

EVERYTHING THAT HAS BREATH

By Rev. Will Nelken

Last Sunday I spoke to you about a vital spiritual activity: giving God praise. Worship is more than religious routine; it is a *value* to be cultivated. Why is it such a value? Because we were made for worship!

Last weekend, the psalmist, David, led us down a path of instruction, highlighting praise as a value to be shared with succeeding generations, and inspiring us with reminders of the awesome character of our God.

I suggested to you that each day could begin with the conscious purpose and corresponding vow to make God's praise a priority in your life—each day, not just Sundays.

Most of us recognize the significance of such a plan. But the regular practice of it often escapes us. It's a common tripping point. Why is that?

Why am I reluctant to praise God out loud? (Even when I'm alone.)

Last week we thought about the high value of praise. This week, let's think about what causes us to stumble and fall short of this great purpose.

Can I just put the question to you? Tell us, if you will, why are you reluctant at times to raise your voice and give God the praise that is due Him?

Today, I'm going to make a list! You give me your answers and I'm going to write them down.

I have my own list, a dozen reasons I can think of that make me reluctant to give God His praise. Let's put them together and think them over.

- I feel unworthy
- I don't know what to say (what words to use)
- I feel uncertain of my relationship with Him
- I don't think He'll be pleased (He won't accept it)
- I can't carry a tune (can't sing)
- I'm not eloquent (stumble over my words)
- I feel embarrassed around others
- It feels mechanical
- I'm not into it

- It's hard to break the "sound barrier" (can't I just do it in my head?)
- I get distracted by my own voice
- I'm not reluctant, but I'm not consistent or persistent

Now, you've added these thoughts:

- I'm distracted by life's events (too busy)
- I want the credit for what I've done
- I feel ashamed of myself
- I'm afraid of what others may think (judgment)
- I just forget
- My location seems inappropriate
- I feel intimidated
- I fear rejection or ridicule
- I don't feel faith (not sure God is good)
- Negativity and anger are more natural
- I'm self-centered
- I fear the accountability that may follow
- I fail to see how big God is

Wow! That's quite a list we've gathered. I'll bet you've heard some reasons expressed today with which you are familiar. And I imagine you've also heard a few ideas that you didn't think of yourself, but that still make perfect sense to you.

You see, it's a common tripping point.

But now, the really important question (and its most important answers): What's wrong with all these excuses?

The only valid reason for not giving God His praise is: *not knowing God at all.*

But as Apostle Paul has made clear to us in Romans 1:19-23, there has never been anyone on the planet that did not know God *enough* to acknowledge that He is worthy to be praised. Paul wrote:

*1:19 What can be known about God is plain to [people], because God has made it plain to them.
1:20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes—His eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, because they are understood through what has been made. So people are without excuse. 1:21 For although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God or give Him thanks, but they became futile in their thoughts and their senseless hearts were darkened. 1:22 Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools 1:23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for an image resembling mortal human beings or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles.*

The tragic condition of sin in the hearts of humans translates to their preference to esteem and worship the things God has made, rather than God Himself!

Let me illustrate how pervasive is this warp in our minds. If you're honest with me, how many of you find it much easier to express praise of a golden sunset than of the Creator who painted it in the sky? How many find it easy to express wonder at the behaviors of creatures—like birds of the air or fish of the sea or otters and bears or elephants and giraffes—without a thought of the Creator who fashioned them from nothing and sustains them by His open hand?

We so readily give our praise to women and men who have written novels of fiction, or reported scientific research, or invented and developed innovative products, or built successful businesses, or accomplished amazing feats of sport, or responded in heroic fashion to circumstances beyond their control.

Yet, by comparison, we so seldom give praise intentionally and audibly to the One who made such discoveries and achievements possible, the One who gave such intellect and courage to humankind.

How sad. How sad it must be for God to be so overlooked. So underestimated. So unappreciated.

He gave us eyes to see, yet we close them.
He gave us ears to hear, yet we close them.
He gave us mouths to speak, yet we close them.
He gave us hearts to believe, yet we close them.

Psalm 145, which we read last weekend, was not a one-hit wonder. The psalms *burst* with praise to the Lord. The sheer volume of praise (not the loudness, but the number of expressions) are overwhelming. The occasion of words translated as worship or praise number over 2,000 (in just 66 books)!

I'd like to highlight some of them today. Listen, as I quickly read them.

Psa 9:14 Save me so I can praise you publicly at Jerusalem's gates, so I can rejoice that you have rescued me.

Salvation is a cause for public rejoicing and praise. (That's we baptize believers in water.)

Psa 22:25 I will praise you in the great assembly. I will fulfill my vows in the presence of those who worship you. ²⁶ The poor will eat and be satisfied. All who seek the Lord will praise him. Their hearts will rejoice with everlasting joy.

Psa 26:12 Now I stand on solid ground, and I will publicly praise the Lord.

Has God moved you from shaky ground to solid ground? From the mire of sin to the solid rock of salvation? Then, nothing is more appropriate than giving Him praise.

Psa 33:1 Let the godly sing for joy to the Lord; it is fitting for the pure to praise him.

Psa 35:10 With every bone in my body I will praise him:

"Lord, who can compare with you? Who else rescues the helpless from the strong? Who else protects the helpless and poor from those who rob them?"

Psa 40:1 I waited patiently for the Lord to help me, and he turned to me and heard my cry. ² He lifted me out of the pit of despair, out of the mud and the mire. He set my feet on solid ground and steadied me as I walked along. ³ He has given me a new song to sing, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see what he has done and be amazed. They will put their trust in the Lord.

Your acknowledgement of the good hand of God in your life is what softens the hearts of unbelievers and inspires their faith. Don't be intimidated by their unbelief! Just give God the praise He is due. Exude praise of Him like you would a celebrity or a hero.

Psa 47:1 Come, everyone! Clap your hands! Shout to God with joyful praise! ² For the Lord Most High is awesome. He is the great King of all the earth.

Psa 48:1 How great is the Lord, how deserving of praise!

Psa 51:15 Unseal my lips, O Lord, that my mouth may praise you.

Something (or someone) has put a lock on my lips. Break the lock, Lord! Unseal my lips!

Psa 54:6 I will sacrifice a voluntary offering to you; I will praise your name, O Lord, for it is good. ⁷ For you have rescued me from my troubles and helped me to triumph over my enemies.

Psa 63:3 Your unfailing love is better than life itself; how I praise you! ⁴ I will praise you as long as I live, lifting up my hands to you in prayer. ⁵ You satisfy me more than the richest feast. I will praise you with songs of joy.

When life is good, God's love is better! Give Him praise.

Psa 64:10 The godly will rejoice in the Lord and find shelter in him. And those who do what is right will praise him.

Praise is a shelter, a place of refuge and refreshing. Find reasons to retreat there often, if only for a moment.

Psa 66:20 Praise God, who did not ignore my prayer or withdraw his unfailing love from me.

Even when life is NOT good, let your hope be in God. Lift your prayer to God and thank Him for His faithfulness.

Psa 69:29 I am suffering and in pain. Rescue me, O God, by your saving power. ³⁰ Then I will praise God's name with singing, and I will honor him with thanksgiving.

Psa 71:14 But I will keep on hoping for your help; I will praise you more and more.

Music can help you to express your praise to God. You may not be a soloist, but you should be a singer. Who told you that you cannot sing? Probably someone who idolizes vocalists, but it wasn't God.

Psa 71:22 Then I will praise you with music on the harp, because you are faithful to your promises, O my God.

Psa 96:2 Sing to the Lord; praise his name. Each day proclaim the good news that he saves. ³ Publish his glorious deeds among the nations. Tell everyone about the amazing things he does. ⁴ Great is the Lord! He is most worthy of praise! He is to be feared above all gods.

Do you hesitate to pray to God because you don't know how to start? Start with praise! Then the way becomes much easier.

Psa 100:4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving; go into his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise his name. ⁵ For the Lord is good. His unfailing love continues forever, and his faithfulness continues to each generation.

Psa 103:1 Let all that I am praise the Lord; with my whole heart, I will praise his holy name. ² Let all that I am praise the Lord; may I never forget the good things he does for me. ³ He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases. ⁴ He redeems me from death and crowns me with love and tender mercies. ⁵ He fills my life with good things. My youth is renewed like the eagle's!

Psa 104:33 I will sing to the Lord as long as I live. I will praise my God to my last breath!

Psa 106:2 Who can list the glorious miracles of the Lord? Who can ever praise him enough?

Four times (!) Psalm 108 urges us to “praise the Lord for his great love and for the wonderful things he has done” for us.

Psa 111:1 Praise the Lord! I will thank the Lord with all my heart as I meet with his godly people.

Psa 116:13 I will lift up the cup of salvation and praise the Lord's name for saving me.

At the center of your Bible you will find Psalm 117. It is the shortest chapter in the Bible, and its two verses are entirely about giving God praise!

Psa 117:1 Praise the Lord, all you nations. Praise him, all you people of the earth. ² For his unfailing love for us is powerful; the Lord's faithfulness endures forever. Praise the Lord!

If you have heard God's voice as you read the Scriptures, give Him praise for opening your heart.

Psa 119:171 Let praise flow from my lips, for you have taught me your decrees.

Let praise and worship become your lifestyle, not just your religious duty. Don't just "do worship" from time to time; instead, become a worshipper. Let praise of God become characteristic of who you are.

Psa 146:2 I will praise the Lord as long as I live. I will sing praises to my God with my dying breath.

Psa 147:1 Praise the Lord! How good to sing praises to our God! How delightful and how fitting!

Psa 148:5 Let every created thing give praise to the Lord, for he issued his command, and they came into being.

Psa 150:6 Let everything that breathes sing praises to the Lord! Praise the Lord!

WOW! And that's just from the Book of Psalms!!!

Do you remember Isaiah? He was the prophet who wrote "I saw the Lord high and lifted up and His train filled the Temple!" He also wrote:

Isa 12:1 In that day you will sing:

"I will praise you, O Lord! You were angry with me, but not any more. Now you comfort me.

² See, God has come to save me. I will trust in him and not be afraid. The Lord God is my strength and my song; he has given me victory."

Isa 63:7 I will tell of the Lord's unfailing love. I will praise the Lord for all he has done.

Jeremiah said:

Jer 20:13 Sing to the Lord! Praise the Lord! For though I was poor and needy, he rescued me from my oppressors.

Apostle Paul was emphatic:

Rom 1:25 They traded the truth about God for a lie. So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator himself, who is worthy of eternal praise! Amen.

2 Cor 1:3 All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort.

Eph 1:6 So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son.

The writer to the Hebrews described the sacrifices of the New Covenant: praise and compassion.

Hebrews 13:14 For this world is not our permanent home; we are looking forward to a home yet to come.

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

And Apostle Peter reminded us that it is our unique privilege to give God praise.

1 Pet 4:16 Praise God for the privilege of being called by his name!

It's time to shoot down our own excuses. It's time to overcome the thoughts and feelings that intimidate us.

It is good to praise the Lord! For praise is appropriate and appealing.

It's our destiny! We were made for this.

Are you on the Lord's side?

Make this fresh vow to God today:

“With Your help, I will become a worshipper. I will find reasons every day to give God praise. I will not be intimidated, nor will I be inappropriate. Let praise of God become as natural and normal as every other expression of delight or surprise or esteem. In Jesus’ name, so be it.”

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!