

January 14, 2018 - Psalm 150

“Total Praise!!!”

Today I’d like to talk about *the prepositions of praise*. But before we get to that, I have to tell you about an experience I had a few years ago in Starbucks. Now, I’m not really allowed to go to Starbucks unless I have a gift card. But a few years ago, as I have this year, I got one! So a few years ago, on a bright sunny day, I find myself on the patio at Starbucks in Richmond Hill, doing some Bible study on Psalm 150.

And it struck me how my experience on that patio and the experience of the psalmist are total and complete opposites! There I am, slurping my venti white mocha, over the loud speakers there’s this hip, urban music over the speakers— *“I’m cool like that, I’m cool like that, I’m cool like that”*— and I really fit in, because as my kids will tell you, I’m the coolest guy on the planet! *(Not!!)*

But what I’m reading is totally the opposite of what I’m experiencing! Praise isn’t about being *cool*! Praise is about being totally geeked out about God! The praise here in Psalm 150 isn’t all conformed, quiet and reserved— it’s *loud* and *eclectic*! The last word in the book of Psalms is *total, all-out* praise of the Lord! The words *“hallelu ya”*, “praise the Lord!”, begin and end this psalm like book-ends of exuberance. Praise isn’t about being all chill, praise is all about losing oneself in the total greatness of God!!

So the first preposition of praise is **“in”**: Vs.1, **“Praise the LORD. Praise God in His sanctuary; praise Him in His mighty heavens.”** Two places we’re to praise God. The first place is in His sanctuary. Originally, His sanctuary was located at the Temple in Jerusalem. But we can very justifiably extend this to the church. Seems pretty obvious, doesn’t it? Praise God in the church!

But how often can churches lose sight of the fact that worship is one of the main things we're to do as a church! We're to worship and proclaim God's worth and glory and praise! That's our primary function as the people of God in the church! Some may think the primary focus in the church needs to be evangelism, others think it ought to be community outreach, or helping the poor or social justice— all of those things have their place and need to be done, but the *primary* work of the church is to worship, praise and glorify our God.

But worship is *also* to be an intimate reality in our individual lives as well. It says "praise God in the sanctuary"— but did you know that for the believer in Jesus your physical body itself *is* a sanctuary? I Corinthians 6:19-20 says, "**Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, Who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.**"

Even the normal, everyday expressions of our bodies is a form of worship for the person who's placed their trust in Christ. John Stott once said, "Our greatest claim to nobility is our created capacity to know God, to be in personal relationship with him, to love him and worship him. Indeed, we are most truly human when we are on our knees before our Creator." (quoted in *1001 Quotes, Illustrations & Humorous Stories*, pg.186)

But then vs.1 *also* says, "... **praise him in his mighty heavens.**" Think about it: A key feature of heaven, the most perfect, most blissful place in the universe, is the praise and worship of the Living God. One of the things I did that afternoon in Starbucks was to take a look at the last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation, *through* the "lens" of Psalm 150. And one of the main things I discovered was that *worship is and will be the main business of heaven.*

I discovered a number of other things looking at Revelation through the lens of Psalm 150. #1 praise & worship figure prominently if not centrally in the vision of heaven in Revelation. #2 heaven, earth and all creation will

eventually be involved in worship— we'll get to that point a little later on. #3 the key leaders in heaven, I found this fascinating— there are four heavenly creatures described throughout, plus 24 elders— and these key leaders in heaven were all *worshippers*. *Worship* was the leadership's main focus— I think that's instructive for all who are in Christian leadership— myself included. #4 worship is all about God and the Lamb of God, Jesus. #5 it was all centered about God who was on the throne, sovereign, in control. And last but not least, worship in the book of Revelation, worship in heaven is *loud*. *There's a lot of shoutin' going on in heaven!*

Which brings to the next preposition of worship—“**for**”— Who is worship *for*? In our consumerist society, we might be tempted to say that worship is primarily *for* the worshipers present, but vs.2 says, “**Praise him** (that is, praise *God*) **for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness.**” Church life *at its worst* is all about *your and/or my* acts of power and greatness. But Psalm 150:2 says that *His* greatness is surpassing— it's really all about *God's power and greatness*.

What a great, awesome, *powerful* God we serve! He's created this wonderful world we live in! He's created *you and me*!! Now, I got all “C's” in science, but experts tell us that if any aspect of this universe was off by just a little bit-- from gravitational forces, to the distance this planet is from the sun, to the complex mix of proteins that make up life itself— if *any* of that is just off kilter by a little bit, this planet wouldn't be able to support life at all! But we have a powerful Creator Who's in control of it all.

And the most powerful thing God ever did was through the weakness of His Son, crucified on a Cross for each one of us. Of this powerful Saviour God's Word declares in Colossians 1:15-20, “**He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were**

created by Him and for Him. And He is head of the body, the church; He is the beginning and the first born from among the dead, so that in everything He might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross.” (Colossians 1:15-20)

Allow me to read that last bit one more time: “... **and through Him** (that is, through this mighty Saviour Jesus) **to reconcile to Himself all things... by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross.”** It takes *one* kind of power to start a fight. It takes a totally different kind of power on a *completely higher level* to make for peace. Such is the power of Jesus! In one fell swoop through the Cross of Christ God took out all the power of sin, death and even hell itself. And all He requires of you and me is our trust to invite Jesus into our lives to finally save us and bring us close to God.

John Stott once gave this powerful testimony while addressing a group of students at the University of Michigan: “If the basic Christian thesis is true, and Jesus Christ is the Son of God, then you can never be the same after your discovery as you were before. You cannot fit Jesus at the end of a telescope and say, ‘How interesting!’ Jesus Christ is not interesting. He is profoundly morally and spiritually disturbing and challenging. If there is anybody who forces us to get off the fence and to enter the field of moral commitment, it is Jesus Christ. If He is God, He deserves our worship, not just our patronage. Not just our admiration but our adoration. It is my earnest prayer that many on this campus this week may come to find a true and sincere conviction that Jesus is the Son of God and may bring to Him the worship of their lives and their hearts.” (quoted in T. Winter, *Evidence: The Truth about Christianity*, pg.38)

I love the rather homey way the late Peter Marshall, Chaplain to the U.S. Senate once put it. He said, “I think I may have to go through the agony of hearing all my sins recited in the presence of God. But I believe it will be

like this— Jesus will come over and lay his hand across my shoulders and say to God, ‘Yes, all these things are true, but I’m here to cover up for Peter. He is sorry for all his sins, and by a transaction made between us, I am now solely responsible for them.’” (Winter, pg.43)

Which leads to another preposition of praise that we find in vs.3-5— the preposition “**with**”. **“Praise Him *with* the sounding of the trumpet, praise Him with the harp and lyre, praise Him with tambourine and dancing, praise Him with the strings and flute, praise Him with the clash of cymbals, praise Him with resounding cymbals.”** *Sounds loud* doesn’t it?

And there is something else that’s very interesting about this list of things we can praise the Lord *with*: It includes instruments of *all* kinds— it even includes different *modes* of worshiping like dancing. It even includes instruments like the tambourines and the flutes which were both not normally used in the formal worship of Israel at that time. That’s pretty instructive for the church: *Every* instrument is acceptable for use in the worship of God, not just the organ or piano—although we have a beautiful piano and organ here, and two very artistic and accomplished musicians to play them. But here in Psalm 150, the worship is eclectic, varied and dynamic. It really isn’t restricted in any sense at all. The real focus of worship is not the *mode* of worship, but the *Person* we’re worshiping!

We serve a mighty Saviour, we have an awesome God— and He is worthy of all our praise for His acts of power and His surpassing greatness. And there is coming a day when all the praise due to this great God will *go viral*. That’s what the fourth preposition of praise is all about— it’s not mentioned explicitly in the text, but it is certainly implied!

It’s that powerful little word “***all***”. Look with me at vs.6: **“Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD.”**

Isn't that awesome!?! God is *so* worthy of worship and praise *everything* that breathes is exhorted to praise our God. Not just Canada, not just western society, not just all the nations of the world, but let everything that has breath praise the Lord! Just before He was to go to the Cross, when Jesus rode into Jerusalem in the humility of riding on a donkey, as the crowds cheered His coming, and joyfully began to praise God, some religious snobs sneered, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" Jesus shot back, **"I tell you, if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."** (Luke 19:40)

Back at Starbucks, I discovered that in Revelation 4 & 5 there's this awesome scene of worship around the Throne of God and the Lamb of God Who is the Lord Jesus Christ. And the worship there seems to fan out into concentric circles starting nearest to the throne of God Himself. First it includes these four mysterious heavenly beings with six wings and completely covered with eyes. Around them were the 24 elders of the book of Revelation, presumably representing one elder for each of the tribes of Israel, and then the 12 New Testament apostles. And then around them are a countless number of angels, 10 000 times 10 000 angels the scripture tells us. And then *around them* is every creature in heaven and on earth and on the sea, and all that is in them. And they are all singing the same song, **"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power for ever and ever!"** (Revelation 5:13)

And the whole thing comes to this spine-tingling crescendo in chapter 7 where we read these stirring words: **"After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: 'Salvation belongs to our God, Who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.' All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: 'Amen! Praise and**

glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!” (Rev. 7:9-12)

Isn't that awesome! How on earth can you sip on a cappuccino listening to "*I'm chill like that*" when you have a vision like this!! Now listen again to Psalm 150:6: **"Let everything that has breath praise the LORD."** Do you know what we know about this verse in light of what we read at the end of the Book in Revelation? *One day it's gonna happen! Praise God, because of Jesus, the Lamb who was slain for us, one day it's gonna happen!* One day everything that has breath *will* praise the Lord!!!

I heard of a story of one Anglican pastor who was just coming back from performing the morning Eucharist where usually only seven or eight people show up. As he walked back for a brief break one neighbor asked him, with tongue firmly in cheek, "How many did you have at church today, padre?" He replied, "*Millions.*" For that pastor knew what the Scripture teaches— all of heaven joins in when we worship the King— and one day all creation will join in as well.

Some of you may remember I used the following illustration when I preached for the call here—but it's one of my favorites. After Arturo Toscanini finished conducting a brilliant performance of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, the crowd rose to its feet and applauded, shouting its delight. But Toscanini waved his arms violently for it all to stop. He turned to the orchestra and shouted hoarsely, "You are nothing!" He pointed to himself and shouted, "I am nothing!" Then he shouted, "Beethoven is everything, everything, everything!" (D.W. McCullough, *The Trivialization of God...*, pg.115, 116)

Praise the Lord! In... for... with... all... praise the Lord!! Worship is all about saying, with our voices, with what we do *in* church, what we do *for* our great God & Saviour with our lives, praising Him *for* all that He's done for us, we say at the top of our lungs, *with* our hearts, with our lives, with all of our focus—no distractions!—we our very, very best, "*Jesus is everything, everything, everything!*"

It's all about Him. Author Rick Warren brilliantly describes the heart of worship with one word: *Surrender*. That's worship at its core, *surrender*, total, unreserved *surrender to God and to His Son the Lord Jesus Christ*. Leave acting cool for Fonzie & Jay-zee & five-dollar coffees, *we were made for worship. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!!*