

Let Your Praise and Blessing Be Known

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our father and our Lord and risen Savior Jesus Christ.

I delight greatly in gathering together with believers to offer prayers and songs of praise, rejoicing and celebrating the arrival of the Son of God, the light of the world.

Christ our Savior is born!! and the season of Epiphany is upon us. It is the time of the Church year when Jesus is "*revealed*", "*shown*" and "*made known*" to the world. The Magi who brought gifts to the child Jesus were the first Gentiles to bow down and worship Him. They were the first to "*reveal*" Jesus to a wider world as the promised "ruler who will shepherd" God's people.

How the Magi's were moved to find and worship the new born king are part of the mysteries of faith, but undoubtedly they are a part of God's plan to bring the light of His promise to all people.

Isaiah the Prophet, in the Sixtieth Chapter, speaks the word of the Lord **1** "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you... **3** Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn."

A star in the east lead the Magi to where the child was and "they were overjoyed when they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him." Jesus's birth brought the dawn of new brightness into the world. The gifts the Magi presented to the Christ Child were earthly treasures, but the sacrifice God rejoices in most greatly is when we praise Him and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, call on the name of Jesus to guide us in this life and to protect unto eternal life.

We are called by the light of Christ to believe in Him and to praise and worship our God... Just as the Magi followed the light of the star out of the darkness, we are lead out of the darkness of sin under the law, into the light of righteousness by the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Today is January 3rd, three days into a new year... By now most everyone has made some kind of New Year's resolution... At a younger age I used to like to share my New Year's Resolutions... At first it kind of seemed cute to have others help hold me accountable – I don't do that anymore... I made a lot of resolutions and some of the same ones a lot of times... I don't really remember keeping anyone of them in particular... I guess the only way I can remember keeping a New Year's Resolution is that it dropped off my list for the next year... (See if you followed through on a resolution you don't have to make the same resolution next year-just mark it completed)... And if it dropped off my list from a past year... than I probably forgot about it... so I don't recall what was so important that it needed to be resolved... I can't be sure, but I think I've fulfilled all of my New Year's Resolutions from past years... There's nothing new that I'd like to resolve... You understand don't you?

There is one timeless Resolution I'm not finished with though, and I expect it to be a challenge until my dying day, it is to give thanks and praise and worship the Lord daily.

Our Epistle Reading from Ephesians supports this resolution as a call to believe and act like Paul, as disciples of Jesus “to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that **now, through the church**, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known.” Eph 3:9-10

I recently read a little book given to me by one of my granddaughters for Christmas. It was a simple book written in 1971. I was apparently the third recipient of the book because there were gift acknowledgements for two other people written on the inside cover; one from 1973 and one from the 1980's. The book title is “Prison to Praise” It started slowly, but it finished strong with a message as profound as our common Doxology – Hymn 805 in our LSB.

Praise God from whom all blessing flow
Praise Him all creatures here below;
Praise Him above ye heavenly host
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost Amen

The Apostle's Creed is a clear statement of our Christian Faith. The Lord's Prayer is the form of prayer our Lord and Savior taught us but how and when do we praise the Lord versus how and when we pray

How many times is praise mentioned in the Bible. – 363 – I counted them all - Only 4 times less than the three words pray, prayer or praying. Praise must be very important.

Prayer is important... In individual prayer we speak to God one on one for a variety of reason both good and bad. We ask for a variety on outcomes (hopefully always good), but always knowing Thy will be done... In group prayer we share our joint hopes and thanksgiving, and we again ask for a variety on outcomes (hopefully good), but again knowing Thy will be done...

Prayer provides comfort and hope to a believer and it can touch the lives of a non-believer in need as well.

But Praise is something different. Praise can be a part of a prayer and prayer can be part of praise... praise always thanks God and pleases Him as a refreshing Spiritual Sacrifice. Our Worship and the worship of the Magi are sincere forms of praise, as is the Song of Simeon in Luke Chap 2:25-32

“Simeon took child Jesus in his arms and **praised God** saying:
²⁹ “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you may now dismiss your servant in peace.
³⁰ For my eyes have seen your salvation,
³¹ which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:
³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and the glory of your people Israel.”

Throughout the Old and New Testament we find wonderful hymns of praise especially in
Psalm 104: I will sing to the Lord all my life; I will sing **praise** to my God as long as I live.
Psalm 106: **Praise** the Lord. Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever.
Psalm 148: Praise the LORD. Praise the LORD from the heavens; praise him in the heights above. Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his heavenly hosts.
Hebrews 13: Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of **praise** —
the fruit of lips that openly profess his name.

We often talk about the power of prayer, **but thank God for the power of Praise.** When we thank God for everything, **EVERYTHING** that happens in our lives and the lives of others we acknowledge His power and His presence, and the Holy Spirit, by His will, shields us from the power of the evil one and works for His good purpose in our lives.

It's easy to thank and praise God when things are going well, but try to understand how much more God hears and wants to provide us with his healing comfort when we praise him as things are happening that we find hard to accept and really don't understand.

When done openly, praise moves people. Praising the Lord is less complicated than prayer; we're not asking for anything; we're just thanking God for the fine mess we've gotten ourselves into... Observers of our open praise may want to join in with their own Amen or Alleluia... Or they may be perplexed and fearful when we praise God for circumstances they don't see as beneficial... Either way praise is a proper way to show our trust in the Lord....The positive effects of praising God cannot be measured by any means, but the negative effect of not acknowledging our problems to God can't be overstated.

It may seem like a little too much faith in the power of a positive mental attitude. I don't mean that things we perceive as bad are not going to happen, stuff happens... But putting your trust in God and believing that all things work for His good purpose; **praising Him** for the situations we may have helped yourself into is a sign of a true believer.

If God so loved the world that he sent His one and only Son into the world to live and die for our sins, how can we not believe that He cares for us in every setback or disaster we encounter.

I searched and searched for a book or chapter and a verse in the Bible to find one that says "When things don't seem to be going your way, don't bother God or don't turn to Jesus" ... **I couldn't find one!!**... When people are down or distressed or deep in the ravages sin Our Lord says "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Matthew 11:28

Everything points to God.

Give **praise** to the Lord, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done. Psalm 105:1

Christ our Savior is born!! Let us resolve to make known, reveal and shown Jesus to the world in the coming year through the praise and worship of our Lord.

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thessalonians 5:23)

Amen

In His Service

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