

Psalm 134 | “Bless the Lord!”

Preached on February 23, 2025 by Pastor Matt Brown

Please turn in your Bibles to Psalm 134 this morning, as we are on the last of the psalms, which are titled a ‘song of ascents’. *[pause]*

As we found out, this set of psalms in the Psalter were songs specifically sung as Israel traveled to worship God during their three annual feasts. [pause]

Since Jerusalem sat on a hill, going to Jerusalem was always seen as “ascending”, no matter what direction you approached.

That’s why these are “songs of ascents”, for they were ascending to Jerusalem to worship with God’s people in the presence of God. [pauseeee]

The psalms started out from a far, and looked towards Jerusalem.

Then they described traveling to Jerusalem, and once there, looking at the Temple. [pause]

Now as we are on the final psalm, it’s like the Israelites are standing in the Temple, worshipping and praising God. *[pause]*

It’s where this ‘ascending’ was leading to—praise of the Lord in the Temple among God’s people. [pauseeeee]

There’s no higher goal or purpose, but for the praise and glory of God. *[pause]*

That’s where the ascending to the Temple was leading to, and that’s what our lives are for—so what a fitting conclusion to these songs of ascents. [pauseeee]

All of what we do should end in praise, but is that really our focus, our goal, our purpose as we live our lives? *[pause]*

Do we truly live for the glory and praise of God? [pauseeeee]

Sadly, there is a lack of praise of God among Christians. *[pause]*

We might tip our hat to God when we go to a church service, or when He helps us in those moments of desperation.

But could our whole lives be characterized as one of praise to the Lord? *[pause]*

Do we actually live for the glory of God, and give Him glory through our mouths and hearts? [pauseeee]

If you had to divide up your time into one of those pie charts, how much of it would be about glorifying God?

Would it even hit 5%? *[pause]*

We are good at praising ourselves—we certainly like doing that often. *[pause]*

We “toot our own horn” way more than we should.

We try to highlight our own knowledge, talents, and accomplishments. *[pause]*

We readily share stories of something good that we did, or we speak up a lot during a conversation in order to highlight our intelligence about a subject. *[pause]*

Likewise, social media can easily become a platform of self-praise, where you post things continually showing off your lifestyle, possessions, knowledge, accomplishments, or a myriad of other things. *[pauseeee]*

We not only praise ourselves, but we also seek out the praise of others. *[pause]*

We want the likes, the comments, the cheers, the admiration, and so on. *[pause]*

Sometimes we even try to hide our search for praise under the guise of false humility, saying things like, “I don't know why everyone says I'm good at this.” *[pause]*

And when we don't get praise from others, we feel dejected, and we get upset. *[pauseeee]*

Think about how often you seek your own praise and compare it with how often you praise the Lord.

How does it match up? Not so good, right? *[pause]*

But that's not all, for we too often are quick to praise others more than God. *[pause]*

We cheer, congratulate, and commend others for doing something as soon as they do it, but how often do we praise God for the things He does? *[pauseeee]*

Someone does some kind of accomplishment, and we can't help but talk about it with others, but God does things time and time again, and we are quiet. *[pause]*

In like manner, we praise our favorite sports team, celebrity, or politician, and act like they are the best thing ever. *[pause]*

Some people plaster their rooms with images of their favorite team or celebrity.

And that's all they want to talk about—how amazing this or that person is, or this or that team. *[pauseeee]*

The same goes with the companies that we like or the products that we enjoy...

The praise is unending for the people or products that we like, but the praise for the Lord often has an ending—the ending of a church service. *[pauseeee]*

The state of our praise for the Lord is typically lacking, but the psalm this morning reminds us to praise the Lord.

And so I pray that God’s Word this morning would motivate *all of us* and encourage us to praise the Lord even more. *[pause]*

Let’s READ the psalm. *[READ]*

This psalm is structured in a way where verses 1–2 call upon others to bless the Lord, and then verse 3 asks that the Lord would bless them. *[pause]*

Let’s look at the first part first in verses 1–2, which teaches us about...

I. The blessing that we give to the Lord. (1–2)

“Every day when the sun rises over Washington DC, its first rays fall on the eastern side of the city’s tallest structure, the 555-foot Washington Monument.

*[And] the first part of that monument to reflect the rising sun is the eastern side of its aluminum capstone, where these words are inscribed: ‘Laus Deo’, Latin for ‘Praise be to God.’”¹ *[pause]**

My question for you this morning is does your life have “praise be to God” inscribed on it? *[pause]*

The psalmist calls us to that kind of life here in this psalm...

He starts out by saying, “Come, bless the Lord”—but what does it mean to bless the Lord? *[pause]*

You have probably picked up on what it means by what I’ve said so far—it means to praise the Lord.

To bless God is really to praise Him and adore Him—as one Hebrew lexicon says, this word means, “to speak words of excellence about.”² *[pause]*

It involves praise, worship, thanksgiving, and joy.

And you can tell that this is the meaning of the word, when you hear it used in these other Bible verses...*[pause]*

¹ <https://ministry127.com/resources/illustrations/praise>.

² Rick Brannan, ed., *Lexham Research Lexicon of the Hebrew Bible, Lexham Research Lexicons* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020).

Psalm 145:1, “I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever.”
[pause]

There, blessing the Lord’s name is equivalent to extolling Him. *[pause]*

Psalm 66:8, “Bless our God, O peoples; let the sound of his praise be heard.”

So obviously, to bless God is to praise Him. *[pause]*

But listen for the thanksgiving part in Psalm 100, verse 4, when it says, “Give thanks to him; bless his name!” *[pauseeee]*

I’ll give you one more example, and this time it’s from the mouth of David in 1 Chronicles 29.³
[pause]

We are told that “David blessed the Lord in the presence of all the assembly,” and then it goes on to tell us exactly what he said—that is, how he “blessed the Lord.” *[pause]*

He says things like, “Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours.” *[pause]*

Or things like, “And now we thank you, our God, and praise your glorious name.” *[pause]*

After this great blessing, David then tells the assembly to bless the Lord, and they are said to bow their heads, pay homage to the Lord, and offer sacrifices to Him.

And they end all of this, eating and drinking “with great gladness.” *[pauseeee]*

To bless the Lord is to praise the Lord, worshipping and thanking Him with joy.

It’s to lift up His name in honor, glory, and praise, and that’s why the psalm tells the servants of the Lord to “lift up your hands to the holy place and bless the Lord!” *[pause]*

Their hands being lifted up would reflect their lifting up of the name of the Lord, and it would show humility before Him.

And that’s what the psalmist calls us to do here in Psalm 134. *[pause]*

We are to lift up the name of the Lord, declaring that He deserves all glory and honor. *[pause]*

We are to acknowledge that all good comes from Him, and that He rules over all.

We are to thank Him for *everything*, and praise His glorious name. *[pause]*

We are to offer to Him our all with upright, genuine, joyous hearts.

And we are to lift up praises to Him, all the while, we bow down our hearts in worship. *[pause]*

³ 1 Chronicles 29:10–22.

Is this really the way we regularly talk to God? *[pause]*

How often do your prayers include that kind of praise?

Do they include praise *at all?* *[pauseeee]*

So often we go to God for needs, which isn't wrong, but how dare we only go to Him for needs, and not include any praise?

We should be blessing His name all the time. *[pauseeee]*

We sometimes hear the phrase "praise music" and we think that praise only happens during times of singing, but that's not the case...

Certainly, you can praise through song, but you can praise in prayer, praise in talking about the Lord to others, and so much more. *[pauseeee]*

Now in the translation that I read out of this morning, the beginning of the psalm says, "Come, bless the Lord," but that's not what the original language says.

Rather, it actually says, "*Behold, bless the Lord.*" *[pause]*

By saying "behold," the author is getting our attention, and calling us to the importance of blessing the Lord...

Blessing the Lord is not something to be relegated to the lower rungs of the Christian life. *[pause]*

Praise is not to be left on the back burner and neglected.

It's not to be shoved away in the attic until a future time.

No, praising and glorifying the Lord is to be of utmost importance! *[pauseeee]*

Behold Christian, bless the Lord! *[pause]*

In the easy and good times, bless His name.

In the hard moments and dark trials, praise Him.

Praise Him for His goodness, praise Him for His grace, praise Him for His love, praise Him for His mercy, control, knowledge, wisdom, presence, and peace.

Praise Him, praise Him, praise Him! *[pauseeee]*

Thank Him when the blessings are clear, and when the blessings are hidden from your sight, but not from His. *[pause]*

Find joy in the Lord and direct your heart to Him. *[pauseeee]*

When you are wondering what to praise the Lord for, just remember what He did through Christ for you. *[pause]*

If you trust in Jesus, that means that He took you, who was a sinner and in great need, and sent His Son, who died on the cross for you.

He gave you forgiveness, eternal life, a living hope, and so much more when you simply placed your faith in Him. *[pauseeee]*

You want more to praise?

Consider how you have breath in your lungs, a roof over your head, and food in your stomach. *[pause]*

Want more?

Just think about how he has sustained you, helped you, and guided you all of the way up to today—He has never left you! *[pause]*

Need even more than that?

Just read through the Scriptures, and you have plenty of content to praise God for. *[pause]*

Marvel and ponder at His character and amazing deeds.

We have so much to praise Him for! *[pause]*

With so much to praise the Lord for, it's a wonder that praise isn't flowing off of our lips continually, day and night. *[pauseeeee]*

Now the psalmist says to bless the Lord, but who specifically was he talking to in the psalm? *[pause]*

He says, “bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord, who stand by night in the house of the Lord!” *[pause]*

The psalmist was calling the Levitical priests to bless the Lord in their role as priests.

And the priests were servants of the Lord, for they served the Lord in the tabernacle, being devoted to Him. *[pause]*

We are told that some of the priests stood, praising the Lord every morning and “likewise at evening.”⁴ *[pause]*

There were Levitical singers “on duty day and night.”⁵ *[pause]*

⁴ 1 Chronicles 23:30.

⁵ 1 Chronicles 9:33.

The priests also had the duties of keeping the lampstand lit, keeping the sacrifices burning, and guarding the gates.⁶

So the priests were surely servants, who stood *by night* in the house of the Lord. *[pause]*

They were serving, ministering, praising, thanking the Lord, day and night.

They were those “who stand” before the Lord because they attended to the Lord, being ready and willing to serve at His bidding. *[pause]*

Listen to Deuteronomy 10:8, which brings the blessing, standing, and ministering of the Levites together into one verse...

It says, “At that time the Lord set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the Lord *to stand before the Lord to minister to him and to bless in his name, to this day.*” *[pauseeee]*

So if the priests of the Old Testament time were called to bless the Lord, then what are we to do with this psalm today? *[pause]*

Well now that we are in the New Testament time period, there is something theologians call, “the priesthood of the believer.” *[pause]*

Basically, it means that every single Christian is actually a priest now.

And that’s why in Romans 12:1 it calls us “to present [our] bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is [our] spiritual worship.” *[pause]*

Most clearly, we see this truth found in 1 Peter 2...

There Peter says that we are actually a “royal priesthood”⁷ and also listen to verse 5 of 1 Peter 2...

“You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” *[pause]*

We are priests, who serve and minister for the Lord. *[pause]*

We offer sacrifices, not bloody ones like in the Old Testament, but sacrifices of praise and good works.⁸ *[pause]*

This is what we are called to do! Do you realize this?!

No Christian is called to be a spiritual spectator, rather, we are *all* called to minister to the Lord with our *whole* lives! *[pause]*

⁶ Ex. 27:21, Lev. 6:9, 1 Chr. 9:22–27.

⁷ 1 Peter 2:9.

⁸ See Hebrews 13:15–16.

We lay down our lives in service to the King.

We stand willing to serve Him, day and night, ready to do whatever He calls us to do. *[pause]*

Is that your mindset? *[pause]*

Do you see yourself as a priest of the Lord, standing in His service, and ready to attend to Him and His cause? *[pause]*

Are you willing to do anything for Him? *[pause]*

Are you willing to give up your time, money, energy, and effort? *[pauseeee]*

Here in this psalm, we are pointed to our responsibility to bless the Lord. *[pause]*

It is our responsibility, but it is also our privilege—because what a privilege it is to serve the King of kings and Lord of lords!

What a privilege it is to praise the One who has done so much for us!

No one else is more deserving of praise. *[pause]*

We lift up our hands, our voices, our songs, our prayers, our whole lives up to the Lord, and bless His name. *[pauseeeee]*

Like I said earlier, verses 1–2 are about us blessing the Lord, but verse 3 is about...

II. The blessings that we receive from the Lord. (3)

Verse 3 says, “May the Lord bless you from Zion, he who made heaven and earth!” *[pause]*

The psalmist asks and desires for the people to be blessed by God—it’s really a plea for the Lord to bless the people. *[pause]*

This teaches us that we absolutely need the Lord to bless us, if we are going to be blessed.

He is the One who determines what true blessing is, and He’s the One who gives true blessing. *[pauseeee]*

We do not create our own blessings, but all blessings come from God—therefore, *all blessing is grace.* *[pause]*

Any and every blessing that we receive is God-given good.

So we don’t go around boasting in our blessings, acting like we procured them through our own effort or skill.

Anything that we have is from the Lord. *[pause]*

As that one passage that I quoted earlier about David blessing the Lord says of God, “in your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all.”

And it goes on to say, “Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you.”⁹ [pauseeee]

Stand amazed that the Lord blesses undeserving people like us.

He doesn't have to bless, it's in His power and control to bless or not—yet He chooses to bless us. [pauseeee]

Do you look to the Lord, knowing that only He can give you true blessing?

Go to the source, the fountain of all blessing, and receive good from His hand! [pause]

Get on your knees regularly and pray to Him, knowing that He has all that you need, and you absolutely need Him. [pauseeee]

The psalmist shows us here that we should *ask* God to bless, but we should also desire God to bless others. [pause]

The psalmist didn't just selfishly only go to God for himself, but he thought of others. [pause]

How often do you go to God about others?

That is, how often do you approach the throne of grace¹⁰ to ask for *others* to be helped and blessed? [pause]

Way too often we are consumed with thoughts only about our own wants, desires, and needs, but how much time is spent in prayerful intercession for the sake of others? [pauseeee]

Imagine our whole church on its knees for the sake of each other, where each of us is saying, “Please bless this person or that person, may they experience your grace today.” [pause]

Wouldn't that draw us closer together?

Wouldn't that show great love for each other?

Couldn't that potentially open the floodgates of God's blessing on others? [pauseeeee]

Now the psalmist doesn't merely say, “May the Lord bless you,” but he adds, “May the Lord bless you *from Zion*.” [pause]

Now why is that significant?

Well in the Old Covenant time period, God was to be found in Zion.

⁹ 1 Chronicles 29:12,14.

¹⁰ A reference to Hebrews 4:16.

That was considered His dwelling place, and so therefore, that's where people not only gathered to worship Him, but gathered to receive His blessing. *[pause]*

They knew that there was a special place that they could meet God, and experience His grace.

And this was helpful for them because it meant that though God is the Creator, He can be found at a place. *[pause]*

He wasn't too distant, or too transcendent to reach.

Rather, in choosing Zion, God was showing His people that He was a God who comes down to them in order to bless them. *[pause]*

That's who God is!

He is the God who stoops down to bless, a God who reaches down in mercy, a God who comes to give grace.

And when I think about this, I can't help but think of Jesus! *[pause]*

Jesus is the prime and clearest demonstration of this truth—in Jesus, God came down to bless us. *[pause]*

Although God is the Creator, He can be found in a place, or more accurately, in a person, Jesus Christ.

It's through Jesus that we receive true and lasting blessing. *[pause]*

Here in Psalm 134, the psalmist said, "May the Lord bless you *from Zion*," and now the New Testament says that God "has blessed us *in Christ* with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places."¹¹ *[pauseeee]*

Listen up, God is not too far or too distant to receive good from, but you can receive eternal good through Jesus Christ!

Go to Him! *[pauseeeee]*

Looking further into verse 3, we see that the Lord is described as "he who made heaven and earth." *[pause]*

Now why would the writer include this?

It's certainly true that the Lord is the Creator, but why talk about it in relation to blessing? *[pause]*

Well first off, it makes sense that the Creator is the Blesser, for He is the Maker of all things.

¹¹ Ephesians 1:3.

He created everything, so obviously, He's the One who has to bless us—He's the ultimate source of all good. *[pause]*

But also, it's reassuring and comforting knowing that the Creator is the One who blesses us because of some other reasons...

It reminds us that the Creator has *infinite power*, so He has the power to bless us whenever, wherever, and however He deems best. *[pause]*

The Creator also has *infinite resources* so He can bless us in as many ways as He desires. *[pause]*

His infinite power and infinite resources means that nothing can or will hinder His ability to bless us.

Do you believe that? *[pause]*

Rest in His wisdom and knowledge, reminding yourself that He knows exactly what you need and when.

He knows how best to bless you, so keep going to the Creator Blessor, who has all that you need. *[pauseeee]*

This short, little psalm is packed with a praise-filled punch, and it teaches us that...

The Lord gives us so many blessings, let's praise His name!

“The Duke of Wellington, the British military leader who defeated Napoleon at Waterloo, was not an easy man to serve under. *[pause]*

He was brilliant, demanding, and not one to shower his subordinates with compliments, yet even Wellington realized that his methods left something to be desired. *[pause]*

In his old age, a young lady asked him what, if anything, he would do differently if he had his life to live over again.

*[And] Wellington thought for a moment, then replied. ‘I’d give more praise.’”¹² *[pause]**

While that leader was thinking of the praise given to those under him, will you near the end of your life and wish you'd given more praise *to the Lord?* *[pauseeee]*

Praise for the Lord should be a constant theme of our lives, for we have so much to praise Him for!

So come, bless the Lord, First Baptist Church! *[pause]*

¹² *Bits and Pieces*, March 31, 1994. Found at: <https://ministry127.com/resources/illustrations/praise>.

Let's praise the Lord for the many blessings that He has given to us as individuals *and* as a church. *[pause]*

Think of all that He has done through Christ for us, and praise Him for His grace and power. *[pause]*

He sent Jesus to die on the cross for our sins, and then He rose from the grave, so that we could be redeemed.

Death no longer has the final word over our lives anymore because of Christ, so how could we not praise Him with our all for that? *[pause]*

Consider all that He has done in your life up to this point, and lift up His name.

He has been with you through the ups and down, the highs and lows, the messy and the beautiful. *[pauseeee]*

Dwell upon how He has provided and taken care of our church throughout the years, and glory in His faithfulness. *[pause]*

So as Hebrews 13:15 says, "Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name."

And may we remember that every blessing that we receive from the Lord should be seen as an opportunity for praise.