

Lesson 13 | August 28, 2022

Magnify Our Incomparable Lord

Study Text: Psalm 86:1–17; 146:1–10

Central Truth: There is no god like the Lord God.

Key Verse: Psalm 86:5

For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee (KJV).

O Lord, you are so good, so ready to forgive, so full of unfailing love for all who ask for your help (NLT).

Learning Objectives

- Students should acknowledge God's uniqueness over all the powers in this world.
- Students should understand what Psalms teaches about the character of God and praise Him as an act of confidence in His character.
- Students should praise God for His love and mercy to all people, then demonstrate His love to others.

Introducing the Lesson

Say: Some of the more quoted Scripture passages center around believers being strangers in this world (see Philippians 3:20; 1 Peter 2:11). The act of worship in its various forms serves to illustrate this, as God's people express heartfelt, exuberant allegiance to Him. As we magnify the Lord in word and deed, others can clearly see our commitment to Him above anything in this world.

[Phi 3:20 KJV] 20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

[1Pe 2:11 KJV] 11 Dearly beloved, I beseech [you] as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

[1Th 4:15-18 KJV] 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive [and] remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive [and] remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Opening Activity—A Huge Fan

Ask: Whom do you know who is a huge fan of a college or professional sports team? How do they show their excitement? While specific sports and teams vary, sports are a central pastime all around the world. Sporting events can even bring people together around allegiance to a common team or city. Shared excitement within a group of friends or a crowded stadium is part of the great appeal of sports.

Say: The appeal of sports can be perplexing to someone who is not a sports fan. Avid fans often hold extreme allegiance and unwavering confidence that their team or player will excel. And these fans are quite willing to make their allegiances known. This may be why sports are often used to illustrate spiritual truths in the modern world. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Throughout this unit, we have explored many facets of what it means to worship the Lord. It is fitting that the unit ends with a focus on magnifying the Lord—lifting high our allegiance to Him above everyone and everything else in our lives. In Psalms 86 and 146, we find an emphasis on mercy followed by a declaration that He will reign forever. May our joy over these realities flow freely from our lives in both our worship and in our declaration of the Lord to the world around us.

Part 1—Commune With the Incomparable God

Call Upon the Lord

Psalm 86:1–7

[Psa 86:1-7 KJV] 1 [[A Prayer of David.]] Bow down thine ear, O LORD, hear me: for I [am] poor and needy. 2 Preserve my soul; for I [am] holy: O thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee. 3 Be merciful unto me, O Lord: for I cry unto thee daily. 4 Rejoice the soul of thy servant: for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. 5 For thou, Lord, [art] good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee. 6 Give ear, O LORD, unto my prayer; and attend to the voice of my supplications. 7 In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me.

Bob Hoekstra says, The attributes and the message of Jesus are not characterized by uncertainty. He is faithful and sure. The message concerning Him, as well as the messages He proclaimed, are "Yes." They are all guaranteed realities. It is not that Jesus could be the Son of God. He is certainly such. It is not that Jesus might save all who call upon Him. Such is totally assured. It is not that some of His promises could possibly be fulfilled. Rather, all of them will absolutely

be fulfilled. ... Our God is going to faithfully do everything that He has ever stated in every one of His promises. The result will be great glory to Him, as He fulfills His promises in and through our lives.

Say: Psalm 86, like many of the worship psalms we have considered, combines a plea for mercy from God with a prayer for Him to teach His ways to the Psalmist. It's a good reminder that as we proclaim the praise of our Lord, we do so with a desire to walk more closely with Him. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

The biggest obstacle is unbelief. Going back to Bob Hoekstra's devotion, he closed with this thought. "The determining difference is faith versus unbelief. Joshua and Caleb of old entered into the promised land. The rest of that generation "could not enter in because of unbelief" (Hebrews 3:19)."

Psalm 86 opens with a prayer similar to what we studied in Psalm 113:6, as God is said to stoop low to engage with His people. Here the Psalmist pleads, "Bend down, O Lord, and hear my prayer" (verse 1, NLT). Such a request recognizes God's exalted position as well as the Psalmist's desperate need to hear from Him. This is similar to the place we often find ourselves today when we go to prayer.

The Psalmist here is David, once again in deep prayer as he is under threat from his enemies, yet without giving specific details (Psalm 86:2). As a result, some commentators note that this can serve as a kind of model prayer for believers today. David appealed to relationship, noting his trust in and devotion to God. So, he declares: "You are my God" (NLT). Such an announcement of trust also speaks to humble submission to God's care and will. David is calling upon the Lord, recognizing that he cannot save himself. Indeed, he readily gives himself—his well-being, his future, and his trust—to the Lord (verses 3–4).

Despite the fact his enemies continued to threaten him, David maintained his confidence in the unchanging righteous character and loving mercy of the Lord.

He believed! The great and mighty Lord is forgiving of those who seek Him (Psalm 86:5). The implication, of course, is that this seeker approached with a penitent heart (much like he did in Psalm 51). Truly, the love of the Lord is unending; He will never come up short in acts of grace or decide to ignore His promises.

As a result, David cried out to the Lord with a strong sense of trust in Him. Note David's declaration that God will "listen" and "hear," and ultimately "answer" his cries for help (Psalm 86:6–7, NLT; "give ear," "attend," and "answer," KJV). Note especially the beautifully simple expression of faith seen in verse 7: "I will call to you whenever I'm in trouble" (NLT). David recognized God as his only source of help, and he affirmed that no other source would be either needed or able to help him.

Resource Packet Item 1: Steps to True Repentance

Distribute the work sheet and complete it as a class. Focus on the two questions at the bottom of the page. Consider reading James 5:16 as you cover the second question. Talk about what it means to confess our sins to one another, and why this might be a healthy part of our worship and fellowship as Christians.

Discuss

- ? What enemy is threatening you today, and how can you best respond?
- ? Why is it important to recognize that God is your only source of help?

No Other Gods Are Like Him

Psalm 86:8–10

[Psa 86:8-10 KJV] 8 Among the gods [there is] none like unto thee, O Lord; neither [are there any works] like unto thy works. 9 All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name. 10 For thou [art] great, and doest wondrous things: thou [art] God alone.

Say: In Old Testament times, God’s people lived in the midst of nations that believed in many gods. Even today, many resist, or even resent, the suggestion that there is only one true God, and all others are false gods. As a result, we, like Israel of old, must be prepared to stand firm on the conviction that there is no god like our Lord. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Psalm 86:8–10 form a fitting capstone to the previous seven verses. David’s heartfelt cry for mercy exudes confidence in the Lord. **Why could he trust the protection of God? How could he know that forgiveness was genuine? What made him so certain that God would be faithful to answer him? He knew all of this because there is no god like the Lord (verse 8). Then, how could he know this? Because he could look to the great works of the Lord: “None can do what you do!” (NLT).**

It follows, then, that all the other nations, with their false gods, would bow before the Lord, praise His name, and thereby recognize Him as Lord of lords (verse 9). As we observe this verse from the perspective of New Testament believers, we can see several implications to what David has said. **In one sense, we note an ominous or threatening tone, recognizing that unbelievers who continue in their sin will someday recognize the truth: He is Lord—and Judge. However, we might also think back to the great covenant promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1–3, and thereby be reminded that God’s grace is ultimately intended for the nations. Every race, nationality, and lineage can cry out to Him, recognizing Him as Creator, Lord, and Maker of salvation through Christ (see Romans 14:11–12; Philippians 2:10–11).**

While Psalm 86:10 serves to strengthen the declarations the Psalmist has already given in this psalm, there is an added point to mention. **The phrase “wondrous things” (KJV; “wonderful deeds,” NLT) carries the idea of miraculous deeds, divine acts that go beyond human understanding and reason. Still today, miracles testify to the reality of our God. They reveal a God who is able to do even the unimaginable on behalf of His people. As we declare our incomparable God to an unbelieving world around us, we can do so knowing that He will work great things, and even miraculous things, as we place our trust in Him.**

Discuss

? Why do you think it is hard for many to acknowledge that God is who Scripture says that He is?

? Describe a time when you have seen or heard of God doing the miraculous.

Part 2—Learn From the Merciful God “Teach Me Your Ways”

Psalm 86:11–13

[Psa 86:11-13 KJV] 11 Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name. 12 I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify thy name for evermore. 13 For great [is] thy mercy toward me: and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell.

Say: As we have seen in a number of psalms throughout this unit, words of praise to God are often combined with a heartfelt desire to walk close to God, know more about Him, and live in relationship with Him. Psalm 86:11–13 is a good example. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Clearly, David’s commitment to the Lord was more than just intellectual knowledge or empty words. He deeply desired to live out what he believed about the Lord, as seen in his request to God: **“Teach me your ways, O Lord, that I may live according to your truth!” (Psalm 86:11, NLT).** Yet he also recognized that such a pursuit would pose a challenge. The latter phrase of this verse reads, **“Unite my heart” (KJV).** Every human being is prone to wander spiritually, no matter how deep his or her passion for the Lord might be. This issue, the problem of a divided heart, is the challenge that we all face each day. It is a challenge to put aside human desires in favor of honoring and serving our Lord. Yet we can take comfort in knowing that even David, a man after God’s own heart (see 1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22), faced such a struggle. And we, like David, can find victory amid our ongoing struggle as we continue to learn and follow the truths of God.

Resource Packet Item 2: The Contrast

Distribute the work sheet and invite students to complete it in groups. Note that the Book of Psalms contains a number of examples where the ways of the Lord are contrasted with the ways of the sinful human heart. When students have finished in groups, discuss their results as a class.

David followed in Psalm 86:12 with a solemn vow to the Lord: He would praise the Lord with all his heart. “Heart” is a reference to one’s feelings, will, intellect, and understanding. Simply put, David vowed that his affections and desires would always be focused on the Lord. Furthermore, he would give glory to God “forever” (NLT). His praise would not be a one-time event. It would not ebb and flow with the circumstances of life. He would not limit his praise to those moments when he could clearly see the hand of God working to bless him. David’s praise would be unconditional.

David provides a good example for us. Praise is easier to offer at some times than other times. Similarly, there are moments when we want to express our praise, yet hold back in an area where our faith is challenged. We must recall the conviction that David voiced in Psalm 86:13: The Lord’s love for us is great. He has rescued us from death. He has accomplished this through Christ. Praise be to the name of the Lord!

Discuss

? What might cause a person’s praise to the Lord to be half-hearted?

? How can a Christian overcome barriers that keep him or her from offering undivided praise to the Lord?

“Have Mercy on Me”

Psalm 86:14–17

[Psa 86:14-17 KJV] 14 O God, the proud are risen against me, and the assemblies of violent [men] have sought after my soul; and have not set thee before them. 15 But thou, O Lord, [art] a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth. 16 O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me; give thy strength unto thy servant, and save the son of thine handmaid. 17 Shew me a token for good; that they which hate me may see [it], and be ashamed: because thou, LORD, hast holpen me, and comforted me.

Say: At first glance, Psalm 86:14 seems like it might apply only in dramatic and specific circumstances. But, in fact, we all have enemies, whether they are people, organizations, or circumstances. Worst of all, the forces that come against us often have no regard for the Lord. Let us learn from David: The Source of our help is here for us today.

(Share your highlights from the following text.)

While Psalm 86:14 records the cry of David amid threats from enemies, it serves as a timeless prayer for all God's people. The problem with these enemies is their rejection of God: "You mean nothing to them" (NLT). Such rejection is at the root of the evil in this world. Whether the opposing forces are evil people or evil spiritual beings, they are violent, lacking compassion, and arrogant because sin rules them. Keeping this in focus helps us remember that life's battles are often spiritual battles.

David recognizes this, prompting him to place his focus fully on the Lord. Unlike his enemies, who populate the evil, fallen world around him, God is compassionate, merciful, loving, and patient (verse 15). David's words might remind us of Exodus 34:5–7. This passage recounts the second time Moses received the covenant from God. Furthermore, God proclaimed these words when He gave the new copy of the covenant, after the people worship the golden calf (see Exodus 32:1–14), not long after the miraculous Exodus from Egypt. What a powerful example of God's patience, mercy, compassion, and love for His people.

What joy, then, it must have given David in being able to reflect on God's gifts of mercy and strength (Psalm 86:16). Clearly, he recognized his own flaws and weaknesses. He needed strength. He needed mercy. And he needed to be saved from his enemies. Such could be said of every God-follower. And, thankfully, God responds.

As he anticipated the answer to his prayers, David asked for a sign (verse 17). This refers to a desire for some indication that God is acting on his behalf. In other words, David asked for God to show him that He was at work; it does not necessarily refer to the actual answer to his prayers. It was, in effect, a request for divine comfort and reassurance. Such a sign might also indicate to David's enemies that God was at work in his situation. As a result, they would have been put to shame; that is, their reckless and selfish rejection of God would be proven wrong.

Still today, God reminds us that He is walking alongside us and working in us. This brings us comfort, and also serves as a sign to unbelievers around us—not just in convicting them of their sin but also as a source of encouragement. In 1 Peter 3:15, Peter reminded believers to be ready to answer those who ask about the hope that is evident in us. As people around us, even enemies, see God's hand in our lives, we are able to respond with a message of hope.

[1Pe 3:15 KJV] 15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and [be] ready always to [give] an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

Discuss

? How can knowing that God is patient and merciful impact how we pray for and interact with unbelievers?

? What are some ways God brings comfort into your life amid hard times?

Part 3—God Reigns Supreme Forever

“Let All That I Am Praise the Lord”

Psalm 146:1–2

**[Psa 146:1-2 KJV] 1 Praise ye the LORD. Praise the LORD, O my soul.
2 While I live will I praise the LORD: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.**

Say: Scripture teaches us that “out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh” (Matthew 12:34–35, KJV). Thus, we can conclude that there is a link between worship and spiritual growth: A growing Christian makes exalting the Lord a central part of life. Psalm 146 captures such praise, declaring the glory of the eternal God. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Psalm 146 is one of the “Hallelujah Psalms,” so called because each begins with the Hebrew word *halelu*, an imperative word meaning “praise!” The three groups of Hallelujah Psalms are 104–106; 111–113; 146–150. The last group of five psalms are a fitting conclusion to the Book of Psalms, as they focus on rendering exuberant praise to the Lord.

Psalm 146:1 begins with an exclamation of praise without reservation: “Let all that I am praise the Lord” (NLT). The Psalmist’s worship would not be dulled—or amplified—simply by the mood of the day. He desired his whole heart to be continually occupied in praise to the one true God.

Such praise would be a lifelong pursuit: “I will praise the Lord as long as I live. I will sing praises to my God with my dying breath” (verse 2, NLT). This declaration is important for two reasons. First, it looks ahead to the “dying breath” of the Psalmist. Death is the ultimate enemy. **As New Testament believers, we know that death is the last enemy to be destroyed (see 1 Corinthians 15:20–28; note that Christ will be that great conqueror of death). In declaring praise to God until one’s final breath, we declare that we will trust God even in the face of this enemy. He is greater than even the terrors of death (see also 1 Corinthians 15:54–56).**

The declaration of lifelong praise is also important because it sets the foundation for the rest of the psalm. In the section that follows, we can observe how this psalm courses through many of our everyday thoughts, concerns, and needs of life. **Truly, God will answer the cry of the believer that echoes in the voice of the Psalmist: Our Lord walks beside us, caring for us, each and every day of our lives.**

Discuss

? What are some ways our moods can impact our worship and praise? Why is it important to keep in mind that our varying moods are not necessarily wrong; they often simply serve to guide our praise as we allow them to do so?

? What signs do you observe that God is walking with you each day?

Have Confidence in God

Psalm 146:3–10

[Psa 146:3-10 KJV] 3 Put not your trust in princes, [nor] in the son of man, in whom [there is] no help. 4 His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish. 5 Happy [is he] that [hath] the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope [is] in the LORD his God: 6 Which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein [is]: which keepeth truth for ever: 7 Which executeth judgment for the oppressed: which giveth food to the hungry. The LORD looseth the prisoners: 8 The LORD openeth [the eyes of] the blind: the LORD raiseth them that are bowed down: the LORD loveth the righteous: 9 The LORD preserveth the strangers; he relieveth the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down. 10 The LORD shall reign for ever, [even] thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Praise ye the LORD.

Say: The Psalmist recognized that the life of the God-follower is a life of choices. The most fundamental of these, perhaps, is where we place our confidence. For the world around us, that confidence rests in financial security, career progress, or even political matters. These choices are rooted in human power and achievement. But for us, our confidence is in the Lord. Psalm 146 is especially powerful, then, in that it reminds us of how our confidence is rewarded in countless ways. (Share your highlights from the following text.)

Psalm 146:3–4 is a reality check for the human race. At our very best and most powerful, we still fall short. We are still fallible. In the end, even the most successful people return to the earth—that is, the dust, from which God first made Adam. In contrast, the godly find joy, help, and hope in the Lord (verse 5). Such hope is well placed.

As we look at verses 7–9, it is important to note that the specific needs listed have something in common: Each status describes the kind of person who was neglected or even exploited in Bible times—just as they often are today. And so, while humanity might turn their backs or take advantage, the Creator looks upon them with compassion. In contrast, however, God “frustrates the plans of the

wicked,” who do evil to the vulnerable around them (verse 9, NLT). It is fitting, then, that we can join with the Psalmist in concluding, “The Lord will reign forever . . . Praise the Lord!” (verse 10, NLT).

Resource Packet Item 3: I’m Thankful For . . .

Distribute the work sheet, inviting students to complete it during their devotional times this week. Encourage them to keep a regular list of reasons they are thankful to God, then use that list during times of personal prayer and praise.

Discuss

? What are some ways we are tempted to trust people rather than God?

? Who are some of the vulnerable among us today, and how can we help them?

What Is God Saying to Us?

Say: God indeed presents us with a choice today: Either praise Him, or trust in ourselves and others. May we choose to magnify our incomparable Lord.

Living It Out

Ministry in Action

- Find a reason to praise the Lord each day this week, then spend time giving Him praise. Endeavor to make this a regular part of your prayer life.
- Text, e-mail, or call a fellow class member or church member in need with a word of encouragement and prayer this week.
- As a class, organize an event to help someone in the church who is needy or vulnerable.

Daily Bible Readings

Monday:

Trust in God Is Better.
Psalm 118:5–9

[Psa 118:5-9 KJV] 5 I called upon the LORD in distress: the LORD answered me, [and set me] in a large place. 6 The LORD [is] on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me? 7 The LORD taketh my part with them that help me: therefore shall I see [my desire] upon them that hate me. 8 [It is] better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man. 9 [It is] better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes.

Tuesday:

Trust in God Produces Peace.
Isaiah 26:1–9

[Isa 26:1-9 KJV] 1 In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; salvation will [God] appoint [for] walls and bulwarks. 2 Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in.

3 Thou wilt keep [him] in perfect peace, [whose] mind [is] stayed [on thee]: because he trusteth in thee. 4 Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH [is] everlasting strength: 5 For he bringeth down them that dwell on high; the lofty city, he layeth it low; he layeth it low, [even] to the ground; he bringeth it [even] to the dust. 6 The foot shall tread it down, [even] the feet of the poor, [and] the steps of the needy. 7 The way of the just [is] uprightness: thou, most upright, dost weigh the path of the just. 8 Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O LORD, have we waited for thee; the desire of [our] soul [is] to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. 9 With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments [are] in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.

Wednesday:

Trust in God Brings Blessing.
Jeremiah 17:5–8

[Jer 17:5-8 KJV] 5 Thus saith the LORD; Cursed [be] the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD. 6 For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, [in] a salt land and not inhabited. 7 Blessed [is] the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. 8 For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and [that] spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

Thursday:

Trust in the Beloved Savior.
Matthew 12:18–21

[Mat 12:18-21 KJV] 18 Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles. 19 He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. 20 A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. 21 And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.

Friday:

Trust in God's Delivering Power.
2 Corinthians 1:8–11

[2Co 1:8-11 KJV] 8 For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: 9 But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: 10 Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in

whom we trust that he will yet deliver [us]; 11 Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift [bestowed] upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.

Saturday:

Trust in the Living God.

1 Timothy 4:6–10

[1Ti 4:6-10 KJV] 6 If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained. 7 But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself [rather] unto godliness. 8 For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. 9 This [is] a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation. 10 For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.