

Theme:

- John's vision of a heavenly picture of praise is the model we must emulate in order to see the Power of Praise in our lives.

Introduction

- Passage: Revelation 4:8-11.

Defining Praise:

- Praise is, "One of humanity's many responses to God's revelation of Himself." Therefore, when God gives us a picture of himself, it is our responsibility to praise what we see.
- Praise is a relational term. God gives us a picture of himself so that we would praise him-- and in turn our praise would push us toward the presence of God.

The Benefit of Praise:

- We do not praise because we are unaware of the benefits of praise.
- The benefit is that Praise is the means by which God presents to us his presence. And the Psalmist tells us that in his presence is fullness of joy (Psa. 16:11). Therefore, failing to praise God is indicative of depression, anxiety, and all sorts of issues we come across in our everyday lives.

Passage

Context: For the Picture of Praise

- Here in the book of Revelation, John is receiving a revelatory vision from the Lord. In the midst of the revelation John is taken to a place to see a vision of the heavenly place.
- John notices a door that is open in heaven. And he is bid by a voice, in heaven, that says to him, "come up here." Immediately after he notices he is in the spirit. Subsequently he notices "one" sitting on a throne that stood in heaven; essentially he sees *YHWH*
- John notices the color of the figure who sat on the throne. That is, God, the Father sits in colors that represent his loving kindness and covenantal protection (Gen. 9:6)
- Next, surrounding the throne, John sees twenty four thrones with twenty four elders sitting on the throne. The identify of the elders are not known but the important thing about them is what they are wearing. They are wearing white garments and golden crowns. The white garments symbolize the notion that the elders represent the saints of God; for the saints of God are those who walk this life in the perfect righteousness of Christ represented by these

white, stainless garments. Furthermore, the fact that they are sitting on thrones puts to picture the idea that the saints are raised with Christ and seated with Christ in heavenly places (Eph. 2:6). Moreover, the elders are wearing golden crowns. That is, the saints reward for their good works subsequent to salvation. For there is a process that proceeds salvation called sanctification (It is making the saint holy and pure and good. That is to say, the stainless garments they are wearing becomes a reality as the Spirit works perfection in their lives). And the product of salvation is sanctification and the fruit of sanctification is good works (it's something of a linear process, namely, salvation --- sanctification --- good works --- reward). Indeed, the reward for the good works is presented to the saints in heaven, which is here represented by the golden crowns (Mat. 6:19-20; 2 Cor.5:10).

- So what are we seeing here? Commentators make it clear that we are viewing a worship scene. In fact, it was common, whether speaking about the greek amphitheaters, or the Jewish Sanhedrin, to witness the seating arrangement scene here in the passage. Indeed, one commentator points out that "Greek choruses would often sing or dance in circles" similar to what we see in the passage. Therefore, what John is seeing is a vision pertaining to--praising God.
- With that being said, let me point out one more key factor in the passage, namely, there was lightening and thunder that came forth from the throne. This lightening and thunder is very similar to what we saw at Mt. Sinai (Ex. 19:16-19); which helps us to understand that we are witnessing God's manifest presence. Therefore, as we move into our passage, we note that true praise host the presence of God's weighty glory.

Verse by Verse: The Picture of Praise

Rev. 4:6 and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal.

And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: 7 the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight

- The four living creatures are what is none as the “four gospel symbols.” In a strictly gospel speaking manner, the early church fathers understood each symbol to have gospel significance (i.e., the man is the fulfillment of the law). However, more specifically in this passage, commentators note that each creature represents a characteristic of God's eternal reign.
 - The historical proof is in understanding that it was common for thrones to be surrounded by carved images that were emblematic representations of the characteristics of the particular monarch who sat on the throne. Thus, each creature represents a divine aspect of God's authoritative reign. For example, the lion teaches us about the power and authority of God; the ox teaches us about the stability, consistency and perseverance of God; the man teaches us about the intelligibility, and rationality and logicity of God; and the eagle teaches us about the swiftness and efficiency and expediency of God's reign.

- Also, note that the creatures are “full of eyes,” denoting the omniscience of God.

Rev. 4:8 And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say,

“Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!

- Again as God goes to describe himself we get, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!”
- The BRCC Catechism question 7 ask, "What is God's character like?" The answer is, what? God is perfect in holiness, love, and integrity. I believe holy is the best word to describe God. Why? Because it denotes the separateness and uniqueness of God.
- Furthermore, note, the "who was and is and is to come." It takes us back to when God described himself to Moses. He said, "I am who I am" (Ex. 3:14). Meaning, I reveal myself to you as I see fit to show you all that makes me--me. Then this passage takes it a step further. That is, who God was, is who he is now, and when he is revealed in our future he will be who he has revealed himself to be over time. In other words, when he returns, we will know, like Thomas who physically touched his hands, that he is tangibly good, loving, kind, gentle, righteous, graceful, etc.

Rev. 4:9 And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

Rev. 4:11 “Worthy are you, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they existed and were created.”

- First thing to recall is that the elders represent the church. Thus, their response ought to be our response. And what are they doing? They are praising him in response to who he is and what he has done. And this is an important lesson for us. For when the word is preached, God is proclaimed. The proper response, in praise, is with a yes and an amen to the revelation of God.
- More specifically, in this passage, the elders describe God as creator. That is, he is the creator without ever being created himself. All things exist by him and without him nothing exist. He is the giver of life. Thus, we would be wise to follow the example of the elders and ascribe proper recognition to the value therein.

Insight: From the Picture of Praise

1. Praise Requires Reciprocity

- For any relationship to thrive there must be reciprocity. Therefore, us giving to God—is God's designed way for us to receive more of him. So God gives gifts in order for his creation to receive him as the great giver.
- You see, a way to ascribe value is by reciprocating what was given with a gift.
- We see it in the passage. Note, in verse 10.

10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne

- Recall that the crowns are the fruit of their good works performed after salvation. So before they say a word they give back to God all that they had!!
- Here it is, if you want to praise God you must present to God all that he has provided—for your prosperity.
 - After pleading with God for a child, Hanna was providentially given the child Samuel. What did she do? She returned to God her child as a sacrifice of praise for his provision.
 - **Applying the Word:** Ask yourself, "What provision has God given that I can present to God as a sacrifice of praise?"

2. Praise Communicates the Characteristics of God back to God

- Look to verse 10 again.

Rev. 4:11 “Worthy are you, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they existed and were created.”

- Communicating the characteristics of God, back to God magnifies God in your life. What's the benefit of that type of praise? Well, it takes your focus off of your Problems and gives your gaze proper perspective by placing your focus on God. Again, it must be verbal. You can think about God but when you attach your thought with an action like speaking, it cements the reality of the thought deep into your heart; making it a belief.
 - It's like looking at a planet through a telescope. It makes the object bigger in the beholders view. However, the object does not expand in size. Rather, the planet is bigger than what the telescope makes it seem to be. That's what it is to praise God verbally; it magnifies him in our view. Focusing our thoughts on his characteristics whereby our view of him expands--yet he gains nothing in dimension or size.
 - On the other hand, it is not like a microscope. A microscope makes smaller objects bigger in the beholders view. Again it does not change the size of the

object. In fact, the object, say an atom, is smaller than one can imagine. But with the right amount of focus, one can see the atom clearly. It is like that with our problems, our worries and anxieties. They are small in comparison to the grandeur of God but when we focus our thoughts on them, we expound them and give them power in our lives.

- And this is how it's powerful. The greater you see God, the greater you believe God. And when you believe God the impossible suddenly becomes possible.
- You'll recall when Paul and Silas were in prison for sharing the gospel. What did they do? They praised God with their voices. And what happened? Their praise had power, to the point that God loosed their chains and they were freed from the prison (Acts 16:25-34).
 - Some of you are stuck in the prison of depression. You will not be free until you praise him. Addictions are loosed when you praise him. Because the power of his presence is manifest when you audibly praise him.
 - **Applying the Word:** Here's a question, "What prisons do you find yourself in?" And what characteristic of God can you focus on that will enable freedom from the prison?"

3. Praise Requires Prostration

- Again, see it in verse 10.

10 the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever.

- What the elders do with their bodies shows what you should do with your heart. When you do it with your body it calls to your heart to orient it towards prostration.
- Have you ever heard a coach say, "your hearts not in it." He can't read your heart. So what is he saying? He is saying, I can look at your physiology and determine your psychology. Because what you do with your body is predicated on what is in your heart.
- This is why Jesus says,

Luke 6:45 The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

- **Applying the Word:** My final question for the day is, "Do you struggle to express yourself when worshipping and praising God."

Vision

- I want us to be a people whose lives are marked by praise. Could you imagine that? A couple hundred people who are not marked by their problems but by praise. What would that do in a culture that lifts up busyness? Moreover a culture that prioritizes spending as much time in the temporal as possible? A culture that is consumer oriented and self pleasing? But a church that stands on a city, like a light in a dark place, with praise in their mouths and prostration in their hearts, is a church ready to engage a culture hungry for Jesus.