I just tell you, you'll always have that. You'll always have this time, you'll always have what God spoke to us through the Psalms together.

Even if you got most of the chapters, we're going to give you credit today, because I believe that His word will not return empty, that it's going to accomplish what He desires. We've also had some amazing messages all summer long. We have leaders and pastors here that have brought some profound words from the Lord over our church. And so I want to encourage you if you missed any of those, check out ValleyCreek+. ValleyCreek+ is a great resource site. It's got all our messages. It's got teachings. It's got things to encourage your heart. You can go on and you can keyword search. But check that out at valleycreek.plus because we really, really

want to encourage our church family. Own your own journey with Jesus. Like, this is how you own your own journey. You take some steps, you get into it. You dig into what he has for you. So all across the resource site, check that out today. But today we are together. Whether you were here all of those 60 days, whether you missed some, or maybe you're just here for the first time today, it is great to be together. The people of God in the presence of God, ready to hear the word of God, and it is time to praise God.

So here we go, Psalm 150. Let me read these quick 6 verses over our church to kick things off. Psalm 150, verse one, "Praise the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary. Praise him in his mighty heavens. Praise him for his acts of power. Praise him for his surpassing greatness. Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet. Praise him with the harp and the lyre. Praise him with timbrel and dancing. Praise him with the string and pipe. Praise him with the clash of cymbals. Praise him with resounding cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord." What if we just praise God together right now? God, we praise you. Come on, wherever you are, praise the Lord. Give Him a shot of praise for who He is, for what He's done. We praise you, God. We praise you God. We praise you, Jesus, for what you've done among us, for how you've moved, we praise the Lord.

So today, I just want to take a journey of talking about praise. Praise is a really big deal. Praising the Lord is what the end of the Psalms finishes with, because praising God isn't just something we do, it is life itself. And so there's a reason the Psalms end with the Psalms of praise. Across the Psalms, there's 260 times the word "praise" is used. So what I want to do today, is I just want to walk us through the what and the why and the how of praise. So what is praise? Praise is simply recognizing God for his greatness and declaring it back to Him. Whenever we recognize God for his greatness and declare it back to Him, that's a form of praise. It's not always singing. It's mostly singing, but it's not always singing, and there's lots of ways we can declare God's greatness back to Him. And you're familiar with praise, because we praise people all the time. So if you've ever been to an award show, or if you've ever been to a retirement party, if you've seen, like somebody, get a lifetime achievement award, that's when we heap praise upon someone.

We actually recognize their greatness, and then we declare it back to them. Now I want you to think about this. If you were at a retirement party and somebody just put in 40 years with the company and everybody is gathered around, the balloons and the streamers, and the foods on the table, and then like the boss of the person comes up to read just a few words over them and they grabbed their notes and they say everybody have a few words, [whispers] "I'd like to read over Tom in the events of his 40 years of our company, so bear with me just a moment. Tom, you been such a great employee. I just want everybody to know how great you are and how much I've really enjoyed working with you. Every single fiscal year, you were the best employee in our entire company. So today we honor you for your 40 –" no, come on man. If you were in a room and you watched that happen, you would think something was really, really

wrong, because praise is expressive. Praise is outgoing. Praise is something that happens big and out loud. In fact, there's a difference between praise and worship.

Sometimes we get this wrong. When we think about worshipping together, like on the weekends, what we're doing is a combination of praise and worship. And let me explain. Praise is really exalting, it's outward, it's lifting up God and an expressive way. Worship is more reverence; worship is more inward; worship is more internal. If worship goes more internal, then praise is more external. Essentially, praise is like clapping of hands and shouting out to God; worship is more a bowing in reverence and adoring Him and thinking of Him highly on the inside of you. If you think of praise as expressive and joyful and exalting, then worship is really where it's more internal. It's more, maybe, subdued. It's where you think of and pray to God from in here. But it's also other things. For example, if we get loud over somebody's step of baptism because we're recognizing God's greatness in their life and declaring it back over the atmosphere, that's a form of praise. If we read Scriptures together and we recognize God's greatness through His word, and then we all read the Scripture out loud, that's a form of praise.

It's just declaring back His goodness over Him. And both are needed. Praise and worship are both needed. But today, for the purposes I'm going to talk about mostly praise rather than worship, because Psalm 150 is a primary chapter on praise. Because it's used so many times in the Psalms, I want to really take a look at, really, the word for praise and what it means, and then explain why that's so important in our life. So check this out. In Psalm 150, the primary word in the Hebrew is the word "hallel." And when you combo that word with the name of God, Yahweh, that's where we get our word "hallelujah." So when you raise a hallelujah, or if you say the word hallelujah, you're literally saying the word, "praise God." And this is important because praise is not just something you do. Praising God is life itself. Let me explain. Most Hebrew scholars believe that the word Yahweh, the name that God gave himself when he talked to Moses and said, "Tell the people I am who I am," that the name Yahweh is literally connected to the aspiration, to breathing, to breathing in, and breathing out.

So that every time you breathe in, Yahweh. Yahweh. The very name of God is on your lips. It's a form of praise. Just to literally breathe in God's goodness in your life and breathe it back out, Yahweh. So God loves us so much that He gave us His name to remind us that His praise should always be on our lips. Praising God is not just something you do, praising God is life itself. Think about it, when a baby is born and they take their first breath, what's the next thing they do? They cry. They cry out as a form of praise from the very beginning of their life. One day, Jesus' disciples are praising him and they're saying, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."

And the Pharisees and the religious leaders tried to tamper it down. They had tried to stop and they actually literally shushed him. Because a religious spirit, a pharisaical spirit will always lean back from praise, it'll always try to quiet it, it'll try to get small, it'll try to shrink back. But Jesus says no, no, no, it's really simple. "I tell you, if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out." So

babies cry out, stones cry out, all of life cries out, because praising God is not just something you do. It is life itself. And even at the end of your life I will sing to the Lord as long as I live, I will praise my God to my last breath. So from the first to the last, we're meant to literally praise God with everything that we are, Yahweh, Yahweh, his praise always on our lips. Praising God is not just something to do, it is life itself.

Even Jesus at the end of his life, right before he passes away on the cross, he says, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." And it doesn't say that his heart stopped. It says he breathed his last breath. So when literally the praise of God ceased to be on his lips, that was the end of his life on Earth. And then he went on to praise God forever in heaven. That is what we're called to do. That's what we're called to experience. That's what praise is, recognizing God for his greatness, and declaring it back to Him with every single breath that we take. So that's what praise is. But then why? Why do we praise? Why do we lift God up? Well, verse two tells us that we praise Him for his acts of power. We praise Him for his surpassing greatness. We praise God because He's worthy to be praised. We praise God because He's the King of kings and Lord of lords, because He's the beginning and the end, the first and the last, because He's the creator and the sustainer of us.

We praise God because He literally gives us the breath of our lungs. He leads us in our life. We praise God because His beauty is uncontainable, His love it's undeniable, His grace is unfathomable. We praise God because He is the only name that's worthy to be praised. Jesus, the name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Every knee will bow to his greatness. We praise God because He's the only one who's worthy to be praised. We praise Him because He's worthy. We praise him because He's powerful, because His greatness is surpassing, we praise Him because He is the one worthy of praise. Why else do we praise God? We also praise God because when we praise Him, we literally place Him onto His throne and place His throne into our hearts. We place God onto His throne, the place that He deserves to be, and into our hearts, the place where He desires to be.

Check this out. "Yet you were wholly enthroned on the praises of Israel, of your people." So when we praise God, we place Him up on his throne, the place that He deserves to be. We place his throne into our hearts, the place that He desires to be. And here's the craziest part. We don't praise because God needs it, we praise because we need it. He actually doesn't need it, like, He's doing great. He's doing fine on his own. He deserves it. But He actually wants us to praise Him for us. Here's the crazy part. God made us to praise Him for us. Just think about this for a second. He loves you so much that He built you to be a worshipper, to praise Him. He made you to praise Him for you, because He knows that you need it. Why? Because when God is high and lifted up placed on his throne, your eyes lift up away from the down, away from your circumstances, away from the things that are holding you back, away from the things that aren't turning out.

You're lifted up. You see Him seated on his throne. You place Him onto His throne, and you place His throne into your heart. So lift up your eyes, see Jesus seated above, higher, more, beyond than whatever you're facing right now, because God loves you so much that He made you to praise because He's worthy of it, and because when you praise you lift Him up above the things in your life beyond so much more than anything you've ever imagined. When Jesus is lifted up, it's amazing how much your problems seem to dissipate. When he's lifted up, it's amazing how much the things of this world seem to just take, like, a back seat to the greatness of God. That is why we praise. He's worthy of it, and it places Him on his throne. So then, how do we praise? What should praise look like?

Well, we hear a lot about it in the Psalms. Check this out, "Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet. Praise him with the harp and the lyre. Praise him with the timbrel dancing. Praise him with the strings and pipe. Praise him with the clash of cymbals. Praise him with resounding cymbals." Do I have any harpists in the room? Anybody get the harp? How about pipers? Anybody pipe? I can remember when my daughters were learning to use the recorder, you know, the little like you do in 5th or 6th grade, like the plastic recorder? And there's definitely a verse in the Bible that says like, make a joyful noise. I'm just telling you that thing was devastating my theology, alright? It really was like, I just was no go. I was no go for that. So here's the thing, what do we see here in the passage? We see movement, we see big, we see instruments, we see loudness. So can I ask you, is your praise big? Does it reflect the bigness that you even see in that passage? I've recently been going to soccer games. I've really been enjoying soccer. I know there's not much scoring, it's boring, I get you.

But I really enjoy going to FC Dallas games. And recently I got to go to one and the guy in front of me was like it was, like, so quiet all game. Like, his beer and snacks, and just mumbling at the ref below his breath and he looked like he was just having, like, the worst time of his life. And so I was sitting, like, literally directly behind him and then they scored a goal and this guy, like, he became a different human. It was like he became Animal in The Muppets behind the drums or like he, like, won like the Powerball, like he just went nuts, right? And I was thinking, I was like, wow, that really changed -- like high fives, like we were best friends, like it was just everything, it was just the greatest moment, right? But here's the thing, that's soccer, this is Jesus. So like that's a sporting event, but we're talking about, like, praising the God of the universe. So can I ask you, is your praise big? Do you praise big? Oh well, Jason, I'm just -- I'm not that kind of person. Okay, I get it. Different personality types.

You know, some people are more gregarious. Here's the question for you. If you're at a concert, like if you're rocking out with Garth Brooks, like what does that look like? What do you look like in that moment? If you're cheering on a Cowboys game and they score, or they lose in overtime, you know, like what kind of energy does that look like? Because I made a decision years ago that nothing was going to get more of my energy than praising God, like nothing was going to get more of my excitement, more of my heart, more of my engagement than praising God because He deserves it, because He's worth it. He deserves our all, the energy,

the bigness that comes with it, our biggest and our best. Check this out of Psalm 47, "Oh, clap your hands all you people. Shout to God with the voice of triumph." I want to encourage you, on the weekends, look for reasons to clap your hands. Even if you got no rhythm, it's okay, our drummers do. They're great. So look for reasons to clap your hands. Maybe not just when we're clapping, other times too. Just clap. Just why not? Just clap my hands.

There, you're doing great. That's great. Or just look for reasons to shout, yes Lord, thank you God, You are good, we praise You, we thank you. And not just during worship, also when a message is given, because when you say things like "amen" and "that's right," that's a form of praise. Why? Because we're hearing the greatness of God through His words spoken over our church and we're just declaring it back to Him. And then it lifts up the heart of everybody in the room that hears you verbally engaged and to shout back like, "thank you God," "that's good," "that's right, it is all good." I am giving you permission today that during any given worship time as a church and during any given message, man, truly lift up your voice. Praise the Lord. I came out of a church that, it felt so disconnected sometimes. Like we would sing the songs, like we would have the hymnal open, and we would be singing, but it's like our face was at a funeral.

Like we needed, like, a fix your face moment. Like we would, like, praise the Lord, praise the Lord. Huh. Let the earth hear his voice, praise the Lord, praise the Lord. And then I came to Valley Creek and everybody's like just going for it. And it's because, as a church, we are passionate about the presence of God, because He is truly worthy of worship. We are a worshipping church. And I started to realize, like, people like actually want to do this, like they're not just, like, bored and like, doing it because they had to sing all four of, you know, lines of the hymnal. And so it was a really -- it was a tough one for me because that was like way out of my comfort zone. So I can remember when I first came and I saw people even, like, raising their hands, I was like, "hey usher, I think that person has like a question, would you go and help him?" Like it was one of those kind of weird moments, you're like, I'm not used to that part at all, right? And then it was challenging my faith because I'm like, I got to kind of get outside myself and I see versus like this, "Lift up your hands in the sanctuary and praise the Lord."

I was like, okay. So here is my progression. I decided that I was going to finally just start to lift my hands in worship. And it's kind of a progression because you're not going to like, go for it all at once, right? So it's kind of slow. So it kind of starts down, kind of starts down low. It starts with you just serving the platter. I'm just serving the platter to the Lord. And then maybe you get a little bit more confident and you don't want to extend the hands away from the body. You keep them close so you just go for like the T-Rex arms. This is T-Rex worship. We're just T-Rex into Jesus. And then you kind of give maybe up a little bit further. Sometimes if you just want to kind of keep a base, you'll go like with maybe one hand, you get a little bold. So I like to do this one, like one hand in the pocket, like one hand worshipping up here. So here's what that is. This is more like keep it grounded on Earth and reach up to heaven, grounded on Earth,

reach up to heaven and your arm gets tired after a while. Then you go back again and your arm gets tired and then pretty soon you're just straight John Travolta. We're just going for it.

And then after that if you get really crazy, it's just touchdown, Jesus. Let's go Jesus, like here we go. Let's go, let's go, Jesus, let's go. Okay, here's the thing. I make the joke about it, now catch it, it's not even about your hands. It's not even about lifting up your hands, it's about lifting up your heart to God. It's about remembering who you are in Jesus and why that matters and how you respond to it. Look at this one, "In every place of worship I want men to pray with holy hands lifted up." Hands lifted up is what you do. Holy is who you are in Jesus. Hands lifted up, hands lifted up is what you do, holy is who God declares you to be. And so the declaration of who you are in Him is the reason that you just go for it. Like I am actually holy, I'm set apart in Jesus and I'm beloved and I'm worthy. And now I'm just overwhelmed by the whole thing. And so now I just respond in a praise and in a way that reveals what I really believe about myself.

So let me just ask you, what does your worship, what does your praise reveal about what you think and who you think you are in Jesus? What does the way you praise reveal about what you really believe about God, and what He says about you and His declaration over your life? Because holy is who you are in Jesus. Hands lifted up, oh that's just something you do, that's just part of how we praise Him with an openness, with a humility, with a willingness to lay it all out at his feet. So what is praise? Man, praise is recognizing God for His greatness and just declaring it back to Him. Why? Because He's worthy of it, and it places Him on a throne. How do we praise? In all kinds of ways. In movement and bigness, and loudness and exuberance, breaking free from the smallness. It's really like a religious spirit that's hidden, that's scared. Because we know that Jesus is worthy of our praise.

Doesn't matter what they all think. It matters what He thinks. Doesn't matter what's going on around me. It matters what He thinks about me. And so that brings us to one more point, which is this, when you praise, you're actually not just praising for you, you're also praising for them. Here's what I mean. God loves it when his children encourages other children. God loves it when his brothers and sisters that are in the family encourage the other brothers and sisters in the family. So every single weekend we gather together, people walk into our campuses hopeless and feeling helpless and wondering whether God's real or whether He loves them or if He cares. And so when you praise, you're proclaiming the goodness of God over their life. Sing to the Lord, praise His name, proclaim His salvation day after day. Praise is a proclamation. Praise is a proclamation of the salvation that's available to all, and so you're not just praising for you, you're praising for the person behind you.

You're praising for the single mom that just had the worst week of her life. And she doesn't know if she could do it anymore and she doesn't know if anybody sees her or if God cares or if He's real. So when you praise, you're praying for her and you're reminding her that yes, He is, and He does see and He does love and He sees you right now and you have a family of faith

and a community that's just declaring over your life the goodness of God. When you praise, you're not just praising for you, you're praising for them. So when you praise and the person that's coming from years of addiction comes in and thinks, am I ever going to be free? Is there any hope for me? Can I breakthrough? What's this all about? And you just are going for it, they look around and think well, that person must know something. That person must like, know God for real, like not for like the way you grew up in church one, like for real, for himself and his own heart and his own life. He knows Him and he's worshipping Him. And so they start to begin to feel that and something breaks free inside their heart.

You're not just praising for you, you're praising for the student that gets bullied every single day at school. And you're praising loud and big and you're declaring God as a protector over their life. You're declaring God as a constant help in a time of need. And so for that student, the next time they go to school, they'll remember, I got a family that's worshipping with me, praising altogether declaring the goodness of God over my life, proclaiming His salvation over each one of them every single week. You're not just praising for you, you're also praising for them. One more, the primary place that we praised together, for what you have done, I will always praise you in the presence of your faithful people. Now, catch it, can you praise with Spotify rocking out in your car on the way to work? Absolutely. But the primary way that we praise God is together, in the presence of all his faithful people. All through the Psalms, the description of praise happens as a church, as a people, in community.

It's the reason that the very beginning of Solomon 50, says, "Praise God in his sanctuary." Literally, with people and with all the instruments. Because the instruments are reminding us that we all get to hear it, we all get to be part of it. That it really isn't about any given one of us, it's us together, the people of God, all the family that is on mission to seek and save that which is lost. And so we're going to get a chance to practice that today. We couldn't think of a better way to finish out this series than to take communion and finish with a song of praise. And so at all of our campuses, our teams are going to begin to get up and distribute communion. Our worship teams are going to come back onto the platform. And I just want to encourage you that communion is really a form of worship. It is a form of praise. Because even as we take communion, we remember who God is and what He's done and we with our whole heart, with all of us, we declare that back to Him.

So communion is for anyone who's placed their faith in Jesus and made him Lord. You're welcome to take it if that's you. And communion is also a reminder to each one of us that there is a brand new song being sung over our life. You see, we talked a lot in this series about singing a new song unto the Lord, that He'll put a new song in our mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Communion is really literally the reminder that there was an old song that we used to sing and in Jesus we got a brand new song. The old song that we used to sing was a song of brokenness, broken identity and confusion and stuck in sin and stuck in performance trying to literally perform for my value, perform for, you know, to be considered worthy.



In Jesus, the new song is you are worthy. In Jesus, the new song is you got a brand new identity, a brand new place in the family of God. In Jesus, the new song is no longer is it going to be about what you have done or accomplished, it's going to be about what I've accomplished. No longer is it going to be about the work that you've strived for so long in your life to try to finish. Jesus says, "It is finished." A brand new song. And so communion, every time we take it, we remember that song. We remember that it's God singing a new song over our life, putting a new song in our mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Can I ask you during these 60 days, what's the new song that He gave you? What's the new song that He sang over you and over your family, and over your heart that was hurting? What's the new hymn of praise that God put in your lips and your mouth and your hearts?

I believe that God's writing a brand new song on our church family right now. I believe it kicked off in this season and it kicked off with this series, where hearts were healed, where some things were reestablished in our church family and into our homes. I believe that's a new song He's going to continue to sing over us and speak to our church. It's a brand new season in Jesus' name and may it truly be a season of praise. Communion is an interesting one, because even in the communion story when Jesus took communion with his disciples, it actually says that at the backside of taking it, they worshipped and praised the Lord together. So the very first communion, the first time they ever took it, not only did they know that it was the beginning of a new song that was going to be sung through the power of Jesus over their lives, they literally sang a new song.

They worshipped and praised Him for who He was and what He had done for them. And so go ahead and take the bread. Hold that up. And remember that every time that we take the bread, this is Jesus's body broken for us, broken that we would be made whole. He had to sing the song of isolation and death and pain and brokenness so that we could sing the song of community and life and healing and wholeness. So every time we take the bread, we remember Jesus. Let's take it together. In the same way he took the cup. And he said, this is a cup of a new covenant, a promise between God and mankind, not the old song of striving and sin and brokenness and shame, a new song of forgiveness, of wholeness, of Kingdom living and thinking, a new song of forgiveness between God and mankind through the blood shed of Jesus. Let's take the cup together.

So in just a moment, we're going to get a chance to respond to this moment. We're going to get a chance to lift up our praise to Him. So Jesus, we praise you for all that you've done, we praise you because you're worthy of praise. We praise you because you're a name above every name, we praise you because you're the only one that could have done what needed to be done to bring us back to God. May our praise from our first breath to our last always be on our lips. We breathe you in today God and we just choose to praise it back to you. Thank you, Jesus, for who you are, for what you've done, in your name, amen.