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SERMON

PREACHED BY MR L S B HYDE

AT

'SALEM' CHAPEL, CARSHALTON

Text  
Psalm 92, verse 1

Thursday evening  
17th June 1982

It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High.

Our view of God will make all the difference to our feelings. We have already noticed, from our reading in the 50th Psalm: 'Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.' If that represents the extent of our knowledge of God, then of course we shall not engage in very much worship. But on the other hand, if our perception and our conviction concerning the Person of God should be couched in these most wonderful terms: O Most High; then how good that will be, because we shall see that God is exalted over all, thrice blessed for evermore. In the 8th verse we read: 'But thou, Lord, art most high for evermore.' The mercy of God to us will be wonderful if we get close to a revelation of that great truth: But thou, Lord, art most high for evermore. May we therefore not only have clear views of God, but also high views of God. It is because our views of God are not as high as the Word of God declares concerning God that we often come into many fears and anxieties. The Scripture declares that the Lord reigneth, that the Most High is above all. Nebuchadnezzar learned it by a bitter experience; he acknowledged it and he rejoiced in this truth to such an extent that he said: I will extol Thee, O Most High.

May the Spirit of God this evening bring our attention, and not only our attention, but our feelings, to this glorious Name of the Almighty, the Most High, and may it ever be before us. Whenever we think of God, may we think of the Most High. Now the Most High of necessity will be above everything else. We see many things taking place in the world, but what are our feelings? Are we afraid? The wicked run to and fro for fear of the things that are coming upon the earth;

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they are in great fear. What about the people of God? If their view is that the Lord God Omnipotent, the Most High, reigneth, then may they not follow the teaching of Scripture and remain calm? Dr Watts gets a wonderful glimpse of the Most High when he says:

Our lives through various scenes are drawn,  
And vexed with trifling cares;  
While thy eternal thought moves on  
Thy undisturbed affairs.

1

It is a great consolation to the church of God, and certainly it is to me, to believe that He is the Most High. It is so appropriate a name for the Eternal God.

In the verse here we read: 'It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High.' So then, two things present themselves. First of all, it is a good thing to give thanks; and also, in the second place, it is a good thing to sing praises unto Thy Name. And, over-riding both these points, let us remember continually the last three words: O Most High. It is a good thing. Now, the people of God alone recognise the most High. With some reluctance perhaps the world may at times give their assent that the Lord reigns. But there are words of the Scripture which make it very clear that the wicked do not acknowledge God, and therefore they have no desire after God at all, neither have they an interest in anything that He does. But there are those who are called by grace who know the Most High. They have been made aware that nothing less than the Most High could have called them by grace and communicated to them a God-given nature, effected a change in their whole life and their heart, directed them into the paths of peace and righteousness.

Now some of us have made a profession publicly of the Name of God, of our hope in Jesus Christ. Others may not have made an open profession, and yet, if they were pressed to it, they would have to acknowledge that their hope is in God, in our Lord Jesus Christ. This is because there has been a change made which they could not make. Now if a change has been made in you, which you have made, if the decision has come from you, then of course you will be giving credit to yourself as the one who has made the change. But if you have been of a rebellious will, if you have been opposed to the Most High and determined not to submit to the Most High, then when the power of the Most High is put forth in regard to yourself you will begin to have knowledge of the Most High. In the 73rd Psalm we read of those who say: 'Is there knowledge in the most High?' There are plenty of people in the world today who would raise the same question. Are we asking that question? If God has begun to teach us we shall not be asking that question because we shall have proved that there is knowledge in the Most High. There is the knowledge of what we are by nature. You know, God is not surprised by our fallen state. We are, very often.

Our staggering faith gives way to doubt:  
Our courage yields to fear;  
Shocked at the sight, we straight cry out,  
"Can ever God dwell here?"

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Though this knowledge may take us by surprise, yet it does not take the Most High by surprise. Why is this? Because the Lord, the Most High, is above all things and everything at all times, in all places. We can sometimes limit in our thinking the greatness and glory of God. Do we sometimes think about God's greatness, and do we believe that He is above all? Do we believe that He knows all, and do we believe that, according to the Scripture testimony, the hearts of all are known to Him? There is not a thing that happens day by day but what He is aware of it. Now, that is a great view of God. But we go a step further, and we say that the Most High, in eternity past, before the world come into being, being above the creation, being above the work of the devil, looking forward throughout the ages of time, saw a peculiar people, certainly saved by grace, delivered from the power of the devil, and brought safely to heaven at last. The Most High looks forward through all ages. There is a wonderful word in Isaiah's prophecy concerning the Most High, that He is able to declare the end from the beginning. How different from ourselves! We make our plans and then we have to wait and see whether they will develop, whether they will come to a successful conclusion. Not so with the Most High. 'He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.'

Now perhaps some of you feel that you have that good hope that God has begun a good work in you, but then you have some fears as to whether it will reach a happy conclusion. There is no doubt in the mind of the Most High that He Who has begun will surely bring about a happy conclusion. There is no if or but or any peradventure here. 'O Most High.' O to feel ourselves moved in worship when we consider what this great name of God means. 'Most High for evermore.' He always was the Most High. The father in law of Moses was moved in a remarkable way when Moses had told him of the interposition of the Most High in bringing Israel out of Egypt by a high hand and an outstretched arm, and the result of that information was this - a confession: 'Now I know that the Lord is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them.'

Now we can come to some personal experience of a knowledge of the Most High. We have dealt proudly; it is our natural bent, the result of our depravity and fallen nature is to deal proudly. If now by the grace of God restricted and restrained, yet in past days when we knew not the Lord there was only one thing for it; we dealt proudly and we said: Who is the Lord that we should obey Him? But the time came when the Lord was above us, we felt that He was above us, we realized that He was above us, we knew that we could not get over him; we knew

that whatever means or method we might use, however crafty, however deep, yet the Lord had the last word. There is a parable of the man who had two sons, and he said to one: Go, work in my vineyard. With much resolution the son replied: I will not go. Perhaps you have been in that place, when God has made a proposition to you, if I may use that word, though it is not to propose, but call by grace. Nevertheless, it may seem sometimes as though God sets something before you, and you say: I will not. What happened to that man? Afterwards he repented and went. Now why did he go? Well, he did because of the Most High. He had to learn that the most High ruleth in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him: What doest Thou?

We may well dwell upon this point, because if we are to give thanks and to sing praises, we must know to whom we are giving thanks and to whom we are rendering praise. We shall be short in our thanksgiving and in our praise if our God is anything less than the Most High. There is an encouraging word in the 138th Psalm: 'Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly.' Now our opening hymn, (1060) describes a state of christian experience which might be said to be of the lowly, of the poor in spirit. Such may say: "Will the Most High look down upon me in my sad state, in my low state, in my rebellious state?" Well, 'though the Lord be high,' the Most High, yet the children of God have proved that He looked down from the height of the sanctuary 'to hear the groaning of the prisoner and to set at liberty those that are bound.' It is good if we can say, as a result of the teaching of the Holy Ghost, that we know something about the Most High. In a well known hymn of Cowper's there is an acknowledgement that God is most High:

God moves in a mysterious way  
His wonders to perform;  
He plants his footsteps in the sea,  
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines  
Of never-failing skill,  
He treasures up his bright designs  
And works his sovereign will.

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Have we had anything to do with the Most High? Have we seen in our own lives the exercise of the will of the Most High, and the outpouring of the thoughts of the Most High? 'O Lord,' we read in this Psalm, 'how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep. A brutish man knoweth not; neither doth a fool understand this.' But in those sad days for the children of Israel, when they were in Babylon under captivity, the Most High says: 'For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.' Perhaps we may find our experience this evening akin to the captivity under which the children of Israel found themselves, and in that sad

captivity they were invited to sing one of the songs of Zion. They said: How shall we sing one of the songs of Zion in a strange land? And yet the Most High said to the people in Jeremiah's day, and says to the church of God in our day: 'I know the thoughts that I think toward you, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end.' With this little knowledge, is it not clear that the words of the Psalmist are so true: It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord.

We may say first of all that it is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord because He is the Most High. There is none above Him and none ever will be above Him; He executes His decrees in heaven and in earth. Because of this the salvation, the security, the safety of the election of grace, is sure. The church of the living God, the Body of Christ, are saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation. With this truth before us, must we not say with the Psalmist: It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord? The Psalmist also carries this thought further in the 147th Psalm: 'Praise ye the Lord: for it is good to sing praises unto our God: for it is pleasant; and praise is comely.' Now it is, and should be, our feeling that there is nothing more pleasant than to give thanks unto the Most High, and to feel that we cannot be occupied in a more pleasant occupation than giving thanks unto the Lord. The Lord ruleth. He rules over every aspect. One of our poets brings to our attention a blessed truth:

Search all the world thro', examine and see,  
And what canst thou view more suited to thee  
Than this declaration, in Scripture expressed,  
That God, thy Salvation, does all for the best? 322

Now you cannot believe that unless you believe in the Most High. You see, there are some things which God does that are not agreeable to our thinking. But by the teaching and enlightenment of the Spirit of God we are brought to agree and we are brought to say, without any reservation, that the Lord does all things for the best. The Apostle in writing to the Romans puts it very clearly: 'And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.' So if we love God, if we are called according to His purpose, then what is this but the work of the Most High? What does the Psalmist say in the 4th verse? 'For thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands.' So then, if our hearts agree, then we shall surely assent to what is here written: 'It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord.'

The teaching of the Spirit of God in the Psalmist is very extensive. We need to read through and meditate upon the Book of Psalms in order to discover how extensive it is. Let me refer you to the 4th Psalm: 'There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and

their wine increased. I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep; for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.' This indeed may bring us to say: 'It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord;' when we consider that He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. Sometimes we of necessity, physically, are asleep. There are other times when we are like the ten virgins who all slumbered and slept. But there is one, the Most High, Who never sleeps, Who has no need of sleep. His strength is always at its peak, there is never any diminution. He is the Mighty God, the Almighty God. The Most High can manifest Himself as He did to Abraham so many years ago, presenting Himself as the Most High, and nothing less, for we read that: 'When Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.' Notice the reaction in the soul of Abraham when the Most High spoke to him: 'And Abraham fell on his face.' Our reaction will be the same if we are aware of the Most High speaking to us. That voice is different from anybody else's because it has the authority of the Most High, it has the authority of God. He can speak and say: It shall come to pass. And then it is subsequently recorded: And it came to pass. That is the work of Almighty God.

'It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord.' To give thanks unto the Lord that we know Him. What does this mean, that we know Him? We possess eternal life, and so God, the Most High, has given to us this supreme gift, this gift which is above every other gift. It is identifiable in our lives, in our hearts, in our souls by the Lord's description of eternal life: 'And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.' In the 14th chapter of John we find these opening words: 'Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me.' The Word of God declares that the Most High is terrible, and so He is. You may have been brought to that point, to realize that out of Christ God can do nothing but devour. 'Our God is a consuming fire.' If you have trembled because of the revelation of the Most High and the glory of His Majesty, then 'let not your heart be troubled.' There is Jesus Christ, there is the Most High Who at the time of His birth was contracted to a span. The hymn puts it in this way: 'His shoulders held up heaven and earth, while Mary held up Him.' God the Spirit may take you to the manger at Bethlehem, as the shepherds came and later, in another place, the wise men came. They worshipped the Babe at Bethlehem, not just as a remarkable Child with an astonishing future before Him. They worshipped Him as the Most High. They bowed down and they brought gifts; those gifts were not without their meaning, they were all setting forth that the Object of their worship was no less than the Most High.

Now as we come to consider the Lord Jesus Christ and the glory of God manifested in the face of Jesus Christ, we have before us the Most High. I cannot help but insist upon the necessity, the importance of this this evening, because the more you consider it, the more you meditate upon it, the more deep will be the giving of thanks, the deeper your heart-felt feeling that it is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord. You will give thanks unto the Lord that Jesus Christ should ever have come in human flesh, that He should ever have died at Calvary, dismissing His Spirit, yet offering a Sacrifice holy, acceptable unto the Most High. Now consider it, friends, because we want to put this on the highest level that we can. This was the Most High offering a sacrifice, an acceptable sacrifice, to the Most High; nothing less would do. Jesus, though His Godhead was veiled, yet He was still the Most High. In the Most High, we verily believe, according to the Scriptures, there are Three Persons; Father, Son and the Holy Ghost. Therefore this offering in the Body, the human Body and soul of our Lord Jesus Christ, was the offering of the Most High to the Most High. Therefore our salvation is settled upon the highest level, satisfying the highest demands. The more we get into the reality of this truth, the deeper will be our feeling in regard to those words of the Psalmist: 'It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord.' It is good, and it is a pleasant thing.

Now will the Spirit of God move us this evening in such a way that as we go home and as we bow before God in our evening worship, and as we lay upon our bed, we may think upon the glory of the Most High and feel: Yes, it is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord because He is the Most High, and though:

Our lives through various scenes are drawn,  
And vexed with trifling cares,  
Yet thy eternal thought moves on  
Thy undisturbed affairs.

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Now if it is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord and we are to benefit, first of all in the appreciation of this truth and then in the performance of it, it will be necessary for us to possess a divine nature, the nature of God. We cannot acceptably worship the Most High with our fallen nature, with our natural mind, because the Word of God tells us clearly that the natural man is enmity against God. So it is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord with that which is of God in us, as we see His glory. Do you see the glory of the Lord? Do you see it, as faith is given, by the grace of God, at Bethlehem, when Jesus was born, and do you see the glory of the Lord when Jesus stood in the temple at 12 years of age, speaking with the doctors, asking and answering questions? Do you see the glory of the Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane, do you see the glory of the Lord at Calvary, and when He rose from the dead, when He was at the Mount of Olives and ascended into heaven? The angels that stood by said: 'This same Jesus,' the

Most High, mark you, 'this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.' What a remarkable view this is of the Almighty God, the Almighty; the Most High in the Person of Jesus Christ will come Himself to gather His people together. They shall be caught up with Him in the clouds and so they shall be ever with the Lord. The Most High will come personally.

O what matchless condescension  
The eternal God displays;  
Claiming our supreme attention,  
To his boundless works and ways.  
His own glory  
He reveals in gospel days.

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'It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord,' to give thanks unto the Lord for His providence but much more to give thanks unto the Lord for the blessings of the grace of the Most High in giving His Son.

But in the second place we read: 'And sing praises unto thy name, O Most High.' To sing praises. Now in the last verse of the 50th Psalm we read this evening: 'Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me.' Now surely, if we are born of the Spirit there is one thing that we shall want to do, and that is to glorify the Lord. People have various ideas about this, and they may tell you about their activities and so on, all they are doing for the Lord. We shall make no comment upon that, but we will say this, the Scripture says: 'Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me.' How often we need to consider what the Scripture says! Now, how is praise offered? True and real praise that escapes from the souls of the children of God is very often silent; or, if it is expressed, maybe it is but the endorsement of what the Lord Jesus said. Jesus rejoiced in spirit on one occasion, and He said: 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.' He rejoiced in spirit, He sang the praises of the Most High. Jesus in His Manhood sang praises. So 'it is a good thing to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High.' Sometimes we join together in singing the Doxology: 'Praise God from whom all blessings flow.' We come to the Apostle James and we find: 'Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.' Shall we sing praises unto Thy Name, O Most High, on that account, that every good gift and every perfect gift cometh from above? Whatever we have, whether it be natural gifts or spiritual blessings, they all proceed from the Most High. If we are aware of it, we shall be amongst those that 'sing praises unto thy name, O Most High.' Because in the Lord is all wisdom. 'I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions.'

How heartily we sing praises unto 'thy name, O Most High,' will depend upon our views of the Most High. When you consider how great God is, it will



make you feel what the Scriptures say we are, and that is as grasshoppers in His sight. That view of the Most High will surely bring forth praises out of the heart. One man describes his experience like this: 'I'd creep beside him as a worm, and see him bleed for me.' Now you see, if I can put it like this, the desire of the soul is to make oneself as small as possible in order that, according to our feelings, the Most High may 'fill immensity', as Dr Watts puts it, 'And reign from pole to pole.' There is a word in Colossians: 'Christ is all and in all.' If we are to enter into the fulness of this word: 'It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High,' then it will be needful for us to feel that Christ is all and in all; for Him to fill us, to fill us as individuals, so that there is no room for self to have even the smallest place. When the soul is brought into that favoured spot, and it is not a spot we are brought into every day or in continuity, but it is a spot where we have no self-will, because the Spirit of God dwells in us and moves us, and gives us faith to behold the glory of the Most High, so that we say: "Yes, it is good to give thanks." 'O that men would praise the Lord for His goodness,' says the Psalmist. And this is surely the goodness of God, the goodness of God displayed, which results in repentance; that is, seeing ourselves as nothing at all. We should not have half our troubles, we should not have any trouble at all if we were more conscious of what we are, which is nothing. It is because we want to be something, which has an association of pride with it, that we often raise many, many troubles. 'It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord.'

There is a little incident which I sometimes mention; it brings to our attention a poor woman in the days of the Puritans. She was singing and a man who was passing was attracted to enquire what this all meant. As he put his head round the door he saw this woman holding up a dry crust and saying: All this, and Jesus Christ. Without any doubt that woman would endorse what we have before us: It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord; though "I have nothing in regard to the things of this life but a dry crust." How many would reject it out of hand! But that woman sang the praises of the Most High because not only had she a dry crust, but she had Christ in her heart; and Christ in her heart was a revelation of the Most High. He was no secondary person; He was no person that such a one as she was; but He held all things in the palm of His hand. We often look at the 40th chapter of Isaiah. How gloriously it describes the greatness and excellency of the Most High! May the Lord grant us such a spirit and such a view of the Most High as to say: 'It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High.'

Amen.