

## **Put Not your Trust in Princes - Psalms 146** **Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading**

### **Notes from the Sermon**

Music is a powerful thing. It deeply affects our emotions, but our songs also sink deep into our minds. Many a musician has known that if they want to get the culture to embrace an idea they need to put it to song and hope that song catches fire. So often, the way to our minds is through the heart, and music is the quickest way there. Let me illustrate. For those of you who know the song, let's think about *Imagine* by John Lennon. The conclusion to the song is "that we will all live as one." What a vision, who doesn't want peace and a culture where people are kind to each other and work for the greater good. So the song is compelling, and we sing it. But the pathway to Lennon's vision of the world is imagining there is no heaven, no religion, no possessions, no countries or governments. The song definitively sets forth an entire worldview and a whole generation sang it (normally while taking LSD), and in mass embraced the belief system. It's not my goal to trash the song, rather to show you the power of music. You can generally figure out exactly what a church really believes about God and themselves by listening to the music for a few weeks. In some churches all they sing about is heaven, and often they are no earthly good. Other churches focus in on music that speaks of how much God thinks of me with little thought of the transcendence and sovereignty of God. Now, both of these are important themes. Yes, heaven awaits, and we should sing, and yes, God's love and purpose for me are real and we should have songs that help us remember this. But the music of the church should be more robust and engage other theological ideas and concepts as well. This is what you find in the Psalms, 150 songs that give a hearty and glorious theology looking at multiple tiers of God's character while at the same time engaging our humanity with great Biblical and rich themes.

The Psalms do this because the editors knew God's community needed to sing the truths of God together, as their singing would comfort those who needed it and at the same time confront those living in denial about God's character with theology. Singing these songs shaped the heart and mind of the Hebrew community and the church through the ages.

So one of the themes found over and over in the Psalms is the justice of God. This Psalm has a movement that crescendos in the phrases in v. 6-7, "(the LORD) who keeps faith forever, who executes justice for the oppressed." The Psalm then goes on to sing the ways God cares for and identifies with the oppressed, marginalized, broken, and outcast. The word *mishpat* translated "justice" appears over 500 times in the Old Testament and over 50 times in Psalms. It speaks primarily as a judicial judgment made by a judge, and therefore, especially when coupled with the concept of righteousness speaks of God's justice, where He both declares evil just that and then acts to love and defend the powerless. This Psalm focuses on this aspect of God. There are multiple other Psalms that have God's justice and our call to justice as a significant theme (Psalm 7, 28, 58, 89 among others). Beyond this, a myriad of other Psalms this issue in song alongside other aspects of God's character and call. For those living in oppression and hardship, these songs gave them hope as they would often sing about the God of justice who defends the powerless, standing with the marginalized, and supplying the needs of the poor. These often speak of what pastor and author Tim Keller refers to as the quartet of the vulnerable, the widow, orphan, immigrant, and the poor. These people had little or no standing in the culture and often lived dependant and destitute lives. Yet, they could sing in the congregation that God was watching over them and for them. Meanwhile, these songs also reminded those who lived in more prosperity that these people mattered to God and that justice mattered to Him and them. These songs brought the oppressor and the silent church goer face to face with the God who "executes justice for the oppressed" and clearly calls the people of God to be the means for doing this. It reminded them that justice is active, a call to do something. It's too easy to look at justice issues such as race, sex trafficking, abortion, poverty care, single parent challenges, immigration, and senior care and find absolution in the fact that I am not guilty of causing the problem. But justice songs call the church to be much more than innocent of causing the problem, it calls the church to embrace the values and cares of their Lord and embody them in the world. And the songs remind us that we deserve God's justice

because we are guilty of injustice in the world. No matter how hard we try, we are numbered with the guilty who have sinned against God, oppressed others, and harmed God's creation.

This then brings us to the hope we find in this Psalm. If you read the text you will see Jesus as the embodiment of the justice of the LORD as He is the one who acts to give food the hungry (feeding of the 5,000), setting prisoners free, lifting up those who are broken and distraught, and caring for widows and orphans. One of the amazing things in this text is the reference to opening the eyes of the blind. Throughout the Old Testament the idea of giving sight to the blind is promised, yet it never happened. That is until Jesus came. He is the person who puts fully on display God's care for the outcast, sojourner, oppressed, and poor. But this justice puts all of humanity in the place of the condemned, so the LORD of justice intentionally moved toward the guilty and bore their guilt absorbing God's wrath on the cross. We deserve the full weight of this justice, yet Jesus paid it all for us. And this leads us to the core point of singing justice songs. These bring us face to face with the God of justice, who also gave himself for me when I was spiritually poor. He then calls us to be people of justice representing His values and hopes in the world. May we fulfill this call.

**Bible Reading for the Week**

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Psalm 137	Psalm 138	Psalm 139	Psalm 140	Psalm 141	Psalm 142	Psalm 143

Reading from this past week: Psalm 146

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Psalm 139

**Family Worship**

Song - *His Mercy is More*

<https://youtu.be/l1GiZL60c80>

Gospel Project

Story: Stephen's sermon

Story Point: Stephen preached about Jesus no matter what.

Big Picture Question: What is the church?

Answer: The church is all Christians everywhere, who gather together in their communities to worship and serve God.

Scripture: Acts 6-7

New City Catechism

Question #2: How many persons are there in God?

Answer: There are three persons in one God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Verse: 2 Corinthians 13:14

Scripture

Psalm 146

- Why might music be important in helping shape our beliefs? Why is it important for the church to sing songs that deal with all aspects of God's attributes?
- What does the text mean when it says, "God executes justice for the oppressed?" Why does this matter in our world?
- How would this song give hope for people who were outcast and marginalized? What might it do for those who find themselves in more prosperity and abundance?

Prayer

\*Pray that God would reveal the glory of His justice to you and that we would be people of justice.

\*Pray for our new Director of Youth Ministry and his wife, Travis & Aune Dierker.