

## PSALM 113:1-9

### A GODLY VIEW OF MOTHERHOOD

“Praise the Lord!  
Praise, O servants of the Lord,  
praise the name of the Lord!

“Blessed be the name of the Lord  
from this time forth and forevermore!  
From the rising of the sun to its setting,  
the name of the Lord is to be praised!

“The Lord is high above all nations,  
and his glory above the heavens!  
Who is like the Lord our God,  
who is seated on high,  
who looks far down  
on the heavens and the earth?  
He raises the poor from the dust  
and lifts the needy from the ash heap,  
to make them sit with princes,  
with the princes of his people.  
He gives the barren woman a home,  
making her the joyous mother of children.  
Praise the Lord!”<sup>1</sup>



peaking of the Last Days, the Master attested: “Many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold” [MATTHEW 24:10-12]. One can only marvel that those times may well be unfolding before our eyes as we witness the increase in lawlessness and the deficit of love among the professed people of God. It is frequently impossible to distinguish between the righteous and the unrighteous, as the righteous embrace the attitudes of the lost and live as though they were part of this dying world.

Godly individuals are undoubtedly horrified at the boldness exhibited in the perversions that are promoted by the wicked of this world. I thought that perhaps I was becoming inured to the wickedness of this fallen world as it promotes the dissolution of the home and the slaughter of the innocent. Like many of the saints, I imagined that I was growing jaded as I watched the increase of wickedness. Surely, I reasoned, people cannot sink any lower; but I was wrong.

---

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible: English Standard Version**. Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers, 2001. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

As one example of the depravity of contemporary society, I note that one “religious” organisation promotes abortion as an item of faith.<sup>2</sup> In another instance, a “reverend” has written a series of prayers for a forty-day series of prayers for abortion clinics.<sup>3</sup> The “prayers” verge on blasphemous; one can only wonder to what deity such debauched “prayers” might be addressed.

Yet another “religious institute” that tacitly despises motherhood through favouring the murder of the unborn released a special Mother’s Day bulletin insert for churches.<sup>4</sup> Shades of the worship of Baal and Asherah redivivus, this wicked, self-promoting group presents itself as “Faithful Voices on Sexuality and Religion!”<sup>5</sup> Following the logic of these perverted religionists, one would be compelled to accept that sex is all that God is concerned about, and our gratification is at the centre of His existence. By their logic, man was created to have sex. Nothing else matters; and candidly, if the present offerings of television and the advertising that pays for our entertainment is any indication, that is the regnant view for contemporary society.

How far from the biblical ideal we have strayed. The joy that is promised appears ephemeral for many; it seems as though it is but a gossamer dream that always eludes reality. Perhaps we need to return to a day in which we believed the Word of God, putting it into practise. The Lord our God gave us His Word so that we might know Him and enjoy Him forever, and as we do what He commands we will discover joy and peace that now seems to always be just out of reach.

Among the areas that we neglect and which must be addressed is support for the family. The roles of fathers and mothers, of husbands and wives, are horribly distorted in this day. Daily, we are re-educated in the new concept that family is any number of individuals cohabiting or living in some form of communal relationship. Tragically, even professed Evangelical Christians are becoming silent on the issue of family make-up, or on the purpose of marriage.

If we were to endeavour to again seek the mind of the Master on these issues, applying them in our lives, we would undoubtedly discover the joy that He intends His people to have. As one step toward such a goal, I invite you to witness a godly view of motherhood as witnessed in the one of the Psalms. The focus of our attention in this brief hour is the 113<sup>th</sup> Psalm, to which I invite your attention at this time.

**THE FOCUS OF THE PSALM IS THE LORD** — My wife questioned me about how I would approach this Psalm. She confessed that she had difficulty connecting the Psalm to Mother’s Day until she read the final strophe. That is an accurate observation, to be certain. However, the final verse does mark the Psalm as appropriate for honouring mothers. However, if we will truly honour mothers, we must first discover the focus of the Psalm, which is the LORD.

---

<sup>2</sup> “Faith Aloud” website (<http://www.faithaloud.org/aboutus.php>), accessed 15 April 2010

<sup>3</sup> “40 Days of Prayer to Keep Abortion Safe and Legal,” <http://abortionclinicdays.blogs.com/abortionclinicdays/2010/03/40-days-of-prayer-to-keep-abortion-safe-and-legal.html>, accessed 15 April 2010

<sup>4</sup>

[http://www.religiousinstitute.org/sites/default/files/initiatives/Rachel\\_Sabbath\\_Bulletin\\_Insert\\_Mothers\\_Day\\_0.pdf](http://www.religiousinstitute.org/sites/default/files/initiatives/Rachel_Sabbath_Bulletin_Insert_Mothers_Day_0.pdf), accessed 15 April 2010

<sup>5</sup> Religious Institute website, <http://www.religiousinstitute.org/>, accessed 15 April 2010

“Praise the LORD!  
Praise, O servants of the LORD,  
praise the name of the LORD!

“Blessed be the name of the LORD  
from this time forth and forevermore!  
From the rising of the sun to its setting,  
the name of the Lord is to be praised!

“The LORD is high above all nations,  
and his glory above the heavens!  
Who is like the Lord our God,  
who is seated on high,  
who looks far down  
on the heavens and the earth?”

For the worshipper of the True and Living God, all of life flows from her relationship to the Master. If her walk with the LORD God is interrupted, she will shortly begin to experience disappointment in every other facet of life. However, if she remains focused on the King of Glory, she will know perfect peace. Do you remember Isaiah’s testimony?

“You keep him in perfect peace  
whose mind is stayed on you,  
because he trusts in you.”

[ISAIAH 26:3]

What a comforting promise! Then, Isaiah makes that promise stronger still when he writes:

“Trust in the Lord forever,  
for the LORD God is an everlasting rock.”

[ISAIAH 26:4]

This strain is an echo resounding from the Name Moses ascribed to the LORD God:

“The Rock, his work is perfect,  
for all his ways are justice.  
A God of faithfulness and without iniquity,  
just and upright is he.”

[DEUTERONOMY 32:4]

The point is more important than you might imagine. We live in a day in which we have subtly been conditioned to believe that we are at the centre of our world. How we feel, how we react to a situation, the impact of a given condition on us—these are the things that we are trained to believe are vital. Consequently, the quality of worship among contemporary evangelical Christians is more often than not gauged by how we feel about the experience rather than whether we met with the Risen Son of God.

Among many who worship in modern churches, the music reflects our desires rather than glory to the Living God. What we feel, whether we appreciate the rhythm or the melody, the ability to lose ourselves in the soothing hypnotism of the notes—these are the elements we look for in worship. However, that is not the evidence of worship found in the Word of God. There, the focus is on the One worshipped and not on the feelings of the worshipper. There, any praise and all the glory are given to Him who gives us life.

Here is one example of worship, as the Psalmist calls on the angels to ascribe to the Living God glory and strength, as is His due. He is adamant that such ascription of praise, focusing on the Living God, is worship—worship in the splendour of holiness.

“Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings,  
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.  
Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;  
worship the LORD in the splendour of holiness.”

[PSALM 29:1, 2]

The worship standard urged on the angels is the same standard urged upon all mankind!

“Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples,  
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength!  
Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;  
bring an offering, and come into his courts!  
Worship the LORD in the splendour of holiness;  
tremble before him, all the earth!”

[PSALM 96:7, 8]

God is to be worshipped by focusing on Him, and not on our own situation. Worship places the Living God at the centre of life, acknowledging Him for the attributes that reveal Him as God.

“Ascribe power to God,  
whose majesty is over Israel,  
and whose power is in the skies.”

[PSALM 68:34]

As an aside of considerable significance, I note that whenever individuals come into the presence of the Living God, they “feel” terrible about themselves! Consider, for instance, Job’s response to the presence of the LORD God.

“I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear,  
but now my eye sees you;  
therefore I despise myself,  
and repent in dust and ashes.”

[JOB 42:5, 6]

When Isaiah met the Living God, there was no elation in him. He did not feel good about himself. Rather, he was in abject terror. He cried out, “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts” [ISAIAH 6:5]. Conscious of his own sinful condition, the prophet was compelled to confess his lack of righteousness. This was not the result of mere knowledge—he felt keenly the contrast between himself and God.

Perhaps you recall the response of Peter, James and John when they witnessed Jesus in His unveiled glory. Listen to the account as recorded in Matthew’s Gospel. “After six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. And Peter said to Jesus, ‘Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.’ He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.’ When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified” [MATTHEW 17:1-6]. These men did not find themselves lost in ecstasy—according to the text, they were terrified. They were conscious of the magnificence of the transfigured Master and of their own lack of glory. They certainly did not feel good about themselves or about their foolish proposal to build some tents.

Witnessing Jesus’ power displayed in directing the disciples to a miraculous catch of fish, Peter’s response was to fall down at Jesus’ knees, saying “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord” [LUKE 5:8]. Rather than exhilaration, Peter was acutely conscious of his own fallen condition. Therefore, he begged Jesus to leave.

As John, while in exile on Patmos, begins his account of meeting the Risen Saviour, he speaks of his feelings, and they are not what many imagine they will feel. Worshipping on the Lord’s Day, the first day of the week, John was “in the Spirit” when he heard a voice commanding him to write all that he was about to see and hear. Now listen to his response when he turned “to see the voice that was speaking” to him. “When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as though dead” [REVELATION 1:17a]. He felt fear, not elation. He felt dread, not ecstasy. Where do people get the idea that there is ecstasy in the presence of the Risen Son of God?

Individuals who imagine that worship will make them feel better, and especially feel better about their own person and/or abilities, have not met the Living God! People do not feel good about themselves, about what they do, or about what they bring when they are in the presence of the Risen Christ. They are overwhelmed by a sense of inadequacy, incompetency and insufficiency. Only when we have nothing with which we can endeavour to impress the Lord our God will we begin to see His mercy and grace as evidence of His goodness toward us.

**GOD’S MERCY AND GRACE ARE EVIDENCE OF HIS GREATNESS —**

“[The LORD] raises the poor from the dust  
and lifts the needy from the ash heap,  
to make them sit with princes,  
with the princes of his people.”

Our God is gracious. He blesses His people with good things. Repeatedly do we witness this testimony of His goodness throughout the Word of God. Consider just a few of the instances where the writers of Scripture spoke of God’s goodness toward mankind. The 103<sup>rd</sup> Psalm begins by focusing attention on the goodness of the Lord. Listen to the opening verses.

“Bless the Lord, O my soul;  
And all that is within me, bless His holy name!  
Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
And forget not all His benefits:  
Who forgives all your iniquities,  
Who heals all your diseases,  
Who redeems your life from destruction,  
Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies,  
Who satisfies your mouth with good things,  
So that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.”<sup>6</sup>

**[PSALM 103:1-5]**

Speaking of God’s goodness even toward the great creatures of the sea, the Psalmist says,

“These all look to you,  
to give them their food in due season.  
When you give it to them, they gather it up;  
when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.”

**[PSALM 104:27, 28]**

---

<sup>6</sup> **New King James Version** (Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, TN 1979, 1980, 1982)

However, it is not only the beasts to whom God shows goodness. We read in the Psalms:

“He satisfies the longing soul,  
and the hungry soul he fills with good things.

“Some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death,  
prisoners in affliction and in irons,  
for they had rebelled against the words of God,  
and spurned the counsel of the Most High.  
So he bowed their hearts down with hard labour;  
they fell down, with none to help.  
Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,  
and he delivered them from their distress.  
He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death,  
and burst their bonds apart.  
Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love,  
for his wondrous works to the children of man!  
For he shatters the doors of bronze  
and cuts in two the bars of iron.”

[PSALM 107:9-16]

What a powerful affirmation of the goodness of God! He satisfies the longing soul. Surely that gracious promise reminds the people of God of Jesus’ Beatitude that promises goodness: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied” [MATTHEW 5:6].

In the Magnificat, the hymn in which Mary exults in the Lord God, she speaks of God’s goodness, just as the verses we have just seen speak of His goodness. Listen to the hymn.

“My soul magnifies the Lord,  
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,  
for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.  
For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;  
for he who is mighty has done great things for me,  
and holy is his name.  
And his mercy is for those who fear him  
from generation to generation.  
He has shown strength with his arm;  
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;  
he has brought down the mighty from their thrones  
and exalted those of humble estate;

he has filled the hungry with good things,  
and the rich he has sent away empty.  
He has helped his servant Israel,  
in remembrance of his mercy,  
as he spoke to our fathers,  
to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”

[LUKE 1:46b-55]

From this hymn of praise we learn that the Lord God shows His strength on behalf of those whom He loves, exalting them while humbling all who stand opposed to them. God fills those who hunger with good things. In demonstrating His mercy, the Lord helps His people.

Among the Psalms is found a gem that testifies to God’s grace and mercy toward His people. The Psalm resonates with the Psalm before us. Listen to a portion of the 103<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, the opening verses of which we read moments before.

“The Lord works righteousness  
and justice for all who are oppressed.  
He made known his ways to Moses,  
his acts to the people of Israel.  
The Lord is merciful and gracious,  
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.  
He will not always chide,  
nor will he keep his anger forever.  
He does not deal with us according to our sins,  
nor repay us according to our iniquities.  
For as high as the heavens are above the earth,  
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;  
as far as the east is from the west,  
so far does he remove our transgressions from us.  
As a father shows compassion to his children,  
so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him.  
For he knows our frame;  
he remembers that we are dust.”

[PSALM 103:6-14]

God is known by His righteousness, by His justice and by His mercy and grace. That tenth verse is especially precious to the people of God. That is the verse that tells us that He does not deal with us according to our sins nor repay us according to our iniquities.

One cannot help but be humbled by the promises of God that He will not hold His anger. Isaiah, speaking on behalf of the Living God, has written:



“I will not contend forever,  
nor will I always be angry;  
for the spirit would grow faint before me,  
and the breath of life that I made.”

**[ISAIAH 57:16]**

Shortly before this, He had spoken on God’s behalf, saying to faithless Israel:

““For a brief moment I deserted you,  
but with great compassion I will gather you.  
In overflowing anger for a moment  
I hid my face from you,  
but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you,’  
says the Lord, your Redeemer.”

**[ISAIAH 54:7, 8]**

God is gracious and merciful. Think of this beautiful affirmation of his character found in another of the Psalms.

“You, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious,  
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.  
Turn to me and be gracious to me;  
give your strength to your servant,  
and save the son of your maidservant.  
Show me a sign of your favour,  
that those who hate me may see and be put to shame  
because you, Lord, have helped me and comforted me.”

**[PSALM 86:15]**

### **MOTHERHOOD REVEALS GOD’S GREATNESS —**

“[The LORD] gives the barren woman a home,  
making her the joyous mother of children.  
Praise the Lord!”

What does all this have to do with mothers and especially what has this to do with Mother’s Day? These are legitimate questions that deserve a serious answer, and the answer is suggested in the passage under consideration. We have been focused on the greatness of God. Suddenly, the Psalmist says that God’s greatness is witnessed in His compassion to one person.

We live in a strange day when motherhood is universally disparaged. The first birth control pill was approved in May of 1960. At that time, when we were presented with “the pill,” we were told that it would ensure that every child was wanted, give women control over their bodies and grant couples worry-free sex. I recall these benefits touted by a woman who had worked in the Searle laboratories in Chicago during the development of the pill. She was my supervisor when I initiated my first studies in the field of biochemistry.

Despite the great promises that attended the supposed freedom everyone would experience through use of this chemical cocktail, life is more complicated and for many, it is also less satisfying. The pill assuredly gave impetus accelerated the depreciation of sexual mores during the past fifty years. It failed to ensure that children were wanted, as sexual activity has grown more common at an ever younger age and consequently the age for first pregnancy has dropped dramatically. To address this increased incidence of babies having babies, society has turned to the slaughter of the unborn in the womb as a fix.

As bad as this general degradation of social mores is, I am more greatly disturbed at the loss of respect for God’s great gift to mankind of children. Even among the professed people of God, joy at the prospect of motherhood is muted. When a young woman announces she is expecting a child we reveal our warped perspective through the questions we ask. “Was this expected?” “Were you trying?” We assume that we control our destiny, and thus control every facet of our lives.

In the text we see that God gives the barren woman a home; it is God who makes her the joyous mother of children. Children were a mark of divine favour in the mind of our spiritual forebears. Childlessness was a source of sorrow. When Rachel angrily demanded children from her husband, he reminded her that God gives children [see **GENESIS 30:1, 2**]. Later, we read that “God remembered Rachel,” and He opened her womb, permitting her to become pregnant [**GENESIS 30:22, 23**]. Hannah was also a woman who grieved deeply because she had no children. We read the pointed words that “The LORD had closed her womb” [**1 SAMUEL 1:17**]. Consequently, “The LORD remembered her,” and gave her children [**1 SAMUEL 1:19b, 20**].

Do you believe the Bible to be true? Even when the Word of God challenges modern myths, do you accept that God has spoken the truth? How do you interpret the words of a beloved Psalm, such as the 127<sup>th</sup> Psalm?

“Unless the Lord builds the house,  
those who build it labour in vain.  
Unless the Lord watches over the city,  
the watchman stays awake in vain.  
It is in vain that you rise up early  
and go late to rest,  
eating the bread of anxious toil;  
for he gives to his beloved sleep.

“Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord,  
the fruit of the womb a reward.  
Like arrows in the hand of a warrior  
are the children of one’s youth.  
Blessed is the man  
who fills his quiver with them!  
He shall not be put to shame  
when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.”

[**PSALM 127:1-5**]

God gives children, and children are to be received as His gift. None other than the Master Himself was of the opinion that the birth of a child was a joyous occasion for a mother [**JOHN 16:21**]. Thus, it is appropriate to rejoice in motherhood, not because we simply love mothers or rejoice in the presence of children, but because we recognise that children are God’s gift to mankind. The congregation that values the presence of the Son of God will value the presence of children and honour those women who accept the gift of motherhood.

To the congregation before me, may I say that we are responsible to know the mind of God. If we know His mind we will value children and rejoice in those godly women who wish to honour God through being godly mothers. We will resist the efforts of the world which depreciates children in general, or which sees them as commodities to be used by wicked men and women. We will strengthen the hands of godly women in every way possible and seek to equip them to raise their children to the glory of God. We will pray continually for the children and seek to give what aid we can to those mothers. Amen.