

Psalms 147:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Praise ye the LORD: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely.

Analysis

This verse opens with what appears to be a simple affirmation that becomes theologically profound: 'Praise ye the LORD: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely.' The word 'good' (Hebrew 'tov') establishes that praise is objectively valuable and morally appropriate. 'To sing praises unto our God' uses the plural, suggesting corporate worship rather than solitary devotion. The phrase 'it is pleasant' (Hebrew 'naa'im') suggests that praise brings genuine delight, not merely duty. 'Praise is comely' (navah) means praise is fitting, proper, and aesthetically beautiful. The verse establishes multiple grounds for praise: it is morally good, spiritually appropriate, personally delightful, and aesthetically proper. This multivalent justification answers potential objections that praise is mere obligation. Rather, the verse claims that praise aligns with reality itself - it is good, pleasant, and beautiful because it reflects ultimate truth about God's worthiness. The structure progresses from rational affirmation ('good') to emotional response ('pleasant') to aesthetic judgment ('comely').

Historical Context

This verse reflects the integration of theology and aesthetics characteristic of post-exilic Jewish worship. The emphasis on praise being 'pleasant' and 'comely' suggests a period when music and beauty were valued in worship, likely corresponding to Second Temple musical practice. Chronicles records that David appointed professional musicians and singers (1 Chronicles 15:19-24), establishing a tradition of musical sophistication. The phrase 'sing praises unto our God'

employs the corporate 'our,' suggesting congregational liturgical use. The repeated emphasis that praise is intrinsically good and pleasant counters ascetic or guilt-based approaches to worship that emphasize only obligation. In Jewish tradition, particularly in Hasidic movements, this verse became important in establishing that joy (simcha) in worship was not indulgent but spiritually essential. The aesthetic dimension ('praise is comely') connects to the broader ancient Near Eastern understanding that beauty itself reflects divine order.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does affirming that praise is 'good' and 'pleasant' transform our understanding of worship?
2. Why does the verse provide multiple justifications for praise rather than a single reason?
3. What does it mean that praise is 'comely' (aesthetically appropriate), and how does beauty relate to authentic worship?
4. In what ways does the corporate dimension ('our God') deepen the meaning of praise?
5. How should the understanding that praise is intrinsically good affect our participation in worship that feels difficult or dry?

Interlinear Text

הַ לְלוֹ	יְהוָה	כִּי	טוֹב	זִמְרָה	אֱלֹהֵינוּ	כִּי
Praise	ye the LORD	H3588	for it is good	to sing praises	unto our God	H3588
H1984	H3050		H2896	H2167	H430	
נֶעִים	נֶאֱמָרָה	תְּהִלָּה:				
for it is pleasant	is comely	and praise				
H5273	H5000	H8416				

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 135:3 (Resurrection): Praise the LORD; for the LORD is good: sing praises unto his name; for it is pleasant.

Psalms 33:1 (Resurrection): Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright.