

PSALM 135: Our Great Big God is living and active!

Big Idea: Our God is greater than all gods, because he is living, and actively provides salvation for his people.

As we near the end of our series in the Psalms, I must admit I have really enjoyed my time in the Psalms.

At the start of this series as I was prepping I was slightly terrified. On the one hand the Psalms are easy to relate to.

They express emotions I feel. They are very real, they are very human. Yet at the same time they have such a great big view of God.

A view I often don't have. I have been really encouraged and challenged by the Psalms we have looked at so far.

They have all helped me to express feelings I often feel but don't know how.

They have helped me appreciate our great big God a whole lot more too.

My prayer has been that you would all be challenged and encouraged by the Psalms as I have.

I have been refreshed and my hope is that you have been refreshed to.

Tonight we turn our attention to Psalm 135 which is another masterpiece. It has a really simple truth to communicate to us.

But the Psalmist who is anonymous does it in such a masterful way.

The common thread throughout the book of Psalms is that the Psalmists have the right view of God.

Whether happy or sad, scared or courageous, angry or peaceful they know that God is huge and that God is enough.

Tonight's truth we see in Psalm 135 is that our great big God is both living and active. We serve a living God. This is really important truth to get.

As we will see that's what makes our great big God unique and set apart to all other gods.

It also makes us as his people unique to any other people.

The first thing the psalmist wants us to see is this...

People of the LORD are to praise his name,

Have a look at v1-4 with me...

¹ Hallelujah!

Praise the name of the LORD.

Give praise, you servants of the LORD

**² who stand in the house of the LORD,
in the courts of the house of our God.**

**³ Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good;
sing praise to his name, for it is delightful.**

**⁴ For the LORD has chosen Jacob for himself,
Israel as his treasured possession.**

Names carry meaning. Names carry emotion.
Names carry power. Names carry relationship.

You may be mom or dad to your kids. But you
may be Dr. Lorelei Hughes to your colleagues.

You may be Chris to your friends but when you
are in trouble with your parents you are
Christopher Andrew Elliott.

You may be Gertrude to your husband but Gaga to your grandkids. Your name may be Cyril, but no one respects you the same way they do President Cyril Ramaphosa.

That's the way names work. They communicate various things to those around you. Sometimes we may wish our parents took that into consideration before naming us.

As people of the LORD we are to praise his name. Our great big God's name deserves and demands our praise.

God's name is above all other names. It communicates power and love and mercy and fear and many other things all in one.

Many of you will already know that when we see LORD written in all caps like this it is actually saying Yahweh.

That's the name God revealed to Moses. The holy name of our God.

God's name communicates to us so many aspects of who he is. Yahweh which is revealed in the book of Exodus reveals God as the eternal creator.

God says he is who he is. God is. God was. God will forever be. God is the living God.

God existed before creation and will continue to exist for all eternity. God is not bound by time.

God is not limited by anything...not even a name. That's why we are to praise God's name. It is God's name alone that deserves all our praise.

It's a little bit like the name of that boy or girl you liked from afar. They were so dreamy and cool. You started planning your wedding.

You started thinking about your little home and the two and half kids you would have with a dog and a cat.

And then you learnt their name and it sounded so magical. Wow John...wow Mary. What a great name I love it.

You started writing your names together perhaps added some hearts to it. May have even started practicing your new signature.

It feels a bit weird to think of God's name like this. But I think we should feel overwhelmed and squishy and warm inside when we hear God's name.

No one loves us more than God does and no one ever will. No one deserves our love and praise more than God does.

Our great big God's name communicates so much to us about his character and helps us to keep things in perspective.

God doesn't just love, God is love. God isn't just wise he is wisdom. God isn't just powerful, he is power. God doesn't just do good, God is good.

And the list can go on. Our great big God is not just another god, he is the God, the only God.

As we move on we see that as his people we are to praise the name of the LORD

Because our LORD is greater than all gods.

Follow with me as I read from v5...

**⁵ For I know that the LORD is great;
our Lord is greater than all gods.**

**⁶ The LORD does whatever he pleases
in heaven and on earth,
in the seas and all the depths.**

**⁷ He causes the clouds to rise from the ends of
the earth.**

**He makes lightning for the rain
and brings the wind from his storehouses.**

This is what it all boils down to for this Psalmist.
V5 says Yahweh is great, greater than all gods.

Yahweh is the name above all other names.
Yahweh is the name that carries all the power.

Yahweh's name sets him apart from any other.
Have a look at how great Yahweh is.

In v6 we see Yahweh does whatever he pleases,
in heaven, on earth, in the seas in all the depths.

No one tells Yahweh what to do. No one says to
our great big God this is what I think you should
do.

Or no God I don't think you should do that.
Yahweh our great big God does what he wants,
when he wants and how he wants.

He doesn't need us or anything we bring him in
order to do what he wants.

As the Psalmist continues in v7 he gives us an
example. God causes the clouds to rise from the
ends of the earth.

God makes lightning for the rain. Ever wonder
why there is lightning? What's the point of
lightning...because God wanted it.

God brings the wind from the storehouses. We don't really like wind here in Cape Town.

But wind is important. Wind carries sand from the Sahara all the way to the Amazon rain forest to help with growth there.

Why does all this happen? Because God wants it to happen. Without being silly, obviously this is poetry.

Obviously we can understand these processes better now with modern science.

But the truth the Psalmist manages to grasp here all those thousands of years ago is that our great big God is behind everything.

Our great big God is behind every process. Things are the way they are, things happen the way they do, when they do because our great big God wanted it that way.

He never had to study these things.

He never got advised on how and when things should happen. No one bribed him. Our great big God is in charge.

Our great big God designed everything to work as it should. Our great big God is the creator and his creation listens to him.

Store this point in your mind for now as we continue to see how much greater our great big God is than other gods as we continue from v8...

**⁸ He struck down the firstborn of Egypt,
both people and animals.**

**⁹ He sent signs and wonders against you, Egypt,
against Pharaoh and all his officials.**

**¹⁰ He struck down many nations
and slaughtered mighty kings:**

**¹¹ Sihon king of the Amorites,
Og king of Bashan,
and all the kings of Canaan.**

**¹² He gave their land as an inheritance,
an inheritance to his people Israel.**

**¹³ LORD, your name endures forever,
your reputation, LORD,
through all generations.**

**¹⁴ For the LORD will vindicate his people
and have compassion on his servants.**

The Psalmist turns his attention from the great big God of creation and brings it closer to home for his people.

The psalmist reflects on God's power over all the nations of the world. He starts with God's incredible rescue of Israel from Egypt.

Recorded for us in the book of Exodus. God single handedly destroyed the powerhouse of the day Pharaoh and his Egyptian power.

Once rescued and led out into the wilderness God continued to rescue Israel from the nations around them.

This is recorded in the book of numbers for us.

Eventually the Israelites were given a great land because God was on their side and had chosen them they received the land as an inheritance.

When you read all these true stories recorded for us in God's word it's hard to miss that God is the one doing all the heavy lifting.

The Israelites very rarely lift a finger. God is on their side. Our great big God is the one with the reputation as the psalmist says in v13.

The Israelites aren't feared, but their great big God Yahweh is feared by the nations. They hear the stories of him crushing anyone who goes against his people.

They fear the great big God of Israel. It's a bit like having a big strong sibling at your school.

No one messes with you, but not because they fear you, they fear your sibling.

Our God is the biggest, he is the greatest, there is no one or nothing bigger than him.

As people of the LORD we are to praise his name, because our LORD is greater than all gods which we will flesh out more in the next point.

We serve the living God who deserves living praise!

Follow with me as I read from v15...

¹⁵ The idols of the nations are of silver and gold, made by human hands.

¹⁶ They have mouths but cannot speak, eyes, but cannot see.

¹⁷ They have ears but cannot hear; indeed, there is no breath in their mouths.

¹⁸ Those who make them are just like them, as are all who trust in them.

¹⁹ House of Israel, bless the LORD!

House of Aaron, bless the LORD!

²⁰ House of Levi, bless the LORD!

You who revere the LORD, bless the LORD!

²¹ Blessed be the LORD from Zion;

**he dwells in Jerusalem.
Hallelujah!**

This is what the psalmist has been building up to all along. Our great big God is greater than all gods...because he is alive.

All other gods are dead. They are not the creators, but the created. They are made by us...made by human hands.

They are made with silver and gold. They are statues and nothing else. They have mouths but unlike our great big God they don't speak.

They have eyes but unlike our great big God they don't see. They have ears but unlike our great big God they don't hear.

Remember in the previous section I asked you to bank some information about our great big God?

Now's the time to unpack it. Our great big God is not told what to do, he can't be manipulated by us or bribed.

Our great big God does what he pleases. The created gods of the nations were the opposite of that.

People would do all sorts of crazy things to try and manipulate their gods to send rain. They would cut themselves or offer up their children as sacrifices.

Their gods couldn't speak so who told them this? They told themselves. They created their own gods and therefore they created their own rules.

Our great big God requires sacrifice, but not to do things. Rather because we are in relationship with him and it's our act of worship.

The nations created gods for rain, for fertility for thunder. Our great big God controls all those things. Our God is greater.

The nations had their gods when the Israelites came against them, Egypt, Canaan and the Philistines.

But none could stand against our great big God. The one and only true God. There are countless stories of our great big God defeating them and shaming them.

One of the most famous being our great big God vs baal in the Elijah story. Sometimes kings of the nations were seen as gods.

Our great big God defeated them too. There is no one like our God. He alone is God.

V18 has some chilling words for us to consider. Those who make these gods are just like them, as are all who trust in them.

The famous saying comes to mind you are what you eat. Only this time it's you are what you worship.

If you choose to ignore your creator and instead choose to worship the created like your idol is dead...so are you.

Our great big God is alive, idols are not. Most of us don't have statues at home so might not feel the weight or see the danger.

But here are some idols we have created ourselves and need to be aware of.

Education. We receive a piece of paper once finished studying our degree, honours, masters or Phd.

That paper is recognition of our knowledge. But it really doesn't compare to our great big God. I am not saying education isn't important.

But if we put our knowledge before our great big God. If we are more dependent on our brains than our great big God we have turned away from him.

We are praising ourselves. The piece of paper is the symbol of our idolatry.

Success. This is another area where we pour a lot of our time and energy into.

We are so busy making a success of ourselves. We want as much cash as we can get, we want the massive house and the cars.

We pour all of ourselves into making it in the world that we have no time for our great big God.

Our plastic bank cards are the symbol of our idolatry.

Comfort. This is an area we use lots of excuses to achieve. We need to leave this country because it's not safe.

There are no jobs for me here. The transport system is useless here.

Again all good things to desire, but when those things take God's place...that is idolatry.

The coveted passport of Britain, Australia or America is the symbol of that idol.

The list can go on and on...food, sports teams, sex, marriage and fame are all idols we need to be aware of.

Anything that takes us away from our great big living God is idolatry.

Anything that we praise other than our great big living God is idolatry.

We can be very religious, we can take all the good things God gives us and turn them into idols.

We can be like the nations and worship created things that are dead rather than the creator our great big God.

It was no different in Paul's time have a listen to Acts 17:22-29...

²² Paul stood in the middle of the Areopagus and said: "People of Athens! I see that you are extremely religious in every respect. ²³ For as I was passing through and observing the objects of your worship, I even found an altar on which was inscribed: 'To an Unknown God.' Therefore, what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you. ²⁴ The God who made the world and everything in it—he is Lord of heaven and earth—does not live in shrines made by hands. ²⁵ Neither is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives everyone life and breath and all things. ²⁶ From one man he has made every

nationality to live over the whole earth and has determined their appointed times and the boundaries of where they live. ²⁷ He did this so that they might seek God, and perhaps they might reach out and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. ²⁸ For in him we live and move and have our being, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also his offspring.' ²⁹ Since we are God's offspring then, we shouldn't think that the divine nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image fashioned by human art and imagination.

The people in Athens had idols too.

They were religious they wanted a god...they made their own dead gods. Paul introduces them to the living God, our great big God.

Tonight we need to reflect on our own lives.
Have we let an idols take the place of our great
big God?

Have we started deciding for our great big God
what our lives should be like?

Are we slipping into the false security a dead idol
brings? Are we settling for something less? Are
we happy with a little pleasure that is never
enough?

If we have we need to repent, we need to see
our great big God for who he is.

Perhaps tonight you haven't ever turned to the
great big God.

You prefer your own gods you have made for
yourself. You are too scared to let them go.

Remember the words of v18. You are what you worship. Those gods you have made are dead. Sticking with them means you are too.

Which leads me to something really exciting for all who turn to the great big living God. You are what you worship.

Worshipping the living God means we are alive and no longer dead. We were created to worship our creator.

The great news is that our great big God does speak, he does see and he does hear.

As we think of our terribly horrific week that passed in our country.

As we think of all the injustices and sufferings that happen every day not just in our country but in our world.

We know that our living God has seen everything that has gone on. He has heard the cries of the poor and the weak.

He has spoken out against this and he has real answers for all these horrific acts.

Our great big God came and lived amongst us. He lived in our world, he experienced our life first hand.

Our great big God died for us to save us from our sins, from the devil and from death.

Jesus Christ has made it possible for us to know and praise the great big living God.

In his resurrection we are guaranteed eternity with God. This world is coming to an end and on that final day God will bring justice for every act.

Our great big God is living and active in our world. No one tells him what to do. He is in charge and we are to praise him.

As we come to the celebrate the Lord's Supper. As we come to remember all that Christ did for us to give us life let's spend some time reflecting on the idolatry of our own hearts.

I will then lead us in a prayer...

Read Pslam 135:19-21...

Merciful Father you have made your dwelling with your people. You have raised up for yourself a people who are to be holy.

Through your son Jesus Christ we have been made alive. Help us...

Therefore, to rid ourselves of all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all slander. ² Like newborn infants, help us to desire the pure milk of the word, so that we may grow up into your salvation, ³ if we have tasted that the Lord is good. ⁴ As we come to him, a living stone—rejected by people but chosen and honored by God— ⁵ we ourselves, as living stones, a spiritual house, are being built to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Strengthen us to do this for your glory gracious Father and help us to remember who we are.

⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the one who called you out of

darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

We are alive in Christ, we are your holy set apart people who are to praise you for our life and the mercy we have received. Please continue to mould us and shape us into the people we already are in Jesus Christ.

Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship. ² Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.

In Christ's name we pray. Amen

Distribute bread and grape juice. Part of our
praise. For those who know our great big living
God.

Those who have accepted all that Jesus has done
for them. If not rather observe.

Hand out and hold on till all have...

The body of our Lord Jesus Christ that was
broken for you...eat and be thankful.

The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ that was shed
for you...drink and be thankful.

Pray...

Sing