

PROTOTYPE

"MODEL PRESENCE"

PSALM 113

This Week's Core Competency

Trinity – I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

2 Corinthians 13:14 *May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*

One of the most unique doctrines of the Christian faith is that of our catholic (i.e., universal) belief in the Trinity; that is, the tri-unity of the one true God. Countless analogies and/or metaphors have been given in an attempt to best express the nature of the one God expressed in three persons— Father, Son and Spirit. But in the end, they all fall severely short. While some inquisitors are left unsatisfied, I find great comfort in this incomprehensible, eternal truth. My inability to 'wrap my mind' around God's triune nature stands as one more affirmation that what has been revealed to us in the Bible about God is not of human origin. "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2Pe 1:20-21)

A central question stands in the middle of today's passage—"Who is like the Lord our God?" The answer is found on every page of the Bible—NO ONE. In fact, God answers this question in numerous places in Scripture. Isaiah 40:12ff provides one of the most notable examples in all of Scripture of God's self-attesting uniqueness:

*12 who has measured the waters
in the hollow of his hand,
or with the breadth of his
hand marked off the heavens?*

*Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket,
or weighed the mountains on the scales
and the hills in a balance?*

*13 Who has understood the mind of the Lord
or instructed him as his counselor?*

*18 To whom, then, will you compare God?
What image will you compare him to?*

*21 Do you not know? Have you not heard?
Has it not been told you from the beginning?
Have you not understood since the earth was founded?*

*22 He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth,
and its people are like grasshoppers.*

*He stretches out the heavens like a canopy,
and spreads them out like a tent to live in.*

*23 He brings princes to naught and
reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.*

*24 No sooner are they sown,
no sooner do they take root in the ground,
than he blows on them and they wither,
and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff.*

*25 "To whom will you compare me?
Or who is my equal?" says the Holy One.*

*26 Lift your eyes and look to the heavens:
Who created all these?*

*He who brings out the starry host one by one,
and calls them each by name.*

*Because of his great power and mighty strength,
not one of them is missing.*

*27 Why do you say, O Jacob,
and complain, O Israel,*

*"My way is hidden from the LORD;
my cause is disregarded by my God?"*

cont pg. 2

28 Do you not know? Have you not heard?
The Lord is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He will not grow tired or weary,
and his understanding no one can fathom.

29 He gives strength to the weary
and increases the power of the weak.
30 Even youths grow tired and weary,
and young men stumble and fall;

31 but those who hope in the Lord
will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.

41:4 Who has done this and carried it through,
calling forth the generations from the beginning?
I, the Lord - with the first of them
and with the last - I am he.

For Discussion

During the first few minutes of the worship service you found yourself in the same situation you've been in for some time now: arms crossed or hands in pockets, blank stare toward the stage admiring the gifted and impassioned singers and musicians leading the congregation through various praise and worship songs. You think to yourself, "They seem to 'get it' and for some reason, I just don't. I don't know why I struggle to fully 'engage' in the praise and worship portion of the service. It's not the song selection or style of music; and I totally agree with all the lyrics. But why is it that I don't seem to 'feel' or 'respond' like they and so many others in the congregation do?"

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Psalm 113

1 Praise the LORD.

*Praise, O servants of the LORD,
praise the name of the LORD.*

2 Let the name of the LORD be praised,
both now and forevermore.

3 From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets,
the name of the LORD is to be praised.

4 The LORD is exalted over all the nations,
his glory above the heavens.

5 Who is like the LORD our God,
the One who sits enthroned on high,
6 who stoops down to look
on the heavens and the earth?

7 He raises the poor from the dust
and lifts the needy from the ash heap;

8 he seats them with princes,
with the princes of their people.

9 He settles the barren woman in her home
as a happy mother of children.

Praise the LORD.

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Highlight each occurrence "praise" or "praised" in this passage.
- * Double underline the words "O servants" in v. 1
- * Circle every occurrence of "the Lord" in this passage.
- * Underline each occurrence of "the name of" in this passage.
- * Box "now and forevermore" indicating duration in v. 2.

- * Underline "exalted" in v. 4.
- * Underline "stoops down" in v. 6.
- * Circle "He raises" indicating divine interaction v. 7.
- * Circle "he seats" indicating divine interaction v. 8.
- * Circle "He settles" indicating divine interaction v. 9.
- * Draw a line between the first and last phrase of the Psalm in vv. 1 and 9.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Record your initial impressions of this psalm? In what ways can you identify with it? In what ways do you not identify with the psalmist's sentiments?
2. Identify the "movements" (or "sections") in today's passage and give a title to each one.
3. List the reasons given in today's passage for why we are to "praise the Lord"?
4. What is the duration of time God's "servants" should offer praise and worship to him? What does this communicate to you about his "name" (i.e. - his character and attributes)?
5. Put the first line of v. 3 in your own words.
6. How would you answer the rhetorical question in v. 5? What supporting evidence (Scripture, personal experience, etc) would you offer in support of your answer?
7. What examples does the psalmist include that highlight the grace (unmerited favor) of God?
8. What parallels, if any, to the gospel of Jesus Christ do you see in the example given in vv. 7-8?
9. How do you reconcile the two examples given in vv. 7-9 with the fact that not *all* the poor/needly become "seated with princes" and not *all* barren women become a fertile?
10. **Discussion:** Take a moment to read the passages on pg 1. Share what "stirs your spirit" the most.

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

To the Jew living in the days after the composition of Psalm 113, this song was full of historical significance and pregnant with veiled insight to the ultimate expression of the God who "stoops down" (v. 6) to humanity; that is, via the subsequent sending of His Son, of whom "they will call Immanuel - which means God with us" (Mt 1:23). Psalm 113 is the first of what's referred to as the Egyptian *Hallel* (lit. praise) psalms (113-118). These and other such psalms were sung at the various feasts and festivals throughout the Jewish calendar. But Psalms 113-118 were of particular significance during the feast of Passover. As most students of the Bible know this feast served as a memorial of Israel's first Passover on the eve of their mass exodus from bondage to the Egyptian Pharaoh (Ex 12; hence the name "*Egyptian Hallel*"). Of these, Psalm 113-114 were sung before the Passover meal; while 115-118 were sung after the meal was complete. "[This] psalm would have been the first sung by Jesus and the disciples in the celebration of their last supper, with profound implications for the occasion and its consequences" (James L. Mays, *Psalms*, Interpretation, 363).

Psalm 113 is comprised of three strophes (chorus movements) containing three lines each. The first strophe (vv. 1-3) is a exuberant call to "praise the Lord" (5x). Additionally, praise to the Lord is to come from his servants. Or, stated differently, those that belong in covenant relationship to Him. Also of note is the repetition of the imperative to praise "the *name of the Lord*" (italics mine); that is, His covenantal "name" (Yahweh) revealed to his people. One author notes, "The name of the Lord is the mode of God's presence for the congregation. [God] who cannot be comprehended in space or seen by human eye is graciously available in the name that bears His identity and all that goes with it. The name is the way the transcendent [God] who is not "there" in any ordinary sense is nonetheless present for those who worship" (Mays, 361). Further, their praise was to be seen in a universal sense (i.e., all of God's children everywhere; possibly foreshadowing Israel's subsequent exiles) and done so as an everlasting activity.

Whereas vv. 1-3 serve as a call to praise, the

second strophe (vv. 4-6) provides the first reason God is deserving of such praise—His incomparable, majestic greatness. He alone is "exalted over all the nations" (v. 4). His glory alone spans "above the heavens" (v. 4). He alone "sits enthroned on high" (v. 5) *above* "the heavens and the earth" (v. 6). This strophe contains a chiasmatic structure in which the "centerpiece" is the ultimate rhetorical question: "Who is like the Lord our God?" You know...the One being exalted so high above the heavens and earth that He must "stoop down" to see them both. The descriptions of God in vv. 4, 6) make it clear: there is none like Him.

Being created by and in the image of the one true God, He is indeed worthy of our obedience and worship. However, the third strophe (vv. 7-9) highlights vivid examples of those upon whom God's unmerited favor rests (See Lk 2:14 where this theme repeats itself in relation to the sending of God's Son). Each example mirrors the theme of "deliverance" like the ancestor's ages-ago exodus from Egypt. The first speaks of God's strength and might to "raise the poor" from poverty, oppression and social obscurity—by seating them in a place of honor amongst royalty. Once again, the New Testament provides believers with an even fuller, richer expression of God graciously raising us up to become "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God [so] *that you may declare the praises of him* who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Pt 2:9; italics mine).

The second example of God's gracious favor relates to a woman being delivered of her barrenness with a house full of children in return. As with the first example, it is essential we affirm that even though this psalm was intended to be sung as a hymn, it still falls under the category of Hebraic poetry. As such, phrases such as this that look like "promises, guarantees or absolutes" are simply acknowledgments of what God can, and *has* done. Just as we have seen such works today, Israel had several notable women (e.g., Sarah, Rachel, Hannah, etc) to whom we can all look back to as a testimony of God's gracious intervention. In fact, verse 7-8a is a quote from Hannah's song (1 Sam

2:8). And given the numerous allusions to Jesus Christ from this and other *Hallel* psalms, it should come as no surprise that Mary makes a similar comment in her praise to God. "He has brought down rulers from their thrones [God being "enthroned on high - Ps 113:5], but has lifted up the humble [the "poor" and "needy"-Ps 113:7]" (Lk 1:52).

I doubt Mary knew the full extent that "raised" believers would have in her Son. "And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the

heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace expressed in the kindness to us in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:6-7). For those of us who have been freed from the bondage of sin and brought back into a right relationship with God through his Son...we have every reason to offer him unceasing glory, honor and, of course, praise!

The Message of the Passage

Because of His incomparable greatness and in light of the riches of his grace, let us ceaselessly offer praise to the Lord our God.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your thoughts on the passage:**

–Write about what God wants you to know . . .

–Write about how God wants you to feel . . .

–Write about what God wants you to do . . .

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 1 **Praise the Lord** (Heb. *Hal lu-yah*). "How can God be praised enough? To worship adequately would take the rest of time and the concerted tongues of all creatures on earth. No less response in time or space is worthy of God. [The imperative mood of the opening strophe affirms that] the congregation is not being excused from praise but assured of an obligation to play their part there and then" (Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, WBC, 136).

v. 1 **servants** "Servants of the Lord" are those who have been claimed by his choice of them and who respond by calling the Lord "our God." Their chief service is to praise the Lord, and their worship is therefore called "service" (Mays, 361).

v. 2 **name of** "The Psalms celebrate or "remember" (cf. Ex 3:15) "the name" of the Lord as the object of thanksgiving, confidence and prayer. The "name" Yahweh is the revelation of the glory of God in his acts of creation and redemption and in the revelation of his person. The name of God is the name of the Creator-Redeemer-King. He is not [simply] a national deity but the King of the world. He freely revealed to Israel his "name" when he graciously chose them out of all the nations (Ex 19:5-6)" (Willem A. VanGemeren, *Psalms*, EBC vol. 5, 107). "There is point in specifying the Lord's servants and His name, since worship to be acceptable must be more than flattery and more than guess-work. It is the loving homage to the Revealed" (Derek Kidner, *Psalms* 73-50, TNTC, 401).

v. 3 **rising/set[ting]** "The extent is not temporal ("from sunrise to sunset") but spatial ("from the place where the sun rises [the east] to the place where it sets [the west].") In the phenomenological language of OT cosmology [that is, as it appeared by elementary observation], the sun was described as rising in the east and setting in the west" (tn, NET Bible, 1029).

v. 5 **who is like. . .** "Other peoples in the ancient Near East claimed incomparability for their gods, so in the praise of Israel the attribution of uniqueness to the Lord has a polemical and confessional tone. Here it points to the Lord as the incomparable sovereign who is above the nations and above the heavens, beyond and superior to every sphere of power. Yet the one who is beyond all is concerned with all below. The Lord is . . . capable of both transcendence and immanence" (Mays, 361-62)

v. 7 **poor/needy** "'Poor' is an economic term, suggesting people's lack of assets. 'Needy' draws attention to the consequence, people's lack of resources; the needy are people who lack food" (John Goldingay, *Psalms*, vol 3: 90-150, BCOTWP, 318). "God exalts - thus sharing His nature with man - the miserable and the poor to places of prominence and prosperity. The poor hover near the refuse heap outside the city for warmth from the perpetual burning and for food from the garbage. But God exalts them, the lowest of society, to an equal portion with the highest (the princes)" (Allen P. Ross, *Psalms, The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, 875).

v. 8 **seats** "Their lowliness involves not merely poverty and hunger but degradation and shame. Thus their deliverance involves not merely food but restoration to a proper position in the community" (Goldingay, 318). "The NT treats the grace of God in similar vein: God "chose what is weak, . . . low and despised in the world" (1 Cor 1:27-29 NRSV), and it is "the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame" who get invited to the heavenly banquet (Lk 14:15-24). Likewise, the theme of vv. 4-9b finds a remarkable correspondence in God's raising and seating the church in a status parallel to the mighty acts wrought on behalf of the Son (Eph 1:19-2:7)" (Allen, 137).

v. 9 **barren woman** "[This verse] looks back to the song of Hannah (1 Sam 2:8); for this was Hannah's theme. With such a background the psalm not only makes it immediate point, that the Most High cares for the most humiliated, but brings to mind the train of events that can follow from such an intervention. Hannah's joy became all Israel's; Sarah's became the world's. And the song of Hannah was to be outshone one day by the *Magnificat* [of Mary]. But, it would distort the psalm, and its values, to make verse 9 simply a means to an end. The psalm finishes with what seems an anticlimax, and it must not be disguised. It is here that God's glory most sharply differs from man's: a glory that is equally at home 'above the heavens' (v. 4) and at the side of one forlorn person" (Kidner, 402).

Family Time

Family time will help you take a break from your busy schedule and spend time connecting with your family.
Tips for your Family Time: Keep it simple! Be flexible! Do it often! HAVE FUN!!

Prep: Gather paper and writing materials, any other craft material you have around the house (craft sticks, glue, tape, etc.)

Create a special "new" dessert to share for Family Time. It can be a little crazy like ice cream topped with goldfish crackers. Begin a discussion with your kids about the greatest inventions of the past (cars, airplanes, indoor plumbing, computers, cell phones). Tell each family member that they are now inventors. They can work in teams or alone. Each team will come up with the next greatest invention. They must create an advertisement and a thirty second commercial to promote their invention and present it to the rest of the family. Use the experience to remind kids that God is big and powerful and knows everything. Nothing surprised him in the past and he knows what's coming in the future. Because God is so powerful and knows everything we can trust Him!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Psalm 113

- *Who is expected to praise God?
- *When should God be praised?
- *What people around the world should praise God?

What Do You Think

- *Why do you think God expects people to praise Him?
- *When is it the most difficult for you to praise God?
- *How does remembering how big God is help you praise Him?
- *How does praising God help you trust Him?

What R U Going To Do

As you look in the mirror each morning think of something you are thankful for. With a non-permanent marker write your praise to God on the mirror.

MEMORY TIME

Post the kid-friendly Core Competency and the Memory Verse throughout the house.

Core Comp

Trinity—I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Memory Verse

Matthew 6:10 "Your kingdom come your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC ____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.
 Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.