

The Power of Praise Part 4

We are continuing to look at the power and importance of praise. Just to quickly review, we quoted from Peter Lord who said **“Praise is my response to the person, presence, position, power, greatness, majesty and the love of God.”...Peter Lord.** When you get to know Him, praise is a logical and natural response! When you know Him, you can’t help but praise Him. We talked about the benefits of praise. God instructed us to praise him, not because God needed our praise and affirmation, but because praising him changes us. I quoted last week from the Westminster Catechism that declares **“Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.”** C. S. Lewis wrote concerning that statement, “...we shall then know that these are the same thing. Fully to enjoy is to glorify. In commanding us to glorify Him [to praise Him] God is inviting us to enjoy Him.” To offer praise to the Lord is to accept his invitation to enjoy him, to experience him and his presence. Lewis says what we are doing now as we offer praise to the Lord is like the tuning of an instrument in an orchestra before the symphony begins. We are just getting tuned up for this incredible praise and worship that is going to occur some day when everything that has breath, every person and every creature joins in one great symphony and chorus of praise and when that happens, our joy will be complete and will never end!

We said praise is becoming, it puts things in proper perspective, it renews and refreshes our mind, it brings peace. Praising God is what we were created for so we find our purpose in praising Him. Praising God is obedience to God and His word. God is enthroned on our praise. His kingdom, his throne, his authority is established in our circumstances when we praise Him!

We talked last Sunday about some of the “hows” of praise. How are we to praise Him? The bible says praise is to be vocal, it is to be expressed, it is to be physical (we praise him with our whole being), it is musical (we are to sing to the Lord a new song), it is to be innovative and creative. Praise involves our emotions because we are created as emotional beings and we said praise is to be taught to our children (one generation commends His works to another).

We’ve talked about the why and the how of praise. This morning I want to spend a few minutes talking about the “when” of praise. **When do we praise Him?**

The simple truth is, **We are to praise him all the time.** David said, **“I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall continually be in my mouth.” Psalm 34:1** There is not a time when we shouldn’t offer praise to the Lord and bless his name. The Apostle Paul writes, **“Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another**

with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Ephesians 5:17-20 When are we to praise him and giving him thanks? Always. And in what circumstances? In everything, for everything. Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 5 **“In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” 1 Thessalonians 5:18** Praise him. Always. At all times. In all circumstances. That about wraps it up, doesn't it? Praising and giving thanks to God is a way of life. We are to praise him in every situation, for all things. Get this in your heart and your mind.

We are to praise God in good times and bad, in heartache and in celebration, because he is always and at all times worthy to be praised. In the story of Job, this good man essentially lost everything in one day – his source of income – his flocks and herds and all of his family, all his children were killed. Hardly a time to offer praise is it? But look at Job's response. **“At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship and said, ‘Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised.’ In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.” Job 1:20-22**

We praise God when he gives and when he allows something to be taken away because regardless of the circumstances, He is still God and he is still worthy to be praised. His praise will continually be in our mouth remember, regardless of the circumstances. Remember we said praise will put things in proper perspective. That's what it did for Job. God is still to be praised.

The prophet Habakkuk wrote, **“Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights.” Habakkuk 3:17-19**

Things may not have turned out as you expected or as you desired, but God is still God and still worthy of our praise. We praise him as we remember he is the Sovereign Lord. We praise him because he is worthy of our praise and the result is his strength is renewed in us and our faith is renewed and he enables us to keep going, to even move up a little higher, up on to the heights where our vision is a little clearer and he keeps our feet from slipping.

Understand, I don't believe God brings suffering. Suffering comes from the enemy, it comes as a result of the fall, it comes as a result of our fallen nature, at times it comes as a result

of our poor choices and decisions, at other times it comes with just living in a fallen world where bad things happen to really good people. Bad things happen but we still praise the Lord. “Yet will I praise Him.” We aren’t praising him FOR illness or tragedy, but we can praise him IN illness or in the tragedy! We can praise him when the stalls are full and when they are empty, when the Lord gives and when the Lord takes away. You say, “I can’t praise him where I am today.” Again, I’m not saying praise him FOR what’s happened, not yet, I’m saying praise him IN what’s happened. But know that you might end up praising him for the tragedy, for the situation you are in now because it might turn out to be the best thing that ever happened to you. God can turn it for good, for triumph. It may change the course of your life. **Praise him “in” the circumstances until you can praise him “for” the circumstances!** Praise him in spite of. Praise him through the trouble.

You see, we praise him because we know a few things. We praise him as Habakkuk said because we know the Lord is Sovereign and because he is our strength. We praise him because we know the bible says the trying or testing of our faith will bring us to a place of maturity (James 1:2-4). We praise him because we know he is faithful and he will provide a way through or a way out. He’ll provide a way of escape or the strength to endure. He’ll provide us with answers or a solution. We praise him because we know through this our faith is being built up, increasing, maturing. We praise him because he is causing all things to work together for our good and his glory if we maintain our confidence in him. We praise him because we know the steps of the righteous are ordered of the Lord so we don’t have to stay up all night and worry and pace the floor because we’ve committed our ways to him and he is going to direct and guide our steps. We praise him because we can cast our cares on him and go on to bed and rest because the Lord never slumbers nor sleeps. He’s got this. He is watching over us. We praise him because we know he is the same yesterday, today and forever. We praise him because he is already present in our tomorrow, making a way through, making the crooked places straight. He is God and he is always, at all times, in every circumstance worthy of our praise!

Don’t forget to praise him for the good things and in the good times. Isn’t it strange that sometimes we are more apt to praise when trouble comes than when everything is going fine. We take the blessings for granted and we forget to praise him. We are drawing breath today because of God’s mercy and grace. We ought to praise him for life today. Don’t become complacent in your praise. You remember that commercial, I think for febreze, about becoming nose blind. You get so used to the smell that you no longer notice it. Sometimes we get so used

to the blessings and the goodness of God that we become blessing blind. We neglect to praise him. Every moment, in every circumstance, he is worthy of praise!

Earlier I quoted from Peter Lord. Let me share something he wrote in a book called *Hearing God*. He tells of his son who lived in Colorado. From his son's office window he could see Pikes Peak. You can only imagine the beauty and the distraction that could result from that view. Peter Lord writes, "One day, looking at the scenery with him and fearing there would come a day when he might not notice it, I said, 'Richard, let me tell you how to protect yourself from taking this beauty for granted. When you see it, give expression to it: say something to someone about it, or write about it, or just say something out loud. You will then see more beauty than you have ever seen before.'"

I think Peter Lord hit on an important truth and something important for us to consider with regard to when to praise the Lord. We can either train ourselves to respond to the Lord in praise, regardless of the circumstances, or we can fail to praise him, or refuse to praise him, and eventually something begins to shrivel in our soul, we fail to see his beauty, or his beauty and worthiness begins to diminish in our heart and mind and that's a dangerous place to be. In the book Peter Lord talks about the Law of Response. I think we can apply this to our praise.

"There must be a purposed response...a commitment to respond..." We are going to have to decide if we are going to praise God or not. Whether we feel like it or not. Whether that's the song we like or not. Whether things have gone good this morning or getting to church was a disaster, we have to decide: Are we going to praise him or not? Is he worthy of praise or not? Make a commitment to praise the Lord, regardless. Don't allow an opportunity to praise God pass you by or go unnoticed. Every time you choose to respond, every time you choose to worship and to praise God, regardless of the circumstances, the more sensitive you will become to the presence of God, to his voice, to his Spirit, to the beauty of the Lord.

"There must be a positive response." Peter Lord's suggestion to his son concerning the view of Pike's Peak was to "always give a positive response to what you see and observe. Say, 'What a beautiful peak! Look at the shadow of the trees. What a magnificent rock...Responding positively is the key to developing sensitivity to God...' If we will learn to respond to the Lord continuously with a positive response, offering praise to him, extolling him and thanking him and speaking of his greatness and his mercy and grace, our spirit will remain open and sensitive to the Lord, to his voice and direction. We will remain sensitive and responsive to the beauty of the Lord and that will have a positive effect on us and our spiritual walk.

“There must also be a negative response.” What he means by this is that we will have to shut out some of the distractions so we don’t miss what God has for us. Keep your focus on Jesus and shut out the rest. If there is too much going on around you, sit somewhere else. If you spent the entire time during praise and worship watching someone else and thinking, “what in the world is that guy doing?” then you missed the point of worship didn’t you? You need to shut out the world and get shut in with God! If you spent the whole morning worrying about and focusing on your problem instead of focusing on and praising the Lord, you missed not only the point, you may have missed the answer and the help He wanted to bring. He is calling us to worship and praise this morning. Can you hear him? You’ll discover Him in the praise!

“There must be an increased response.” “The Law of Response says our sensitivity increases in direct proportion to the positive responses we give to our impressions.” The more his son responds to the beauty of Pikes Peak, the more aware he is of its beauty every day. The more we worship and praise the Lord, the more we focus on Him and his goodness, the more we become aware of Him, His presence, His will, His voice, His blessings, His beauty, His favor. That’s why we bless the Lord at all times and his praise is continually in our mouth!

“There must be a practical response.” Peter Lord said, “The last advice I gave Richard was, ‘If possible do something, act on what you have seen as soon as possible. Share it with somebody, take a picture of it, write something down about what you have noticed.’” The same applies to our worship and praise. As we stand in a worship service, knowing the Word of God instructs us to praise the Lord at all times, knowing the Spirit of the Lord is calling us to offer praise, we must respond in a positive, ever increasing and practical way. Do something about that call to worship and praise the Lord. Open your mouth and sing, pray, give thanks, bow your head and heart, lift your voice, lift your eyes, lift your hands, clap your hands, jump, shout, weep, quote his word, speak his name, do whatever you choose but choose to respond in some way. To ignore the Lord knowing he has called us and instructed us to praise him, to ignore the opportunity given to praise him corporately, to ignore the Lord knowing He is worthy at all times of our praise is the height of insensitivity. To fail to respond over an extended period of time will make you less responsive and less sensitive to the Spirit of God.

How will we respond to the Lord? As a pastor and a life long church-goer, I walk into another church and I’m evaluating the facility and judging, critiquing everything and everyone. I have to remind myself what I’m there for. I have to decide am I going to praise the Lord or be a critic? Sarah said Dr. Lednicky at CBC used to say “you’ll do one of two things in this chapel.

You'll either worship or become critical of those who do." Which will it be for you? I have to decide every Sunday to give a purposed response, a positive response, to shut out the distractions and praise the Lord because he is worthy of my best praise! You may need to remind yourself what you are here for. Our highest purpose is to praise Him. Our greatest need right now is to praise Him. Think of that. We need to praise Him because when we praise him, we begin to see things in proper perspective, we begin to see how faithful he is and we begin to realize we have nothing to fear and nothing to worry about. We begin to realize he is going to supply our needs and guide our steps and we can trust him. He is worthy of praise! Let's praise him. Out of our heart. Praise him out of your need! Praise him in spite of the circumstances. Praise him in your circumstances. Let everything that has breath, at all times, in every situation, praise the Lord!