

“Praise Is the Greatest Blessing of God!”

People have different ways of expressing their emotions and making gestures, depending on the degree of their joy. People usually laugh out loud when they are happy. Sometimes people hit other people on the arm when they burst out laughing, like Euni. But when they find joy greater than that, they sing and praise. If they are happier than that, they will dance. And when some experience even greater joy, they cry.

When was the last time you laughed for joy? When did you rejoice and praise? When did you dance for joy? When did you cry for joy?

Have you ever been to a nightclub full of dancers? People there don't dance because they are happy; they dance to be happy, or probably because they are drunk. Will we be happy if we dance? Also, on stage, are people who dance to be seen by others happy?

In today's scriptures, we can see the praise of humans delighting in God through King David in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, we find reasons why we should praise God through the Apostle Paul.

I. Let's look at David's praise. David has been known to be a faithful praise-giver to God in Israel since his youth. Through the history of the Old Testament and the Psalms, we can find countless ways for him to praise God. Through David's example, we can confirm that we can also be people of faithful praise.

In 2 Samuel 6, David brought the ark of God to the city of David. The ark of God symbolizes the presence of God. It was taken by the Philistines in the Aphek War (1 Samuel 4:1) and returned to Judah after seventy years. For twenty years thereafter, the ark was in Abinadab's house in Kiriath Jearim (1 Sam. 7:1).

Then it was in the house of Obed-Edom for three months. I don't tell you this information because I think it is important for you to know the history of where the Ark was, but because I want you to know how happy Israel was to have it back.

To King David and to the people of Israel, moving the ark of God to the city of David was like bringing God to their side. Therefore, they were filled with joy that could not be expressed through just laughing or hitting someone's arm.

However, do you know that the same joy of the presence of God that King David experienced can be obtained through our worship today? Praise is the expression of our joy toward God. Remember that this is our duty as well as our right to be a child of God. In Psalm 147:1, the poet confessed, "Hallelujah, Praise the Lord! It is good to sing praise to our God; it is pleasant and right to praise him."

It is easy to praise God when we are happy, of course, but when we are sad, we should also give God praise. Because praise represents our will, not only our emotions. God helps us to praise, regardless of circumstances and conditions, if we are determined.

Let's take a look at the struggle that David and his wife, Michal, had with praise. But it should be noted that this is not a matter of King David's dress code.

King David focused on God while praising God. He did not care whether his clothing was disheveled or whether the inner part of his body was seen between the outer garment hem. He concentrated on rejoicing and praising God's goodness and kindness with all his body and mind.

But his wife, Michal, was different from David. Her interest was in the eyes of the people at the time of the festival, when the people were pleased with God's presence. For her, her first priority was to maintain human dignity and formality, and she was concerned about how she would be viewed in the eyes of others rather than in the eyes of God.

When our concern for man takes precedence over our concern for God, we run the risk of offering false praise and mere praise to God. Therefore, worship and praise became festivals for David, but it was a stumbling block for Michal. David concludes: "I have no choice but to praise the Lord. I will always be joyful to dance in the presence of the Lord. I will go on dancing to honor the Lord, and I will disgrace myself even more" (6:21.22).

There were many praises during our service. Praise is an important means of worshiping God. At this time, we must focus on the Creator, God, above all else. Our God does not get confused by the wrong pronunciation of my English during our worship, something that I am so grateful for.

He does not get annoyed if there are any mistakes in the piano accompaniment or if someone sings off-key, and he does not care how many people attend worship. God checks how much we rejoice in him, recognize him, and exalt him.

Did David calculate what blessings he would receive from God during his praise? He had already experienced and confirmed how blessed he was in receiving the blessing of God in his life and through the blessing of Obed Edom during the past three months. He did not worry about the size of the blessing at all but instead focused only on the size of his praise. Because he knew for sure what the outcome of the worship experienced by those who rejoiced and praised God would be.

Look at the praises of Paul and Silas from Acts 16:16–40. Paul and Silas, who were preaching in Philippi, had to be arrested by security officers due to the rowdiness of the crowd that was attacking them. They were heavily beaten and had their feet fastened between heavy blocks of wood.

At this time, they could have complained to God. However, they sang a song of praise to God in prayer. Perhaps they sang Psalm 27. “The Lord is my light and my salvation; I will fear no one. The Lord protects me from all danger; I will never be afraid. When evil people attack me and try to kill me, they stumble and fall.” ***Song titled: "The Lord is my light"**

Suddenly, there was a great earthquake, and the ground of the prison was shaken. Soon all the doors were opened, and the handcuffs of all the prisoners were unlocked, and they were freed. In addition, the guard who beat them and his whole family came to believe in Jesus.

Let's look at the spiritual benefits that come to us when we praise the Lord.

- 1) God always hears and sees our praises.
 - 2) Praise enables us to live with joy and boldness under all conditions.
 - 3) Through praise, God allows us to experience His almighty power.
- Our worship and praise are the most blessed time and place to meet, experience, and serve God.

#My True Song: I have been trained in voice to praise God since kindergarten. After that, I went through the children's choir, youth choir, and adult choir, and continued to receive voice training for praise. While I was attending Bible college, I took private lessons for classical vocalizing. Even now, while driving long distances with Euni, I always devote a certain amount of time to vocalizing. In the past, I focused on the praise I gave with my voice, and I was grateful for it.

However, in my case, I found that singing praises is always accompanied by stress because I've always been looking for better vocalization and technique for my voice. But true praise should begin simply through gratitude for God's existence, not through my talents and possessions. So, the driving force of praise is adjusted according to the depth and opportunity of my fellowship with the Lord.

David was a good person of praise, enough to bring peace to the heart of King Saul, who was afflicted with evil spirits. However, the fact that he was a true man of praise was proven when he did not depend on the circumstances around him but when he exalted and delighted God with all his heart. When things go well or not, when we can realize and acknowledge that Almighty God is with us, we can experience the ultimate joy.

II. Let us look at the reasons why we should praise God through the Ephesians. To conclude, we should praise God because of the abundant spiritual riches He has given us. Through his long sentences, Paul tells us some of the blessings that make up our spiritual wealth.

First, let's see what blessings we receive from our Heavenly Father (1:4–6). Through faith, he has chosen us unconditionally as God's people (v. 4). God has adopted us as his children (v. 5). And he has accepted us (v. 6). We cannot accept God on our own. But God, by His grace, has accepted us in Christ. This is our eternal position that will never change.

This time, let's see what blessings we receive through the Son of God (1:7–12). Jesus Christ saved us through his sacrifice on the cross (v. 7). He forgave our sins (7). The word "forgive" means "to take away." Christ died to keep our sins from being seen again. Sin made us poor, but grace makes us rich. Jesus showed us the will of God (vv. 8–10). And He has made us heirs of the kingdom of God (11–12).

Third, let us know what blessings we have received through the Holy Spirit (1:13–14). He has sealed us in the gospel as the children of salvation (v. 13). And he has given us earnestness (v. 14). The Holy Spirit is God's first installment to assure His children that He will end His work and eventually bring them to glory.

It is our right and duty to rejoice and praise the Creator as we become children of the Lord and have been guaranteed the blessings of earth and heaven. But sometimes we come across a time when we can't laugh, we can't sing, we can't dance, and we can't cry like everyone else. From time to time, quietly and honestly acknowledge the greatness of the Lord. Before you know it, praise from your soul will begin.

In Revelation 21:1–5, there is an explanation of “a new heaven and a new earth.” There, God wipes away every tear from his children. They must have shed all their sorrow on this earth, but why do they have tears? Those tears in them are tears of joy that flowed when they met God the Father there.

Our Father God says, "I give all my spiritual possessions and riches to my children as inheritance. Use this wealth as much as you want to use it. And share this with others and give it to others in the world as you please, according to my desire. Remember today that you are the richest people in the world." Amen.

Reflections and Applications for Today's Sermon:

(1) When and how do you personally praise God? At that time, through what route do you feel the presence of the Lord?

(2) What is your favorite hymn in the UMC hymnal? What spiritual experience of yours intertwined with that praise produced that result?

(3) What hymn would you recommend for the congregation to sing together at WCUMC's Sunday service? Please let the pastor or office know. Songs not included in the hymnal are also acceptable.