

We Are What We Worship – Worship Jesus by Praising Him

11/25/18 – Pastor Randy

John was on his way home after a long and difficult day at work. Having burned the midnight oil at the office for several weeks, the stress and fatigue was about to catch up with him. A few miles and minutes from his family he lost control and clipped a guardrail, flipping the car and landing it upside down in the middle of the road. Trapped inside, he watched in horror as gasoline from the ruptured tank caught fire and lit the pavement. And worse, the road was remote and cries for help would go unheard. Terrible thoughts raced through his head. Was this the end? Would he never see his family again? Would he die an excruciating death? As the seconds dragged like hours, his cries for help became screams of horror, filled with regret and sorrow.

As he gave up all hope he saw a white light through the flames. The car shook as he heard a voice and felt a strong grip on his wrist. Within moments he found himself lying on the pavement several yards from the burning car, while flashing red lights approached in the distance. A passing traveler had stopped and braved the flames to save the desperate and pleading driver, pulling him clear of the wreckage. In the process, however, he suffered significant burns to his face and body and was taken away in an ambulance. Surprisingly, John was virtually unscathed. His tears of terror became tears of joy at the thought of embracing his wife and family again.

The fireman tending to John described the daring rescue and asked if he would like to visit his brave and selfless savior as he struggled for life in a nearby hospital. “Wouldn’t you like the opportunity to thank him for saving your life?” he asked. John, thinking only of seeing his family, replied, “No thanks, I’m not interested.”

(This story was adapted from Craig Biehl’s, [God the Reason: How Infinite Excellence Gives Unbreakable Faith](#) and posted online at Bible.org)

We are designed to worship; to be drawn into an enthralling experience of admiration, reverence, awe and wonder in the presence of true beauty and genuine greatness, and pure goodness. We worship whatever or whoever we consider to be great. Greatness demands worship. The question is, “What, or who, do we consider “great”? What, or who we consider great will receive our worship? The title of this sermon series is “We Are What We Worship”. We become like what we worship

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because what, or who, we worship as “GREAT” has influence over us. We imitate what we esteem as great. Admiration leads to imitation.

When we worship the One True God, He will be the one:
for Whom we reserve our *highest PRAISE*;
in Whom we place our *ultimate TRUST*; and
to Whom we surrender our *supreme ALLEGIANCE*;

*Therefore, let us offer through Jesus a continual sacrifice of praise to God, proclaiming our allegiance to his name. And don't forget to do good and to share with those in need. **These are the sacrifices that please God.** – Hebrews 13:15,16*

This language is very similar to the language found in Romans 12:1,
*“And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. **Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.**”*

Under the OT Law worship centered around the offering of sacrifices. Therefore, it is not surprising to find the NT authors refer to worship in terms of “offering a sacrifice”. The phrase in Hebrews 13:6, “These are the sacrifices that please God” is a parallel to the expression in Romans 12:1, “This is the way to truly worship him.” In other words, we could translate Hebrews 13:15-16 as follows:

*“Therefore, let us offer through Jesus a continual sacrifice of praise to God, proclaiming our allegiance to his name. And don't forget to do good and to share with those in need. **This is truly the way to worship him.**”*

In Romans 12 we are told to worship God by offering our bodies as a living sacrifice to Him. We learned two weeks ago that this expression is another way of saying that one way to worship God - to honor Him and revere Him above all else - is to surrender to His will in loving, obedient service. Hebrews 13:16 repeats that concept of worship with a specific application: Render obedient service to God's will in the form of generous action directed towards those in need.

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Hebrews 13:15 speaks to the first form of worship as expressed in my three-fold definition of worship; **vocalized expressions of praise to God**.

The author of Hebrews, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit had repeatedly and forcefully communicated earlier in his letter (7:27; 9:12, 25-26; 10:10,14-18) that Jesus has offered Himself as the once-for-all sacrifice that has atoned for our sins, so offering animal sacrifices as a token payment for our sins is no longer a necessary part of our worship. What we sacrifice, what we give now instead, is our constant praise and thanksgiving. This praise from our lips is organically produced from a heart that recognizes Who God is and what He has done for us through Christ.

Hebrews 13:15 is not a suggested option for us. It is a necessary decision. One of the most frequent commands in the Bible is the directive to “Praise God!” God wants you to express your worship to Him by vocalizing your adoration and appreciation of Him. The “sacrifice of praise” could also be described as a “thank offering”. Praise and thanks inextricably linked to each other.

Why is vocalizing our praise to God an important part of being a worshipper of God? I’m going to give you three reasons today but the first one is the ultimate reason:

1. We should vocalize our praise to God because He deserves it. He is worthy of our praise. To not do so is to withhold from God that which belongs to him! This is also the primary and ultimate reason we should worship God in the manner we have spoken about the past two weeks; by placing our trust in Him and giving ourselves to him in obedient service. He is worthy of our trust, obedience, and praise.

Atheists often mock God’s commands in scripture that call on man to give Him praise by creating a caricature of God that paints Him as an ego maniac in constant need of praise. They act as if these commands mean that God needs us to stroke His pride. This is a sad misrepresentation that can easily be dismantled.

Is it proper to instruct children to express thanks to their parents? Are parents ego maniacs if they believe that their children ought to express thanks and appreciation

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to them and instruct their children to do so? Does it mean these parents suffer from an unhealthy sense of self-esteem? Are parents wrong for being offended if their children, those who are old enough to recognize the immense sacrifice that their parents have made for them, fail to recognize and appreciate those sacrifices?

The answer is NO! Children ought to be scolded for being ingrates and taught to express gratitude. Ingratitude in the life of one who is the beneficiary of abundant blessings that are the result of another person's sacrificial goodness is deplorable, and disgraceful. It is morally reprehensible and repugnant. Think back to the story I shared at the beginning of this message. How did you feel when you heard the response of the man who was saved? We are commanded to praise God because to fail to do so exposes us as morally corrupt beings who lack the capacity to respond in love, the love that is an inherent part of the nature of God who create us in His image.

2. God wants us to vocalize praise and thanks to him because it is good for us!

When we express praise and thanks to God, God is not changed by our praise but we are. God is no better or worse off whether we praise him or don't praise him. We are the ones hurt by our ingratitude. It is actually revealed in Romans 1 to be the starting point of mankind's rebellion which turns into idolatry.

*Yes, they knew God, but **they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused. Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools. And instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles. Romans 1:21-23***

Ingratitude turns us into miserable, self-absorbed, joyless, foolish, idolaters who, although we may not have fashioned idols out of metal, wood, or stone, we have committed idolatry by assigning to other things the honor that belongs to God.

The decision to praise God is a decision to focus on the blessings in your life. The poorest person is the person who is blessed and doesn't know it. There is a great benefit to think about and meditate on your blessings. But actually vocalizing praise and thanks for your blessings, whether you do it in private or in public corporate worship, has an even more powerful impact on your own spiritual, mental, and emotional well being.

Whenever you speak, the first person that is influenced by your words is yourself. That is true regardless of the truthfulness or righteousness of your words. If your

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words always focus on your negative experiences or your lack of positive circumstances, you will develop a vision problem. Your eyes begin to only focus on what you lack, leaving you blind to all of your blessings. You become spiritually blind and deaf just like man made idols. Praise to God reinforces our admiration of God and motivates us to want to become more like Jesus. A stronger admiration of God produces a closer imitation of God!

3. God wants us to vocalize praise and thanks to him publically because it is good for others!

*Ephesians 5:19 - **Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord***

*Colossians 3:16 - Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly **as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.***

Of course we sing praises to God for the primary purpose of glorifying him through expressing our adoration and appreciation to Him! But singing praise to God accomplishes two other purposes: It builds our faith and builds the faith of others. Gratitude and joy are contagious and infectious. Unfortunately, so is ingratitude. A complaining person not only depresses himself, he depresses the people who have to listen to his complaining. Complaints are not aimed at solutions.

I bet few of us come to church with the mindset that we have an opportunity and a responsibility to encourage others decision to life our voices and sing and praise God. You don't have to shout, but you do need to vocalize thanks.

Those are three reasons why you should praise God. In closing I want to address WHEN you should praise God. Hebrews 13:15 says,

4. *"Let us offer through Jesus **a continual sacrifice of praise to God**".*

But pastor, how can I Praise God if I am experiencing difficult and unpleasant circumstances? The Holy Spirit calls the Christian to:

"Give thanks in all circumstances" (1 Thess. 4:18)

"Rejoice in the Lord always" (Phil. 4:8) Paul went on to add that we should not be anxious BUT (instead) in EVERYTHING pray WITH THANKSGIVING. (Phil. 4:6)

Constant praise requires constant reflection on the greatness and goodness of our God. It requires us to recall our blessings and reaffirm to ourselves how blessed we really are.

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How can we praise God when facing painful or unpleasant circumstances? How can we not praise God in those moments? Those are the moments we need to praise and give thanks the most. For the situation? Not necessarily, but in the situation, absolutely!

In Acts 16 we read about an incident where Paul and Silas, were stripped and severely beaten with wooden rods. Then they were thrown into the inner dungeon and their feet were placed in stocks. The next sentence begins Around midnight Paul and Silas... Before I tell you what they did, what would you be doing at midnight. Sleeping? Crying? Yelling at God? Cursing the soldiers who did this to you? Feeling sorry for yourself? All of the above?

Here is what Luke tells us they did: Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening. What happened next was God caused an earthquake to break the chains of every prisoner and shake the prison doors off their hinges. Although Paul and Silas were set free they they didn't run. Why? Because the man in charge of the prison was about to kill himself thinking all his prisoners had escaped on his watch. Paul and Silas stayed to protect him. He ended up placing his faith in Jesus as his Savior. How did Paul and Silas rise above their circumstances to where they could still serve others in the middle of their midnight hour?

When it got darker they sang louder! I don't know what kind of midnight hour you are facing today, but it is probably not as dark as the situation Paul and Silas were facing. Let's follow their example and decide now that we will not allow our praise to God become conditioned by our circumstances. We will not forget God when it gets dark. Figuratively speaking, in our dark moments it is harder to see God, but he is no less present with us. Our circumstances may not be good but God is no less good when it is dark outside than He is when the sun is shining bright. Don't let the darkness shut down your praise. When it gets darker, sing louder.

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