

Dr. Ted Hildebrandt, Praise of God in Book II of the Psalter, Session 4: Call to and Cause for Praise, Podcast Audio Overview

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All right, let's jump into something I think is really cool: praising God, and specifically in the book of Psalms. Okay. And we're going to be looking at book two of Psalms, so that's Psalms 42 through 72.

Right. We're unpacking a lecture by Dr. Ted Hildebrandt, and I think you're going to like this one. It really is a deep dive into praise.

Awesome. So we're going to be kind of looking at how it's done, why it matters, and what it reveals about our own lives today. Sounds good.

You know what really stood out to me about Dr. Hildebrandt's lecture is how book two kind of takes us on a journey. Okay. You know, it starts with these cries for help and lament, almost like whispers of despair, and then it gradually builds to these really powerful expressions of praise.

It's like moving from darkness into light. Yeah. It's like the music is swelling, rising to this crescendo.

Yeah, exactly. But before we get to that crescendo of praise, Dr. Hildebrandt points out these calls to praise throughout these Psalms, and they're not, you know, gentle suggestions either. They're more like divine commands to, you know, get in on the action.

Yeah. They're very direct. Yeah.

Like in Psalm 47.1, clap your hands, all you nations; shout with joy to God, all the earth. It's an invitation to actively participate, to let loose, and just make some noise to God. Yeah.

It's not the quiet contemplative worship we often see today, right? This is like full-on exuberant, let-your-hair-down kind of praise. But Dr. Hildebrandt also brings up this distinction between a commitment to praise and a vow to praise. Yeah.

And I have to admit, I'm a little fuzzy on that. Okay. Well, think of it this way.

Okay. A commitment to praise is like a lifestyle, you know, a way of approaching life with an attitude of gratitude and constantly looking for reasons to celebrate God. Okay.

A vow to praise, on the other hand, is more specific. It's like a promise made to God in a moment of crisis. Okay.

Like Psalm 61 is a good example. Okay. David, facing some serious trouble, vows to sing praises to God's name forever.

Yeah. You know, if he's delivered. So it's like the difference between a marathon runner who is committed to the long haul and someone making a bold declaration.

In a moment of intense need. Exactly. Both powerful, but in different ways.

Yeah. And that vow to praise often springs from a place of deep trust, you know? It's acknowledging that even when things are tough, God is still worthy of our praise. It reminds me of those stories of people lost at sea.

Right. Who vowed to dedicate their lives to God if they are rescued. Yeah.

It's a testament to that human spirit. Absolutely. And speaking of powerful moments, the culmination of Book Two is just breathtaking.

Yes. You know, Psalm 72 ends with this beautiful repetition: praise be to the Lord God, praise be to his glorious name forever. And then it hits you with this double amen.

Yes. Like a seal of approval. It's power.

On everything that's come before. Yeah. It's like the entire book has been building towards this eruption of just joyful celebration.

Okay. So we've got this crescendo of praise, these calls to action, but why, what are these ancient poets so fired up about? Yeah. Dr. Hildebrandt dives into the reasons, and it's so fascinating.

He introduces this Hebrew word *ki*, which pops up throughout the psalm. Okay. And it's almost like a signal flare that says, you know, here's why we're praising God.

Like, for example, in Psalm 47, the psalmist shouts, for the Lord Most High is awesome, a great king over all the earth. Yes. So God's awesome kingship.

Yeah. Two big reasons for praise. Yeah.

But I'm curious, like, what made those attributes so significant to the psalmists? Were they responding to, like, specific events, challenging prevailing cultural norms? That's a great question. And one that Dr. Hildebrandt doesn't explicitly address. Okay.

You know, it'd be interesting to dig a little deeper and explore the historical context surrounding these psalms. Like what was going on in the lives of the Israelites that might've prompted such, you know, passionate declarations of God's kingship. Right.

Were they surrounded by enemies? Did they feel threatened or vulnerable? It's like those declarations become even more powerful when we consider the circumstances surrounding them. We get a glimpse into the hearts and minds of these poets wrestling with their faith and finding solace in that sovereignty of God. I love that.

And sometimes that key word is dropped altogether. Okay. But the cause for praise is still implied.

Dr. Hildebrandt points out that it's a common technique in biblical poetry, almost like a shorthand, that assumes the reader understands that inherent connection. Okay. Like in Psalm 66, he has preserved our lives and kept our feet from slipping.

No key there, but it's crystal clear that those acts of preservation are the fuel for praise. Precisely. And Dr. Hildebrandt highlights another beautiful reason for praise that I think we can all relate to.

Okay. The simple fact that God hears and responds to our prayers. Yes.

In Psalm 66.19-20, the psalmist gushes, but God has surely listened and heard my voice in prayer. Praise be to God who has not rejected my prayer or withheld his love from me. Wow.

It's like this beautiful cycle of communication and connection with the divine. You know, we pour out our hearts in prayer, and when we feel that connection, that response, it just naturally spills over into praise. It's that moment of realizing you're not alone, that someone is listening, and not just anyone, but the creator of the universe.

No wonder the psalmists were so eager to burst into song. Absolutely. But how did they actually express this praise? Did they just stand there and quietly contemplate God's goodness? Or was there more to it? Well, let's just say things got a bit more lively.

Yeah. Dr. Hildebrandt takes us on this fascinating tour of the how of praise in book two, and you might be surprised by what you hear. Ooh, I like that.

Yeah. I like that a lot. All right.

So stay tuned. Yes. We're going to take a quick break, and we'll be right back.

Sounds good. Okay. So we got these ancient poets shouting from the rooftops about God's awesomeness.

Right. But what did that actually look like? I mean, did they have, like, choreographed dance routines where there were smoke machines and laser lights? Well, maybe not lasers, but Dr. Hildebrandt paints a pretty vivid picture of what this exuberant praise involved. And he points out that it all starts with this deep, overflowing delight in God.

It's not just about going through the motions. It's about genuine joy and excitement that just can't be contained. I love that image, joy bubbling over like a shaken-up soda bottle.

And speaking of bubbling over, Dr. Hildebrandt uses the word exuberance to describe this praise. And I think that's spot on. It's not about being quiet or reserved.

It's about letting loose and expressing your love for God with your whole heart, your whole being. It's like that feeling you get when your favorite team scores the winning goal, or when you finally reach the summit of a mountain you've been climbing for days. It's this rush of pure joy and excitement that you just have to express outwardly.

Okay. So we've got the joy, we've got the exuberance, but Dr. Hildebrandt also mentioned some moral prerequisites to praise. And I have to admit, that makes me a little uneasy.

Does that mean we have to be perfect before we can praise God? That's a great question. And I think it's one that a lot of people wrestle with. Dr. Hildebrandt brings up Psalm 66.18, where the psalmist says, If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.

So there's definitely a sense that our sin can hinder our connection with God and make it harder for Him to hear our prayers and receive our praise. That makes sense. But I also wonder if it's possible to praise God even while we're still struggling with sin.

Could it be that the very act of praising God, focusing on His goodness and His grace, helps us move towards that transformation? I think that's a really insightful point. Praise becomes a catalyst for change. By acknowledging God's holiness and our own need for forgiveness, we create space for His transforming power to work in our lives.

It's like that old saying, fake it till you make it. Maybe sometimes we have to start by praising God, even when we don't feel it, trusting that the feeling will follow as we align our hearts with His will. And speaking of hearts, Dr. Hildebrandt gets really specific about how this praise was expressed.

You know, he takes us on this fascinating tour of body parts mentioned in the Psalms. Body parts. Lips shouting for joy, tongues declaring God's righteousness, hands lifted up in adoration.

Okay, that sounds a little strange. Yeah. But I'm intrigued.

Right. Instead of explaining some complicated concept called synecdoche, Dr. Hildebrandt cuts to the chase and tells us that these vivid images of body parts simply represent the fullness of our being participating in praise. It's about engaging our entire selves, mind, body, and soul in the act of worship.

So it's not just about, you know, singing a few hymns on Sunday morning. Right. It's about embodying that praise in every aspect of our lives.

Right. And it wasn't just body parts either. Okay.

The psalmists were big fans of musical instruments. Mm-hmm. And Dr. Hildebrandt pulls back the curtain on a few of their favorites.

Okay. He talks about the *natal*, a larger harp, and the *kinnor*, a lyre. Okay.

Both portable instruments used in processions, you know, adding to the energy and movement of the celebration. It's like picturing a giant parade with people dancing, singing, and playing these ancient instruments. Yeah.

What a spectacle that must have been. I know. And speaking of spectacles, what about the *shofar*? You know, that ram's horn trumpet we hear about in the Bible.

Oh, Dr. Hildebrandt definitely doesn't shy away from the shofar. Okay. He even tells this funny story about playing trumpet for Child Evangelism Fellowship as a kid.

See, I told you he was funny. Drawing this unexpected connection to this ancient practice of using the shofar to gather people for religious purposes. It's those personal touches that make these ancient texts come alive, don't they? Absolutely.

But what about the timbrels? Weren't those like ancient tambourines? Uh-huh. I can just imagine maidens dancing and twirling, adding this rhythmic beat to the music. You got it.

And Dr. Hildebrandt reminds us that singing was the cornerstone of all this musical expression. You know, he talks about how powerful music can be, even for people struggling with cognitive decline. He shares this touching story about his mother-in-law, who has dementia, but still lights up when she hears familiar hymns like Amazing Grace.

Wow. It just shows how deeply music can move us, even when other parts of our minds are fading. It's like music bypasses all the filters and goes straight to the soul.

Yes. And speaking of moving and paid, Dr. Hildebrandt takes us beyond the mechanics of praise and starts exploring awareness of it all. Right.

I'm guessing it wasn't just limited to a stuffy sanctuary with pews and stained-glass windows. You guessed right. Okay.

He starts by highlighting specific locations mentioned in the Psalms: the house of God, his holy mountain, his altar, places where the Israelites gathered to worship and offer sacrifices. Okay. But he also challenges us to think beyond those physical locations and embrace the universality of praise.

So it's not about being confined to a specific building or geographical location. Exactly. He points to Psalm 66.1-2, which says, Shout for joy to God, all the earth.

Sing the glory of his name, make his praise glorious. It's a call to praise God everywhere and anywhere in the mountains, by the sea, in the middle of a bustling city, even in the quiet solitude of our own homes. That's a beautiful thought: that God's presence isn't limited to a specific place and can be experienced anywhere we open our hearts to him.

And that reminds me of Jesus's conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well. Yeah. He tells her that true worship isn't about location, but about worshiping in spirit and in truth.

It's like Jesus is saying that the external trappings of worship are less important than the inner posture of our hearts. You know, we can create sacred space anywhere we choose simply by turning our attention towards God and acknowledging his presence in our lives. So we've explored the why, the how, and the where of praise.

Right. But what were these ancient poets actually praising God for? What filled their hearts with such gratitude and wonder? That's where things get really interesting. Dr. Hildebrandt introduces this helpful distinction between descriptive praise and declarative praise.

Okay. But I'll let you just break it down for me. Okay.

Think of it this way. Okay. Descriptive praise is like complimenting someone on their beautiful eyes or their infectious laugh.

You're focusing on their inherent qualities, their character, who they are at their core. Okay. Declarative praise, on the other hand, is like thanking someone for baking you a cake or helping you move.

You're acknowledging specific actions, things they've done that have made a positive impact on your life. Ah, so descriptive praise is about praising God for who he is, his might, his power, his righteousness. Right.

Declarative praise is about thanking him for what he's done. Yes. Specific acts of deliverance, answers to prayer, interventions in our lives.

Exactly. And Dr. Hildebrand provides tons of examples from Book Two to illustrate both types of praise. For instance, in Psalm 64.9, we see descriptive praise: all mankind will fear and will proclaim the works of God and ponder what he has done.

You know, it's about recognizing the awe-inspiring nature of God's creation and the wonder of his works. And then you have Psalm 66.3, which is a classic example of declarative praise. Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds. So great is the power that your enemies cringe before you." Here, the psalmist is specifically thanking God for his mighty acts and the way he displays his power to overcome his enemies. And those mighty acts extend far beyond individual experiences.

Right. You know, Dr. Hildebrand highlights how the psalmist praised God for his works in creation, referencing Psalm 65, which describes God forming mountains, dealing the roaring seas, and providing rain for the land. It's a reminder that praise isn't just about personal blessings, but about acknowledging the beauty and wonder of the natural world.

Yes. And the incredible power of the one who created it all. And speaking of power, Dr. Hildebrand draws this fascinating parallel between Psalm 65.7, which talks about God calming the stormy seas, and the story of Jesus calming the storm in the New Testament.

It's like an echo of that ancient theme, showing how Jesus embodied God's power over nature, just as the psalmist had sung about centuries earlier. It's those connections across scripture that really bring these themes to life. Yeah.

And Dr. Hildebrand doesn't stop there. He goes on to explore how the psalmist praised God for specific historical events like the Exodus and the conquest of Canaan, referencing passages like Psalm 66.6 and Psalm 44.2-4. It's like they were weaving their national narrative into their praise, remembering God's faithfulness throughout their history. And it wasn't just about celebrating victories either.

Right. Dr. Hildebrand points out the significance of God's care for the lonely and prisoners in Psalm 68.5-6. Absolutely. It's a reminder that God sees those who are marginalized and suffering, and that his compassion extends to all, regardless of their circumstances.

And of course, we can't forget about those personal stories of deliverance that are sprinkled throughout the Psalms. Yes. Dr. Hildebrand shares multiple examples of psalmists praising God for his specific interventions in their lives, like in Psalm 54.7, where the psalmist declares, For he has delivered me from all my troubles, and my eyes have looked in triumph on my foes.

It's a powerful reminder that praise is not just a communal activity, but also a deeply personal response to God's faithfulness in our own individual lives. And it's not just about praising God for outward blessings or victories either. Dr. Hildebrand emphasizes the importance of praising God for the forgiveness of sin, referencing Psalm 51, David's heartfelt confession and plea for mercy after his sin with Bathsheba.

Right. It's a reminder that true praise flows from a heart that's been humbled and cleansed, recognizing our need for God's grace and forgiveness. It's like that brokenness and repentance actually paved the way for a deeper, more authentic experience of praise.

We come to God not with a sense of entitlement, but with a profound awareness of his mercy and our need for his transforming power. But Dr. Hildebrand doesn't just leave us in the ancient world. He brings this whole exploration of praise into the 21st century.

Right. He does. And he raises some really thought-provoking questions about what this ancient practice might look like in our modern context.

We'll dive into those after a quick... Just kidding. No breaks in this episode, remember. Let's jump right into those implications for contemporary worship.

So we've journeyed through all these whys and hows and where's of praise in these ancient Psalms. Right. But the big question is, like, what does all this have to do with us today? Does praising God with, you know, timbrels and shofars really translate to our 21st-century lives? Yeah, that's where Dr. Hildebrand gets really challenging.

He points out that our modern worship can sometimes be a little too tame. Okay. You remember all that exuberant full-body praise we were talking about? Well, he suggests that our modern focus on self-centeredness and comfort can actually hinder that kind of passionate expression.

I can see that. We're so used to being, you know, quiet and polite in church, worried about what others might think if we really let loose. Right.

And Dr. Hildebrand doesn't mince words. He compares our subdued worship to, uh, get this, the wild enthusiasm of fans at a football game. I know it sounds strange.

It does. But think about it. There's a certain energy, a shared passion that comes with collective celebration.

It's like everyone's on the same wavelength, united in their excitement. And he's suggesting we bring that same level of passion to our worship of God. Exactly.

He reminds us that praise isn't about conforming to social norms or expectations, but about expressing our heartfelt gratitude and awe in a way that's authentic and transformative. Okay. I'm starting to see how these ancient psalms can speak to our modern lives.

But Dr. Hildebrand also brings up this issue of, uh, you know, biblical illiteracy. Right. He suggests that when we don't know those stories of God's faithfulness throughout history, our praise can become shallow and disconnected.

Yeah, that's a crucial point. Remember how the psalmist wove those historical narratives into their songs of praise? It added this depth and richness to their worship, a sense of connection to something much bigger than themselves. Dr. Hildebrand argues that we need to rediscover that historical depth to immerse ourselves in the grand narrative of scripture so that our praise is rooted in something solid and enduring.

It's like we're missing a piece of the puzzle if we don't understand the context, the history behind these expressions of praise. Right. But what about those times when we're struggling, when we're facing hardship and pain? Can we still praise God in those moments? That's where Dr. Hildebrand challenges what he calls the prosperity gospel, this idea that faith is all about being happy and successful.

Okay. He argues that the psalms don't shy away from expressing raw emotions like sorrow, anger, and doubt. In fact, he says it's often through those experiences of lament that we come to a deeper appreciation for God's grace and deliverance.

It's like those dark moments can actually refine our faith, making it stronger and more resilient. And when we emerge from those trials, our praise is all the more meaningful because it's been forged in the fires of suffering. Exactly.

It's in those moments of brokenness and vulnerability that we can truly experience the depths of God's love and compassion. And when we come through those trials, our praise is not just a superficial expression of happiness, but a heartfelt testament to God's faithfulness in the midst of pain. He also addresses that tension between praising God in specific places and the universality of praise.

Right. He reminds us that while those physical locations can hold spiritual significance, our worship is ultimately not confined to buildings or geographical locations. He points back to Jesus' words to the Samaritan woman, emphasizing that true worship is about worshiping in spirit and in truth, transcending those physical limitations.

So even if we can't gather in a church building or travel to a holy site, we can still cultivate a heart of worship and offer praise to God wherever we are. Absolutely. And Dr. Hildebrandt leaves us with this powerful image to ponder: the deer panting for water in Psalm 42.1-2. He uses it as a metaphor for our own longing for God, urging us to cultivate that same thirst for God's presence in our lives, allowing it to fuel our praise and transform our hearts.

It's like that thirst for God should be so intense that it consumes us, driving us to seek him with all our heart, mind, and soul. And when we find him, when we experience his presence, it's like that refreshing drink of water that quenches our deepest thirst. And as we wrap up this deep dive, I'm struck by one final question that Dr. Hildebrandt poses.

If the inanimate creation- the mountains, the valley, even the rocks can erupt in praise to God, how much more should we, who are made in his image, express our gratitude and wonder through lives filled with praise? Wow. It's a powerful thought, isn't it? It reminds us that praise isn't just an activity we do on Sundays, but an ongoing posture of the heart, a way of life that recognizes God's presence and goodness in every moment. So as you go about your week, I encourage you to consider how you can cultivate that heart of praise, allowing it to overflow into every aspect of your life.

Let your gratitude for God's goodness be the driving force behind your actions, your words, and your very being. Until next time, keep diving deep.