

What Makes Your Soul Sing?

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[0 : 0 0] So we come to a time for our song reflection, and our reflection this morning comes from our brother Harsad. We're going to be talking about a hymn that we all know very well, How Great Thou Art.

And so let me offer what he shares with us. I grew up in Lucknow, India, and spent all of my early and teenage years attending the Laobao Methodist Church with my parents, brother, and sister, before leaving for further study in the United States.

The church had a large, vibrant choir under the leadership of Mrs. Jordan. Prem's father, a bishop in the United Methodist Church, was transferred to Lucknow, and so she attended the same church for a few years before coming to the U.S. for study herself.

I have many favorite hymns that I remember singing at the church, such as Amazing Grace, In the Garden, Silent Night, The Old Rugged Cross, just to name a few.

Even today when we sing one of the hymns I've mentioned, Prem turns to me and says, We used to sing this, and it takes us back to our church in Lucknow. I chose how great thou art, because I, and I'm sure many of us in the church today, have experienced how awesome God is.

[1 : 2 1] Just to give you a bit of background regarding the hymn, the hymn is based on a poem written by Carl Boberg in Sweden in 1885. One day on his way home from church, he was caught in a sudden, violent thunderstorm.

After he returned home, the storm cleared, he opened his window and looked out to the sea. This inspired the words in the hymn, O Lord my God, when I, in awesome wonder, I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder, Thy power throughout the universe displayed.

The poem was later set to a Swedish folk tune. In the early 1920s, it was translated into the English version that we sing today. I'm sure most of us, if not all, have experienced what Mr. Boberg went through on his way home from church in that sudden thunderstorm.

I recall shopping at a mall and realizing a storm might be coming soon. So I got out of the mall, started to walk towards the parked car, and all of a sudden, it started to rain heavily. So we ran to the car.

We ran in the parking lot. Thank God for the keys these days that not only opened the car doors, but also indicated where we were parked. And we drove home, and by the time we got home, the rain had stopped.

[2 : 4 7] Sky cleared, and the sun came out. I looked up to the sky and said, Wow, amazing, and gave thanks to God. The sim is also very special to Prem and me, as we were invited to a memorial service for Prem's mother, Mrs. Sudaram, and the choir sang How Great Thou Art at the Council of Bishops meeting in Detroit, Michigan.

So now, with that special reflection on our minds, and all the ways in which that song touches us, let's enjoy it together and sing it as we know it, as the band leads us.

Let's pray with us.

And I in awesome wonder Consider all the worlds I had made I see the stars I see the rolling thunder Thy power throughout The universe displayed Then sings my soul My Savior God to Thee How great Thou art How great Thou art Then sings my soul My Savior God to Thee How great Thou art How great Thou art When through the woods

And forest glades I wander And hear the birds Sing sweetly in the trees When I look down From lofty mountain granule And hear the sun and hear And hear the brook And hear the gentle breeze Then sings my soul My Savior God to Thee How great Thou art How great Thou art Then sings my soul My Savior God to Thee How great Thou art How great Thou art And when I think

[5 : 48] That God His Son not sparing Sent Him to die My Spirit's been taken in Then on the cross My burden gladly bearing He bled and died To take away my sin Then sings my soul My Savior God to Thee How great Thou art How great Thou art Then sings my soul My Savior God to Thee How great Thou art How great Thou art How great Thou art

Then Christ shall come With shout of acclamation And take me home What joy shall fill my heart Then I shall bow In humble adoration And there proclaim My God the great Thou art How great Thou art Then sings my soul My Savior God to Thee How great Thou art How great Thou art How great Thou art Then sings my soul My Savior God to Thee How great Thou art How great Thou art How great Thou art

Good morning Good morning Good morning Good morning This morning's reading is Psalm 145 I will exalt you My God the King I will praise your name forever and ever Every day I will praise you And extol your name forever and ever Great is the Lord And most worthy of praise His greatness no one can fathom One generation commends your work To another They tell of your mighty acts They speak of the glorious splendor Of your majesty And I will meditate On your wonderful works They tell of the power Of your awesome works And I will proclaim Your great deeds They celebrate your abundant goodness And joyfully sing

Of your righteousness The Lord is gracious And compassionate Slow to anger And rich in love The Lord is good to all He has compassion On all he has made All your works praise you Lord Your faithful people extol you They tell of the glory Of your kingdom And speak of your might So that all people may know Of your mighty acts And the glorious splendor Of your kingdom Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom And your dominion endures Through all generations The Lord is trustworthy In all he promises And faithful in all he does The Lord upholds all who fall And lifts up all who are bowed down The eyes of all look to you And you give them their food At the proper time You open your hand And satisfy the desires Of every living thing

The Lord is righteous In all ways And faithful in all he does The Lord is near to all Who call on him To all who call on him In truth He fulfills the desires Of those who fear him He hears their cry And saves them The Lord watches over all Who love him But all the wicked He will destroy My mouth will speak In praise of the Lord Let every creature Praise his holy name Forever and ever This is the word of the Lord Thanks be to God So this morning I'm blessed and honored To share some thoughts On how great they are Because it happens to be One of my favorite songs And it's a song That my grandfather Was known for singing And I can remember Being four At University Methodist Church Sitting through what seemed Like an endless service To hear him sing So does your soul ever sing?

[10 : 58] Do we notice if it doesn't? I mean it's a weird concept, right? We sing at church We sing in the car And I know there's some Shower singers out there We have phrases When we hear good news Like it's music to our ears And that it calms our soul But do our souls Actually sing?

That's the refrain Of how great thou art Then sings my soul But what does that mean? What is it about this song That ranks its second On the list of favorite hymns Only behind Amazing Grace?

It was the most requested song To go into the Methodist hymnal When they were creating it What is it about this song That's been recorded Over 17,000 times And in every genre Of music possible?

We heard a little bit About how this story Came into being And the English translation Was written by Stuart K. Hine Who was actually A Methodist missionary And he was stationed In the Ukraine And he heard it And brought it back Back into America And he wrote That fourth stanza The text of this Was based on Psalm 145 David's Psalm of Praise Which celebrates The greatness And the goodness of God Great is the Lord And most worthy of praise Of his greatness No one can fathom One generation Commends your works To another They tell of your mighty acts They speak Of your glorious splendor Of your majesty And I will meditate And I will meditate On your wonderful works They tell of the power Of your awesome works And I will proclaim Your great deeds They celebrate Your abundance goodness And joyfully sing Of your righteousness We all know God's

Untouchable nature Because of his powerful Gracious actions In particular God cares for the fallen And the hungry And he's filled And he's filled With kindness for all And close to all Who call on him Great is the Lord And most worthy Of our praise His greatness No one can fathom I love how the Contemporary English version Puts it For verse 3 It says You are wonderful Lord And you deserve all praise Because you are much greater Than anyone could ever understand In the psalm King David sings praises to God And uses the phrase How great thou art O sovereign God The flow of the original three verses Of the poem Reflects those themes In Psalm 145 Like the song David talks about God's might On one hand And then praises God's loving attributes On the other

[13 : 56] David begins that psalm With a statement Of intention He says I will extol thee My God O king And I will bless thy name Forever and ever Every day I will bless thee And I will praise thy name Forever and ever David's praise was personal He addresses it to my God And if you know that God is your savior If you have a personal relationship With him You're on a personal First name basis With the king Of all the universe David's praise was persistent praise He says Every day I will bless thee Not just in eternity In heaven someday He resolved to glorify God Each and every day While he was on this earth We wouldn't be so discouraged And negative sometimes I think if we purposed Our hearts to make a habit

Of lifting up And blessing And praising God Every single day Of our lives So what is it about this song How great thou art That stirs something So deep within us And I was reading an article And it talked about the fact That Billy Graham used the song So much in his crusades And when he was asked why He said It glorifies God It turns Christians eyes Towards God Rather than upon themselves I use it as often as possible Because it's such a God honoring song It honors God And turns our focus away And places our attention Back on God where it belongs God is greater than any joy This world has to offer Greater than any storm Our souls will ever weather Even the structure of our song Demonstrates the history of salvation God creates God provides and sustains

We corrupt God's creation But God in his infinite wisdom Sends his son When we sing How great thou art We acknowledge that God Is worthy of our adoration Of our devotion Singing is an act of worship To God Worshipping the natural order Worshipping God's love and wisdom And worshipping that Holy Spirit That moves through each of us Now I'm guessing that each of us Has experienced our soul singing At least once And even if you can't put it into words You felt that soaring, lifting That joyous feeling That fills your soul That passion and joy That wells up in us So much so that we can't put it into words But each verse of this hymn Paints a picture of these things That might make our soul sing Verse 1 looks at the cosmos The whole universe And we stand in awe

Of all that God has done We see the power and the bigness And the majesty of God's creation Expanding beyond anything We could ever imagine God's greatness is powerfully joined In the first verse of How Great Thou Art O Lord my God When I in awesome wonder Consider all The worlds thy hands have made I see the stars I hear the rolling thunder They power throughout the universe displayed Who among us hasn't marveled At the awesome greatness of God In his creation Consider all the worlds God's hands have made Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars In our own solar system Each one amazingly different And amazingly awesome And there are billions of other worlds Throughout our vast universe Like Boberg, I've seen the stars I think about when I was a youth And I went to Camp Asbury

And each night we have the opportunity To go and lay in the field And stare at a sky so full of stars That it was nearly as bright as day That makes my soul sing In 1988 at age 77 John Glenn took his final trip into space And he was noted for his faith And he said To look out at this kind of creation And not believe in God To me is impossible John's faith was reinforced By his experience in space And the knowledge that God spoke All of this into being The vastness of the universe compared to us That we're just a small part of it It's estimated that there are about 100 billion stars And only a tiny percentage Are visible with even the most powerful telescopes 100 billion stars 100 billion stars

[19 : 10] Just think of it What kind of God can create 100 billion stars Like that? Out of nothing How great is our God?

And like Boberg I've heard that rolling thunder And I'm sure a lot of you heard it Thursday night And one of my favorite things to do Is walk in a thunderstorm And jump in the puddles Just watching and listening to the greatness of God Seen in those violent thunderstorms But think of it Thunder and lightning are only a tiny Infantescently small fraction of the power displayed When a star explodes How credibly great God's power is God's power is displayed throughout the whole universe Everywhere Everywhere In every tiny corner God's greatness and power are displayed How great is our God?

But God's greatness isn't seen in just these incredible Mighty big displays of power They're displayed in quiet, gentle, peaceful ways Right here on earth And this is the inspiration for the second verse Of how great thou art We move from the whole universe To creation To birds To water To mountains Then through the woods and forest glades I wander And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees When I look down from lofty mountains grandeur And see the brook And feel the gentle breeze When my life gets too busy Or I'm stressed out Or I'm discouraged I like to go outside and walk And as I walk through those woods I hear the birds singing sweetly in the trees I see the water that he describes And somehow just being out there In the glory of God's creation I feel calm and whole again

And the stress drops away And I find a peace and a harmony That fills me with gratitude For the great God who made it all I think of one summer When we went and stayed on the top of a mountain in North Carolina And I woke up and looked out the window And you could see the amazing valley below The breeze blowing in cooled me And the quiet was so still And I could hear my soul sing then too In such awe of God's creation Often when we talk We talk about connecting with God in nature Of course we do That quiet of nature That contemplation That connection of God That allows us to marvel at God's work How often do we stop and take it in?

When does your soul sing? All too often we can feel helpless There are negative conversations we have Cynicism There are times when we can fall into the trap Of doubting who God really is And when we fall into the trap You need to lift your eyes Find God Go for a walk And breathe in and experience nature Think about it God created this universe for us This mass of chemical compounds That makes up the planets and the stars and the galaxy Our earth when we were in quarantine That we saw it healing itself Our connection to nature We have this innate desire to be near nature Because we're interdependent on each other We not only rely on it to help create the fresh air we breathe And the food we eat and the water But studies have shown that being in nature Living near nature

[23 : 12] Has a positive effect on our brains, our bodies Our feelings, our thought processes And our social interactions We feel happier when we're in nature How often do we connect with that experience of awe And let our soul sing Then sings my soul, my Savior God to thee How great thou art How great thou art I think David and Boberg would understand each other Another theme of Psalm 145 is God's goodness They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness And shall sing of thy righteousness The Lord is gracious and full of compassion Slow to anger and of great mercy The Lord is good to all And his tender mercies are over all his works God is good and righteous We can't really appreciate God's loving attributes mentioned Until we get a grasp of God's goodness

And his righteousness But God's also righteous Which means that he is perfectly holy And set apart from sin God can do no sin Nor can he tolerate sin And he's totally just Meeting to humankind What it justly deserves For its actions and choices This presents a problem for us Because we are all sinners And it's deeply ingrained We have sinful hearts We're by nature Separated from this holy, righteous, good God Because of our sin God cannot fellowship with sinful creatures Without their sin being justly punished And we know that there's no way We can make up for our sins ourselves Because God being infinite Requires infinite perfection Infinite holiness And infinite goodness And none of us are truly perfect

Good or righteous Despite our best efforts We as sinful creatures Can tolerate sin And we can overlook that sin in ourselves And other sinful people But God who is infinitely holy Just can't So on our own We stand condemned And doomed Before God's judgment But that's where God's loving attributes Come into the picture And why David is so much Praising God He says God is gracious He bestows upon us grace That we don't even have to ask for This grace that God gives us That we don't deserve He gives us salvation Salvation through Christ Forgiveness of our sins Eternal life And heaven Not because we deserve it But in spite of what we deserve David tells us that God is full of compassion We deserve his wrath

But God is full of compassion A fellow clergy member shared a story Of a lady that came to her church And in her church And in her church People in the congregation Would talk responsibly With the pastor as they preached And from time to time This woman would do it in their church And she was preaching And talked about how God was full of compassion And the woman spoke up and said Pastor, God just can't help himself It's true God's full of it He overflows with it He exudes it It's part of his basic makeup God can't help but be compassionate For our plight That's the only reason He sent his son to die on the cross For our sins Because of his character Of who he is God didn't save us because he needs us For some reason God's totally self-sufficient He needs no one And no nothing So why does he love us?

Why did Jesus come to save us from sin And give us eternal life? Why does he put up with us Who are ready his children When we sin again and again and again?

[27 : 36] Because he's full of compassion He can't help himself It's part of his nature It's who God is Those beginning verses of how great they are Help us figure out what fills our souls But the next verses dive into what that song should be God created this magnificent, beautiful world That can make our hearts sing That can bring out all those feelings of awe and majesty But that doesn't fill our souls God in all of his infinite wisdom Did something so amazing Something so special God sent his son God sent his son to take our sins from us To live with us as one of us To experience life and love And heartache and pain just like we do And then to suffer and die on our behalf To bear the burden that we couldn't bear To love us so much that we can scarcely take it in

God is slow to anger His anger but his long suffering won't last forever His anger slow but inevitable To those who turn from him He offers that gift of salvation Don't delay in coming to Christ And trusting him to save you Because God is standing there with open arms And will always accept you back David reminds us That God is also of great mercy And mercy is the flip side of grace Grace is God giving us what we don't deserve Salvation, forgiveness of sins, eternal life A relationship with God, heaven, and a spiritual family But mercy is not Is God not giving us what we do deserve Condemnation, judgment, separation from God And David says God is of great mercy He's not just a nitty-bitty little bit of merciful

He's of great mercy His fullness of compassion He's full of mercy too Finally, David sums it up by saying in verse 9 The Lord is good to all And his tender mercies are over all his works There's no preference with God and his mercy It has no limits It matters not if you sought to be good your whole life Or if you've shaken your fist And rebellion your whole life There's ample mercy for you It doesn't matter where you came from What you've done What sins you've committed What commandments you've broken How bad you've been God in his goodness Calls out to you in love To come to him To be saved and to experience his mercy With grace and love and forgiveness But wait, there's more That final glorious stanza of the hymn

Exposes God's mission Christ will come and be greeted with shouts of praise We will bow down in humble adoration Because his glory will be so great God is a great God and a good God He is worthy of our praise And he's worthy of giving our lives to serve He's gracious Full of compassion Slow to anger And of great mercy Boberg expressed it like this In the powerful hymn And when I think That God his son not sparing Sent him to die I scarce can take it in That on that cross my burden gladly bearing He bled and died to take away my sin Then sings my soul My savior God to thee How great thou art How great thou art Think of a God so gracious So full of compassion

So long suffering So great in mercy That he would not only spare his only son But send him to die on the cross That cross for yours and my sin Our burdens he gladly bared He bled and died To take away our sin What a great and good God One that you should bow down before And give your life to today If you have not been saved One you should turn back in humble repentance If you've wandered away from God One whom we should intentionally Purposefully and continually lift up And praise every single day And because of this We can't help but respond My God how great thou art So again I ask you What makes your soul sing Like me you may find it in nature You may connect and have your soul sing

[32 : 50] But no matter how beautiful that is You need to find the truest song there is In the work that Jesus Christ has done for you And when your soul sings with the love of Jesus Christ You can't help but to use it To nurture it To share it with others To use your gifts To bless and inspire everyone Please pray with me God of majesty and might You are the Alpha, the Omega, the God forevermore We raise your name on high for your kindness Your justice, your perfect love towards all mankind Every day is new Every moment a gift from you And you extend your hand And lift us up With numerous blessings to get through the day We give you thankfulness And worship of your goodness and majesty

Every day we face new challenges Physical, emotional, mental, spiritual And we need your strength to get through it all It's impossible without you Lord you save us Deliver us and strengthen us With the power of your spirit You have created us as your children Your promises are unshakable And you bless us You have equipped us And empowered us to face the toughest situations Because you are in our midst Our faith and trust in you is boundless For everything is possible with you Jesus our Savior has redeemed us For an eternal life in your beautiful presence Where we will endlessly pour out our blessings of your glory And say God how great thou art We thank you in the name of Jesus Amen So I invite you to let your soul sing with only the song that can come from God

So that you truly can say how great thou art Thou art We invite you this afternoon to come and let your soul sing at one o'clock As you listen to our band and share ice cream with people And find those connections that will help your soul find the song that God longs for you to have So I bless you in the name of God our Father I send you love and peace from Jesus Christ And with the Holy Spirit May he guide you and help you find that soul that your soul longs to sing That you have what we have hearings with for you and help us hear in your ■escending The soldiers have non-■ modo You have ■■atimes to be buds session do Then Principle awake is offering, your soul next to all 11 Your Lord SENG has raised awareness from those about child's parents The children may be both■■■ they press ■■■■ It is worth 6■■■ning And with that being say about the heart of children So you are struggling to answer cela