As we continue our study on the subject of “praise,” let me remind you that we have seen that the Word of God has given us this command in Psalm 150:6 “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.” Praise is not just what we do – praise is who we are as believers! It is simply a spiritual “thank you.”

I realize that we make a lot of preparation to attend church, but I wonder how much preparation we make to really and truly praise the living God. You see, until the practice of praise in private is continuous and free, the practice of praise within the fellowship of worship will be inhibited by fear, self-consciousness, and discomfort. What do I mean by such a statement? Simply this - public praise is threatening and fearful to those who are not “into” praise in their private lives! Therefore, I encourage each of you to begin immediately the practice of praise in its simplicity. Out of that will flow a desire, expectations, and delight toward the public exercises in praise!

I believe that our preparation for praise can be wrapped up in the words of our text, when Jesus said, “...true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth...”

For the sake of emphasis, we will take the last statement first. Jesus says that “true worshipers” must know the “truth.” That is, if you and I are ever going to praise the Lord with genuine praise, we must know the truth. Because, you see, real praise is a response to the truth. It is something that you and I know that invokes from us a praise and adoration and applause about who God is. Praise is an expression of our love and devotion to the God of glory.

It is a biblical fact that God inhabits the praises of His people, as seen in Psalm 22:3, “But You are holy, enthroned in the praises of Israel." The New International Version reads this way, "Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the praise of Israel." Child of God, praise is where God lives! It is His permanent address. Praise is his home element. God is at home in praise. Psalm 48:1 says that He is "great and greatly to be praised."

Listen carefully: praise is not just an emotional response. If praise is only built on some kind of emotional feeling, it will not last, nor is it genuine. But true genuine praise is built on truth.

Secondly, we must have the right "spirit." If I am going to praise the Lord, I must praise Him in the right spirit, based on the solid truth of the Word of God. Therefore, look with me as we seek to understand what constitutes a
"right spirit." **First of all, a "right spirit" is the spirit of submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.** Think about that for just a moment. How in the world can I stand before a holy God; who is the sovereign God of the universe; who rules all things; who has saved me; who possesses me; who clothes me; and live in rebellion to His will for my life, and at the same time praise Him? I tell you, it cannot be done!

Out of our human spirit must come the overflow of our gratitude, and praise, and joy, and adoration, for all who God is. But it cannot come out of a rebellious heart!

Do you remember the account of King David’s attempt to bring the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem as recorded in 2 Samuel 6?

Now that David was firmly established as king, his heart was drawn to honor God and restore the ark to its place of prominence in Zion. With thirty thousand elders, nobles, and leaders (not counting the multitude that followed), David set out to retrieve the ark from the house of Abinadab. The ark was placed on a new cart and pulled along by oxen.

Abinadab’s sons – Uzzah and Ahio – were most familiar with the ark, for it has remained in their house for some time. While Ahio walked in front, probably guiding the oxen, Uzzah stayed next to the cart, watchful of the ruts and bumps along the way that could upset the precious cargo.

2 Samuel 6:5 says that “David and the whole house of Israel were celebrating with all their might before the Lord, with songs and with harps, lyres, tambourines, sistroms and cymbals.” What were they doing? They were praising God for His sovereignty and submitting to His lordship. And that is the first step in developing a “right spirit” for praise.

The second thing that established a "right spirit" for praise is the confession of all known sin in our lives. That means that I cannot come in here with some "secret sin" in my heart and praise the living God as if He did not know anything about it!

You see, sin does something to my fellowship! Sin acts as a barrier between God and me. And you know this! Sin comes in many forms, but I really believe that the most damning and destructive sin in our churches today has to do with attitude!

Sinful attitudes reach out in many directions, but it usually has to do with pride and an unforgiving spirit. Child of God, when your heart is filled with pride, there will be no praise in your life! When you heart is in bondage to
an unforgiving spirit, there will be no praise in your life!

You simply cannot praise the Lord when you are not right in your heart towards someone else. We will never be the kind of people that God desires of us as long as sin lurking in our hearts. Folks, there are too many of God's children that are trying to cover up their sin by their religious activity such as going to church, singing in the choir, preaching sermons, or teaching a class. We can cover up a lot of stuff down here by getting busy for God, but the only problem is that it doesn't work. And, my friend, God is far more interested in my genuine worship and praise and adoration than He is in how many sermons I might preach. God can do without sermons, but praise and worship and adoration of Him is what He desires!

In this same category of attitude is a negative and critical spirit. You can't praise God and think that kind of stuff. Praise means that my heart is centered on God. Can you imagine someone saying, "I don't like this. I don't like that. Nothing is going right. The whole church is falling apart. Nobody cares about me. Well, praise the Lord. Thank you Jesus." My friend, it will never happen!

When you and I walk into this place, we ought to walk in here expecting God to do something in our lives! And those people with a negative and critical spirit will never have the joy of the Lord, they will always be critical of those who are filled with excitement, and they will continue to sit on the side lines and do nothing for the cause of Christ as they look for others who will listen to their petty fussing and gripping!

You see, sin short-circuits the work of the Holy Spirit. And for praise to be genuine, it must be the work of the Spirit of God lifting that praise up to the Father! And when the Holy Spirit is grieved because of sin, He doesn't work. It doesn't make any difference what we preach, how loud we sing, or how glorious it may appear to the world, God cannot and will not work around sin in our lives!

Sure, some song, or some sermon, might tickle your emotions, but when the song or sermon is over, then there is no more loyalty to Christ. And that is the reason people will follow a certain preacher or a certain singing group - their praises and spiritual highs come from people and programs instead of the Lord God of glory!

Let me ask you this question - Have you ever found anything in Jesus that was not worthy of your praise? Have you ever discovered anything about God that turns you off? And has God ever treated you in such a way that you said, "Well, I can't praise Him any more after I found that out about Him. Oh no!" Do you have a problem with the way Jesus was born? Or do you have a
problem with His sinless life? Or maybe you have a problem with His death on the Cross, and the way that He gave His life as a ransom for us to be saved. Could it be that you have a problem with His glorious resurrection? Or, just maybe you have some difficulty with His coming again to take us all to heaven. Child of God, there is one thing that you can always count on - Jesus Christ has done all things well, and He is worthy of our praise!

But, when I have a critical spirit about things and people and places and circumstances and situations, how am I going to be praising the Lord and glorifying Him? I tell you what – If you have a critical spirit, just tell God you are going to lay it down by faith, and you want to start praising Him! And the next time you feel critical, just start praising the Lord! Just say, "Father, I am having to learn. I am really having some problems, but I choose to trust you instead of looking at my circumstances." And just lift up your hands and start praising the Lord for His goodness and blessings on your life! And I promise you; it will change your attitude!

The third thing that established a “right spirit” for praise is a heart warmed by the reality of an intimate, vital relationship with Jesus Christ. Apart from Him, I am miserably alienated from Holy God.

Do I really understand that all my good works, all my attempts at obedience, all my prayers and songs are unacceptable apart from the Lord Jesus? Ladies and Gentlemen, the Gospel brings blessed relief to our hopeless condition. Through the death of Christ, God reconciled me to Himself and now accepts me as holy, without blemish, and free from accusation. What an astounding truth! The basis of my relationship with God is forever rooted in Christ. He is my high priest, the One who made the sacrifice for my sin. He is my righteousness, the One who fulfilled all the requirements of the Law on my behalf. He is my intercessor, the One who pleads my case before Holy God. All that I offer to God is acceptable in and through Him.

Have you ever felt that you just could not praise God as well as other people, sing as well, or be as free in your expressions of worship? Well, cheer up! If you come to God through Christ, your offerings are perfectly acceptable. Your songs are beautiful, your words of praise are treasured, and your heartfelt gratitude rises toward heaven as incense.

Let me close by simply once more reminding you that praise is a spiritual thank you to the Lord, as seen in Psalm 103:1-2 that says, "Bless the Lord, 0 my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, 0 my soul, and forget not all his benefits." Praise, with thanksgiving, is the only access into the presence of God, as seen in Psalm 100:4 "Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise." Since praise is God's home element and He dwells in
praises, as we praise we are visiting His presence, standing in His courts. Just as there was a gate into the tabernacle, there is a gate into the worship experience whether, private and personal or public and personal or public and corporate. That means, there is no real praise without genuine praise!!

We have this story found in Luke 17:12-19, "As he (Jesus) entered a village there, ten lepers stood at a distance, crying out, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!” He looked at them and said, “Go show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were cleansed of their leprosy. One of them, when he saw that he was healed, came back to Jesus, shouting, “Praise God!” He fell to the ground at Jesus’ feet, thanking him for what he had done. This man was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, “Didn’t I heal ten men? Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?” And Jesus said to the man, “Stand up and go. Your faith has healed you." When Jesus healed these ten lepers it was a great miracle and it is interesting that out of those ten only one returned to thank Him.

It is interesting to understand that the religious leaders looked upon the disease of leprosy as the judgment of God upon those who were infected with this dreaded disease. Therefore, the attitude of the religious leader was that lepers were outcast and not welcomed, in fact, they were banned from any religious activities.

With that thought in mind, it is interesting to notice the wording of verse 11, "And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee." Ladies and Gentlemen, these men were not looking for Jesus - it was Jesus Himself that took the initiative. Does that sound familiar? Listen very carefully to this statement found in John 6:44, "For no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me, and at the last day I will raise them up."

Ever so often I hear someone say, "I remember the day I found Jesus." Let me remind you that Jesus was not the one that was lost! My friend, it was Holy God Who took the initiative in your salvation experience! Listen to what we have been told in Ephesians 1:6-14, "To the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth - in Him. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. In
Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory." Listen, it was God who saw your impossible predicament and moved to see that you were somehow exposed to the Word of God, which in turn awakened your understanding enough to make you realize your lostness without Jesus Christ, which in turn aroused the measure of faith (which He himself had planted deep into the uttermost recesses of your heart) and caused you to receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior.

Child of God, you had a disease far more impossible than leprosy! You were spiritually dead! Many of you were looked upon as outcast by the religious leaders in your communities. You were without hope until God the Holy Spirit stirred your heart and loved you to the place of being saved. Thank God for His amazing grace!

Let me ask you - Can we who have been saved by His grace, washed in His blood, and predestined for heaven respond to Him through anything less than praise? I think not!

If you are not saved, Why not?

Everyone please stand for prayer.

Father,

Your Word teaches of Your grace and glory. Your Word is without error and Your goodness is unsurpassed. It is true that You are worthy of my praise. In Jesus’ name. Amen.