

## “The Symphony of Praise”

Date: June 5, 2016

Place: Lakewood UMC

Text: Psalm 146, 150

Theme: Praise

Occasion: 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Have you ever wondered, “Where are you, God?” know I have. Have you ever been going through a hard time, and when you prayed all you felt was the *absence* of God, and all you heard was silence? Maybe you’re going through such a time right now.

One way that people of faith have drawn closer to God, in times of darkness and despair, is to praise the Lord. “Say what?” you might ask. “If I’m feeling discouraged, it seems like the last thing I’d want to do is praise the Lord.”

Exactly. So what do we do? We sit around and mope, throwing a pity party for ourselves. We feel sorry for ourselves. We obsess about our problems; all we can think about is what’s going wrong in our lives. The whole focus of our thinking is turned inward.

And the presence of God is lost. Now, it is not the case that God leaves us. God promised He would never abandon us or forsake us. God is with us always. But we can certainly feel abandoned and rejected by God, especially in times of trial and trouble.

So how can we get reconnected with God? How can we change the focus? Well let me ask this - Did you know God has an address? Have you ever wondered where God dwells? Psalm 22:3 tells us, “Thou art enthroned on the praises of Israel.”

God’s address is spelled P-R-A-I-S-E. Through our praises, we build a throne in the heavenly places from which God comes and

rules. Psalm 100, verse 4 tells us the way into God's presence is by praise and thanksgiving. When we praise God, when we give God thanks, we are more likely to become aware of God's presence. God is enthroned on the praises of His people.

The Bible is filled with passages about our delighting in the Lord and singing praise to God. Praise is what we were created for.

1 Peter 2:9 says, "You are my chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, so that you may declare the wonderful deeds of Him who calls you out of darkness into His marvelous light."

Isaiah 43:21 reads – "My chosen people, the people whom I formed for myself, that you might declare my praise." In the old catechism that many of us studied as children, the question was asked, "what is the purpose of Man?" The answer was, "to glorify God." In other words, to give God praise.

Psalm 34:1 says, "I will bless the Lord at all times, His praise shall continually be in my mouth."

How is it with you and your soul? Are you praising the Lord with all of your heart and soul and mind? Many of us get so caught up in the daily struggles of life that praising God may seem like a foreign idea. We might think, "Sure, it's ok to do that if you're in church, but I'm not going to be doing that in the car or in the house or on the street." How many of us praise the Lord while doing our daily chores?

We can, though. God's Word tells us this is the reason we were created. This is our response to what God has done for us in Christ Jesus. Praise is not just a certain kind of music we sing in

worship. Praise is to be the way we live our lives as Christians. It is our destiny and our appointment.

Praise is the offering up of self as a living sacrifice. Romans 12:1 says, “Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – *this* is your spiritual act of worship.” Praise simply means to give God the honor. It means to acknowledge the perfection of God, the work of God, and the many blessings of God to us.

Right now there is a bit of a controversy going on as to who is the greatest basketball player of our time – LeBron James or Stephen Curry. Young people are idolizing these two men for their skills in handling a basketball. They want to imitate them; they praise them; in fact we might even say they worship them.

But basketball players come and go, as do rock stars and TV personalities, actors and actresses. But our God is a holy and mighty God and there is none like Him in the universe. Only God is worthy of our praise. Listen to these verses from scripture.

Romans 4:11 – “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power.” God is worthy of our praise. Amen?

Psalm 48:1 – “Great is the Lord, and most worthy of praise.”

Psalm 145:3 – “Great is the Lord, and most worthy of praise, his greatness no one can fathom.”

Why should we praise God? - because we were created to praise the Lord. Why should we praise God? - because God alone is worthy and deserving of our praise. Why should we praise God? - because God dwells in our praise; God lives in our praise. God is enthroned on the praises of His people. (Psalm 22:3)

People often wonder why God seems so far away. Maybe they're looking for God in all the wrong places. God is not to be found in our doubt. God is not to be found in our fears. God is not to be found in our lukewarm faith. God is high and lifted up, enthroned on the praises of His people. If you want to know the living God, let your voices praise the Lord.

I love a good orchestra. Erie is really fortunate to have a quality music program in our town. I love to listen to the Erie Philharmonic or the Erie Chamber Orchestra. We have some incredibly talented people in our city.

I enjoy how each instrument has its own unique sound to make, but blended together they sound so much richer and fuller and more beautiful. Each instrument must follow the conductor and the score for the sound to be what the composer intended.

The score is the Word of God. The conductor is the Holy Spirit, and the composer is Jesus. So it is in the symphony of praise. You and I are called to let go of our personal agendas, our competitive spirits, and our inflated egos, tooting our own horns.

We are, instead, to complement and cooperate together as one giant symphony, to exalt God's name together. Listen again to a reading of Psalm 150.

"Praise the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens. Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness. Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, praise him with tambourine and dancing, praise him with the strings and flute, praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals. Let

everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!” What a symphony!

In times of trouble, let us chase away the blues by praising the Lord. Come into his presence with praise and thanksgiving. Amen!