

Who is like unto the Lord

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Date: 01 January 2000

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[0 : 00] We shall begin reading at verse 5. Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, who humbled himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth?

He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill, that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people.

He maketh a barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the Lord.

Praise ye the Lord.

It comprises Psalms 113 to 118. And they are called by literary critics of these psalms, they are called the Great Hallel.

[1 : 42] Now, the reason, part of the reason for that is that this psalm which introduces the Great Hallel, it begins with an exhortation, Praise ye the Lord.

And of course you know that in the Hebrew tongue, that exhortation, Praise ye the Lord, is written, Hallelujah.

And this section of the Psalms, it's a section that was used particularly around the time of Passover. It's a section that the children of Israel used as they looked back on their deliverance from Egypt. And as they looked forward to the coming deliverance from Egypt.

The Lord of glory, Jesus Christ. And no wonder, in the light of that fact, in the light of the fact that they were looking back to deliverance from Egypt, and looking forward to the Great Deliverer that was to come.

[2 : 58] No wonder they should say at the beginning and at the end of this psalm, Hallelujah. Now tonight, I want us to look at the section beginning with verse 5.

And I want us to concentrate our attention first of all on the great question of verse 5. Who is like unto the Lord, O God, who dwelleth on high?

Who is like the Lord? That's my first point. I want us to look at that question. And then secondly, I want us to look at the great description that we have here.

of the Lord's holiness and majesty as it is seen in his condescension. And then thirdly, I want us to concentrate on the two great examples that we are given here of the condescension of the Lord. And finally, to look at the great effect that this should all have in our lives. First of all then, we have here a great, great question.

[4 : 20] Who is like unto the Lord? And you know that this isn't the only place in the Bible where you have this question asked.

Who is like unto the Lord? And you know why this question is asked in the Bible again and again. Who is like unto the Lord?

It's asked again and again because God is so holy. And God is so majestic. And God is so different. That's why it's asked. You know when you consider the holiness of God, I think that you can say tonight, there are two things that should take up your attention.

First of all, you should grasp the wonder of this fact. That God, the Holy One, God who is totally other, He is so glorious in holiness, so spotless, so cut apart from every other being in the universe, that He is totally other, totally separate.

[5 : 45] But today, I think you can say that there are two ways in which God, the question can be asked and answered, Who is like unto the Lord?

First of all, Who is like Him for all the tremendous glory and power that is His?

That's the first way in which God is set apart and totally other. He is tremendous in His glory, tremendous in His power, tremendous in His holiness.

So when you consider the holiness of God, you consider it from the fact that He is so tremendous, so glorious.

and you have to say, when you look at His power and His glory and His might and His dominion, you've got to say, Who is like unto the Lord?

[6 : 53] Who is like Him? He's totally other. But then, I think you've got to look at His holiness in another way. And you remember that this was what that interesting book that was written by that German Rudolf Otto taught away back in the 1920s when he wrote that book called The Idea of the Holy.

He taught that God was totally other, e as the tremendum, as the one who is so tremendous and cut apart. But God is the totally other, as you consider Him, as the fascinating one, the one who is so, so fascinating.

And tonight, my friend, I want to ask you a question. Do you not find Him fascinating? Because I believe that when this psalmist, whoever he was, we don't know who wrote this psalm, but whoever he was, I believe that he was thinking not only in regard to the tremendousness of Jehovah, he was also thinking in respect of the fascinatingness of Jehovah.

And what made Him so fascinating? I'll tell you what makes Jehovah so fascinating. It is this, His condescension.

And the psalmist would have us take a while tonight and consider the condescension of this God.

[8 : 43] And listen to the way that's brought before us in verse 6 here. He humbled Himself to behold the things that are in heaven.

Do you realize, my friend, that the heavens aren't clean in the sight of Jehovah? Everything in the created universe is tinged by sin and everything is lowered by our sin.

And it is brought low by our sin. and even the heavens aren't clean before Him. And He humbles Himself to behold the things that are in the heavens.

Oh, what a fascinating God this God is. The God who stoops to view His own creation in the heavens. What a fascinating God.

But then, you know, God took a lower stoop, my friends. God is. And the stoop that would fascinate a sinner tonight is this.

[9 : 52] That God stooped not only to look at the heavens, but God stooped to look at the things that are on earth.

And the psalmist gives us two wonderful examples here of the stooping God, the condescending God, the God who is so fascinating in the way He stoops down to deal with sinners like you and I. And He says it like this, Who from the dust does raise the poor that very low does lie, and from the dunghill lifts the man oppressed with poverty.

And tonight I want us to spend most of this sermon looking at these two great examples of the condescending God.

first of all we're going to look at this man who was lying in the dust, lying in the side of the road as it were, lying in the ditch, that's where he was, and God stretched out his hand and He plucked him at a brand from the burning.

[11 : 12] What's it a picture of? It's a picture of God's saving grace in the gospel, condescendingly to reach man in his low and sinful condition, in his low and sinful estate.

And the first thing I want you to notice is this, the character of those to whom God stoops. God uses two words in this text for the character of the ones to whom He stoops in our first example.

and He calls them the poor and the needy. The poor and the needy.

What a description of human life. What a description of man in his sin. This is the banner headline that God writes over the whole of humanity, tinged by sin, the poor and the needy.

Do you know my friend that tonight that's the story of your life because all men tied by their sin have lost communion with God.

[12 : 32] That's the story of my life as I am by nature lost and undone poor and needy. That's the story of my life.

How poor is the sinner who has lost his place with God, the sinner who is under sin. Well, listen, first of all, he's got this poverty in his life.

All mankind by the fall lost communion with God. what poverty. And how can I highlight that poverty?

Only by going to the primitive estate of man before he fell. In the state wherein man was created, what did man have in Eden?

And man had communion with God. Adam shared fellowship with the God who made him in Eden. And if you're going to ask tonight what made Adam rich in Eden, I'll tell you the greatest riches that Adam had in all of Eden's garden.

[13:49] It was this, that he shared communion with God. That's his riches. is it, but all mankind by the fall lost the great riches that Adam had in the garden.

Do you know there's a verse there at the end of Genesis 2, and it's a tremendous verse, it's a verse that tells us about the estate of man as a result of it, sin, man expelled from Eden, and a fiery sword guarding the way to the tree of life.

That's where man is by the fall, he's been expelled from communion with God, expelled from all the joys, expelled from all the blessings that once he enjoyed.

All mankind by the fall lost communion with God. Is that the depths of his poverty? No, listen, he's under God's wrath and curse.

Instead of being under the hand of God's blessing, my sinner friend, you and I by nature are under the curse and the wrath of Almighty God.

[15:17] God is angry with the sinner every day. The Bible makes that so clear. God is angry with you every day if you've lost communion with God.

Angry. Do you remember that great sermon of Jonathan Edwards preached in Northampton? He called it sinners in the hands of an angry God.

And you know, friends, that's part of our poverty tonight. As mankind who have fallen from the estate wherein we were created, we have lost communion with God and we're under his wrath.

Under the wrath of Almighty God, angry with us day by day as we open our eyes and as we close them in sleep. Do you understand, sinner, that you're under that wrath?

Unremittingly under the wrath of God. If you're here without God and Christ, that's your estate. Under the wrath of God.

[16:27] And then something else, you're under the curse of Almighty God. Oh, how difficult it is, how impossible it is for the sinner to believe that.

Because you see, your life is such that you're enjoying yourself, you're going on quite easily in the world, and you're having it just as easy as the greatest Christians who have to experience temptation and trial and everything else, and you're saying, surely I'm not under God's curse.

But oh unbeliever, that's where you are tonight. You're lying in a ditch with a curse of God lying upon you. That's the picture that the psalmist paints of mankind here, when he says he's in the dust, he's the poor man, he's lost communion with God, he's under his wrath and curse, he's liable to all the miseries of this life.

And you know as well as I do that this life is full of miseries. things. You've only got to turn on your television set and look at the news.

What does it show you? It shows you a world wrapped up in misery, a world full of drought and famine, a world full of disease inherited and disease brought as judgment into man's condition.

[18:01] you see the world full of wars and rumours of wars. What's all of this? The world that's depicted on the television screen and on your newsreels, what is it?

It's a world that is liable to all the miseries of this life and in the midst of it all the pale horse man comes galloping on into our human lives.

Who's the pale horse man? The pale horse man is called death. You see my friends the story of your poverty, lost communion with God under his wrath and curse, liable to the miseries of this life, all of them, to death itself.

And at the end what lies before the sinner without God, the pains of him forever. The poor and the needy.

Isn't it a good picture my friend of the character of mankind and their sin, the poor and the needy. Oh my friend, what road are you on tonight?

[19:26] Are you on the broad road that leads to destruction? Are you on the broad road that leads to hell? Or are you on the narrow road that leads to life? And I'm telling you this with all the solemnity that I can muster, I'm telling you friend, that if you've lost communion with God by man's fall, if you're amongst those that don't know God, I'm telling you friend, you're on the broad road that leads to hell and the miseries of this life are nothing to be compared with the miseries that are

awaiting you at the moment when the word will go round the streets of Inverness, he died, she died, did you hear?

The phones will be going and they'll say he died. But oh my friends, what will death mean to the unconverted soul?

Death will mean in the twinkling of an eye that that soul will go to meet his maker and that soul will be consigned eternally to a lost hell forever.

Oh, what a poverty is yours if you're without Christ. And then notice where these poor needy ones are found, in the dust and on the dunghill.

That's the place that they occupied, in the dust and on the dunghill. that's the lowest place you could have. You know what the dunghill was?

[21 : 00] In these poor countries in the Middle East, the only fuel that men had was dung. And after the dung was burnt and gave off the poor heat that it gave, it turned to ashes.

And outside everybody's house there would be this pile of ashes. Ashes that had been spent. And the only comfort that these ashes could give is that the sun would arise for a little while and they would become slightly, slightly warm.

Little comfort, cold comfort. My friend, is that where you are tonight? in a land of cold comfort, in a land of dust and ashes.

Do you know there are people tonight and they're building for eternity on a land of dust and ashes? They're there and they think they've got comfort in the land of dust and ashes.

Young people without Christ, let me plead with you for a moment. Where are you tonight? Where do you get your comforts? Oh, you say, we're enjoying ourselves, we've got a great time, we've got a great life.

[22 : 24] Yes, my friend, where do you have such a great life? In the dust and on the dunghill, the little warmth that you get in the pleasures of sin are only for a little season and soon the little warmth that the pleasures of sin can give you will warm and it will be gone and it will laugh at you and it will mock you.

At all friend, if you die, Christ bless, the pleasures that sin have given you will mock you for all eternity. It's not what your eternity is going to be.

The eternity of pleasures that are long past that will mock you forever as you spend your eternity in a lost hell, mocking and saying you had your enjoyment.

But your enjoyment is no longer it's the enjoyment of the douche, it's the enjoyment of the dust, it's the enjoyment that turns to ashes. Do you remember the story that's told about the great missionary of the cross, Henry Martin?

Henry Martin had a brilliant academic career and in Cambridge in his own day he won what was called the Senior Wrangler Fellowship.

[23 : 52] It was one of the highest steps of attainment in the whole of Cambridge University. And you know that that's one of the highest seats of learning in our country.

And really Henry Martin reached the Senate. And you know what he said? He said I received all that I had ever wanted and wished for when I got this Senior Wrangler Fellowship.

And he said in my hands I realized that all I had grasped was a shadow. Friend, after you receive everything your greatest ambitions, your greatest attainments, you can get it all.

And all you have is a shadow if you're there in the dust and in the jungle. If you're there where dreams turn to dust and ashes my friend.

And that's all that you'll have. Dust and ashes. that's all that you'll have for eternity, dust and ashes.

Do you not see it? Do you not see it as one generation comes and another generation goes?

[25 : 12] Do you not see it written in the faces of your fellow men if you can't see it in your own body tonight? That all you've got if you're building for time is dust and ashes.

and it'll all go. But listen to what this God of whom the question is asked, who is like the Lord our God who dwells on high?

Listen to what he does for the man on the dust and on the ashes and on the jungle. Listen to what he does. He from the dust does raise the poor and he lifts the man who is needy from the jungle.

He raises them and he lifts them. If you want an example tonight of condescension, I'll tell you where you'll find it. You'll find it, my friend, as you look at a sinner who has dared to raise the hill of rebellion against God.

And God rushes into that man's life and grace and God plugs them as a brand from the burning. That's the glory of this condescension.

[26 : 32] That God goes to these men that have nothing, who have graft channels like Henry Martin and he plugs them like brands from the burning.

Do you know this? He's done it for some that are sitting in this church tonight. He's done it for them. And do you know this, my friend, what he did for others, he can do for you.

Oh, I'm hearing somebody telling me from their seat there, I'm hearing you saying, that's okay for these Christians, I can understand that for them, but it's impossible.

I'm too far gone to be saved. Are you? My friend, while I see you here under the preaching of the gospel, I would dare to cherish a hope that one day your soul will be brought to Christ.

While I see you sitting under the gospel of salvation, I cherish hopes for you. I know that you've been for rebellion. I know that you've said no to the claims of Christ so often.

[27 : 42] I know that you've rejected this Christ, but yet I cherish hopes. I cherish hopes and I wonder when you'll come into the kingdom.

Oh, my friends, will you not consider the one who raises the food from the dust and who raises and lifts the needy man from the jungle?

Will you not consider what he's done for them? Will I not ask you tonight, will I not dare to ask you tonight? If he did it for them, when will he do it for you?

When will he do it for you? Then again, let me turn finally in this example to his purpose in doing this.

What purpose did he have in raising the poor from the dust and the beggar to the needy man from the jungle, that he might take him among princes, yes, even the princes of his people.

[28 : 52] You know, it's a wonderful thing that a commoner should ever be placed among royalty. You know, if you were placed among royalty, one of the great fears that you would live with always is this, princes, yes, I know that I'm among them as far as my status is concerned, but I've only got the nature of a commoner.

But you know, my friend, when God lifts the poor and the needy from the dust and from the jungle, and he places them among the princes, yes, the princes of his people, he deals not only with their status, he also gives them a new nature, the nature of princes.

What does God say about these people? He says, and to him, what do they say about him? Listen to their own testimony in heaven about him. And to him who loosed us and loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God.

And tonight you know what Christ does to prove beggars from the jungle, he lifts them by his love, and he places them among his people, and he makes them his children, and he calls them his princes forever.

Would you be a prince with God, my friend? That's what Israel was, that's what Jacob became, twisted Jacob, a prince with God, would you be a prince or a princess tonight with the God of heaven?

[30 : 39] If so, you must be lifted by the love of Christ from the jungle where you're lying in a state of nature, in your need and in your poverty, and in everything that can be said of you.

Under the wrath and curse of God, you must be lifted from there, and you must be placed in the orbit of Christ's love, and you must come to know the love of Christ, that's the example of his condescension, who from the dust doth raise, the poor that very low doth lie, and from the jungle, the man oppressed with poverty, that he may highly him advance, and with a prince as said, even those princes great.

No wonder that in the house of the prodigal son was heard the sound of music and dancing. No wonder there's gladness when a sinner is brought home to Christ.

Oh, my friend, there would be that same gladness for you if tonight you were lifted and brought into the fellowship of God's tears.

There would, there would. And now I'm going to turn to the other example of his condescension, the barren woman. What a condition she has.

[32 : 07] And especially if you view the barren woman in a Middle Eastern society without children. It's almost as though there's a stigma of stigmas over this woman.

She's got no children. No children. That's the stigma of all stigmas for a Middle Eastern woman. But listen to what God does.

He takes that barren woman and he makes her a housekeeper and he makes her the mother of sons. I'm going to ask you tonight, how does he do it? and I'm going to take you to a text in the prophecies of Isaiah tonight. And I'm going to remind you of Isaiah 54 and verse 1, Sing, O barren and thou that didst not bear. Break forth into singing, for more shall be the children of the barren woman than of the married wife. how could the barren sing?

[33 : 15] How can the barren sing tonight? Listen to the context of Isaiah 53. He shall see of the travel of a soul that he shall be satisfied.

By his knowledge shall my righteous sermon justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death.

He was numbered among the transgressors, and he bared the sin of many, and he makes intercessions for the transgressors, and then he said, Sing, O barren.

I'm asking you tonight, how can the barren woman of a Christ with a Christless life, without the Son of God in her life, be made to sing? As she realises the glory of the travel of the soul of Emmanuel, as she realises what God stood in his cross at Calvary, that's what makes the barren woman to sing.

And do you know who's called the barren woman in Isaiah? The church of the heathen, the church of the Gentiles. You and I, we're the barren woman that has no song.

[34 : 37] That's what we've been with the barren woman that has no song. The Jewish church had her song. But we're the barren woman that has no song.

And yet the day came in the experience of barren women, barren men, and they could say, he put a new song in my heart, our God to magnify.

barren woman. The barren shall be made a housekeeper, and of sons and mothers full of joy.

That's the prospect of the barren woman that is blessed with the blessings of Christ. That's the prospect for the barren woman that comes to know the condescension of God and his gospel blessings.

she comes to be the mother of sons. And you know, I wonder when Greyfriars, the barren woman of Greyfriars, will become the mother of sons.

[35 : 43] I'm wondering tonight when we're going to see you, dear people, that haven't experienced the grace of God in Christ, coming under the power of renewing grace and the renewing spirit of God.

And I'm wondering tonight when the new birth is going to come. I'm wondering tonight if the reviving spirit of God is going to come amongst us. And I'm wondering tonight if there are some in this congregation and in their lives there's a new song because Greyfriars have become a place where of sons and mothers full of joy.

Oh, wouldn't it be lovely. Christian friends, I pray that the barren woman of Inverness will become the son, the mother of sons. Are you praying for that? Are you asking that God will break out in power, mighty power, to bless us and to bless our unconverted friends that we love in the gospel? Oh, you people who don't know the Lord in this congregation, we love you. And we're longing, longing to see you brought in to Christ. And we're wondering so often on a Sabbath evening like this, when you're going to come and when you're going to sing the new song and when you're going to begin the singing.

Oh, friend, wouldn't it be lovely if tonight a new song would come into your own heart even praise to the Lord and you would say to the world, how can I keep from singing?

[37 : 37] Wouldn't it be lovely tonight if the closed lips that came in through these doors were to go out with a new song?

If you were to go out tonight a C.S. Lewis experienced surprised by joy, wouldn't it be lovely? Wouldn't it be wonderful?

Wouldn't it be a blessing? Well, let me tell you the effect of God's condescension, what it always is. Listen to verse 9, he maketh a barren woman to keep house and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the Lord. That's the effect, my friend, of the condescension of God in Christ. Every time it opens a wellspring of praise that will never drown.

I drown. Do you remember that day, the last great day of the feast, when Jesus stood up in the midst and he said, whosoever believeth in me, out of him, out of his pen will flow rivers of living water.

[38 : 58] My friend, do you know that in Inverness tonight, the rivers of living water are flowing? And do you know that tonight, by the grace and the condescension of God in Christ, it could flow from you.

May God grant it. For Jesus sake, let's pray. Oh Lord, we bless thee for the fascinating answer that we found to the question, who is like the Lord?

He's the God who humbles himself to look at heaven, and to see things on earth, but he raises poor men from the dust, and he makes barren women to be the mother of sons.

Oh, may we know it in our own spiritual life, so that we will praise thee for all eternity. For Jesus sake, Amen.