



1 Chronicles 16:23-36 Our Great Heritage 13 Pastor Ron Koehler
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²³ Sing to the LORD, all the earth; proclaim his salvation day after day. ²⁴ Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples. ²⁵ For great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods. ²⁶ For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the LORD made the heavens.

²⁷ Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and joy are in his dwelling place.

²⁸ Ascribe to the LORD, all you families of nations, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

²⁹ Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering and come before him.

Worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness. ³⁰ Tremble before him, all the earth! The world is firmly established; it cannot be moved. ³¹ Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let them say among the nations, "The LORD reigns!" ³² Let the sea resound, and all that is in it; let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them!

³³ Let the trees of the forest sing, let them sing for joy before the LORD, for he comes to judge the earth. ³⁴ Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever. ³⁵ Cry out, "Save us, God our Savior; gather us and deliver us from the nations, that we may give thanks to your holy name, and glory in your praise." ³⁶ Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting. Then all the people said "Amen" and "Praise the LORD."

TO GOD ALONE BE THE GLORY

Dear Friends in Christ,

On the base of the Luther statue at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin—where our pastors are trained—these words are inscribed: *"I simply taught, preached, and wrote God's Word; otherwise I did nothing. The Word did everything."* When it came to the necessary changes in the church's teaching and practice, which Luther instigated and with which he was heavily involved, Luther was quick to deflect the glory to God. Those words on the base of the statue are important for our pastors to remember as they humbly go about their studies for the ministry and as they leave our seminary to work in the Lord's harvest field.

The context of Luther's words is this—and you may have seen this depicted in one or two of the Luther movies that have been around for a while: some people were taking Luther's call for reformation in the church to an extreme. While the changes to teaching and practice were necessary in order to conform to God's will, Luther NEVER advocated force to make those changes. Some, however, did. Desecration of churches was even involved—and those are some of the chaotic scenes portrayed in those movies. So in 1522, Martin Luther preached a series of sermons in Wittenberg, Germany to quiet the unrest and to continue a proper approach to change in the church. This is a more complete quote from one of those sermons:

"I opposed indulgences and all the papists, but never with force. I simply taught, preached, and wrote God's Word; otherwise I did nothing. And while I slept [cf. Mark 4:26–29], or drank Wittenberg beer with my friends Philip and Amsdorf, the Word so greatly weakened the papacy that no prince or emperor ever inflicted such losses upon it. I did nothing; the Word did everything. Had I desired to foment trouble, I could have brought great bloodshed upon Germany; indeed, I could have started such a game that even the emperor would not have been safe. But what would it have been? Mere fool's play. I did nothing; I let the Word do its work."

The truth that Luther understood is important for all of us to remember. The power that changes hearts and lives is not in us or from us. It is from God through his Word. Therefore all the glory belongs not to us, but to God.

King David could have demanded that glory be given to him. After all, he was now king in Israel, he had begun his reign with a victory over the Philistines, and he was bringing the Ark of the Covenant—the focal point of godly worship—back to its rightful place in Jerusalem. What a glorious king David was!

But David called for all the people to give glory, not to him, but to God. He did so by writing a psalm of praise to the LORD for this happy occasion, the return of the Ark to Jerusalem. Pieces of this original work by the talented king appear in several later psalms as well. So this wonderful psalm which glorified God was included with the other music and prayers and ceremony. And it was appropriate too because it emphasized *WHY* God alone receives glory and *HOW* God's people give glory to him. And not to spoil where we're going with this sermon, but that *WHY* and *HOW* hasn't changed in the 3,000 years since David wrote these words before us this morning!

Did you notice why David encouraged the people to join their voices in giving glory to God? Because the LORD is great, David says! Because he is actually God and not an idol (or false god) like all the rest! And then he points to evidence of this, the kind of evidence that means that people are without excuse if they don't recognize because it should be obvious to all: the creation of this world. **"The LORD made the heavens... The world is firmly established; it cannot be moved. Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let them say among the nations, 'The LORD reigns!' Let the sea resound, and all that is in it; let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them! Let the trees of the forest sing, let them sing for joy before the LORD, for he comes to judge the earth.**

The only true God who is the Creator of all things is to be glorified by all of creation! You notice that David doesn't just call on the nation of Israel to give glory to God. He wanted the whole earth, all nations, to praise God. He even called on the creation itself to honor their Creator God.

David reminded everyone that God will also be the Judge of all the earth. All people are accountable to God. It was David's desire that all people would give glory to God rather than fall under his judgment. But he was clear that the LORD is not this angry judge waiting to condemn them. He proclaimed that the LORD **is good** and **his love endures forever**. He reminds them that God is their **Savior**. God's plan all along was to send a Savior who would bring forgiveness and salvation. The loving Savior of all people was certainly worthy of all glory and praise!

David could look out over God's people and the people of all nations and see that God was deserving of praise and glory by all of them. But how blessed was he that he, a simple shepherd, should be made king of God's people? How blessed was the nation of Israel that they should be called the people of God? How blessed were they all that the Ark of the Covenant—the reminder of God's presence and promises—had been restored to the Holy City? God had truly smiled upon them! He deserved their glory and honor and praise!

We find ourselves in a similar position before God, do we not? We do because he is the eternal, unchanging God and we have also been blessed by him! Like King David, we know that God is the Creator of all things and the Sustainer of life and all that is in this world. Like the Israelites, God has also been good and loving toward us; He is our Savior too.

We even have the *added* blessing of being able to see that the LORD followed through on promises to send Jesus to pay for sin and give the promise of eternal life! What David and the Israelites trusted *would* happen is what we trust *did* happen when Jesus sinlessly lived in this world and endured the punishment for sins that we deserved. We realize the completion of Jesus' work as he rose from death on Easter morning, giving us the assurance that we too will rise from death to eternal life. What David and the Israelites trusted *would* happen, we trust *did* happen! These are all reasons *WHY* God is deserving of all glory.

So how should a person properly respond to this glorious God, this Creator, this Savior? What could a person possibly do that would make a difference to this all-powerful, all-loving God who watches over everything in heaven and on earth and who has even expressed his love in terms of providing forgiveness for sin and eternal life? Is there anything that is worth doing, anything that will get noticed at all? After all, this is a big world and there are lots of people—and he is an immense and amazing God!

David answered those questions and concerns pretty thoroughly as he provided spiritual encouragement to God's people. What does giving glory to God look like?

You could form a "Give God the Glory" checklist just by picking out all the verbs David used in this psalm of praise! In fact, let's do that, but we must remember that the kinds of things David encourages are things that come from a heart of love for God. They are things that a person who has received God's love wants to do to show love back. These are some things that a person who loves God will do to give God glory:

Sing to the Lord is the first thing. This is the loving expression of the believer's heart! There are so many examples in the Bible of people singing their thanks and praise to God and encouragements for people to do so! This is why singing to God has always been an important part of worship for God's people.

Proclaim his salvation David says—and he used a word that means to formally and authoritatively announce something. God's people are to declare that the LORD is the world's Savior. And why would they not want to share with everyone what they know to be true—that God brings relief from the burden and guilt of sin and offers the certainty of life after death?!

Declare his glory to the world. Those who know the glory of God are in the perfect position to let others know how awesome God is.

Bring an offering. Those who know God know that he provides all that they have and own. There's not a dollar he didn't make possible. There's not food on the table that he didn't put there. There are not possessions that he did not provide. The LORD has ALWAYS asked that his people acknowledge him as the Giver by returning a regular, joyful, generous offering back to him.

Worship the Lord. All of a believer's life can be worship of the LORD if a person is living for him in all they do. But God has ALWAYS called his people to gather together for worship, which is exactly what David and the Israelites were doing and what you and I are doing today.

David told them to **tremble** before the Lord—a reminder for all to come with appropriate respect before the almighty God.

Give thanks the king urged. That should not be too hard for God's people when they realize the love and care the LORD extends to them day after day.

Cry out for God to save you he said. There is only one Savior and that is the Lord. He is the only one to turn to, the only one to seek forgiveness from and the only one who can provide it. He is the only one who can promise and deliver eternal life in heaven.

On this glorious day of celebration, after this joyful encouragement from their king, the people responded with "**Amen**" and "**Praise the LORD.**"

So David and all of Israel did these things and gave all glory to God on that day of celebration and going forward—sometimes better than others!

That sounds similar to us, doesn't it? We also give glory to God, doing those kinds of things, but does your glorifying God need a little work?

Do you regularly share God with others?

Is your Offering Life healthy and pleasing to the God who has blessed you with so much?

Have you made worship your priority—not just *being here* each week, but really listening and taking to heart what God says here?

Do you consider the power and majesty of the Triune God in such a way that it causes a deep respect and awe?

Do you routinely offer prayers of thanksgiving? Prayers of repentance to God?

Do you give God glory?

If you are like me, a review of the ways to glorify God with your life ends up revealing some shortcomings. If this were a work review there would be “*Could use improvement*” stamped all over my checklist. If it were a teacher's grading of my efforts, I'm afraid of the letter grade I would receive. If only this weren't so much more serious than work or school! This is my spiritual life! This is my faith and my living for God! My weaknesses and my sins are exposed here today!

Perhaps remembering Luther's dependence not on what he did, but on what God did through his Word is helpful. God's Word changed hearts and lives back then. This is still the case. God's Word changes our hearts and our lives too.

God's Word tells us that Jesus paid for these sins of ours. God's Word tells us that Jesus neglected not one opportunity to give glory to his Father in heaven. He sang songs to God (remember he and the disciples did this in the garden of Gethsemane?). He offered his very life in service to God. He worshiped without fail in the synagogue and the temple and made a point of going to the large, religious festivals. He showed proper respect before his Heavenly Father. He offered prayers of thanks before meals, when he did miracles, prior to his death. In every area where we see our weakness and sin, Jesus perfectly glorified God! His sacrifice of that perfect life paid for our imperfect lives of giving glory to God. God's Word tells us all of this about Jesus and tells us that we are forgiven because of him. God's Word changes our hearts, which changes our lives.

We leave God's house today knowing that we are forgiven and this renews us and encourages us to live in a way that gives all glory to God. It gives us confidence that we are forgiven and that we are saved. It leads us to say “Amen” and to revisit this psalm of David which instructs us on HOW we can give glory to God. May the Holy Spirit continue to work in our hearts so that we always remember WHY we want to give glory to God and so that we are moved to do so out of thanks and love for him. Amen.

Now the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.