

The Power of Praise

This morning I want to talk about people watching. Many of us here today have been in several churches and have observed others. This is natural, after all we all want to fit in and be a part.

Have you ever noticed how some people come to church and get excited by something that they have learned or have discovered about themselves. That is awesome isn't it. Sometimes we are challenged by something that the Holy Spirit has spoken to our our hearts about a change that is needed. Not condemnation, but rather and encouragement to better ourselves and become more like Christ. There is another kind of Christian that you will observe. These Christians treat church as an obligation or sort of as a second job, they show up, put in their time, then to those close to themselves or even in general start complaining about what is going on. They do nothing to help what they perceive is wrong.

In some cases it is because things are changing and they want things to remain the way they have always been. They like to live in their comfort zone. In other cases it is because things are not changing fast enough to suit what they want church to look like.

In both of these cases what is the observable result? It is evident in the demeanour of the individuals. What is the evidence of this mind set you may ask.

They always seem to be lacking in joy, peace and overall happiness. They may often be down, depressed & discouraged. Pretty much any word that you can think of that means unfulfilled can be applied here.

When coming to church, it is often with the attitude of duty, obligation or sometimes even what can I get out of church instead of what can I bring to Jesus or how can I serve my lord and saviour. As a result week after week of observation will show these brothers or sisters leaving the service on Sunday with a myriad of issues:

They feel the same...

- There is no victory for these brothers or sisters over the set backs they have faced
- There is no relief from the burdens or problems of life
- There is no encouragement in their heart
- There is often an avoidance to fellowship or have contact with other brothers and sisters
- There is a propensity to always see things from a negative context

This scenario grieves my soul. There are some simple solutions to giving up on defeat and becoming the over comers that Christ has called these struggling brothers and sisters to be.

Revelation time now...

The problem in these cases is the individuals response to the challenges that life presents them with. I would go even farther and suggest that part of the problem is how the individual faces life.

But the root of the problem is this... Are you ready to hear this? The root of the problem is that those individuals either don't or in many cases wont praise God, in spite of what is happening in their lives.

Turn with me to Psalms 34:1-4 NIV

I will extol the Lord at all times; his praise will always be on my lips.

I will glory in the Lord; let the afflicted hear and rejoice. Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt his name together.

I sought the Lord, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears.

Even more simply put is the CEV Translation

I will always praise the Lord. With all my heart, I will praise the Lord.

Let all who are helpless, listen and be glad.

Honour the Lord with me! Celebrate his great name.

I asked the Lord for help, and he saved me from all my fears.

What is the actual power of praise?

Well Biblically we can look at examples...

We saw praise stop the lions from eating Daniel

We saw praise bring down the walls of Jericho

Why are we told to do this and yet so often fail to see it is essential?

From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, the name of the Lord is to be praised. (Psalms 113:3)

Now the examples are great what does it do for us specifically, today, right now

- Praise brings us back from the brink of our pride to an attitude of humility
- Praise takes us out of self-centredness and puts our focus back where it belongs. On Him.
- Praise opens the door to God's blessings in our lives
- Praise eliminates negative thinking and complaining
- Praise brings release and renewal from the stresses of life

Most importantly....

God inhabits the praises of his people. (Psalms 22:3)

Praise God... Touch God.

The often overlooked act of praise is full of power...

Some Christians, and I don't understand the reasoning don't enter into praise. The word says God inhabits the praises of his people... Why wouldn't we want that?

I heard a story about a preacher that was trying to sell his horse. He wanted a quad... no just kidding!

A potential buyer came to the church for a test ride...

"before you start" the preacher said, "you should know that this horse only responds to church talk. Go is praise the lord and stop is amen."

So the man on the horse says "Praise the lord," and the horse starts to trot. The man again says "Praise the lord," and the horse starts to gallop.

Suddenly there is a cliff right in front of the horse and the man yells "Amen!!!" The horse stops just at the edge of the cliff.

The man wipes the sweat from his brow and says, "Praise the Lord." and the horse leaps forward

Is the praise of God automatic or just words we say automatically out of habit. Do we really mean what we say or are these phrases automatic and rote.

When we give thanks for our food, is it just a habit or do we pause and actually praise God for the provision?

Are we actually grateful for what God has done for us? Do we consider him worthy of our praises?

Psalms 18:3 tells us: I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised.

Do you praise him for what he has done?

Do you offer praise of thanksgiving for what he has done for you?

Here is a little hint from the pastor's mouth to your ears. It is a little secret I have discovered.

Praise goes hand in hand with thanksgiving. Praise is verbalized faith. Thanking God after he has done something is actually called "gratitude" if you thank him before he does it that is faith! Without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb.11:6)

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord (Psalms 150:6)

Here is a second hint about praise...

We become like what we worship

Have you ever observed what a superficial person praises?

- That outfit is simply to die for

- My hair looks so awesome, I got it done by Cutzy that new uber chic boutique
- Oh my girl you have a zit, surely you aren't going out like that. You should have flawless skin like mine
- That new maxgloop eyeshadow is the only brand ill wear
- You brought a Honda quad to the mens retreat, I guess that's okay but I drive a Polaris
- Dude, your wearing a Timex?

Have you ever observed what a perverted person praises?

- Check out her assets man?
- Have you seen EZ on the latest xxx website?
- A priest, a pastor and a rabbi walk into a brothel...

In short we become like what we worship.

So if we worship God, we become Godly

As for me ans my house, we will worship the Lord.

I have observed another interesting trait...

On a side note, I have also observed that: People have been so burned by the superficial that when real praise for a brother or sister is given, there is a reluctance to accept it, value it or otherwise take it to heart.

God inhabits our praise. Is it any wonder then that praise defeats our enemy?

Consider Psalms 149:5-6

Let the saints be JOYFUL in glory; Let them sing aloud on their beds. Let the High praises of God be in their mouth, And a two-edged sword in their hand.

Okay so some of the power of praise is that it:

- Changes us
- Defeats our enemy
- Ushers in the presence of God
- Breaks down walls
- Lightens our burdens and encourages our spirits

So...

How do we praise God.

- We offer up our lives as living sacrifices to the will of the Father

- 1 Cor 10:31 – Therefore whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God
- We praise God with our voices
 - psalms 63:3 – Because your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise you.
- We praise God with Music
 - Psalms 150:3-5 – Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet; praise Him with the lute and harp! Praise Him with the timbrel and dance; praise Him with stringed instruments and flutes! Praise Him with loud cymbals; praise Him with clashing cymbals!
- We praise him with lifting and clapping our hands in worship
 - ps 47:1 – Oh, Clap your hands, all you people! Shout to God with the voice of triumph
- We praise him by investing ourselves emotionally in our relationship with him
 - Jeremiah 29:13 – You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

Praise is essential to your life as a Christian. The word tells us that God inhabits the praises of his people. Praise has the power to change lives. Praise has the power to change your life. God IS worthy of YOUR praise, so seek him with all your heart.