

Thanksgiving November 24, 2022

GIVE GLORY TO GOD!

Romans 11:33-36

Scripture Readings

Isaiah 40:12-18

Matthew 15:29-38

Hymns

574, Worship Supplement 2000: #793, 30, 568

Hymns from The Lutheran Hymnal (1941) unless otherwise noted

+ *In the Name of Jesus Christ* +

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! "For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?" "Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?" For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

Dearly Beloved Fellow Believers,

All of us surely are glad to receive compliments. It is gratifying when someone notices our work and tells us that we have done a good job. It boosts our spirits when someone tells us, "You look nice, today," or compliments us on what we are wearing.

But sometimes a compliment can make us feel uncomfortable. This is so when we feel that we really didn't deserve it. Perhaps the praise was too much or out of proportion to what we did. Maybe we were praised for something for which someone else deserved the credit. Praise that is not fitting is not gratifying. It can even be embarrassing. And the praise of men isn't always fitting.

However, praise given to God is always fitting. It's never out of place, and it's never too much. God is the one who really deserves to be praised because everything good comes from Him. Therefore, it is always fitting that we should gather to praise God, to acknowledge publicly that the good things that we have and enjoy are from the hand of God.

Our text on this Sunday before Thanksgiving Day encourages us to praise God by saying that all glory belongs to Him. The apostle exclaims, "***For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever.***" Today we

want to explore the thought that glory should be given to God. The apostle tells us how we can give glory to God.

GIVE GLORY TO GOD: 1) Acknowledge that His ways surpass our understanding.

Our text teaches of a spirit of thanksgiving towards God that is constant. It guards us against that attitude of heart that gives thanks to God in good times but quickly turns to grumbling in times of trial. It does this by teaching us what it means to give glory to God. To give glory to God, Paul tells us here, is first of all to acknowledge that God's ways are far above us, that they far surpass our understanding. If we know this and acknowledge it, then we will not be quick to complain about changes in our standard of living or our health, when we are disappointed or suffer a painful loss.

When we are tempted to complain to God, we need to stop and recall what Paul says about God here: ***“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!”*** In God there is depth. It is a depth of wisdom and knowledge. We find this depth in His Word where God makes Himself known to us. There we learn to know the true God. There we are taken beyond the foolish notions about God and caricatures of God that are common in the world. In the Scriptures we come to know God who is eternal, who has no beginning and no end. He existed before the universe came into being. He created it by the power of His word in six days. In the Scriptures we come to know God who does not change, who remains consistent over thousands of years. He makes far-reaching promises and keeps them. He carries out His divine purposes and does not lose sight of them. He controls the course of history; He uses kings and mighty empires as His tools to accomplish His purposes.

In the Scriptures we especially come to know God who is love. His purpose was to save mankind. In Bible history we see how God revealed that plan and how He carried it out. Ages passed, empires rose and fell, and in the fullness of time God sent forth His Son to redeem the world from sin and death; yes, to redeem every one of us from our sins and from the death and judgment that we deserved because of them.

All of this shows us that God knows what He is doing. It also shows us that—unless He tells us in His word—we do not know what He is doing. ***“How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!”*** Paul says. ***“For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His***

counselor?” We can’t on our own analyze what God is doing; we can’t say why He permits certain things to happen. It is presumptuous for people to look at an event in the news and claim to know why God permitted it to take place. We know only as much as God has revealed in His word, and we should not claim to know more than that.

What God has revealed of His ways ought to be enough for us. We know that He loved us and sent His own Son to save us. We know at what great cost Jesus Christ gained our salvation, for the removal of our guilt before God was a matter of great magnitude. We know that the salvation that Christ won for us is ours by grace. Let that be enough to keep us from questioning God’s Word when what it says is hard for us to accept. Let that be enough to keep us from questioning His wisdom when we experience trials, or when we see others experience them. Instead of questioning or complaining let us give glory to God for His wisdom and knowledge, His judgments and His ways.

GIVE GLORY TO GOD: 2) Proclaim that He is the source of all that we have.

The apostle also gives glory to God by declaring that He is the source of every good thing. Paul asks this question about God: ***“Who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him?”*** This is a paraphrase of a verse from the Book of Job where God says to Job, ***“Who has preceded Me, that I should pay him? Everything under heaven is Mine.”*** (Job 41:11) God is our Maker; no one preceded Him. Our very life and being come from Him. Therefore, it is impossible that we could give God anything that would place Him in our debt. God wants us to give Him praise and service. He is pleased with the sacrifices that His children offer to Him. (cf. Romans 12:1) But when we give anything to God we are only giving back a part of what He has first given to us. It is as we sing in one of our hymns, *“We give Thee but Thine own, whate’er the gift may be. All that we have is Thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from Thee”* (#441:1)

To this Paul adds, ***“For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things.”*** Everything is ***“of Him”***: the whole universe and everything in it originated in the mind of God. The Bible speaks of God’s plans and thoughts ***“before the foundation of the world.”*** (Ephesians 1:4) Everything is ***“through Him”***: He brought the universe into being by the power of His Word. ***“He spoke and it was done. He commanded and it stood fast.”*** (Psalm

33:9) And besides all this, everything is also “to Him,” by which we understand that everything is there to fulfill God’s purposes. To put it another way, the universe doesn’t exist for its own sake; the earth doesn’t exist for its own sake; nature doesn’t exist for its own sake; and man is not independent of God. Everything exists for God’s glory, as David says, “*The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows His handiwork.*” (Psalm 19:1) The creation is for our benefit, for us to use and enjoy. It is not for us to misuse either by taking it for granted and failing to take care of it or by going to the opposite extreme and treating it as “our mother,” an object of veneration.

Since everything in the universe comes from God and He is its ultimate owner, it follows that everything we have is from God and that it all really still belongs to Him. This includes not only our material possessions but also our abilities and talents. If we are particularly talented at something, we owe that to God. If we excelled in school, we owe that to God. If we have prospered in business, we owe that to God. If we are clever, witty, athletic, good-looking, good at math, musically inclined, or whatever other gift we may have, we owe it all to God. It is a trust from Him to be used to serve Him and bring Him glory.

We give God glory when we proclaim that what we have is from Him. We do that by saying so in openly saying so and doing so humbly. We give God glory for what we have especially when we use it for Him. When we use our voice to sing hymns and join in the liturgy, we are saying that we regard our voice as a gift of God. When we use our education, skills, and training to assist in the Gospel ministry of our church, we are saying that those things are gifts of God. When we use our time to help our spouse, our children, our parents, our neighbor, we are declaring that our time is a gift of God that He has given to us so that we can be a blessing to others. And when we are a blessing to others—even an answer to their prayers, perhaps—we give God glory because they will thank God for us.

A life lived to the glory of God is a good life, a contented life, a happy life, for that is how we were intended to live. It is a foretaste of heaven where we will praise and glorify God forever. Amen.

—**Rev. John Klatt** Watertown, SD