

Treating God as God, part 3 of Easter Response
April 12, 2015

We are in the midst of a sermon series on responding to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. I believe the Bible is true about everything it teaches. Its main points are the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus as truth. This truth matters more than anything else does because it is how you respond to this truth that will determine where you spend eternity.

We began, in the first part, with the words of Jesus in His preaching ministry. He was asked by a crowd of people what God expected of people in order to receive eternal life. Jesus said that the first thing is to believe in Jesus. This is more than believing that Jesus lived and died. It is to believe all that Jesus said and did. It is to believe that Jesus came to live a perfect life, a life without sin, and then to die as the perfect sacrifice for our sins. God proved that this was true by raising Jesus from the dead. Jesus is alive, still, today, in heaven. And He is returning one day to the earth to set everything right that is wrong on the earth.

Part two was that upon choosing to believe in Jesus, **We are to turn away from living for self and turn to living for Jesus as Lord of our lives.** We are immersing ourselves into the name, the life, and the teachings of Jesus. Connected to this is to be a public announcement of that fact. **Jesus commands us to be baptized,** a ritual immersion in water.

Since last week was Easter, I thought you deserved more than one sermon, so I gave you one and a half sermons. I gave you part two and part of part three.

Part three begins with acknowledgment of the Holy Spirit that God gave you upon your faith in Jesus. **We are to listen to the Spirit moment by moment for knowledge and strength to obey Jesus and resist temptation. This is a prayer activity.**

This morning we continue with this prayer action on our part. Part of what is included in all the responses so far is prayer. It is not mentioned directly, but is implied. When you choose to believe in Jesus, you pray that to Him. You pray to Jesus your faith, your repentance, and your readiness to be baptized. We put a sample prayer at the end of each week's sermon outline to help you get started.

Listening to the Holy Spirit is a prayer activity. In prayer, you ask to be filled with the Spirit and then listen with your heart to what the Spirit may say.

Today's sermon is all about prayer. **You cannot respond correctly to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus without prayer.** Prayer is not so much commanded as it is implied. Because Jesus is God, we must pray.

Let me come at this by asking you a couple of questions about your relationships. How do you treat your parents? How do you treat your parents? Do you treat your parents as if they are YOUR parents? God says that we have a unique relationship with our parents simply because they are our parents. In this unique relationship, we are to honor them. We may treat well anyone who is a parent. However, we treat our parents with special honor because they are OUR parents.

God commanded the Israelites to honor their parents. This was a blanket command. It was not qualified as to what kind of parents they were. How you honor a very good parent may be different from how you honor a very bad parent. But no matter what kind of parent you have, because they are your parents, you are to treat them differently than you treat other adults. You are to honor them as your parents. So, do you treat them as Your parents, or do you treat them as you treat any adult of that age group? To fail to honor your parents is sin.

How do you treat your boss, if you have one? You who no longer have a boss can still think about how you were supposed to treat your past bosses. How do you treat your boss? Isn't it true that you are to treat your boss differently than you treat other people's bosses, simply because He is YOUR boss? The fact that he is YOUR boss changes the dynamics of your relationship. There are unique dynamics involved in your relationship with this person that would not be present if he or she were not your boss. You are to treat him or her as your boss. Failure to do so is sin.

For every person you are in a relationship with, there are certain expectations that are implied by that relationship. There are certain responsibilities implied because of who this person is to you. If you fail to live out those expectations or responsibilities, that is sin.

The same principle is true in our relationship with our creator. Because He created us, we have a relationship to God. Whether we recognize it or not, we are in a relationship with God. And in that relationship, there are expectations and responsibilities upon us.

There is evidence of this in Genesis, chapter 4. Here in Genesis 4 man has lost something special. The close relationship with God that Adam and Eve had with God was lost due to sin. Now there is a separation from them and God. All mankind is now trying to reestablish a personal relationship with God.

Genesis 4:26 (NIV) At that time men began to call on the name of the LORD (YAHWEH).

This was not a specific time, such as a particular day in history. The word time is used here as a general conclusion. They grew to realize that they needed God. They knew they owed God glory and honor as their creator. They wanted a personal relationship with God. So they prayed. That is what "calling on the name of" means, they prayed to Him by name.

How should we respond to our creator? Anything short of prayer is too little a response. **Prayer is attention to God.** Prayer says to God, "I am connected to You as my creator." It is in prayer that we treat God as God.

As a beginning response to God as our creator, we owe God recognition as God. We owe Him praise as the creator. We owe Him thanks for our lives. We see this in Paul's letter to the Christians in Rome.

Romans 1:18-20 (NIV) The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since

what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

What this passage describes is what theologians call natural or general revelation. This is God revealing Himself through nature. As we behold the wonders of the natural world in which we live, we see the hand of God. The beauty, orderliness, and complexity of nature show that someone put this world together. The world did not just evolve out of some primordial soup of chemicals. No, someone highly intelligent and powerful created the world in which we live.

We know that this being is not much like us. This being is super powerful and smart, both of which we are not. We can do a lot, but we cannot make a world. We cannot even make an ant. Through nature, God reveals to the heart of man that he is not alone nor an accident. Mankind knows that he and she exists because of someone else.

Now that is about all we know through natural revelation, but it is enough to realize that we have to respond. From the beginning of his time on earth man has been a religious being. Man has called on the name of God. Mankind has sought a personal relationship with the creator God.

However, in sin man has marred his knowledge of God and sought to make his own gods. In sin, man has replaced the Creator with something of His creation. Man has decided to worship an animal or the sun or the weather or sex. Today many people worship themselves. In other words, mankind ceased to treat God as God. Mankind failed to recognize God, to praise God, to thank God, to seek God. This is the chief sin of man.

Romans 1:18-23 (NLT) Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused. Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools. And instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles.

Man failed to treat God as God. When we fail to treat God as God, we fail to recognize His glory. This is the meaning of Romans 3:23.

Romans 3:23 (NIV) ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,...

We fail to see the importance of God. We fail to appreciate the pre-eminence of God. We fail to fear the power of God. We fail to give God the praise His glory deserves. We fail to treat God as God. A correct response to God involves expressing all of this in prayer to God.

The responses we have considered so far, believing in Jesus, turning from self to Jesus, being baptized into His name, and learning to be led by the Holy Spirit, are all actions designed to treat God as God, to treat Jesus as God. They all involve prayer as a way of expressing our response to God. **Prayer is how we treat God as God.**

I want us to look at one more passage this morning. It shows the connection of faith and prayer in a more positive way.

Hebrews 11:6 (NIV) And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

A few minutes ago, we sang about "getting on our knees". This is a figure of speech for prayer. The term "seeking Him" is a figure of speech for prayer, just as "called on the name of God" is a figure of speech for prayer.

Note also in the above verse how faith is the basis for seeking God. This seeking is through prayer. As we saw in Genesis 4:26, "At that time men began to call on the name of Yahweh."

There is no other way to know God. Knowing facts about God is not the same as knowing God. It is not the same as a personal relationship with God. Prayer is one-on-one communication with your creator, your Savior and Lord. **Nothing in the Christian life is more basic than your prayers to Jesus.**

It is by prayer that we seek God.

It is by prayer that we recognize God as God.

It is by prayer that we pursue relationship with God.

It is by prayer that we seek to know God's will.

It is by prayer that we seek to be directed by the Holy Spirit.

It is by prayer that we praise God as the creator.

It is by prayer that we first express our thanks to Jesus for salvation.

It is by prayer that we affirm our belief in Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins.

It is by prayer that we hold on to the promise of eternal life.

It is by prayer that we search the depths of our own hearts with God to root out sin.

It is by prayer that we seek the comfort and counsel of God.

Let me ask you a question this morning, a question about your prayers. Who do you treat God as being?

Do you treat God as your parents? Maybe you have the best parents in the history of kids and you treat them exactly as they ought to be treated. Maybe you treat God the same way. The problem is that God is not your parents. God is different from your parents. What you owe God is different from what you owe your parents. Are you treating God as God or are you treating God like you treat your parents?

Do you treat God as you treat your boss? God does have great authority over you. But, He is much more to you than your boss. What you owe God is different from what you owe your boss. Are you treating God as God or are you treating God like you treat your boss?

Do you treat God as one of your friends? Jesus did call His disciples His friends, but He was more than that to them. He is much more than a friend to us too. We owe Jesus

much more than we owe our friends. But do you treat God just as you treat your friends?

Do you treat God as God? If so, your prayers will show it. Your prayers reveal how you think of God. Your prayers reveal who you treat God to be. What do your prayers reveal?

Do the content of your prayers show that you treat God as God?

Does the consistency of your prayers show that you treat God as God?

Does the regularity of your prayers show that you treat God as God?

Does the honesty of your prayers show that you treat God as God?

Does the frequency of your prayers show that you treat God as God?

Does the persistence of your prayers show that you treat God as God?

Does the faith expressed by your prayers show that you treat God as God?

Does the joy in your prayers show that you treat God as God?

Does the gratitude in your prayers show that you treat God as God?

Does the praise in your prayers show that you treat God as God?

In short, do you treat God as God or as someone else, someone less than your all-knowing, all-powerful, all-loving, all-just creator, Savior, and Lord?

God made you. He made you out of love. He made you to reveal His glory. He made you for His own purposes. A correct response to God is to believe in Him, to give Him praise and thanks as your creator, to seek to know Him and live out His purposes for you.

All of this is only possible if you admit your need for God. You have sinned against Him and need forgiveness. God made possible your forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

Today, won't you choose to believe in Jesus, turn your life over to Him as Lord?