

Praise

-Prayer-

This morning I want to talk about praise. In our North American society there has been a trend towards a sense of entitlement. I have spoken before about our propensity as a society to try to tell God what to do - to invoke him as our own private Genie in a bottle. Today, I want to take us to the next level. Are you ready?

Praise is not optional... It is what we were created for. We are here to commune with God, to bring glory to his name and to praise him. Why because he is worthy of our praise.

Revelations 4:11

"You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being."

How often should we praise God? Does he really care about our recognition of him? Are we on fire for God?

Hebrews 13:15

"Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name" I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth"

If you are really seeking to connect with God here's a thought...

1 Chronicles 16:8-9

"Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done. Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts. Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice"

Why would the hearts of those who seek him rejoice, unless they have found what they are looking for?

People have a role to play in this...

1 Peter 2:9

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."

Without denigrating being quiet in the presence of the Lord and listening. Let me state here and now that there is more to our calling...

Psalms 47:1

“Clap your hands, all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy”

Worship and Praise are communication they build the Spirit.

Ephesians 5:19-20

“Speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”

You want to be close to God? Well he inhabits the praises of his people.

Psalms 22:3

“But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel”

It is infused into who we are... It is part of our very Spirit.

Luke 19:38-40

“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”

“Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!”

“I tell you,” he replied, “if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”

Hear Me! Praise is not just some man made creation that some creative pastor came up with to fill up time in the service. It is a divinely ordained and quite frankly unconditional expression on our part.

If we praise God we will be drawn closer to God and God is drawn closer to us. Praise is an act of our will that is brought forth from our awe and reverence for our creator. When we praise God we let go and let God. It turns our attention off of our problems and onto the nature of God and the wonder of who he is.

Praise has the miraculous though little understood effect in that when we reflect God’s glory back to him, we get filled with a sense of contentment and peace. Don’t believe me consider Isaiah 26:3 “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.”

Psalms 150:6 requires of us: “Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord”

Okay maybe by this point you can see that there is a scriptural basis for praise. So why is it sometimes like pulling teeth to get people to praise the Lord?

In Jeremiah 17:9 it says : “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.” People if we want to live full lives we need to praise. Whether pride can stand it or not, we need God. We can’t do it ourselves, remember the scripture I read this morning about Satan prowling like a Lion in 1 Peter 5:8? He is just waiting for us to do it ourselves, he knows our pride, he knows our history, he is a tremendous predictor of human behavior. Praise gives us the relationship to put on the armor of God.

Satan as Lucifer was the first minister of Music before the Lord God. Nothing gives him more perverse pleasure than to subvert the praise due to God. He wants to confuse and pull people away from praising God.

So how to we get from the As-is in our lives to the To-be...

Make a real life commitment to Christ; place your faith, love and adoration in the God who has quite literally saved you.

Confess with your voice that: “Jesus is Lord”, believe that he was raised from the dead and you will be saved (Romans 10:9) Say it: “Jesus is Lord!”

Confess your sin and repent. By this I mean the sin of prideful self-reliance, which is an illusion from the pit that separates us from the Love of God.

As God to help you examine your heart and when you find something you don’t like and you give it too him, and here is the part so many fail at... receive his forgiveness and move on.

Don’t tie you joy to your circumstance, tie it to your faith. Don’t rely on the way you feel right now, even if you don’t feel like it. Praise God. Do you know that in Hebrews 13:15 the bible says: “By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name” What do you think the sacrifice part means?

Praise God in the rough times, because they are an opportunity to grow. God will take that first step with you, but you have to sincerely choose to believe.

James 1:2-8

“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be

given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways”

To be strong in worship we should worship privately but also with each other.

Hebrews 10:24-25

“We should keep on encouraging each other to be thoughtful and to do helpful things. Some people have gotten out of the habit of meeting for worship, but we must not do that. We should keep on encouraging each other, especially since you know that the day of the Lord's coming is getting closer”

The body of Christ is important – Amen?

Good, cause it is really hard to praise each other and build each other up in a culture of honor if we cannot even praise almighty God for the wondrous works he has done, is doing and will do in each of our lives.

So... What is praise?

Well praise by definition is: “an expression of approval or commendation, applause. It is the act of making positive statements about a person, object or idea, either in public or privately.”

So...

- We approve
- We applaud
- We commend
- We make positive statements

I am gonna shift gears here for a minute...

Let's talk about Hockey... How many people here like to watch hockey? Ever been to a live game? What happens when your team scores a goal?

People Applaud, they whistle, they shout things like “Yes!” and “Man you are awesome!” perhaps “Good Job!” or “Good Goal!” they chant, sometimes they raise their hands up and do the wave.

Shifting back now...

Wouldn't that be great if we could get as excited about the reality of what Jesus has done for us as we can about a piece of rubber, wacked with a stick into a net...

Now, some people get confused with the differences between praise, worship and meditation. Many will plug into worship as they like the music, but worship is what we do. Praise is what we say and meditation is what we think. Just like the bible, there is no picking and choosing the scriptures you like and throwing away the rest. We are to worship, praise and meditate on the Lord. It's not multiple choice... it's all of the above.

Now let's talk about expressing praise...

As Paul said: "All things decently and in order..." So what does the scripture tell us about praise actions?

Clapping and Shouting to God

Psalms 47:1 "All of you nations, clap your hands and shout joyful praises to God"

Lift up your hands

Psalms 134:1-2 "Everyone who serves the LORD, come and offer praises. Everyone who has gathered in his temple tonight, lift your hands in prayer toward his holy place and praise the LORD"

Verbal Praise & Singing

Psalms 100:2 "Shout praises to the LORD, everyone on this earth. Be joyful and sing as you come in to worship the LORD"

When we praise God, we are offering thanks for the blessings received and declaring those blessings in front of others. We are declaring his good works to all those around. Praise God in your house, tell your family what he is doing in your life. We are supposed to do this... Consider Mark 5:19 where the demon possessed man has just been delivered by Jesus from his possession: "When Jesus was getting into the boat, the man begged to go with him. But Jesus would not let him. Instead, he said, "Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how good he has been to you" We read in Ephesians 5:19 where we are to speak to one another in Psalms and Hymn and so on... we are to proclaim.

We also need praise for what he is about to do because we have faith that he is true to his Word.

Praise comes down to this... Do you really believe in God and do you trust him?

If you don't your praise will feel empty, because you have no relationship with him. But if you do, your praise will raise your spirits, it will reflect Gods Glory and it will bring you joy. A bit counter-intuitive but that's the way it works.

Let me throw this at you. I wrote this in a joyful, playful mood, but I think it makes its point:

*We cry and complain
We wince and we doubt
We don't have a clue what praise is about
We hurt and we sorrow
We don't understand
We don't realize God's in command*

*We want and we need, yet we will not praise,
We sit there and wonder why our spirits don't raise
We struggle and strive, when all we should do,
Is reach for our savior, His love is for you.*

One final thought... If there is anyone who wants to go along with the crowd, consider that we are not alone...

Psalms 148:7-10 – Tells us that all nature praises God
Psalms 19:1; 148:3 – Tell us that the sun, moon and stars praise him
Psalms 148:2 – Tells us that the angels praise him

God is worthy of our praise and when we praise him our joy, our faith and the faith of those around us increases.