

Why Worship?

Men's Forum

Thursday, March 13th, 2014

Man made to Glorify God

- Luke 17:11 - Jesus heals ten lepers from a disease which made them defiled outcasts.
- They prayed for his mercy, they obeyed his command; but after the healing takes place, only one of them, who happens to be a Samaritan, a despised and feared outsider, comes back to Jesus, "and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks" - an act of profound worship and obeisance.
- Jesus responds with a question: "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger" - an outsider to Israel.
- Jesus condemns the nine ungrateful lepers: but he commends the one grateful Samaritan; and he tells the thankful man "arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole [or: saved, healed]"ⁱ.
- There is more than a concern for etiquette at work here. His point, I think, is this: the people of God do not treat God as the nine lepers have, simply as a means to getting what they want.
- To be sure, they turn to God in their need, they seek his good gifts, but it is gratitude, not greed and self-gratification, that moves them in the end, a gratitude that is expressed in glorifying God for being God: "we give thanks to thee for thy great glory" [Gloria in excelsis].
- When Jesus says, "none are returned to give glory to God save this stranger", his point is that the Samaritan, the outsider, is acting as a true Israelite should, while the other nine lepers are acting like pagans who refuse glory to God, and whose attitude to his gifts is one of greedy self-gratification rather than gratitude.

- Remember what St. Paul says about the ungodly and unrighteous in Romans 1: "when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. ...Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their hearts... who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator. ...For this cause ...God gave them over to a reprobate mind [a mind void of judgment] , to do those things which are not convenient [fitting]" (Romans 1:21)

- All ten had lifted up their voice in entreaty and prayer to Jesus; but only one lifted up his voice to him to glorify God. All were eager to experience the goodness of God, but in only one was this goodness acknowledged in faith.
- As a result, though all ten benefit from the unmerited kindness of Jesus, only the Samaritan is told "thy faith hath made thee whole". All ten receive healing in this life; but only one finds salvation.

- two principles of understanding and decision in the life of men.
- self-gratifying love of self to the point of contempt for God's glory (mind of the flesh).
- grateful love of God's glory to the point of contempt for self (mind of the Spirit).
- love of self to the point of contempt for God; love of God, to the point of contempt for self.

- As the Flesh (fallen man) uses all things, even God, to gratify and glorify the self; so the Spirit (regenerate man) uses all things, even itself, to give thanks to and glorify God.
- "glory be to the Father" - constant refrain of daily office; "glory be to God on high" - the climax of the Eucharist - orients us beyond ourselves

Glorifying God... and enjoying him for ever

- utility - what is worship for?
- question of utility and enjoyment
- things are to be used as means to an end that lies beyond them - I go to the gym not because I enjoy it but to keep my weight in control, to make me look good, etc.
- but other things are enjoyed for their own sake, not for any further purpose
- some people use the game of golf to get outside, to be with friends, to make connections etc. others enjoy the game of golf for its own sake - at the same time, they may have these other benefits, but it is for the sake of golf itself that they play, not for the side benefits
- what is worship for? use, or enjoyment?

- much worldly religion approaches God precisely as a means to an end - and our worship likewise
- yet even when we use God for something (health, wealth), that has a way of bringing us onward toward God in himself – for all greater goods are to be preferred to lesser goods – and the good we perceive in the lesser good is present more fully in the greater good – we like light of a candle in night, but we blow the candle out when sun rises
- other view: worship is not "useful" - yes you can use it the same way that you use golf - but properly speaking, worship is an end in itself, not a means to an end
- God is the category of things to be enjoyed rather than used - and end in himself, rather than a means to another end

- so Bernard of Clairvaux' (11th c. Cistercian monk, preacher, mystic)
 - we start with love self for sake of self – natural man in his fallen state
 - love of God for sake of self – we love God for the good gifts he gives
 - love of God for sake of God - charity
 - love even of self for sake of God (resurrection)
- we worship God indeed for his own sake, and not merely as a means to another greater good - but in worshipping God for his own sake we attain our highest and true good -
- it is in glorifying God that man finds true happiness as man
- "man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him for ever" (Westminster Catechism)
- Test of this – if we lose all the gifts we receive from God, do we still account him worthy of worship? Satan thinks Job will cease to worship God then – but in fact it is precisely when all other goods fail that the all-sufficiency of God is enough- and in fact without God, there are no goods

- God is infinite power, wisdom, and goodness – all finite goods are as nothing compared to him – measure of our blindness that we prefer lesser goods to the greater – where Spirit illumines hearts and opens the blind eyes in faith, we glimpse the surpassing beauty of God, we fall in love with his goodness – this is worship which prevails even when all other goods lost
- Augustine: “Lord thou hast made us for thyself, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee” (Confessions 1.1)
- Supreme testimony of the “worthship” of God alone is found on the cross – with all goods removed, and all evils inflicted, Christ remains stedfastly turned toward God in faith and obedience – “My god, my god, why hast thou forsaken me” – he is forsaken, yet God is still his God
- Testimony of saints:
 - Ps. 16 “I have no good apart from thee”
 - Ps 73: 24-28

24 Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, * and after that receive me with glory.

25 Whom have I in heaven but thee? * and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee.

26 My flesh and my heart faileth; * but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.

27 For lo, they that forsake thee shall perish; * thou hast destroyed all them that are unfaithful unto thee.

28 But it is good for me to hold me fast by God, to put my trust in the Lord GOD, * and to speak of all thy works in the gates of the daughter of Sion.

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- Let nothing disturb thee/ Nothing affright thee/All things are passing/God never changeth/Patience endurance/Attaineth to all things/Who God possesseth/In nothing is wanting/Alone God sufficeth. St. Teresa
- God alone is enough.

Inward and Outward

- when Jesus asked what is the great commandment of the Law - he gives them two commandments - the first and great, and the second like unto it - upon these two, he explains, hangs all the law and prophets
- axiom of Biblical religion that man was made to glorify God by his worship of him
- "my duty towards God is To believe in him, to fear him, and to love him with all my heart, and with all my mind, with all my soul, and with all my strength: to worship him, to give him thanks:

to my put my whole trust in him, to call upon him: to honour his holy Name and Word: and to serve him truly all the days of my life"

- you can't love God without loving your neighbour as yourself; you can't love your neighbour without loving God above all
- there is a double principle to Christian religion - vertical to God, horizontal to man - and these two dimensions come together in the cruciform Christ and his Church
- both dimensions apply to the worship of Christ by his Church
- vertical dimension - the inward faith, fear, hope, repentance, prayer, praise, thanks, praise, which we have toward God, - and which is summed up in the commandment to love him with all that you are, above everything that is
- this could be considered as something that exists purely in the individual, in his privacy, and among moderns this is often taken for granted - religion is what a man does with his solitude is a modern view - religion a private act purely inward
- but this is not the Biblical view - faith without works is dead - and the first work of faith is to confess Jesus as Lord - it is to be expressed outwardly in word(in confession of faith, praise, sin) and deed (obedient service) - and in particular the service of love offered to the neighbour - the second commandment - it is in the love we offer our neighbour that our love for God finds its expression - and what is the highest act of love? it is to bring the neighbour to the knowledge and love of God also

- so along with the Biblical "vertical" of an individual's faith, hope, and love of God, there is the Biblical "horizontal" - which is the believing community's corporate shared worship of God
- if the inward faith and love is the "soul" of worship, without which the outer forms are dead formalism, so the outward corporate forms are the "body" of worship, without which the soul is incomplete or even (on analogy of works) is dead also!
- OT emphasis is on the covenant people of God - Israel as a holy nation is the first fact, and the individual Israelite has his access and communion with God not as an individual but only in and through his participation in God's covenant with Israel
- countless witnesses to this idea throughout OT - the joy of taking part in Israel's corporate worship in the Temple, the sorrow of being cut off from it -
- this carries over into the "new and eternal" covenant of the NT - only deepened even further - it is as a member of Christ and of his body the Church that an individual has access to God - with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven we have access to God in his heavenly and eternal temple
- variant of this image is that of the living Temple of the Spirit - 1 Peter 2
- it is only in the Body of Christ that we find our true meaning as individuals -
- we are not truly ourselves except insofar as we participate in the life of Christ's body the Temple of his Spirit, which is the Church - whose work is first and foremost the worship of God in Christ

- **1 Peter 2**

⁴To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ⁵*Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.* ⁶Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. ⁷Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, ⁸And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. ⁹*But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light;* ¹⁰*Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.*

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Forms of Worship – Eucharist and Common Prayer

- Eucharist - Sacrament of Christ's Body - the mystical Body, the Church - the conversion effected by the Sacrament is our conversion into his Body - we become what we receive
- but this corporate eucharistic sense underlies all of the Church's worship, especially its common prayer, as well as the other sacraments
- by receiving Christ in his body sacrificed for us we become his body and offer ourselves in sacrifice through him
- prayer is by nature common - "our Father ...give us... forgive us... lead us... deliver us" - body praying through its head - all prayer is the prayer of the whole church - there is not other kind of prayer
- *venite* and *Te Deum* bring to our consciousness and awareness the company of church and saints and angels - precisely so that we can see our destiny lies not in isolated selfish individualism but precisely in and through the body of Christ -
- worship trains our individuality to find its place in relation to God and neighbour in Christ
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- *Venite, exultemus Domino.*

- OCOME, let us sing unto the LORD; * let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation.

Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving; * and show ourselves glad in him with psalms.

For the LORD is a great God; * and a great King above all gods.

In his hand are all the corners of the earth; * and the strength of the hills is his also.

The sea is his, and he made it; * and his hands prepared the dry land.

O come, let us worship and fall down, * and kneel before the LORD our Maker.

For he is the Lord our God; * and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.

O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness; * let the whole earth stand in awe of him.

For he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth; * and with righteousness to judge the world, and the people with his truth.

- *Te Deum laudamus.*

WE praise thee, O God; we acknowledge thee to be the Lord.

All the earth doth worship thee, the Father everlasting.

To thee all Angels cry aloud; the Heavens, and all the Powers therein;

To thee Cherubim and Seraphim continually do cry,

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth;

Heaven and earth are full of the Majesty of thy glory.

The glorious company of the Apostles praise thee.

The goodly fellowship of the Prophets praise thee.

The noble army of Martyrs praise thee.

The holy Church throughout all the world doth acknowledge thee;

The Father of an infinite Majesty;

Thine adorable, true and only Son;

Also the Holy Ghost the Comforter.

THOU art the King of Glory, O Christ.

Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father.

When thou tookest upon thee to deliver man, thou didst humble thyself to be born of a Virgin.

When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, thou didst open the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers.

Thou sittest at the right hand of God, in the glory of the Father.

We believe that thou shalt come to be our Judge.

We therefore pray thee, help thy servants, whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood.

Make them to be numbered with thy Saints, in glory everlasting.

OLORD, save thy people, and bless thine heritage.

Govern them and lift them up for ever.

Day by day we magnify thee;

And we worship thy Name ever, world without end.
Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin.
O Lord, have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us.
O Lord, let thy mercy be upon us, as our trust is in thee.
O Lord, in thee have I trusted; let me never be confounded.

- all creation being drawn to its redemption in Christ by the Holy Spirit
- Common Prayer begins in repentance (erred and strayed) ends in intercession offering and thanksgiving (acts of love to neighbour and God) - at its heart, we apprehend by faith the work of Christ in redeeming us to God and drawing us into his Body - this is logic of daily office and of eucharist
- Why are we bored?
- Natural man is bored, because his capacity to know and delight in God is so limited – as we are reborn, trained up into love of God, then worship grows more and more spontaneous, becomes “second nature” – what begins in duty ends in delight -

ⁱ *sesoken.*