

**Connection with Unit Theme:** To complement the small group study *A Prayer of Praise*, this sermon outline will use the same Scripture passages as the small group study, so the pastor can reinforce the study from the pulpit.

**The Point:** Our prayers are driven by the desire to honor God.

**Introduction:** Billy Graham's wife, Ruth, wrote a book many years ago titled *It's My Turn*. In that book, she told the story of her first encounter with Billy. She was a student at Wheaton College, and he had just transferred to Wheaton from the Florida Bible Institute. During a chapel service, Billy was called on to lead in prayer. Though he and Ruth had not yet been formally introduced, she was impressed by the earnestness and reverence of his prayer. She thought, "He knows who he's talking to."

The Lord Jesus also knew who He was addressing when He prayed. Thus, He taught His disciples to begin their prayers with the words, "Hallowed be Thy name." Certainly we should carry our needs and requests to Him (Philippians 4:6), but at the same time we must remember that He is more than just a friend. He is the God of the universe, and He is worthy of our worship and our reverence.

## I. The mandate for praising God.

A. We are commanded to sing Him "a new song".

1. The word "new" in this context carries the idea of freshness.
  - a. The psalmist was not talking so much about the actual age of the music, but the spirit in which we sing it.
  - b. Whether your songs are traditional or contemporary, they don't mean much when they're sung in a bland, lackluster way.
    - For eleven years I served as pastor of a small country church in southeast Missouri. Many people would regard their taste in music as old-fashioned (they sang from the *Baptist Hymnal* on Sunday mornings and the *Heavenly Highway Hymnal* on Sunday nights). Nevertheless, those people loved to sing! Their joyous singing was a refreshing change from the "Baptist mumble" to which I'd grown accustomed. Their songs were old, but they knew how to "sing a new song".
2. What does it mean to "bless His name"?
  - a. In those days, a person's name was more than a means of identification. It also described the person's character.
  - b. To "bless God's name" means to praise His whole Person.

B. We are to proclaim Him to all nations.

1. He is not just the God of Israel, but of the whole world.
2. He has done great things for all people and nations.
  - a. He bestows His blessings on all people, even when they do not acknowledge Him as the true God.
  - b. This does not mean everyone will be saved (John 14:6; Acts 4:12).
  - c. God uses people to make Himself known (Romans 10:14).

## **II. The motivation for praising God.**

A. He alone is the true God.

1. He alone is worthy to be feared.
  - a. People don't like to talk about "fearing" God today, but the idea is deeply rooted in Scripture.
  - b. Because God loves us, He chastens us.
    - Fear can be a healthy emotion. I drive the speed limit because I have a healthy fear of getting a ticket. When I was growing up, I tried to stay out of trouble because I had a healthy fear of what my parents would do. In the same way, we should have a healthy fear of God that motivates us to obey Him.
2. To acknowledge any other god is a serious sin.
  - Some people contend that all religions worship the same God, but they just know Him by different names. Such ideas are nothing short of blasphemy. If there is only one true God, then all other gods are false.

B. He is worthy of our worship.

1. David wrote this psalm when the Ark of the Covenant was brought into Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 16:23-33).
2. Why is God worthy of our worship?
  - a. He loves us unconditionally.
  - b. He is merciful to us.
  - c. He blesses us even when we do not deserve it.

## **III. The method for praising God.**

A. We praise Him verbally.

- As I write this, our church has recently completed Vacation Bible School. This year a boy asked me, "If God knows our thoughts, then why do we need to pray?" I explained that it's about having a relationship with Him. My wife and my mother both know me better than anyone else, but they still like it when I talk to them.

B. We praise Him with our offerings.

1. Giving is an act of worship.
2. We don't give because God needs our money. Giving is our way of acknowledging that everything we have belongs to Him.

C. We praise Him by our holiness.

1. "In the beauty of holiness" – Other translations say, "in holy attire".

- a. Priests had to wear special clothing and make special preparations before they could worship God.
  - b. Even though we are no longer under the old covenant, we should still worship God with an attitude of awe and respect.
2. We should demonstrate holiness not only when we are gathered for worship, but also in our everyday lives.
- a. Christians are not perfect, but they should be different.
  - b. When people see you in your daily activities, do they know you are someone who loves and worships God?

**Conclusion:** Years ago I attended a seminar on worship, led by a friend of mine. The “worship wars” were waging even in those days, and still are. My friend talked about the different styles of worship, and he noted how people get so defensive about their preferred style. One group says, “I don’t feel like I’ve worshiped unless I’ve sung hymns.” Another group says, “I don’t feel like I’ve worshiped unless I’ve sung praise choruses.” My friend leading the seminar made an astute observation: “The question is not, ‘Do we feel like we’ve worshiped?’ The question is, ‘Does God feel like He’s been worshiped?’ “

We would do well to ask a similar question regarding prayer. It’s not a matter of how it makes us feel. The real question is, does God feel as though we’ve talked to Him? When you keep that perspective, it will revolutionize your prayer life!

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