**“God is Glorious”
Psalm 115**

**Introduction:** During Spring Break of my sophomore year of college, our church sent a team to Hong Kong, China to work with missionaries who were serving in the Kowloon area of the city. The missionary we worked with was named Scott Smith, and he looked just like Robin Williams: smile, nose, eyes, the whole nine yards. After we got over that, we were locked into everything he had to teach us about life and missions there.

One afternoon, as we drove through the city on one of the double-decker buses, he pointed out the numerous temples that filled the city. He explained the practices of the worshipers who would go and fall down before idols where they would pray, meditate, and offer sacrifices before them. I had never seen idolatry like that in my life.

As Scott taught us about the religious practices of the people, he quoted these words: “Their idols are the work of human hands. They have eyes but cannot see, ears but cannot hear, mouths but cannot speak and those who worship them become like them.” But what I did not realize at the time, that I understand now is this . . .

**Idolatry is at the heart of all sin. The essence of all sin is supplanting the rightful place of God with some lesser pursuit, authority, or chief affection. If we do not understand this, we will not truly understand sin and how it works in our life.**

The Bible tells us that God has wired us for glory. We naturally chase that which we perceive to be glorious. Beauty, power, success, achievement draw us in because they hold reflections of glory. Psalm 115 is going to teach us that all glory ultimately belongs to God.

As we read this Psalm, I don’t want you to miss the obvious. This is a prayer. Yes Psalms are songs, but they are also prayers! Think about it: Most all of the songs we sing in worship, even at Redemption Hill, not only declare life giving, hope producing truth, but they also craft the longings of our hearts into words that rise as prayers to God.

Read Psalm 115 . . . This Psalm teaches us that . . .

**The Point: God is glorious and worthy of our trust and praise.**

We discover in vv. 1-3 that

**I. God is glorious and worthy of all glory (Psalm 115:1-8)**

* The psalm begins: “Not to us, O Lord, not to us…” They are concerned about the reputation and glory of God. Why?
* This was a time when God’s people suffered some level of adversity and persecution… We see this in verse 2. Godless people were calling into question God’s power and presence with the derisive challenge: “Where is their God?”
* Here’s the good news: God is not shaken by the scoffing of doubters and disbelievers. He does whatever he pleases.
* The name of God, the reputation of God, the fame of God is under attack.
* This is why the prayer in verse 1 is: “Give glory to your name.” In other words, “Let people know how glorious you are.”
* What is the glory of God? Some of you will remember from our last Sunday at Springstep when I preached on the glory of God from Romans 11:33-36. That Sunday we said: “***The glory of God is the display of his manifold perfections. It is the going public of his intrinsic worth.”***
* We could say the glory of God is the greatness of God on display for all to see.
* I mentioned it last Sunday, but I don’t think we can emphasize this too much. Jesus teaches us to pray? “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.”
* Let’s be honest. We probably don’t understand that like we need to, and we probably don’t pray that with a heart in line with the honoring, revering, and esteeming of God’s name as often as we’d like to.

We pray this prayer: “For the sake of your steadfast love and faithfulness!” You see that in v. 1?

* Steadfast love (*chesed*) / / / Faithfulness (*emet*)
* God also always acts consistent w his character, and we should appeal to his glory and his character when we pray.
* The Psalmist wants the love and faithfulness to be known.
* We see this in the prophet Daniel as well… **“O my God, incline your ear and hear. Open your eyes and see our desolations, and the city that is called by your name. For we do not present our pleas before you because of our righteousness, but because of your great mercy. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive. O Lord, pay attention and act. Delay not, for your own sake, O my God, because your city and your people are called by your name.” (Daniel 9:18-19)**

We find the rebuttal to verse 2 in verse 3: “Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.” This is a declaration of confidence and faith. Look at what we learn about God . . .

**God is Personal and Present.**

* First he is “*Our* God”
* But also notice that: “Our God *is*” He exists and is knowable

**God is Transcendent and Sovereign**

* “Our God is *in the heavens*”
* God is both near *and* far above all.
* App: In times of suffering, our deepest need is a God who is *both* near, who cares and loves us AND a God who is sovereign, holding the power to carry us through our pain and suffering.

**God is Powerful and Free.**

* “Our God is in the heaven; *he does all that he pleases*.”
* God is not subject to anyone or anything.
* God is perfectly free. He is independent. That’s why we cannot say God is a better version of us. Some theologies of God tell us to take our conception of the perfect human and ratchet up a few notches and that is what God is like. Is that right? NO!
* God is Creator. We are the creation. God is perfectly independent. We are utterly dependent. God does whatever he pleases and in all that he does he brings glory to himself. He cannot do otherwise without ceasing to be God.

*Trans*: The contrast comes in verse 4 with a strong warning against idolatry.

Not one person here today can escape the constant temptation to find satisfaction in substitute gods.

* Idols are the work of human hands. And because they are the work of human hands, they have eyes but cannot see. Do you see the irony here?
* Now, let’s chase this, because some of y’all aren’t with me. It was sad to see worshipers in Hong Kong give glory to idols in those Buddhist temples. But lets open our eyes to our own idolatry.
* The gods of prestige and approval have a mouths but cannot speak. The god of sex has eyes but cannot see. The god of money has ears but cannot hear. The gods of success and achievement have noses but cannot smell. The god of comfort has hands but does not feel. What is your god?
* We have an uncanny ability to manufacture substitute gods, and these substitute gods serve as *functional saviors*.
* Let me explain. Functionally, if you take $$ and possessions away from some people, they crumble. Functionally, if some people lose approval in the sight of coworkers, they lose their sense of confidence and motivation in the workplace.
* The following statement can serve as a test to uncover idols in your heart: “*Life only has meaning if* I am being recognized for my accomplishments. (That’s achievement idolatry) OR *I only have worth if* I have the love and respect of that one person in my life. (That’s relationship idolatry)”
* What do you worry about the most? What would cause you despair if you lost it? What brings you the greatest joy in life? What do you put your hope in? However you answer those questions will probably help you identify the idols in your life. And our idols are functional saviors, promising fulfillment, hope and rest when we possess them.
* We worship created things rather than the Creator. We worship the gifts rather than the Giver.
* The results of idolatry. We become like our idols: lifeless & worthless. God is worthy. Idols are worthless. We become of no use when we fall away from the worship of the one, true God.

**II. Because God is glorious, trust him for his help and blessing (115:9-16)**

* Do you see the connection between verse 8 and verse 9. Verse 8 says: “Those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them.” Verse 9 begins: “O Israel, trust in the Lord!!”
* Did you hear all of the repetition? First, there is a call to trust. Trust trust trust...
* Trust is active. True faith is more than intellectual assent. Faith involves understanding truth, approving of it, and trust in it.
* When we trust, we throw ourselves on the strength of something or someone outside of ourselves. If you are about to leap from a burning building, you are looking to land on something that will hold you up!
* Then we have the refrain: he is their help and shield; he is their help and shield; he is their help and shield. He will bless he will bless he will bless
* Why do we have so much repetition? 1) It ingrains it in the minds of the worshippers. 2) It builds confidence and trust. God will really come through. You CAN trust in him...
* This is the same thing that is going on in 14-15. The prayer for confidence in increase and blessing is because God "made heaven and earth"
* One of the saddest things to see is a Christian with little confidence. Your God made heaven and earth. He sustains everything. He is sovereign over everything.
* This is the logic of one of my favorite verses in the Bible: **“He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?” (Romans 8:32)**
* What is holding you up? What are you trusting to deliver help and blessing.
* God wants to help and bless you. He remembers his people. He will never forsake us.
* So often we reduce blessing to what is material, but blessings are anything that comes from the hand of God. Blessings carry benevolent force.
* It is God’s good intention to give his people what they need, and oh by the way, the greatest blessing God can give us is the blessing of himself.
* Seek blessing! Ask for it. Your father won’t give you a stone when you ask for bread.
* Gospel: Jesus became the curse so that through him, we might experience God’s blessing.

*Trans*: Not only do we have every reason to trust. We have every reason. To praise...

**III. Because God is glorious, praise him now! And forever! (115:17-18).**

*Read 17-18*

* Praise is our attempt to give God glory. It is our announcement of God’s worth. One of the ways we praise God with our words is through song. One of my favorite parts of coming together in worship is singing songs of praise together in song.
* But we also have opportunity to praise God with our words wherever we may be found. AND we have opportunity to praise God with our actions. BUT don’t miss this (and I hope we can grow here) we have opportunity to praise him with our actions and then back that up with more praise that explains why we do what we do with words.
* When someone says, “You are so kind.” We could say thank you. Or we could say, “Thank you, God has been very kind to me..” And oh, by the way, you’re already talking gospel…
* Someone may say, “You are such a servant…” I rapped about that yesterday… We could say, “Thanks.” Or “Thank you. God has served me and so the least I can do is serve him adn others.”
* How about . . . “You really love your wife.” - You could say, “You know. She really loves me much better than I love her.” To which they will respond, “but you’re so humble!” And you then can talk about the love and humility of Christ!!

*Here’s the thrust of Verse 17 is this: Praise him now!!!*

* There should be a sense of urgency to our praise. **“From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of the Lord is to be praised!” (Psalm 113:3)**
* This verse asks the reader: “Do you have breath in your lungs?” Then praise him. “Is your heart beating?” Then let beat to praise him.” The praise of anything else is a mirage!
* What does verse 17 mean? That there is no afterlife? No. Just keep reading.

*Verse 18: Praise him forever!*

* Everything we do is for the praise and glory of God! A life of praise. An eternity of praise. I’m ready.

**2014 Commitment Sunday**

* We are going to make some commitments together as a church. Last Sunday I shared a vision for our church in 2014.
* Everything we do. Every plan. Every ministry effort, both individually and collectively, to see the gospel go forth, our community built, and the mission spread must be driven by a desire to display the glory of God.
* Last week, as we unpacked our vision for 2014 we asked three questions & you have them on the cards in your worship guide:
	+ ***What is one specific commitment you will make to own this GOSPEL vision in 2014?***
	+ ***What is one specific commitment you will make to own this vision for COMMUNITY in 2014?***
	+ ***What is one specific commitment you will make to own this MISSIONAL vision in 2014?***
* Any commitment we make is an opportunity to worship and distribute his glory to those around us.
* *Ponder that: God spreads his Glory through us! Isn’t that stunning? We are Glory distributors!*
* Jesus said this in his most famous sermon: Matthew 5… “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.”
* So shine! Distribute the glory of God through pursuing God like never before. Distribute glory through regularly inviting others to see the glory of Christ. Distribute glory by declaring the gospel, building others up, joining a Community Group, serving on Sundays, by giving generously of your financial resources.
* Is there anything holding you back from making some bold commitments to God? What you surrender that to him today?
	+ But Tanner, I don’t have the time. Prioritize - Sacrifice
	+ I don’t have the confidence. He is our help
	+ I don’t have support. Look around!
	+ I don’t have the power. Me either. That’s why we go to him in prayer. God loves using us in our weakness.
* We will fulfill these commitments by 1) dependence on his grace, 2) encouraging one another through accountable relationships, and by 3) understanding that it will be the hundreds of little daily decisions of obedience that will get us there.
* We have opportunity to tell the story of the greatness of God by living to show his greatness.

Micah & Company are going to come and lead us in a prayer. I want you to listen to the words until your heart is ready to sing. When you’re heart is ready to confess your surrender to God, then I want to invite you to join him as he leads us in song.

Pray. Moments of surrender. We want control. “Not to us, not to us, but to your name give glory.”