

July 5, 2009

I Chronicles 29:10-13 / Psalm 96:1-9 / Psalm 113:1-3 / Revelation 5:1-14
 Making the Lord's Prayer Our Own (#6) – Verbally Adoring God

Last week I announced to you I would NOT be preaching on this last phrase of the Lord's Prayer. Sorry about that! They say, "It's a woman's prerogative to change her mind." I might add, "It's a pastor's prerogative, when he senses the Spirit leading him to do otherwise, to change his mind too!"

That's what happened last Sunday afternoon and continued throughout this week. I sensed the Lord did indeed want me to preach on this last phrase of the Lord's Prayer, which as I mentioned, is not found in any of the earliest Greek manuscripts, but seems to have been added on to the prayer, later on, for liturgical purposes.

So even though it does not appear in the text of Luke or Matthew, I would still like to speak on it — just as in the past I have preached on things like "The Apostle's Creed," or one particular Christmas, "The Theology of the Christmas Carols."

And in doing so I'd like to approach the phrase from the standpoint of how much we need to do what this phrase makes us do when we say it — audibly and verbally and publically praise and adore God.

In Scripture we find prophets and priests and psalmists and kings (and God Himself through them) admonishing and even commanding us to praise Him. Not just once or twice here and there, but hundreds upon hundreds of times throughout both Testaments — in the things we say and the songs we sing and the way we live — even as we sleep (Psalm 42:8)!

Listen to the declarations of Scripture:

"Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise." (I Chron. 16:25)

"Praise the Lord your God... praise the greatness of our God." (Dt. 8:10 / 32:3)

"Sing to the Lord and praise Him for the splendor of His holiness." (II Chron. 20:21)

"Stand up and praise the Lord your God, who is from everlasting to everlasting!" (Nehemiah 9:5-6)

“From the rising of the sun until the time that it sets, the name of the Lord is to be praised.” (Psalm 113:3)

“Praise God in the great congregation... Praise Him all His angels... Praise Him sun and moon... Praise Him you waters... Praise Him in the assembly of the saints... Praise His name with tambourine and dancing... It is pleasant and fitting to praise him... Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord.” (Psalm 68, 147, 148, 150)

You see, that’s what this last phrase of the Lord’s Prayer is — a reminder to all of us, every time we pray it, to do what Scripture so incessantly calls us to do — verbally praise and adore God. / Acknowledge audibly, in the presence of others, that everything belongs to Him — that He is Almighty, has made all, and rules over all.

It is not only fitting that we should do it, but we are admonished and even commanded to do it throughout Scripture! And that’s what I want to address today. Why we are called and commanded to praise God, as this phrase so capably reminds us, on a regular basis.

So **FIRST**, let me say without any apology or confusion, that the primary reason we are to praise God, be it through the inaudible adoration in our heart or soul, or the verbal adoration expressed audibly in our words or songs (apart from which no other reason is necessary) is that God is worthy of our praise.

I am to praise and adore and worship God (you are to praise and adore and worship God) for no other reason than that He is WORTHY, as the heavenly beings tell us, *“to receive all glory and honor and power, for He created all things, and by His will they were created and have their being.”*

As the CREATOR, apart from whom there would be no creation, and apart from whose will we creatures would not even exist, God is worthy, for that reason alone, to receive our incessant praise.

But it doesn’t end there. He is also worthy, we are told, *“to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise,”* because He has REDEEMED us by the blood of the Lamb and made us to be a kingdom of priests to serve Him (Rev. 5:9-10).

Because of creation and because of redemption, God is worthy endless praise. Scripture makes that much perfectly clear. In fact, He is so worthy of praise, that the Apostle Paul can assure us that God’s “wrath” is being poured out from heaven, not simply because of the *“ungodliness and*

wickedness of men,” but also because, *“although they knew God they neither glorified Him nor gave thanks to Him...”* They refused to praise Him.

God is so deserving of the praise of His creatures, and the glory and honor due His name as Creator and Redeemer, that those who refuse to offer it to Him, incur His divine wrath.

Then **SECONDLY**, in addition to praising God because we SHOULD — because He is most worthy of our praise — we are also to praise God because our lives will never be whole, nor healthy, nor in sync with God and His purposes for this universe, nor function as people in the way that we should — until we learn to praise Him from the heart!

You see, that’s the reason we were made. Isaiah 43:7 tells us we were formed and made *“for God’s glory.”* We were created to honor and praise Him. That’s why He made us, says God through His prophet, Isaiah.

We were created to live to the praise and the glory of our God. *“The Bible is replete with commands to praise God,”* says John Piper, in His book “Desiring God,” *“God commands it because this is the ultimate goal of all He does — “to be glorified in his saints, and marveled at by all who have believed” (1 Thess. 1:10).”*

That’s why I can say that until we praise Him or worship Him from the heart, and therefore fulfill what we were created and redeemed to do — we will never be fulfilled! For we will be living in a manner that is contrary to His entire purpose in creating and redeeming us!

People have often asked: What is the greatest NEED of man? What is the one thing people must have or must do, if their lives are to be whole and they are to experience true joy and fulfillment?”

And though some will point to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, and others will tell you it is love or self-love or self-esteem or positive thinking, and still others (coming from a more Christian perspective) will say its grace or forgiveness or mercy or pardon or reconciliation with God or salvation or the gift of the Holy Spirit, I need to say in light of the entire testimony of Scripture, that the praise and adoration of God eclipses most if not all of them.

If we’re talking of being truly whole, and filled with joy, or even coming close to fulfilling the purpose for which we were made (and thus finding “fulfillment” in life) one of, if not the greatest need of all, is to have the praise of God be on our lips and in our hearts at all times (which obviously requires the experience of some of those other things I mentioned as well)!

You see, the reason God calls (and even commands) us to praise His name, *“from the rising of the sun until the time that it sets,”* is not simply because He’s most worthy of that praise (though that is the primary reason)! It’s also because when we do that we are fulfilling God’s intended purpose for our lives!

When we do it we’re in sync with the endless rhythm of all creation, which exists to the praise and glory of God. And we’re also joining in on earth with the incessant adoration of the angels in heaven who are constantly engaged in the praise and adoration of God, night and day throughout all eternity!

What will the redeemed be doing for all eternity? Revelation 7:9-12 gives us a clue, where it tells us that the innumerable multitude standing before the throne of God (from every tribe and tongue and people and nation) are waving palm branches in their hands and crying out in a loud voice:

“Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne and to the Lamb.”

Joined, of course, by the angels and elders and living creatures who fall on their faces and say: *“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength, be to our God forever and ever. Amen!”*

You see, when we praise and adore God, our hearts and lips resonate with the song all created beings were created to sing! A song that has been sung incessantly, and will continue to be sung incessantly, before the throne of God, throughout all eternity! So if you intend to be there, you may as well begin getting in practice!

Unless, of course, you are like the boy in the program I worked with in the Dominican Republic, who once said to me, “Who would want to go to heaven if all we’re going to do is praise God. That would be sooo boring!” He obviously didn’t know God!

So let me say it again. Whether you’ve ever considered it before or not, one of, if not the greatest need you have (if you seek fulfillment and joy in life) is to praise and adore God!

Do it and you will sense the pleasure of God, who calls and even commands you to praise Him! For as the Psalmist declares, it is not only right and fitting to praise God, it is also “pleasant” (or pleasurable)! An endless source of joy.

Do it on a regular basis and you will be fulfilling the purpose for which you were made, and thus experience an astonishing degree of fulfillment in life!

Do it and you will experience a degree of joy that cannot otherwise be experienced! Do it, as a regular habit of the heart, and your life will never be the same!

The opposite of praise is to grumble and complain. / It is to sulk and be bitter. / It is to wallow in anger and self-pity. Yet so long as we do that we will never experience the sense that we are doing what we were created to do and being whom we were made to be!

We will always feel out of place and sense that something is wrong inside and miss out on the fullness of life that God intends for us — a fullness and fulfillment in life that only comes when we learn to praise God from the heart — even when times are hard.

Then, **THIRD**, let's consider why verbally praising or adoring God is not only fitting, and one of our greatest needs (as I've already suggested), but also our greatest good in life.

And in order to do that I need to address the one thing that some people may be struggling with right now, as you hear all this talk about God commanding us to praise and adore Him, or the thought that we were created to offer Him glory and praise, or that all He does He does for the glory and praise of His name!

That's hard for some people to swallow. In fact, it has actually turned some people off to God (or at least the God of the Bible). The fact that God calls us repeatedly — hundreds and hundreds of times in Scripture — to praise and worship and adore and magnify and exalt His name, makes it seem to them, that God is somehow vain — even the most vain and outrageously egotistical Being in the universe!

And that's not an unnatural thought, if we align God too closely with us as human beings. Why? Because we know that if any mere human being were ever to call or command everyone else to incessantly praise and adore them from the time the sun rose, until the time it set, every day, for all eternity, and were to exercise wrath upon us for the failure to do so, we would label them an ego-maniac! We would!

They'd be right up there on par with Hitler and Mussolini and Chavez, and other such egotistical megalomaniacs!

And it's true! Any person who even desired (never mind required that), would indeed be a person of such psychological imbalance that we would question their sanity! It would be repulsive.

Why? Because we all know that no human being is worthy of such adoration! We know that every human being is flawed and limited and inadequate and dysfunctional, and thus no matter who it is, they would constitute an inappropriate object for anyone's worship or praise or adoration.

We all know that when flawed beings demand worship they do so to cover up, or somehow compensate, for their own deficiencies and insecurities, like the person who is always trying to get compliments in order to shore up a faltering ego or deep seated insecurities.

It would indeed be vain and egotistical for any person to repeatedly demand praise or adoration — because we know full well that no human being is “worthy” of such honor! (That is, if that person is simply human like the rest of us and not divine like Jesus was.)

Yet, what we need to see is that none of that reasoning applies with God. What would be wrong and egotistical and vain and idolatrous for any of us, is right and necessary and even for our greatest good when it comes to God Himself.

WHY? Because God has no weaknesses or deficiencies or inadequacies of any kind! He is not in any way limited or dysfunctional or lacking or flawed! In fact, He is more splendid and majestic and powerful and wise and wonderful than any of our feeble attempts to praise Him could ever even begin to describe! Whatever I say about God, can only fall short of the reality of what He's really like!

How is it, then, that I can say that praising God is our greatest good in life? *“How then,”* asks John Piper, *“can God be loving and yet utterly devoted to seeking His own glory and praise...? How can God be for us if He is so utterly for himself?”*

“The answer,” he says, *“is this: Because God is unique. As an all-glorious, totally sufficient Being, He must be for Himself if He is to be for us. The rules of humility that belong to a creature cannot apply in the same way to its Creator. If God should turn away from Himself as the Source of infinite joy... He would deny the infinite worth of His own glory. He would imply that there is something more valuable outside Himself. He would commit idolatry... This would be no gain for us. For where (would) we go if God became unrighteous? Where (would) we find a Rock of integrity in the universe (if) the heart of God has ceased to value supremely the supremely valuable?”*

Stick with me please! I know it sounds philosophical, but it's not! It's the way it is and must be if we are ever to understand how God's utter commitment to His praise is also our greatest good!

You see, if God did **NOT** command the praise of His name / If He was **NOT** utterly devoted to seeking His own glory and praise, He would be suggesting (or better yet declaring!) that there is something else or someone else in this universe that is more beautiful and wonderful and glorious and worthy and holy — someone else more splendid and magnificent and gloriously perfect or powerful and wise and loving than He! Which means He would be telling us that He is not God but something else is! He would be deceiving us!

If God is the most glorious Being in the universe, then He must be utterly devoted to seeking His own praise and glory. And He must do it, not only for His own sake, but for our sakes as well!

“God is love,” as Piper continues to point out, “precisely because He relentlessly pursues the praises of His name in the hearts of His people... If God loves us enough to make our joy full, He must not only give us Himself; He must also win from us the praise of our hearts. Not because He needs to shore up some weakness in Himself, or compensate for some deficiency, but because He loves us and seeks the fullness of our joy that can be found only in knowing and praising Him, the most magnificent of all beings... God is the only Being in all the universe for whom seeking His own praise is the ultimately loving act. For Him, self-exaltation is the highest virtue. When He does all things for the praise of His own glory, He preserves for us, and offers to us, the only thing which can satisfy our deepest longings...” He offers us Himself.

Which brings us to our **LAST** point. When God calls us to praise and adore Him, it's like He calls us to look at Himself as we would a dazzlingly beautiful cloud formation, towering high on the horizon and bathed in a glorious spectrum of colors, as the sun goes down in the quiet moments of the evening! In simply gazing upon such a sight our soul is inspired and lifted!

So lifted, in fact, when we see something of such beauty, that we can't help but call out to everyone else who is near, so that they too can turn and see and experience and be equally inspired and lifted in their spirit.

C. S. Lewis, wrestling with the idea that God not only wants our praise, but commands it, wrote in his book “Reflections on the Psalms:”

“The most obvious fact about praise—whether of God or any other thing—had strangely escaped me. I thought of it in terms of compliment, approval, or the giving of honor. I had never noticed that all enjoyment spontaneously overflows into praise... The

world rings with praise—lovers praising their mistresses, readers their favorite poet, walkers praising the countryside, players praising their favorite game—praise of weather, wines, (foods), actors, motors, horses, colleges, countries, historical personages, children, flowers, mountains, rare stamps, rare beetles, even sometimes politicians and scholars. I had not noticed how the humblest, and... most balanced and capacious minds, praised most, while the cranks and misfits, and malcontents praised least...I had not noticed either, that just as men spontaneously praise whatever they value, so they (also) spontaneously urge others to join in with them in praising it..." That's what the Psalmists are doing, he says. *"My whole, more general difficulty, about the praise of God depended on my absurdly denying to us, as regards the supremely Valuable, what we delight to do (indeed can't help doing) about everything else we value."*

Then listen to His conclusion: *"I think we delight to praise what we enjoy, because the praise not merely expresses, but completes the enjoyment. It is its appointed consummation. It is not out of compliment that lovers keep on telling one another how beautiful they are, the delight is incomplete until it is expressed."* (Me—Europe—Alone)

What great stuff! *"We praise what we enjoy because the delight is incomplete until it is expressed!"* says Piper. *"If we were not allowed to speak of what we value, and celebrate what we love, and praise what we admire, our joy would not be full. If God loves us enough to make our joy full, he must not only give us Himself, but win from us the praise of our hearts. Not because he needs to shore up some weakness in Himself... God is the only Being in the whole universe for whom seeking His own praise is the ultimately loving act."*

That' my call to you today — learn to praise and adore God.

Learn to do it incessantly — from the rising of the sun until the time that it sets, and on into the watches of the night. Learn to do it audibly — and do it, not only because it is right and fitting to do so, but because only in doing it will you ever be or become what God intends you to be.

Only then will you experience the fullness of joy and fulfillment in life that God intended you to receive as you praise and adore His holy Name.

Praise the Lord your God... praise the greatness of our God. Stand up and praise the Lord your God, who is from everlasting to everlasting!

Praise Him in the assembly of the saints... Praise His name with tambourine and dancing... Let everything that has breath praise the Lord! Praise the Lord.