

Message: Praise for Our God!

Text: Psalm 150; Luke 1-2

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Introduction: The word eulogy, literally means “to speak well of,” and is a transliteration of the Greek word *eulogia*. It is translated “blessing” and “praise” in the birth narratives of the Gospels. God does deserve our praise, our good words, today just like He did back then.

Praise is a natural and necessary response to fully enjoy the object that is praised. For example, when watching a Steeler game, it is a natural response to praise a tremendous play. To shout WOW! after an acrobatic catch in the end zone is not only natural, but necessary to fully enjoy (no matter how vicariously) the spectacular play. If you do not believe it is necessary, the next time you watch a football game try *not* to express yourself at all. You will quickly find that you do not enjoy the action nearly as much as you do when you have the freedom to express yourself in praise and excitement. (adapted from Green, *Illustrations for Biblical; Preaching*, p.270)

Although, football is not everybody’s game, but there ought to be something that excites you. And God ought to get the most enthusiasm, shouldn’t he?

Praise is out loud. It is verbal ([Luke 2:13-14](#)). “Glory to God in the highest,” the heavenly host shouted. “Glory to God in the highest” wasn’t whispered. It thundered!

Let’s look together at a few songs of praise in Luke’s gospel and what causes praise. Praise is the result of:

I. Being Moved by the Spirit.

Throughout the story of both John the Baptist and Jesus being born, the Holy Spirit is actively prompting responses to God.

A. The Spirit brings peace.

Peace is the result of reconciliation. This is when we no longer fight what God wants from us. There are two contrasting examples in the early part of Luke:

Mary accepted what was said to her by the angel Gabriel. She was pregnant without the aid of a husband, and she was at peace with that.

Zechariah doubted God and was struck dumb (unable to speak) until he complied with God's wishes for the priest's son, John. When he did what was asked, it says:

Luke 1:64 (NIV) ⁶⁴Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue was loosed, and he began to speak, praising God.

Application: We need to have *our* tongues loosed so that we can witness to the power of God. Or do we somehow still doubt God?

Once the priest, Zechariah was able to speak, word travelled throughout the whole area, and just a few verses later, Zechariah is filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesies giving us what is called Zechariah's Song.

Luke 1:67-79 (NIV) ⁶⁷His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied: ⁶⁸“Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people. ⁶⁹ He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David ⁷⁰ (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago), ⁷¹ salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us— ⁷² to show mercy to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, ⁷³ the oath he swore to our father Abraham: ⁷⁴ to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear ⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. ⁷⁶ And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, ⁷⁷ to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, ⁷⁸ because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven ⁷⁹ to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.”

B. The Spirit aids in our salvation.

God draws us to Himself to give us understanding and forgiveness.

It is the Spirit that convicts and helps us lead holy lives.

God was to come in the flesh so He could provide a living example of love and then show us how to die in order that we might live with Him eternally.

Fact is, though, not everyone accepts Jesus. Some people reject God's gracious offer of salvation They don't see the danger in refusing God's plan for salvation. Some, I am sure, even think God may make an exception in their case.

Illus. Scene: Big Thompson Flood on July 31, 1976, in the 35-mile-long, mountain rimmed canyon linking Estes Park and Loveland, Colorado. A 19-foot wall of water, resulting from a furious thunderstorm, roared through the canyon and killed 129 people. This account is given by the wife of one of the victims. The name of the husband has been altered to conceal identities:

Gary was an engineer, and to his trained eye the narrowness of the canyon and the rapidly rising river spelled trouble. Anyhow, he came over to tell me that he was going to our friend's cabin to warn them and the people in cabins across the way to leave at once for higher ground.

Although I asked to go with him, Gary insisted that I stay at the hotel. He said that he would be back for me, but if he didn't return in thirty minutes, I was to climb to the top of the mountain without him. He said he'd catch up with me there. He told the hotel owner and his wife (where we were staying) to be sure to get their two youngsters, an eleven-year old boy and eight-year-old girl, out of bed and dressed right away. Then Gary drove off in such a hurry that he forgot to kiss me good-bye. I have no last kiss to remember, she said.

In exactly thirty minutes, I followed Gary's instructions and started to climb up the rough, rocky side of the mountain ...In the canyon down below, now filled with water, I saw the tops of cars bob by; even a Greyhound bus swept past. I saw the hotel where we were to meet our friends break apart and float away. I wondered if the hotel owner, his wife, and their children were safe. All four, I learned later, were killed.

The warning of disaster and death was clear, the offer of a plan for being saved understood, the rejection tragic. In retrospect, we can all see the foolishness of those who rejected Gary's warning. But can we see also the folly of rejecting the Bible's warning about what will happen to those who do not accept God's offer of salvation? (Green, *Illustrations for Biblical Preaching*, p.316)

Praise is the result of:

II. Faith

All these songs of faith most certainly come after struggle and doubt. Some doubt is even revealed in the text.

A. Song of Elizabeth (Luke 1:41-45)

**To Mary, Elizabeth says: "Blessed are you among women"
"Blessed is the child you will bear!"**

Verse 45 may have been for Mary as well as her own benefit.

Luke 1:45 (NIV) ⁴⁵Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished!"

Blessings are given to the faithful. You may be up in years like Zechariah and Elizabeth or Simeon and Anna before it happens, **BUT GOD IS FAITHFUL!**

B. Song of Simeon (Luke 2:29-32)

Luke 2:29-32 (NIV) ²⁹“Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. ³⁰For my eyes have seen your salvation, ³¹which you have prepared in the sight of all people, ³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.”

Devout Jews prayed every day for the coming or advent of the Messiah, using the common petition, “May I see the consolation of Israel.”

It was faith that brought Simeon to the Temple day after day. There wasn't always a moving service. Feast days were even flat and uninspiring sometimes. Year after year of basically the same thing, but now God was clearly in charge of what was happening. What would have happened if Simeon had been absent that day?

But he wasn't.....The Scripture says: **Luke 2:27-29 (NIV)** ²⁷Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, ²⁸Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: ²⁹“Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace.

When Jesus comes again we will have one everlasting worship service in heaven. I hope you don't miss it. “Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing”, Paul counsels the readers of the Epistle to the Hebrews (10:25).

What is called *Simeon's Song* finds its way into some liturgies as a climactic reading immediately before communion.

Praise is the result of:

III. Experience.

A. Anna's experience

Anna's husband had died years before. Ever since then Anna had always been found in devout worship. The Scripture says, [Luke 2:37b \(NIV\)](#) She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.

Anna's very first reaction to Jesus' presence is to offer up praise to God for His being the redemption of Jerusalem. Jerusalem symbolized the best of Judaism. It was also the starting point for the early Church as well, in its evangelistic strategy.

Jesus wept over Jerusalem because of her lack of faith. Some day there will be a new Jerusalem prepared for the faithful worshippers of the Lamb.

B. Jesus had to be in His Father's house ([Luke 2:49](#)).

People say, "I don't have to be in church to be a Christian." I suppose technically that is right, but it is not following Christ's example. Jesus had to be in His Father's house for:

Praise - Benedictions

Witness - Had to be about His Father's business

Teaching - His teaching amazed people. He taught as one having authority.

Certainly as Paul tells Timothy that "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking (exposing by contrast in Ephesians 5:11), correcting and training in righteousness, so that man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" ([II Timothy 3:16-17](#)).

The LIVING WORD OF GOD would have to be in His Father's house making the same kind of impression.

Conclusion: Praise and worship will be found in heaven. We ought to start practicing now! Our praise, just like our lives, ought to be evangelistic. We could even use the shepherds as an example. (Explain how shepherds were viewed in their culture.)

[Luke 2:17-20 \(NIV\)](#) ¹⁷When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

The shepherds did not need a course on evangelism. They believed what God's angel (messenger) had said and responded.

Up until lately many people took a good economy for granted. We may take each other, our church and even the word of God for granted, but we shouldn't. I pray this Advent season we might recapture the wonder of God in our midst - both in his Word, and in his people.

I would like to share with you a note I received from the Philippines last week (12-10-08):

Hello Pastor

Hello I am Beryo Villadares, i 'am pastoring in a pioneering church here and This is my second time to visit in your church website.Thank you so much for the sermon the " To Be at Peace with God " in your website

I am so bless spiritually when i listend this teaching... and last Sunday i share this sermon in our church.when i shared this teaching to our church many people bless and touch to this teaching.i really feel the presence of God when i listend to your sermon.. That's the reason why i e-mail you because i want to say thank you for the teaching in your website and to let you know that i and my family praying for you..and now i always try my best to visit your site because i want to grow in the Knowledge of God with you..

God Bless you, Beryo and family

God bless us all as we do our best everyday to bless others and praise our God for all of his wonderful gifts. Amen