

Psalm 115

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[0:00] Psalm 115. You are never more as God intended you to be and we are worshippers.

It is wired into our very being. If we do not worship the one true and living God, we will inevitably worship it something lesser. These two sets of three verses each serve as an inclusio for verses 4 through 15.

These types of structures are important for us. They're meant to draw us to central things being taught. They bookend for us a juxtaposition between the worship of false gods and the strong confidence that we can have in worshiping the one true and living God.

So here has been my prayer for you this morning. If you are of the nations, one of those who do not belong to God, who worships the creation rather than the creator, my prayer for you is that you will behold the steadfast love and faithfulness of God this morning toward his people and that you will be moved to place saving faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, right?

That you might be counted amongst his people. If you are already of God's people, if you've already placed this saving faith in Jesus Christ, my prayer for you is that you will behold the steadfast love and faithfulness of God afresh this morning.

[1:53] You will see it once again and that he will show you how inclined you are to still worship at the feet of the creation.

Having been adopted into the family of God, how likely you are to turn back from him to lesser forms of worship. So there are two points for this morning if you're a note taker.

Our number one, the futility of false gods. And number two, the glory of the one true and living God. The psalmist here makes for us such a very clear point and he like stacks up the imagery for us to help us to understand the futility or uselessness of false gods.

He says in verse four, their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. Idols are created things.

[2:55] The psalmist tells us in verse four they are the work of human hands. They are made of precious metals here in verse four, but they are made all the same.

Made by human hands. And he elaborates this point with these accusations of uselessness. Verse five, they have mouths. That is an image of a mouth, but they don't speak.

In juxtaposition to that, Genesis chapter one tells of God creating the world with mighty words. He has spoken and speaks, but idols are dumb.

They cannot utter anything. Certainly not to tell us anything of any value whatsoever. They cannot speak words of promise or encouraging or threatening.

They also have eyes, but do not see. Again, in juxtaposition, when Hagar is told by an angel of the Lord that she will bear a son, it was recorded in Genesis 16 and verse 13.

[4:00] So she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her. You are a God of seeing. Our God sees. He takes in and he acts accordingly.

Verse six says, they have ears, but they do not hear. Exodus chapter two and verse 24, we see God hear the groaning of his people in captivity in Egypt.

And verse 24 says, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. A God who cannot hear is a God that is useless to pray to.

There's no point in praying to an inanimate God. There is a God, a singular God, who hears and responds. Verse six goes on, they have noses, but do not smell.

And this is likely a reference to God's acceptance of sacrifice. Genesis chapter eight records for us in verse 21, when Noah exits the ark, that he made an altar and he put on it a sacrifice.

[5:15] And verse 21 says, and when the Lord smelled the pleasing aroma, the Lord said in his heart, I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth.

Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done. So we have a God who accepts the sacrifice of men. A God who cannot smell, cannot receive an acceptable sacrifice.

Verse seven says, they have hands, but do not feel. False gods cannot sympathize with our weakness or bring us any comfort at all. The author of Hebrews writes in chapter four in verse 15, for we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

These idols have feet, but do not walk. False gods have no activity. But the one true and living God does all that he pleases.

False gods do nothing. The prophet Amos records in chapter four in verse 13, for behold, he who forms the mountains and creates the wind and declares to man what is his thought, who makes the morning darkness and treads on the heights of the earth.

[6:37] Right? He walks on the heights of the earth. The Lord, the God of hosts, is his name. And these idols, verse seven tells us, make not a sound in their throat.

Or, more literally, they don't muse. They have no thoughts. False gods are lifeless and useless. This is a comprehensive, charge list.

Idols are utterly useless, and the worship of them and exercise in futility. To worship anything other than the one true and living God is wasted worship.

In studying these chapters against false gods, my mind was drawn to the taunting words of Elijah to the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18, in verse 27. He says, cry aloud, for he is a god.

Either he is musing or he is relieving himself or he is on a journey or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened. Utter futility to worship anything other than God himself.

[7:52] The psalmist continues by telling us in verse eight, that those who make them become like them and so do all who trust in them.

We become like the things that we worship. This is striking. It's incredible. And this kind of language is picked up all throughout the scripture of people who are not following God.

Right? People who are without their senses. Right? They can't see and they don't hear. Jeremiah chapter 5, verse 21 and following.

Hear this, O foolish and senseless people who have eyes but do not see, who have ears but hear not. Do you not fear me?

Declares the Lord. Do you not tremble before me? I place the sand as the boundary for the sea. A perpetual barrier that it cannot pass.

[8:53] Though the waves toss, they cannot prevail. Though they roar, they cannot pass over it. And the sea was always seen by the Hebrew people as a great evil.

Right? God is saying, I set the limit of that. Verse 23, But this people has a stubborn and rebellious heart. They have turned aside and gone away.

They do not say in their hearts, Let us fear the Lord our God who gives the rain in its season, the autumn rain and the spring rain and keeps for us the weeks appointed for the harvest.

Ezekiel chapter 12 and verse 2. Ezekiel writes, Son of man, you dwell in the midst of a rebellious house who have eyes to see but see not, who have ears to hear but hear not, for they are a rebellious house.

This is the end result of our idolatry. Not seeing, not hearing, being senseless, being rebels against God.

[10:01] And praise be to God that by His Spirit, He works faith in blind and deaf people. We once were blind, but now we see if we are in Christ.

In Matthew chapter 13, Jesus responds to the apostles asking why He speaks in parables. Much of Jesus' language is so very confusing on the surface.

Why not go around teaching more plainly? And in verse 11 and following, He says, To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.

For to the one who has, more will be given and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables because

seeing, they do not see, and hearing, they do not hear, nor do they understand.

Indeed, in their case, the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled that says, and this is Isaiah 6, verses 9 and 10, You will indeed hear, but never understand, and you will indeed see, but never perceive.

[11:12] For this people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed. Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.

But blessed are your eyes for they see and your ears for they hear. For truly I say to you, many prophets and righteous people long to see what you see and did not see it, and to hear what you hear and did not hear it.

And beloved, if we are in Christ this morning, we have seen and heard. We have beheld Christ himself. we have been turned from our evil ways.

We have been made less senseless. We have been turned to the Most High God we now see and we hear.

And most of us do not find ourselves in a position to bow down to carved images. I don't know that this is happening much, although this morning I was told that there's a large night hawk now on one of the UNG campuses that's getting prayed to and gifts given to it and touched for good luck.

[12:25] I was shocked to hear such a thing. It was more striking considering Psalm 115 this week. This is not typically the shape that our idolatry takes but the Bible is relentless about the idolatry of our hearts because we're people created to worship but to worship God alone.

In the Decalogue Exodus 20 in verse 3 we are commanded you shall have no other gods before me. We have to be very careful that we don't see commands like that that we don't read Psalm 115 and think I don't bow down to any graven images.

There's no idolatry in my life that looks like what's being explained here but I would suggest to you that oh on the contrary. Charles Spurgeon once said and this is the quote on your bulletin this morning if you happen to have one, quote, if you love anything better than God you are idolaters. If there's anything you would not give up for God it is your idol. If there's anything that you seek with greater fervor than you seek the glory of God that is your idol.

And conversion means a turning from every idol. Beloved, an idol is anything that we place as the primary focus of our lives.

[13:55] idolaters. And it's very possible to do this with good things. We regularly take good things and make them idols by loving them above God himself.

We do this with security. We do this with all sorts of material possessions. We do it with knowledge. You bunch of reformed Baptists. We do it with our political ideologies, with control and comfort. We do it with our health, pleasure.

We do it with success or significance. I have idolatrously worshipped being a pastor. Isn't it good to be a pastor?

Of course it's good to be a pastor. It's not good to worship being a pastor. creator. We do it with our physical appearance, our leisure time, our ambitions.

[14:57] We do it even with our family and our church. We have to be so very careful where we place our affection.

Even the good things can get misaligned and we can love those things more than the very God who grants them. to us. We've recently studied James.

James chapter 4, verse 1, James writes, what causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?

You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive because you ask wrongly to spend it on your passions.

James is suggesting to us that we would be a people at peace were we not idolatrous. We weren't worshipping the creation rather than the creator.

[16:04] And we know this because he goes on in verse 4 of James 4 to say, you adulterous people, do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?

God. Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. And so, if we are to be worshippers of God, created in Christ Jesus for this, then we have to be very careful about the lingering idolatry of our hearts.

We have to be constantly assessing those things in our life that draw our attention. Has this become a matter of worship for me or just a thing that I do? Serving my family, working my job, owning my home and my car and taking the vacation, all of those things, they ought to be under great scrutiny to be sure that our hearts have not drifted away from worship of our God.

I think a little helpful rubric, although there's a number of great rubrics out there to kind of run your heart through, as one put forth by A.W. Tozer, and he called them rules for self-discovery, and what he meant by that was how to recognize where the inclination of your heart was at, and there's seven of them, so here they are.

Number one, what we want most. You think about things that you want, what is it that you think about? What is it that you desire? Number two, what we think about most.

[17:40] Where is your mind set throughout the day? Number three, how we use our money. Is our money being spent on things that are ultimately about serving us, or about serving the kingdom of God?

Are we storing up treasure here, or treasure above? Fourth, what we do with our leisure time. When you've got some free time, how do you tend to spend it?

Number five, the company we enjoy. What kind of people do you like to be around? Number six, who and what we admire.

And number seven, what we laugh at. Things can be helpful to us to think about the inclination of our hearts.

Now, because God loves us if we're his people, he cares about exposing our idolatry. He wants us to see our idolatry that we might repent of it and return to him. And he does this in a number of ways.

[18:42] He does it by his word and his spirit. Hebrews 4 and verse 12 says, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing the division of soul and spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Oh, Christian, that we would be in his word and inviting him in, that he would expose our hearts by the light of his word. That we might repent and return and worship him with all of our being.

Secondly, God exposes our idolatry by frustrating our idols, by withholding them, or by allowing us to experience their futility. Sometimes he keeps you from the thing that you want to show how much you want it, and sometimes he gives it to you so that you'll realize what a waste of energy it really was.

In Psalm 106, verse 13 and following, this is a reference to Korah's rebellion from Numbers chapter 16, I'll let you go read about that. It records, God as God also exposes our idolatry by giving us, number three, an example of true worship.

To look toward. What does true worship look like? 1 Kings 18, verse 36. And at the time of the offering of the oblation, Elijah the prophet came near and said, O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and that I have done all these things at your word.

[20:43] God also exposes our idolatry, number four, by administering loving discipline. Hebrews chapter 12, verse 5 and 6.

The author of Hebrews, as an encouragement to a people who are suffering, says, And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons?

My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves and chastises every son whom he receives.

So because God loves us, he disciplines us, he trains us in righteousness, because he knows that the very best thing that he can give to us is himself.

It's himself. So we must be very careful, right? The psalmist is trying to teach us about the futility of idolatry. We must not think that we're immune to this, but see that it still exists within us, even if we're in Christ.

[21:52] This temptation to worship lesser things than our most high God. And so what is the remedy for all of this idolatry? It's proper worship.

It's proper worship. So we see in the text also, the second main point, the glory of the one true and living God. The psalmist tells us, in order for us to properly worship, we need to trust, to place our faith in this true and living God.

And we get wonderful repetitions here. Verse 9, 10, and 11. O Israel, trust in the Lord. He is their help and their shield. O house of Aaron, trust in the Lord. He is their help and their shield.

You who fear the Lord, trust in the Lord. He is their help and their shield. And I have to believe that when these repetitions exist in the Scripture, it is because we're supposed to pay attention to them. We need to be told again and again and again, trust in the Lord. He is a help and a shield. Trust in the Lord. He is a help and a shield. Trust in the Lord. He is a help and a shield.

[22:59] He is actively and passively pursuing our good. What a reason to praise our God. Paul writes in Romans chapter 8, verse 28 and 29.

And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good. For those who are called according to his purpose. And here's the good, beloved. For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.

In order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. There's no question there about the good that he's bringing about in our lives. As God is to be trusted, as he is working actively and passively for our good, he's making us look more like Jesus.

So that we might bring him more glory. Right? Not to us, O Lord. Not to us. But to your name give glory.

Then again, repetition. Verses 12, 13, 14, and 50. The Lord has remembered us. He will bless us. He will bless the house of Israel. He will bless the house of Aaron. He will bless those who fear the Lord.

[24:13] Both the small and the great. May the Lord give you increase. You and your children. May you be blessed by the Lord who made heaven and earth. Right? What does he bless us with?

He will bless us with himself. In Joshua chapter 1, verse 5. God says, I will not leave you or forsake you.

And he has promised the very same to us who believe in Christ. The author of Hebrews again picks up chapter 13 and verse 5. This quotation from Joshua 1, 5.

He says, Keep your life free from the love of money. And be content with what you have. Be not idolatrous about possessions.

The author of Hebrews says. For he has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you. So the remedy to this idolatry, this useless, this futile energy, this proper worship of the one true and living God.

[25:22] He deserves all of our worship. And we are most like we were created to be when we give him all of our worship. So may we be God's people, having placed saving faith in Jesus Christ, who recognize the steadfast love and faithfulness of God to us, so that we will turn from our idolatrous ways and turn to him in admiration and praise.

Let's pray together. Let's pray together.