

Prestonwood Connection

Living In The Shadow Of The Almighty #9

Worship

Psalm 103

Wednesday, October 22, 2003 • Dr. David McKinley

[Dr. McKinley, message *Worship In The Shadow Of The Almighty*] <273>

And Lord tonight we all confess in the words of John Newton:

We once were blind but now we see.

And we thank You Lord, for the power of Your grace at work in our hearts and lives tonight and I simply pray that You would make this gathering a gathering of grace and that Father through Your grace we would be strengthened, we would be cleansed, we would be made strong and renewed. Father that some in this place tonight would be saved and Father that all of us would go out of this place moved by grace and touched by love to serve others and to serve the glory of Your name, for it is in the name of Jesus that we pray. Amen. Amen.

What great music tonight and how great to see you tonight. I'm so glad that you're here and thankful that we have this time to just sort of gather together huddled together as members of the family of God, a household of faith and to come to the table together tonight and to share the joy and the blessing of a..., sharing these elements and the fellowship that we find in the Lord Jesus Christ, that He is made available for each of us through His grace, through His mercy and through His love. And a..., I'm very thankful for the ministry of Hope Works, as you saw in this video this evening, a..., this Sunday, Hope Works will celebrate it's first year anniversary and a... it's one of those great ministries of Prestonwood filled with grace and truth, a..., both of these things coming together, the grace that is needed to find people in the hard places of life and to offer them a sense of, of God's love and care and concern for them. But also the ministry of truth, to understand that we never help anyone by simply a..., allowing them to continue in a life, or a life style a..., that is not in keeping with God's plan and purpose for life and so grace and truth come together and I hope that you'll plan this Sunday a..., to put it on your schedule, to go by the a..., open house for Hope Works Counseling and a..., to get to be a part of that. It's right at the Dunkin Donuts, right behind Dunkin Donuts at a..., at Park and Coit and so that's not far from this campus but a..., I hope that you'll do that and take advantage of that opportunity.

When you hear the word worship, what do you think about? When you hear worship, we talk about it all the time, in fact, whenever we come here we call this the worship center and we talk about coming together and having an experience of worship and in so many different ways we use and we a..., banter about, as though it were, this term worship. And my question to you tonight is, **WHAT DO YOU THINK OF WHEN YOU HEAR THE WORD WORSHIP?**

Well, for some of us in this room, when we hear worship we immediately begin to think about **MUSIC**, because music is such a vital and iatrical part of worship a..., for some people they think of a style of music called **PRAISE** and worship. But for many of us the thought of worship involves and engages the thought of music and for many worship is thought to be that which we do with the heart and with the tongue when we lift our voices together and when we sing whether it's one by one or in a tremendous gathering as we have here tonight.

For other people when they hear the word worship they immediately think of something else, not necessarily the music and what happens in music, but maybe some other specific **PROTOCOL** or aspect of worship. A... for those who are from a more liturgical background a..., which the word liturgy, literally means worship, it means that there's sort of a protocol, there's a process that you go through an expression of worship.

For some it would mean prayer and immediately when they think of worship they think of a **POSTURE**, a..., the possibility of kneeling or a..., literally getting on their face before the Lord a..., the head bowed the eyes closed and sometimes for us worship takes on a, a posture of some type and we think of worship in terms of posture.

A..., for some, I might admit a very few, a..., **GIVING** is worship, and a..., what I mean by that is when you say worship not everybody wants to think of giving but certainly I try as often as I the opportunity to be a part of the time of offering in a worship service to remind us that this isn't just the interlude where the church takes time to get it's money in, that's, that has nothing to do with it. In fact, if that's what you see or that's what we think then we have completely missed the aspect of what offering is about. Because an offering is bringing and responding to the Lord in result, in result of that which He has done in my life in response to Him. I'm literally saying, Lord, thank You for meeting my needs, thank you for blessing my life and I want to give and I want to share and, and giving is an aspect of worship.

PREACHING is a part of worship, a..., we read in the New Testament, in the book of Acts chapter 2 that a..., they gathered together and that they heard the teaching and the preaching of the Word of God. And a vital part of any worship experience a..., is an experience that involves hearing the word of God and listening to the Word of God.

And so there are a variety of ways in which we would think of and engage our thoughts about worship. But could I submit to you tonight that in all reality, for all of the aspects that we could list or think or talk about

tonight, that worship is not defined by experience. You see so often when I think of worship and you think of worship, we define it in the terms of an experience, something that I experienced, something that I'm a part of and yes I partake of worship, but worship is not first and foremost experiential, being preached at, being condemned for giving or not giving a..., being asked to sing. Those are the aspects that are expressive the worship, but worship, in and of itself, is not just experiential, it is much more. Worship is my personal response to God for His initiative toward me. It's my personal response to God for His initiative toward me and it may at times be a response that is seen in giving. It may at times be a response that's seen in hearing and receiving the Word of God. It's a response that maybe takes the form of singing. It's a response that takes the form of prayer. But worship in and of itself is not so much getting in an atmosphere where you have an experience with other people as it is the individual response of the heart and then the collective response of the heart and of the life, each together and all together unto the glory of God. Worship is giving the very best of all that I am and all that I have to all that I know of Him. It's giving the very best of all that I have and all that I am to all that I know of Him and one of the greatest ways to define and give expression to the response of your heart is to go to the worship guide that is found in the middle of the Bible in the book of Psalms, because the Psalms are the worship guide of the Bible. Here expression is given to the many different experiences and emotions that we have in life. Sometimes it's singing. Sometimes it's grieving. Sometimes it's expressing, in all honesty, a sense of frustration and even anks before God and in the world in which we live. And so we come to this book, the song book of the Bible, the worship guide of the Bible and it frames for us, responses to God and the reasons for those responses in our worship.

One of my favorite a..., worship guides in my own life and one that I use often on Sunday worship is Psalm 103. And so I want you to join me tonight as we prepare a few thoughts here and prepare our hearts for the worship of the Lord's Supper, our response to God's initiative toward us. As we share and prepare for this tonight, I want us to go to Psalm 103 and I want us to look at it and share it together, because it is a, it is a worship guide that often prompts my heart. A..., it's like lighting a gas grill. You know what it's like to...when you get ready to grill, to go out and you take a match or to take a..., some sort of an instrument and to try to get that flame there, that little spark there and then boy, you put the, the gas on and, proooooommm..., the thing just fires up? And that's sort of how this Psalm is in my heart, it's like the spark, it's like the initial flame that, when it gets close to my heart and my heart embraces the truth of this Psalm, it's as though everything in me begins to warm to God and to the glow of His glory in my life. Let's read together Psalm 103, beginning in verse 1:

Bless the LORD, O my soul; And all that is within me,...

What does the rest of it say?

...bless His holy name!

And then verse 2 says:

²Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits: ²Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases, ⁴Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies, ⁵Who satisfies your mouth with good things, So that your ~~re~~ youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Then look down in verse 11:

¹¹For as the heavens are high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; ¹²As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. ¹³As a father pities his children, So the LORD pities those who fear Him. ¹⁴For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.

Verse 19:

The LORD has established His throne in heaven, And His kingdom rules over all.

And then the last verse, verse 22:

Bless the LORD, all His works, In all places of His dominion. Bless the Lord, O my soul!

Well, obviously, this Psalm is like a fountain of blessing. It's coming from within, from the heart, it is a response that is bubbling up and, and flowing over of joy and gratitude for all that God has done in the life of this worshipper. And yet I believe within this Psalm we understand some of the very basis of our response to God and that which, prompts worship in my heart and life and in your heart and life. And so let me outline several of those things for you tonight, if it can.

The Bible says here in verse 1 and 2:

*Bless the LORD, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name!
Bless the LORD, O my soul,...*

And then what does the rest of verse 2 say?

...And forget not all His benefits:

What I'm saying to you tonight at the outset is simply this, that **WORSHIP BEGINS WITH REMEMBERING GOD'S GRACE**. Remembering God's grace, reflecting, rehearsing, remembering the grace of God, grace is God's initiative toward us, even when we were rebelling against Him. God is so rich in mercy and love and grace, that even though we as a sinful fallen people have resisted Him, have rebelled against Him, have gone our own way, have left

Him out of our lives, have ignored the fact that His is our Creator God, have spurned His power and His authority in our lives, even though we've done all these things our God has demonstrated His grace and His love toward us. And worship begins when I remember God's grace, the initiative that He has taken toward me and the fact that He has taken that initiative and now He simply waits for my response. The Bible says God is seeking worshipers and God is seeking people who will see and understand and respond to that which He has done for them and that which He has done toward them. And when this psalmist begins to embrace the reality of what God has done, the word that he uses to describe his response to God is:

Bless the LORD, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name!

The word **BLESS!** Now candidly today this word is really lost it's, it's kind of umph, in our hearts. Sadly today the word, bless for us is kinda like cotton candy, it doesn't have a lot of substance, it just one of those little spiritual ornaments that we carry around. It's kind of a, a syrupy thing, you know, we hear people all the time saying, "Bless your heart." "Oh, bless your heart." "Oh God bless you." But in reality the word bless is a very substantial term in the Bible. It is a word that means to honor, to reverence. It is a word that means to give the weight of praise and of dignity that is due. It is a word of adoration to God and all worship is, is ultimately recognizing His worth and responding to Him. And therefore when the psalmist says:

Bless the LORD,...

One of the key ingredients in blessing the name of God and in honoring the name of God is remembering and understanding the weight of all that God has done for him and so to help him do that he begins to list the benefits. I don't know about you, but hardly a day goes by in our house where we don't get an invitation to take on a new credit card. I mean everybody wants me in debt. I can't tell you how many people want me in debt. I get an invitation to debt every day of my life and I know many of you do as well. But you know the way that they invite me into debt is that they do it by giving me this long list of benefits. These are all the things you get if you use this card and there's constantly this effort to help me to see that the benefits are gonna outweigh the debts. Now don't ever believe it, but that's the thing that they try to do is to give you that list. It's true if you ever decide you're gonna join a club or an organization of some kind, they'll always try to say to you, now here are all the benefits and they'll give you a list of the benefits that you get. A..., many times when you enlist in a, a frequent flyer program with an airline, a..., you'll get a, a list of benefits, or if you become an employee in an organization you'll be given a list of the benefits that you get within that organization and these benefits are given in order to help us to realize that there are some, some things that we gain, some fringe benefits, if you will, that go along. And so tonight what the psalmist gives us is the benefit package of someone who remembers and responds to God's grace and here it is. Just look at the list:

*He forgives your iniquities,
He heals your diseases,
He redeems your life,
He crowns you with lovingkindness,
He satisfies your mouth,
He executes righteousness toward you.*

You see when I begin to realize just how much God has done for me and I know that even more, because I know it in the work of Jesus Christ. I begin to be overwhelmed and I remember God's grace and it literally amazes me. Is it any wonder that the psalmist went on to say in 103, verses 8 and following:

*⁸The Lord is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy,
⁹He will not always strive with us, Nor will he keep His anger forever.
¹⁰He's not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor has He punished us according to our iniquities.*

What a great God. What a gracious God we have. Because He has so loved and so favored every one of us and so therefore the key ingredient in my worship is remembering God's grace. Is that not what we are called to do whenever we come to this table? The apostle Paul in the book of 1st Corinthians, chapter 11, we'll be there in just a few minutes when we step to these elements, simply says:

²³I deliver to you that which I receive from the Lord Jesus: how that our Lord on the same night on which He was betrayed took the cup and He took the bread;...

And when He broke it and when He distributed it and when they drank it, do you remember what Jesus said after each element? He said:

"...this do..."

What?

"...in remembrance of Me."

Why? Because when I remember God's grace it prompts my heart to worship God. It calls me to say:

Love so amazing, so divine, demands my life, my soul, may all.

And the whole of the Christian life and experience is a recognition, a remembrance of what God has done and in particular what He did on the cross through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It's all about the cross. From Genesis to Revelation, the shadow that covers the book of the Bible is the red-line, the scarlet thread of redemption and the shadow of the cross because it's all about what Christ has done for us. Here in the Psalms, Psalm 103, we can go back just a few Psalms to a trilogy of Psalms, Psalm 22, 23 and 24, it's an incredible trilogy right in the

middle of the Psalms here that help us to see the wonder of what God has done for us. Psalm 22 begins with words that immediately create a flashback experience for every one of us when we hear Psalm 22, the words as they open:

My God, My God, why has thou forsaken Me?...

Where do you hear that? Where do you know that from? The words of Jesus on the cross. And as you make your way through Psalm 22, you find in this trilogy of Psalms that the Psalms begin with this expression of, of the suffering servant, of Jesus, who would be broken and who would be poured out for us and being forsaken and being outcast and being rejected and being wounded and bruised. The prophet Isaiah tells us of the piercing of Jesus Christ and you cannot go through the Old Testament without the foreshadowing of the piercing of Christ. Why all of the blood and the blood sacrifices of the Old Testament? Every time reminding us of the cost and the payment of sin and that one day there would be a complete and a final sacrifice. But not only do we have the suffering servant in Psalm 22 and the picture of God's grace, but then in Psalm 23 we have the picture of the gentle Shepherd, Jesus our Shepherd, the One who gives us guidance in life, the One though Who we find peace in life and there's this wonderful living image of the Shepherd that we know and that we experience and that we share with in life. And then Psalm 24 is this incredible triumphant Psalm that repeats and echoes over and over:

Who is the King of glory?

And it speaks to us about a ruling sovereign and a glory and a hope and so grace and peace and hope are unveiled to us here in the Psalms and it is that same heart and it is that same spirit that calls us tonight to remember the grace of God in this place. All of this a picture of Jesus. The Bible tells us in 2nd Corinthians chapter 5 in verse 21 that:

God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

And every time I hold this bread and every time I touch this cup I remember that I am unrighteous in and of myself, but I have been made righteous by the blood of Jesus Christ and I remember His grace and it calls me to worship Him. He is my substitute. He is my sacrifice and every one of us are here tonight because of Jesus Christ. Every one of us is welcome at this table tonight, not because of what we've done, but because of Jesus; nothing more, nothing less, nothing else, JESUS! That's why the song writer said:

*I hear the Savior say, "Thy strength indeed is small!
Child of weakness watch and pray, Find in Me thine all in all."*

*For nothing good have I, Whereby Thy grace to claim—
I'll wash my garments white In the blood of Calvary's Lamb.*

*And when before the throne I stand in Him complete,
"Jesus died my soul to save," my lips shall still repeat.*

Would you say it with me?

*Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain—
He washed it white as snow.*

< Turn Tape >

Remember God's grace. That's where worship begins. But not only do I remember God's grace, I go back to Psalm 103 and worship is **RESPONDING TO GOD'S GOODNESS**. When I'm remembering His grace, when I'm rehearsing His grace I'm looking at all that He has done for me. But when I am responding to God's goodness and His guidance I'm embracing the fact that God is involved in my life today. I'm not just looking back to a religion of yesterday I'm living with a living Savior today, the Shepherd, who is walking me through every step and stage of life, a Shepherd who loves me and a Shepherd who cares for me and a Shepherd who will never leave me or forsake me. I love the fact that it says in Psalm 103 beginning down in verse 13:

*As a father pities his children, So the Lord pities those who fear Him.
He knows our frame and remembers that we are dust.*

God knows how you are. God knows who you are. God knows what you are and one of the things that happens in worship is that not only do I remember His grace, but I just begin to respond to His goodness, that even though He knows everything He still loves me and even though He sees everything He still receives me and He is working and moving in my heart and in my life, leading and guiding and ~~direction~~...directing. You see worship is focusing my attention on God's active work in my life today. It's something that's happening every day in my life. It's not just happening on Sunday. It's not just happening when I'm in a Bible study. It's recognizing His goodness and His grace and being thankful that even though He sees and knows it all that He still responds to me in love and kindness and care. He's a Father who has pity on us and who always demonstrates His goodness and His guidance.

We were having some flue shots done here on the campus today a..., all kinds of people getting those done. One of the hardest things was watchin those little boys and girls coming, you know the adults would go in there and frankly most of them are scared to death, you could tell, they'd get white, they were sweating, but they were trying to be bold and they'd go in there. But, my goodness when a child would go in you know everybody's sayin, this is gonna be great, this is gonna be fun. Bang! Yaaaaa! [pause for congregation laughter] But boy I watched those fathers having pity on their children as they were there. It's okay honey, it's okay buddy, you're gonna be fine. And yes, you're struggling and yes you're hurting, but this is good, this is right. God is a God who is working in your life

and the things you enjoy and the things that you don't enjoy and what you learn to do is in worship, every day you respond to His goodness and His guidance.

There's one other thing that I think Psalm 103 teaches us about worship and that is not only that worship is remembering God's grace and worship is responding to God's goodness and guidance in my life, but worship is ultimately **REJOICING IN GOD'S GLORY**. It's rejoicing in the glory of God, in the absolute confidence and the sure hope that He is the conquering King and that there is nothing that happens in this earth that is not ultimately under His sovereign rule and care. I love Psalm 103, verse 19, I can't tell you how many times, how many days in my life I have gone to this Psalm and just stood here with gratitude that says:

The Lord has established His throne in heaven, His kingdom (His sovereignty) rules over all.

There will never be a failure of any of His plans. There will never be a short-circuiting of any of His purposes and therefore in my life and in your life every time I think of things that are victories and tragedies, my heart is prompted with Psalm 24 to say:

Lift up your heads for the King of glory will come in.

Life up your head, He is the King of glory. I glorify Him every time there's a victory. I'm tellin you this week when we got news that the Senate had approved to turn over the partial birth abortion ban, I said, "Thank you Jesus!" [pause for applause] And I thank God that we've got a president who said that he's going to do it and the Congress that sent him there and I spent part of my day today sending some quick e-mails a..., of expression, of thanks to Senators who have responded and I hope many of you will do the same. But you know what? All the victories aren't gonna be won here, but thank God not all of them are gonna be lost here either and whenever we see a victory I give God the glory, He's the King of glory and I give thanks to His name. But I also give Him glory in the tragedies, in the hard things that I can't understand and I can't explain in life. I learned that life is about the glory of God and God if You can be glorified in sickness and suffering and hardship then Lord to You be glory. Because I'm gonna worship You from whatever platform I have. I love to worship standing on the platform of victory but I'm learning to worship standing in the platform and even the pits of tragedy, because He is God and He is worthy of all glory and honor and praise. In fact that's one of the things the Lord's Supper always encourage us to do. [1 Corinthians 11:26]

For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, You do show the Lords death until He comes.

You see I always begin the Lord's Supper remember me, looking back. But I always end the Lord's Supper anticipating, looking ahead, to a Savior who's coming, the King of glory who is going to come and it is with that in my heart, grace, peace, hope, remembering His grace, responding to His

goodness, rejoicing in His glory that I'm able to come and I am able to partake of this moment tonight and to look to Jesus my author, my finisher.

Bless the LORD, O my soul; And all the is within me, bless His holy name!