

Our Great God

Your ways, God, are holy. What god is as great as our God?
(Psalm 77:13).

Scripture: Psalm 77:11-20

Song: “How Great Is Our God”

The way that entertainment media showcases celebrities might lead us to think they are different from most of us and can do things that we would not be able to do. Through an experience I had at a meal with a celebrity, I discovered how much that well-known person, at least, is a regular human being with challenges, fears, and setbacks similar to my own.

Personal experience with God, however, will never reveal Him to be a “regular human being.” The more we know Him, the more clearly we will see how much “other than us” God is. The psalmist recalls this in Psalm 77:11, which points back to when God delivered the people from Egypt. That story alone is enough to declare in worship that there is no god like our God!

God reached out to Israel in their bondage, and He has reached out to us by sending Jesus to show His deep love for us. Through Jesus, God says, “I love you.” When we recognize God’s great love in His mighty act of raising Jesus from the dead and we receive His salvation, then we experience God’s mighty rescue from the consequences of our sin. There is no other god like our God, who is holy in all His ways.

Holy Father, please rescue me by the power You demonstrated in history and in resurrecting Jesus. In His name, amen.

.....
March 1–7. **Jake Doberenz** lives in Oklahoma City with his wife and ministers to college-age students.

The Reversal

“Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here [at Abraham’s side]” (Luke 16:25).

Scripture: Luke 16:24-31

Song: “I Will Rise”

We enjoy stories about underdog teams that win, especially in the last seconds of a game. There are countless sports movies with just that plot. The reversal is incredibly attractive and gripping. And maybe for ourselves, we like to imagine that one day we might experience such a reversal and rise from our own down-and-out situation.

Jesus’ stories also celebrate reversal. In His parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16, Jesus juxtaposes a wealthy man with all he could ever want against the poor man who begs for scraps at his gate. But as both men die, we see that for eternity things are the opposite: now the rich man is in torment; Lazarus is comforted. Both of their lives on earth did matter—but not because of their finances. No amount of money could stop the rich man from entering Hell. His hard heart had not followed God’s path.

It’s too simple to say the lesson is about how we use money. Rather, Jesus’ reversal story offers hope to those who relate to Lazarus. While our earthly existence might be torment, in Jesus we are comforted. Bad experiences should not be downplayed, because what is important is that in eternity comfort is offered to those who are afflicted for His name. In Heaven, the righteous underdogs win.

Father, guide our hearts as we seek to live like Jesus. Remind us that in our lowest times, You promise us comfort. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Celebrate

“The whole community of Israel must celebrate [the Passover meal]” (Exodus 12:47).

Scripture: Exodus 12:43-50

Song: “Jesus, We Celebrate Your Victory”

My wife and I celebrate our wedding anniversary between just the two of us at a special dinner or favorite activity. It’s about us and our relationship, so no one else gets invited. But for birthdays we might invite family members and many friends. The one common attribute of all the people is some sort of relationship with the birthday person.

The Jewish Passover was more like our birthday celebrations. Israelites, slaves they owned (Exodus 12:44), and also foreign residents (v. 48) were included in the celebration—if they were devoted to God. Relationship with God and obedience to His commands were essential for an invitation to celebrate. It was a special gathering of the devoted around the Passover table. Everyone was there to remember God’s work in their lives.

God wants everyone devoted to Him to remember and to celebrate His work in their lives. We should celebrate regularly, even daily. We should celebrate that we have been set free from the eternal consequences of our sin, and we should celebrate other ways God is restoring us as His people. Let celebration of your freedom in Christ enrich and strengthen your testimony to other believers and to people who have not yet understood and accepted the invitation into God’s family.

Father, help us to celebrate all that You have done in our lives. Remind us of Your great works, and give us strong witness to the world for Your mighty name. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Everyone Can Be Included

“A foreigner residing among you is also to celebrate the LORD’s Passover in accordance with its rules and regulations”
(Numbers 9:14).

Scripture: Numbers 9:9-14

Song: “All Who Are Thirsty”

I had a school classmate whom most kids did not like. He wanted to be included, but most thought he was “weird” and made him an outcast. However, the so-called outcast and I enjoyed each other and became friends. One of my other friends told me that he didn’t like my new friend, the outcast. Perhaps silly, but I told that friend that I couldn’t be friends with him unless he started being nice to my new friend. Apparently that was all it took because we three became good friends after that. The so-called outcast was slowly becoming included.

God does not make an outcast of anyone who will fear Him. The Lord gave Moses specific instructions to include residents from other nations in their Passover celebrations, if they held to the covenant regulations for Passover. God has rules but also amazing grace. He has always made a way for all who will come to receive His salvation, and a place at the table where His people gather. God has made a way for everyone to come into communion with the Lord. Since God welcomes everyone, we are called to reach out and welcome anyone into the family of God and to include in our faith communities all who respond.

Father, thank You for inviting me in and making me part of Your family. Strengthen me as I show Your love to others and guide people into relationship with You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Devoted to God

The LORD said to Moses, “Consecrate to me every firstborn male” (Exodus 13:1).

Scripture: Exodus 13:1-2; Deuteronomy 15:19-20

Song: “You Are My All in All”

God commanded His people to worship Him in festivals, special meals, and offerings at the temple. Today’s verse is God’s command to consecrate every firstborn son. Every baby boy that was a couple’s first child was to be set apart for God. This was an offering of dedication given out of the parents’ devotion to God. It was also a public declaration that God provides for, and protects, His people. There is a lot of significant meaning embedded in this command.

This instruction is given in the context of other commands for Passover. The consecration of firstborn males reminded the people of the blood of lambs that protected their firstborn sons in Egypt (Exodus 12:13, 29-30), just before they were released from slavery. In dedicating a son to God, the child became a living symbol of God’s grace in the people’s past and also evidence of their confidence that His grace would continue into the future.

All believers today are urged to dedicate ourselves to God (Romans 12:1). We do this in response to God’s mercy for us. Each day we are to look to Scripture and seek how we will give ourselves to Him and to others in His name—because we love God and enjoy the blessing of His grace and mercy in our lives.

Father, I consecrate myself to You. Please help me recognize how to give myself in service to You and the people I can help today. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Go Tell

“On [the day you celebrate the exodus] tell your son, ‘I do this because of what the LORD did for me’” (Exodus 13:8).

Scripture: Exodus 13:3-10

Song: “Shout to the North”

I enjoy telling stories about my travels and other experiences. Stories help people know about me and understand some of the events that have shaped who I am.

God shaped His people and formed their identity through many experiences of His mighty deliverance and provision. They remembered these events and told them to their children to help the children learn their history and be able to pass their faith to the next generation. Parents wanted to tell their God-stories, but God also commanded that they tell them. The stories were written in the Torah (Genesis–Deuteronomy) but also on their hearts because of their power. The most important stories are in Exodus about how God protected the Israelites’ firstborn sons from the final plague on Egypt at Passover, as well as during the Israelites’ subsequent exodus from Egypt. Children learned that God rescued them from slavery by His grace. God’s mighty actions for their freedom shaped their identity as individuals and as a nation.

Believers have stories to tell from Scripture and also from their lives. Our children, families, and friends will benefit when we tell them what God has done in the past, and especially in our lives. We are to tell the world what the Lord has done for us.

Father, I owe everything in my life to You. Help me share my testimony with others so they will know how beautifully You work in the world. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Listen Closely

The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet. . . . You must listen to him (Deuteronomy 18:15).

Scripture: Deuteronomy 18:15-22

Song: “Be Still and Know”

I quickly learned as a substitute teacher that my voice does not always gain the respect of the class. Students might assume that a substitute can't discipline them. But on a few occasions another teacher, one the students knew, stepped into the classroom and spoke. The students respected that teacher and listened. Authority rests on the ability to call people to account for their actions and to be able to give out consequences.

God promised the people a prophet who would speak the words that God would give the prophet to say. The prophet is a messenger; God is the authority behind the message. The validity of the messenger is proven when the prophet's message is fulfilled.

Israel gained a long record of rejecting God's prophets, even though they proved themselves valid. People also rejected Jesus, who prophesied that He would be crucified and rise again (Matthew 20:17-19). History validates Jesus as the Son of God. We can trust Jesus. He is worthy of our exclusive attention and full obedience. There is no substitute for Jesus. He cares so much about us. When we listen to Him and obey, we receive God's blessing and goodness in our lives.

Father, open my ears to Your voice and help me follow Your instructions on how to live. Guide me as I meditate on the sweet words of Jesus, then apply them to my life. In Jesus' name, amen.