

Dr. Joe Jursa's Sermon

[Worship](#) - Psalm 150

- ¹ Praise the LORD!
Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty firmament!
- ² Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his surpassing greatness!
- ³ Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp!
- ⁴ Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe!
- ⁵ Praise him with clanging cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals!
- ⁶ Let everything that breathes praise the LORD!
Praise the LORD!

The Psalmist parting words are for us to remember what is most important. While the entire book of Psalms is about praises and prayers and petitions placed before God during certain times of stress or fear or disaster, just to make certain we have not missed the point he closes out the book with what is most important – We are to Praise God.

It part praise is what creation, including you and me, were created for. Look again at the opening chapters of Genesis as God finishes each day he makes a pronouncement about creation – it was good.

Praise comes from recognizing the goodness of God in the created world. Praise is acknowledging that God is good, all the time. Praise is standing in the presence of God acknowledging that all that God does, all that we are aware of, all that we have learned about, all the ways in which the world around us has treated us, everything we have faced, all of our life has brought us to the place where we acknowledge God.

We are not in charge. We do not control the world around us. We cannot always help ourselves. But the creator, the one who rules all, the God of the universe does have an over riding interest, even love for us.

We have lived up to now this part of our lives. We have seen the world at work around us. We have experience joys and sorrows, fear and freedom and when we have added it all up within our minds and hearts we stand before God in awe and praise of who God is and of God's care for us.

In Psalm 150 the psalmist wants us not to forget that worship, praise of God is important.

Through out this Lenten season we have talked of different disciplines intended to more closely connect us to God's presence. Worship, the gathering together with other Christians to give honor and praise to God is one of those vital disciplines.

For years I have heard people say they can worship God on the golf course or at a picnic or the beach and they are absolutely correct. But more often than not, we work on our golf game, we may say a prayer of to or even words of thanksgiving, but mostly we think about golf. At picnic, we enjoy the company of others; we focus on eating the treats of the day and we might remember God. At the beach we frolic in the waves or just enjoy the pleasantness of being at the beach. We might worship, but it is not the focus, just a passing activity or moment. And when you choose to worship in those ways, we also deprive the rest of the fellowship of the church our presence in our combined worship of God.

It is harder to sing praises when the choir numbers are ½ normal. It is difficult to lead worship when the first 7 pews are empty. Worship times when few have gather can be intimate and enjoyable, but they are also times when those gathered wonder if God has become unimportant to so many others.

We gather for worship to praise God, but we also gather because together our worship can be more meaningful for us and all those gathered. We gather so that those with pleasing voices can surround us with music that lifts our hearts into God's presence.

Let me just pause and give a plug for our choir and praise team. They produced some absolutely wonderful music but they would all tell you that what matters the most is that somehow what they do helps us all draw near to the presence of God. Do you have the kind of voice so that others have told you to sing in the choir? Why have not given it a try? If your voice is pleasing when joined with those around you in worship so that they have suggested you sing in the choir or lend your voice in leadership, you are helping to raise the few around you into closer relationship with God. Why not help the rest of us as well by joining with the group up front?

The songs, music, and hymns we sing are all intended to lift our spirit as we join together in worship.

The psalmist calls us to worship not because God needs to hear our praise. God does not have so low an opinion of God's self that God needs to be boosted up by our praise. We are told to praise God so that we get beyond ourselves. Like it or not from the moment we are born there is this bent within us something that says the world revolves around me. I am the center of my universe.

Moms teach us delayed gratification to help us learn that the world does not revolve around us. We are taught to stand in line in kindergarten sometimes being first sometimes in the middle and sometimes at the end and we learn that there are others who also count. Unless we own our own business, we work for another and learn that their wishes and directions are what count not ours. If we do own our own business you learn fast that everyone else, your customers, is the one who really call the shots. Keeping the customers is the goal of every business.

And in so many ways life calls us to realize that another is in control. Someone else more powerful, with resources beyond ours, with designs we sometimes have no understanding of, controls the world in which we live. We worship in part so that we might feel a connection with God, who is in charge.

We worship because we have discovered that the God who is in charge, loves us. Jesus Christ death upon the cross was because a great gulf called sin separated me from God. Though I might think and know about the creator and controller of all the universe around me, I was distant from this Holy perfect God. I could not draw close; I could not be in intimate relationship with God. Because of sin in my life God was out there and I was stuck inside myself.

As Christians, as people cleansed from sin by the blood of Christ, I no longer need to be distant from God. Indeed God has taken up residence within my life. How can I help but worship? How can I not be overcome with the joy of God's presence in my life? How can I refrain from telling the world of our close relationship? How can I hear a song of God greatness and not join in? How could I possibly be expected to stay away when others who have been similarly blessed gather to sing praise and to worship God?

Because Jesus Christ has washed away my sin, I am free to live close to God. Why would I even for a moment consider not worshipping?

I worship because the God who deserves all praise and honor and glory; the God who created and sustains the universe; the God who sent his son Jesus to rescue me from my separation from him is now within me. I am not separated. Everything in my life, the good, the hard, the cruel, the wonderful; everything has brought me to the place where I have allowed Jesus Christ to wash away my sin and I am free to worship to praise the presence of God within my life.

We worship because God has taken up residence. We worship because everything in our lives has brought us to this wonderful place where we know and relish the presence of God within us. We worship because we could do nothing else.

Maybe today you feel distant. It has been a long time since you asked Jesus into your life and some of the joy is gone. Maybe you have thought about asking Christ to wash away your sins but you have hesitated for one reason or another. Worship is about knowing the closeness and presence of God in your life.

Maybe sin is still standing in your way. I invite you to seek out Christ. To ask him to restore the joy of your first encounter with him. To wash away the sin that you have allowed to come between you and God.

If you have never invited Christ into your life, if you still know the pain of remembered sins and feel that separation between you and God; what better gift to give yourself that freedom from sin and presence with God. Take a moment in prayer to just ask Christ to wash away your sin. Confess that you have sinned just like all the rest of us. Ask Christ to restore your heart to wholeness and to enter into your life. Ask Christ to take up residence in your life.