

“Enthroned on the Praises!”

Psalm 47

Revelation 19:1-8

Bible Mission USA

Sermon Archive

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“You are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel.”

(Psalm 22:3)

About the subject of this morning’s sermon I am an infant. I can’t even toddle yet! I’m still in diapers and sucking the bottle.

I can only hope that you who are ‘further in and higher up’ will be of help. More than that, I am counting on the Scripture to give us clearer guidance as maturing Christians.

The subject to which I refer is *Praise*. Rarely has the centrality of praise been more beautifully expressed than in the text I’ve chosen for this message – Psalm 22:3. O God...

“You are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel.”

Over the years, praise has not always been enthroned in my

spiritual disciplines. Generally speaking my prayers include confession, thanksgiving intercession and petition. But I haven’t always praised God extravagantly or with exuberance.

When I recognized this weakness in myself, I thought I saw something of the same tendency in the corporate life of congregations.

Praise in Heaven

So, on this Thanksgiving Sunday let’s focus on praise. After all, thanking God and praising God are twins or at least ‘kissing cousins.’

For many people, thanking and praising amount to the same thing. Without question they are related. In Psalm 100, praise and thanks are combined in the same verse.

*“Enter his gates with
thanksgiving,
and his courts with
praise.”*

In your personal devotional life, you may have found your praise of God moving quickly and seamlessly into thanking God. Even so, I’m going to hold out for a distinction between thanking and praising.

The passage we read from *Revelation* may help to point up the distinction. It’s a scene of heavenly worship bubbling over with spiritual enthusiasm.

Four great *Hallelujahs* ring out in worship, each of them a joyful expression of praise.

*“Hallelujah,
salvation and glory and
power belong to our God.”*

The Greek text, here, does not include the word *belong*. There is no verb. This is not a sentence about what God does. It is an exclamation about *who* God is.

God *is* salvation, God *is* glory, God *is* power! Once perceive *who* God truly is and praise becomes your only appropriate response.

*“Hallelujah,
the smoke from her goes up
for ever and ever.”*

This imagery refers to God’s judgment on evil leaders represented by Rome and symbolized as “*the great prostitute.*”

But notice, God is praised not because the wicked are consumed, but because God’s “*judgments are true and just.*” In God alone we find true justice.

The third ringing note of praise sounds out in heaven’s worship.

“Amen, Hallelujah!”

Then a voice from the throne encourages everyone,

*“Praise our God,
all you His servants,
you who fear Him,
both small and great.”*

All the faithful are urged to praise God as Master of all. God is Holy and reigns in glory, far above all who consider themselves “*small*” and all who imagine themselves “*great.*”

*“Hallelujah!
For our Lord God Almighty
reigns.”*

No matter how much human distress we suffer, national struggle we encounter, or the worldly turmoil we endure – God is on the throne! Our Lord God Almighty reigns! In the end, God wins!

Boasting About God

Thanks may be our natural response to *what* God does, but praise is our natural response to *who* God is.

God *is* salvation and glory and power. God *is* just and holy and sovereign. Because of *who* God is, we praise Him.

Revelation 19 is peppered with ‘*Hallelujahs*.’ This Hebrew word is vital to our spiritual language of praise. And yet, our English word ‘*Hallelujah*’ occurs only here in all the Bible!

Stay with me now. *Hallelujah* is a transliteration of two Hebrew words, *halal*, meaning ‘praise,’ and *Jah*, a Hebrew name for God.

In some Old Testament Psalms those two Hebrew words are found in sequence and so are translated quite correctly in our English Bibles, “*praise the Lord*.”

But only in *Revelation* 19 are the original Hebrew words combined and *transliterated*, forming our English word ‘*Hallelujah*.’

This single passage has inspired us to sing *Hallelujahs* in our Christian hymns and anthems, and to stand in response to Handel’s mighty *Hallelujah Chorus*.

The Hebrew word *halal* (praise) means basically ‘to boast.’ When we praise we ‘boast about God.’ Someone suggested that Christian praise is ‘bragging on Jesus.’ In our daily lives we do all sorts of boasting and bragging.

We boast about our favorite football team. We brag on our children’s or grandchildren’s accomplishments. We praise the virtues of our wives or husbands. In fact, we are swept along with praise in almost every area of our lives.

We praise boats and books, children and cars, furniture and flowers, homes and horses, mountains and movies, weather and wine. We praise, you see, what we care about most, what we consider to be most valuable.

This, by the way, was the original meaning of our English word *praise*. We borrowed it from an old French word meaning ‘price, value, prize.’

Originally ‘praise’ meant, ‘to price or value something.’ We retain this old idea in our word ‘*appraise*’ – meaning to set a value on something.

So, we praise what we value, what we prize. This is why we praise God. God is our supreme

treasure! God alone is worthy of praise.

Praise in Action

Praise is essentially a verb. It calls for action. The energy we put into praising completes our enjoyment of praising.

To get the feel of this, try to imagine yourself at a football game on Saturday afternoon. Just before the kickoff, a voice comes booming over the loud speaker,

“Once the game gets underway today, we’ll have none of that shouting, clapping, stomping, jumping up and down, hand waving and general mayhem in the stadium”!

Imagine! Just imagine such an announcement!

Deny us the freedom to express ourselves at a football game, and not only would thousands of fans burst from containment, but our enjoyment of the game would be totally demolished.

When a run off tackle gains twelve yards, or a thirty-two-yard pass is caught in the end zone, or the posts are split with a forty-one-yard field goal, we can’t help shouting, stomping and waving our hands.

This is the normal way we humans behave when we genuinely praise. So it’s not surprising to discover the Bible describing praise in some very boisterous ways.

The Israelites were told to *“shout to God with cries of joy!”* (Ps. 47:1). Instruments joined the chorus of praise – trumpets and pipes, harps and tambourines, whatever could be strummed or blown or banged to make music.

Jewish worship was a noisy affair! Why not? We’re told God delights in the *“joyful noise”* of His people (Psalm 100:1).

Movement is also important in praising. The Bible says, *“Lift up your hands in the sanctuary and praise the Lord”* (Ps. 134:2). Lifting hands is a universal sign of surrender to God, as well as a child’s demonstration of wanting to be held.

In that regard, have you ever taken note of our Thanksgiving hymn, *For the Beauty of the Earth!* One of the verses offers thanks to God –

*“for thy church that evermore
lifteth holy hands above”*

More than voices and hands, our whole body gets invested in

praise. I checked out the postures of praise described in the Bible.

There is not a single verse that speaks of praising God while sitting down. Praise is linked with standing, walking, leaping, dancing, bowing, and falling down.

Once someone told me, “Paul, if you had to preach without using your hands and body – *you’d be mute!*” Movement aids our communication and releases our praise.

Most of us are not very demonstrative in our praise. I think this may be because it’s not our tradition or our cultural pattern.

But we do need to honor those for whom movement and involvement is essential in *their* expression of praise.

Health Made Audible

Now, let’s be clear. God is not vain. He does not *need* our praise as an actor might need a fawning crowd.

We praise not because God needs it, *but because we do!* C. S. Lewis made this telling point in his stimulating book, *Reflections on the Psalms*.

He believed praising was an important sign of a healthy and

balanced personality. He put it this way.

“The humblest, and at the same time most balanced minds, praise most, while the cranks, misfits and malcontents, praise least.

Praise almost seems to be inner health made audible.”

What an insight! Praise is “*inner health made audible!*” Praise is the way spiritually healthy believers and spiritually healthy congregations express themselves.

Why is this so? Why is praise of God a sign of spiritual health and vitality?

In part, it is because praise opens the door of communion with God. Praise helps us get beyond ourselves and focus our “*heart and soul and mind*” on God. As one of our praise choruses sings it:

“Let’s forget about ourselves and concentrate on God and worship Him”

Without our genuine praise, worship can become routine and mechanical. Through praise, worship becomes personal and vital. Let me try to put this important truth into an analogy.

This past week I was calling a fellow pastor in Georgia. I punched in the number and waited. On came that mechanical female voice admonishing me, “You must first dial a *one* when calling this number.”

I knew that! I just forgot. We’ve all come to understand that in order to make a long distance call, we have to first press ‘*one*.’ Pressing ‘*one*’ opens up the whole world to us!

We can have all our Worship numbers lined up in proper sequence. We can do everything “*decently and in order*.” But if we are not dialing the ‘*one*’ of praise, we are not likely to get much beyond ourselves in worship.

Our praise serves to tune our spirits to God’s frequency.

If you want God personally,
praise Him.
First the praise, then the personal.

If you want God in prayer,
praise Him.
First the praise, then the prayer.

If you want God’s power,
praise Him.
First the praise, then the power.



God is “*enthroned on our praises*.”

No praise – no enthronement.
No enthronement – no worship.
No worship – no sense of the presence and power of God.

We conclude today using a mighty hymn of praise. When we sing this chorus from our spirit, we do, indeed, get beyond ourselves and enthrone God in our praises.

*Majesty, worship His majesty.
Unto Jesus be all glory,
honor and praise.*

*Majesty, kingdom authority
flow from his throne unto his own,
His anthem raise.*

*So exalt, lift up on high
the name of Jesus.
Magnify, come glorify Christ
Jesus the King.*

*Majesty, worship His majesty –
Jesus who died, now glorified,
King of all kings.*