

**Let Everything PTL**  
**Psalm 150**  
**Peter Hiett**  
**June 12, 2016**

**Worship**

“Let Her Go” written by *Passenger*, sung by The Sanctuary worship band  
Here are a few of the lyrics:

Cause you only need the light when it's burning low  
Only miss the sun when it starts to snow  
Only know you love her when you let her go

Only know you've been high when you're feeling low  
Only hate the road when you're missing home  
Only know you love her when you let her go

Cause you only need the light when it's burning low  
Only miss the sun when it starts to snow  
Only know you love her when you let her go

Only know you've been high when you're feeling low  
Only hate the road when you're missing home  
Only know you love her when you let her go  
And you let her go

**Prayer**

We let you go, but you didn't let us go. And now, we're beginning to know we love you. Thank you Lord God, in Jesus' name. Help us to preach that: the Gospel this morning.

**Message**

Clip: *What We Might Think Praising the Lord Looks Like?*

*Jim and Tammy Show*

Announcer: *The PTL television network...* (drumroll)

Announcer: *presents, Jim and Tammy!* (Their names appear across the screen.)

Choir: (singing) *Praise the Lord! ...*

Choir: *See the things that he has done! Praise the Lord! For the battle has been won!*  
(The camera pans back to show the choir singing before an auditorium full of people.)

Men in choir: *Together we'll thank you.*

Women in choir: *Together we'll thank you.*

Choir: *Together we will praise the Lord.*

Man: *Come on now! Let's have a great big welcome for Jim and Tammy Baker!*  
(clapping)

Choir: *Is it Jimmy? Darling can it be?*

(Jim and Tammy appear at the back and walk down the aisle towards the front of the auditorium, waving.)

Man: *Hello!*

Jim Baker: *Hello everybody, hello! Welcome to Heritage USA. It's nice to have you here! My! What a wonderful audience.* (Continuing to walk with his wife to the front).

Clip  
Cont  
inue

d: *What We Might Think Praising the Lord Looks Like?*

[The scene shifts to *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*.]

Schoolmaster: (Standing up from the pew wearing a white choir robe) *Let us praise God!*

(An entire church full of boys stands.)

Schoolmaster: *Oh Lord!*

Students: (In unison) *Oh Lord.*

Schoolmaster: *Ooo! You are so big!*

Students: *Ooo! You are so big!*

Schoolmaster: *So ab- so- lutely huge!*

Students: *So ab-so-lutely huge!*

Schoolmaster: *Gosh! We're all really impressed down here; I can tell you.*

Students: (with bored expressions on all their faces) *Gosh! We're all really impressed down here; I can tell you.*

[The scene shifts again to a *Borat* clip: Some Pentecostals, a pastor standing with a man in a grey suit, with another helper dressed in a black suit in front of a church audience.]

Preacher: (Holding up a man's hand as he speaks into the microphone)

Man in black suit next to him repeating his command: *Lift your hands! Get them up! Good job! Good Job!*

Man in grey: (looking between the two men, and raising both arms obediently.)

Preacher: *Lift your hands! And begin to worship! Would you lift your hands with him? (He places his hand on a man's forehead as another man in a black suit comes alongside him.)*

[The scene shows another young man in a suit standing in the audience pointing up at them.]

Preacher: *As we pray in the name of Jesus!*

Other leader: *As we pray in the name of Jesus!*

(The camera shows a young man mouthing the words "*we pray in the name of Jesus*" with others around him doing the same. One older lady is holding up one hand as she does so.)

[The scene shifts back to show the pastor leaning into the face of the penitent man with the other leader holding his chest and standing close.]

Preacher: (loudly) *God forgive me of my sins!*

Man in grey suit: *God forgive me of my sins.*

(The audience is now crowding around laying their hands on the man in black and praying with them.)

Preacher: (leans back again in the man's face and yells) *Forgive me God, cleanse me!*

Man in grey: *Cleanse me!*

Preacher: *Cleanse me Lord, in the name of Jesus!*

Man in grey: *Cleanse me! Cleanse me!*

Preacher: (Reaching up and putting a clawed hand on the man's forehead) *Ya-la-la-la!*

Man in grey: *Ya-la -la-la!*

Preacher: *Yi! You gotta let that tongue go! Here it comes! (Leaning in and pushing on the man's forehead even harder.) You gotta speak in tongues; let it go!*

[The scene shifts to show the Mormon tabernacle choir singing the "Hallelujah Chorus" in *Handel's Messiah*.]

Choir: *He shall reign forever and ever:*

Women: *Forever...*

Choir: *and ever, and ever and ever, Allelujah, allelujah! Allelujah. Allelujah, allelujah! Al-le-lu-jah!*

If someone says, "Praise the Lord," those are the images that pop into my mind.

The book of Psalms was the Hhymnal of ancient Israel and of Jesus (*Psalmos* is Greek for “song accompanied by instruments.”) There are 150 Psalms in the Book of Psalms. The book ends with five psalms that begin with the word, “hallelujah” – end with “hallelujah.” *Hallelujah* is Hebrew for “Praise the Lord.”

I’d like to read the last three PTL Psalms and then focus on the last of those, the summation and climax of the Psalms—Psalm 150.

*Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD from the heavens; praise him in the heights! Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his hosts! Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars! Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens! Let them praise the name of the LORD! For he commanded and they were created. And he established them forever and ever; he gave a decree, and it shall not pass away. Praise the LORD from the earth, you great sea creatures and all deeps, fire and hail, snow and mist, stormy wind fulfilling his word! Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars! Beasts and all livestock, creeping things and flying birds! Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth! Young men and maidens together, old men and children! Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted; his majesty is above earth and heaven. He has raised up a horn for his people, praise for all his saints, for the people of Israel who are near to him. Praise the LORD! Praise the Lord! Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the godly! Let Israel be glad in his maker; let the children of Zion rejoice in their king! Let them praise his name with dancing, making melody to him with tambourine and lyre! For the LORD takes pleasure in his people; he adorns the humble with salvation. Let the godly exult in glory; let them sing for joy on their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their throats and two-edged swords in their hands, to execute vengeance on the nations and punishments on the peoples, to bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron, to execute on them the judgment written! This is honor for all his godly ones. Praise the LORD!*

- Psalm 148: 1-150: 5

(That must be “*The judgment written.*”)

*Praise the LORD! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens! Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his excellent greatness! Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp! Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe! Praise him with sounding cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals!*

- Psalm 150: 1-5

Let’s stop there and we’ll read the last verse in a minute. But it seems that Scripture is saying, but I feel like we can discern this; if you could sum it up in three words, what was all that scripture saying? (The congregation responds, “Praise the Lord.”) Yes, “Praise the Lord.”

PRAISE THE LORD . . .

And it’s not an option. It’s a command.

But honestly, I feel a bit ambivalent about that command.

1. How can God command praise?
2. Why would God command praise? Is God needy or insecure?

[Image of Kim Jong Un and multiple soldiers behind him]

Dictators like Kim Jong Un demand praise with legislation and threats, but it doesn't really work.

That's

3. Commanded praise seems fake.

"Gosh, we're really all impressed down here, I can tell you."

The Mormons in their suits and choir robes...

[Image of well-kept men all in matching suits]

kind of remind me of Kim Jong Un and his soldiers.

When I visited the Mormon Tabernacle in High School, they had a simulated picture of Heaven, and it looked like this:

[Image of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir]

I didn't want to go to there.

Praise often seems fake, and I wonder if it's justified. That's number 4.

- I love the "Hallelujah Chorus," but it's being sung by Mormons with bad theology.
- In the *Borat* clip – those Pentecostals look foolish.
- On the PTL club, they preached a prosperity gospel, as if greed could be justified with praise.

I remember watching one episode (I think it was Jim Baker). He talked about how God had called him out to the desert to pray like the prophets of old . . . except this desert was Palm Springs, and he was staying in a mansion. And I think that's what really bugs me about PTL: I think, "God, Jim Baker has bad theology, and he looks like a fool, and I think he's faking it, and he doesn't deserve that mansion. God there are children starving to death in Africa, and Jim Baker praises you for that mansion. He doesn't deserve that mansion."

PTL irritates me, so when scandal hit, and they took the PTL club off the air, I was happy . . . Well, "happy" probably isn't the right word for it. I wasn't really happy so much as I felt that my grumpiness was justified.

Well anyway, what is praise? *Hallel* is a Hebrew word, which means "to shine." So, to "Praise the Lord," *Hallel* – *Hahweh* is to reflect His glory back to Him saying, "You are glorious."

Human beings often hang on to glory, glorifying themselves.

But sometimes we praise something other than the self.

And here's the surprising thing:

When I do praise (not fake praise – but real praise)

When I praise – upon reflection, I realize – I'm happy.

Think about it:

- That moment, right after you take your first bite of pizza, after being really hungry for a long time.
- That moment you say, “This pizza is awesome.” You forget yourself, praise pizza, and you’re happy.
- Think about the first time you saw the ocean (if you’re from Colorado) or
- Think about the first time you saw the Grand Canyon.

John Piper once said,

“No one stands on the edge of the Grand Canyon and says, ‘Aren’t I great?’”

No. You forget yourself, as you say, “That’s Great!” And you feel happy.

Think about reading a great book or seeing a great movie. You praise the movie, saying, “That was great” and you’re happy.

And now think of the moment that you receive praise. Someone says, “You did a great job.” It’s nice, but different, isn’t it? It feels nice, but then makes you nervous. You think, “How can I do that again?” You get stuck on you and even addicted to you. But when you praise, you forget you. You lose yourself and then find yourself happy.

So maybe God’s not needy, but we are.

God doesn’t need to be praised, but we need to praise God.

In Psalm 50: 12 God says,

*“If I were hungry I wouldn’t tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine.” Do I eat the flesh of bulls and drink the blood of goats? Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving.”*

He’s saying, “I don’t need your sacrifice . . . but you need to give it . . . a sacrifice of praise.

C.S. Lewis wrote:

I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation. It is not out of compliment that lovers keep on telling one another how beautiful they are; the delight is incomplete till it is expressed...

I think my best and happiest day this year, so far, was the 24<sup>th</sup> of January. My mom had been in the hospital for about three months and on the 24<sup>th</sup>, she had just had over two feet of her colon removed. Mom is eighty-eight, hard of hearing, and a widow. And on the 24<sup>th</sup> of January, still in the hospital, life was really hard. But the AFC championship game was on TV. And we watched the game together in the dark. When the Broncos beat the Patriots in the final twelve seconds of the game, Mom forgot about her colon, and I forgot about the church budget, and we began praising the Denver Broncos.

We didn’t give each other any new information.

We just had to express the information we already knew.

Sometimes people say, “Why do we have to sing praise songs out loud?”

- We don’t have to.
- We want to.

We'd say, "Did you see that?" Of course we saw that—over and over and over praise, and we were happy. It was genuine praise, not fake praise, genuine praise.

See? You can't make yourself praise.

You can't make yourself praise, but you can turn on the TV . . .

Actually, whenever you turn on the TV, you're looking for something to praise. You can't make yourself praise. You can't make yourself praise! But...

You can drive to the Grand Canyon. And you can look . . . for God.

You can go to worship service Saturday night or Sunday morning.

You can practice the dance steps so that when you finally hear the music, you can really start dancing.

You can hope!

The author of Hebrews writes that we have a hope that enters the inner Sanctuary, behind the veil, where Christ has gone and become our High Priest into the *aion*, God's Age, which is to come (Hebrews 6: 19).

The church father, Gregory of Nyssa spoke of that inner sanctuary as eternal (and beyond all the ages—the Seventh day rest of God, where all is finished.

So you see, we don't hope for something that *might* happen, we hope for something that *has* happened and cannot . . . *not* happen.

And so it's not like the Broncos beating the Patriots, something that might've happened or something that's only good for some. I was happy, but poor Bill Forgione (from Boston) was sad.

See? God beating evil is not like the Broncos beating the Patriots.

Evil is not a rival to God or an equal opposite of God.

God is "the good," and evil is the absence of "the good."

God is "I am," and evil is "I am not."

Evil is emptiness and the void.

But, like Scripture says, "God will be all in all" (1 Corinthians 15). And so, God will fill all things, and that's how God conquers all evil, and that's how all creation wins.

Peter Hiatt and Bill Forgione both win. Every creature wins because the Creator has won. "It is finished," and everyone gives praise constantly filled with the glory that is God.

According to the church fathers, like Gregory, no one truly loves evil for evil. People can only love evil, which they mistake for good because they don't truly know the good. So, if I don't love the Good and praise the Good, it's because I haven't yet seen the Good. In the Revelation, John sees every creature seeing and praising the Good, a slaughtered lamb standing on the throne of God. John sees beyond the veil, beyond our space and time; he sees the Seventh day and the finished creation.

Jesus said, "God alone is good." And Scripture says, "Every good and perfect gift comes from God." Indeed God speaks all things into existence. God is good, and He calls His creation

good; it reflects His glory. But on the sixth day, Adam (man) doesn't know the good. I mean God creates man in a paradise garden, and God walks with man in the cool of the day, and Adam doesn't say, "Thanks. This is good." God makes a beautiful naked woman and brings her to the man saying, "Be fruitful, multiply and have dominion over all this." Adam doesn't say, "Thanks – This is so good!" Adam is surrounded by the Good, but He doesn't know the Good and so he doesn't praise. He doesn't yet reflect the likeness of God. He is not "finished." It is not "finished."

See? I don't think you or I are finished until we begin to praise, and never stop, because we freely will to praise with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength.

So how does God command praise?

- How does God make us in His image and likeness?
- What is the Word God speaks to create praise within the human heart?

Psalm 150:2 says, "*Praise Him for His mighty deeds*" (and all creation is His mighty deed). Then it says, "*Praise Him for His excellent (or exceeding) greatness.*" Jesus said that "*The greatest of all*" is "*least of all and servant of all*" (Mark 9: 34-35, Luke 9: 46-47, Matthew). Jesus is God, who is "The Good" in flesh. We took His life on a tree in a garden. And He gave His life on a tree in a garden. He cries, "*It is finished*" and delivers up His breath becoming least of all and servant to all that draw breath. He is God's exceeding greatness, and when we see Him truly, we will worship saying, "*Surely this is the son of God.*" And one day, "*Every knee will bow and every tongue give praise.*" And that is how God commands praise. He speaks His Word: "*Jesus Christ and Him Crucified.*"

*Praise the LORD! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens!  
Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his excellent greatness! Praise  
him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp! Praise him with sounding  
cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals!*

And now the last sentence:

*LET everything that has breath praise the LORD!*

Psalm 15: 1-6

*"Praise the LORD!"*

That's the end of the Psalm and the Psalms (and the end of all things). "*Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.*" "*Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord*" (second person imperative). "Peter, you praise the Lord." Then: "*Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.*" It reminds me of those pumper stickers that say "Free Tibet." I always think and sometimes say, "Ok . . . Tibet, I free you!!!" But I didn't know that I had that power.

*"Let everything that has breath praise the Lord?"*

1. Do I have that power? (to let everything that has breath praise the Lord? . . .)
2. Does everything just naturally praise the Lord, as if ecstatic praise were the default made of all things, so I just have to let it happen?? And . . .
3. Why would I not let it happen?

Well, praise does bother me when it makes us look foolish. I mean, Sasha Baron Cohen in the movie clip from *Borat* was making those Pentecostal pastors look foolish as they prayed over him in tongues. Now, I don't know if that was authentic or not, but I do know that after Jesus delivered up His Breath, His Breath fell on the early church at Pentecost, and the disciples praised God in foreign tongues and many thought they were drunk. It looked foolish.<sup>1</sup>

You may remember that many of the Psalms were written by King David, and someone didn't want him to praise. His bride, Michal, daughter of Saul, said it made him look "undignified," the way he stripped down to his underwear and danced with wild abandon before the Ark of the Covenant, the throne of God on earth.

Simon the Pharisee didn't want the harlot worshipping at Jesus' feet.

Judas rebuked Mary of Bethany for praising God at Jesus' feet. He said, "That perfume could've been sold and given to the poor." Kind of like I thought, "Hey Jim Baker, your PTL mansion in Palm Springs could've been sold and given to the poor." It bugs me when people with bad theology worship. Something inside me says, "God, I hope you don't receive that worship. "They have bad theology."

And it bugs me when people don't sincerely worship, people who just recite liturgy. "Oh, you are so big – wise, we are all really quite impressed down here." Sometimes I look around this room and I think, "Gosh, people really aren't worshipping." And then I realize I'm not worshipping, but judging worshipping. I'm not even practicing the dance steps. People who practice dance steps may not dance, but at least they hope to dance. They want to dance and "*in this hope we're saved*," writes Paul (Romans 8).

Well, I don't like improper praise, bad praise. I don't like praise from the undeserving. So when PTL went off the air, I was pleased because Jim and Tammy Fay Baker did not deserve what it was that they were praising God for . . . (I think that's the heart of the matter for me: The Mormons, the Pentecostals, the Boring Anglicans, Jim and Tammy Faye Baker don't deserve what it is that they're praising God for. They don't deserve their mansion, their cars, their money. They don't deserve the LORD . . .

Do I think that I deserve the Lord?

Do I think that I deserve what it is that I praise the Lord for?

If I do, I have never praised the Lord.

I have only praised myself, in the name of the Lord. For, something in me thinks, "I am the Lord." Something in me thinks, "I am my own creator, savior, and sanctifier. That something in me hates it when people praise the Lord, for they obviously don't understand that "I am the Lord" (said with great sarcasm).

Don't you hate it when someone else gets praise for something that you think you did?

Well, what if God does everything?

In her famous vision, Julian of Norwich claims that she saw this truth that "there is no doer but God," and so "Sin is not something that is done" because God does everything that's anything."

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<sup>1</sup> I pray in tongues in my own private prayer life and, on a few instances, I've been around folks that said they had the gift of interpretation. I've always been fascinated that interpretations are hardly ever instructions, but [praise, as if we didn't need to understand. We just needed to praise.

And you know Saint Paul agrees with Julian, 1 Corinthians 13. He wrote, “*Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things*” And that means that if you bear, believe, hope or endure a thing, it’s actually Love in you, bearing, believing, hoping, and enduring that thing. It’s Love, and “God is love” and when you see it—see Him—your ego will get torched, and then you will praise God, in freedom, for you will know God and see that He is Good.

God is Good and everything He creates reflects His glory, and when something that contains His breath returns His breath, it’s called praise. “*Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.*”

Psalm 19 says, “*The heavens declare the glory of the Lord.*”

Psalm 98 “*The rivers clap their hands and the hills sing for joy.*”

In Revelation 5, John sees every creature praising God and the slaughtered lamb standing on the throne and the singing never stops.

Heaven is like a musical where the singing never stops. It’s like that finished and forever new creation filled with glory is pressing in on this dark and fallen world, which is aching to surrender to the force of eternal reality and break forth in ecstatic and ceaseless praise. But my ego runs around frantically yelling, “Stop that! Stop that! You’re not going into a song while I’m here.”

Now, I know that some of you don’t appreciate the classics, but I’m a patron of the fine arts, and so what I am describing keeps reminding me of this:

Clip from *Monty Python*

[The scene opens to show a medieval king standing in a stone castle, looking out a window with his son.]

King: One day lad, all this will be yours. (*gesturing out the window.*)

Prince Herbert: *What, the curtains?*

King: *No! Not the curtains lad! All that you can see . . . stretched out over the hills and valleys of this land! That will be your kingdom lad.*

Prince: *But mother . . .!*

King: *Father, I’m father!*

Prince: *But father, I don’t want any of that.*

King: *Listen, lad! I’ve built this kingdom up from nothing! And that’s what you’re gonna get, lad! The strongest castle in these islands!*

Prince: *But I don’t want any of that! I’d rather . . .*

King: *Rather what?!*

Prince: *I’d rather . . . . (looking inwardly) just, . . . . sing!*

[Music starts to play and he flings out his arm dramatically, opening his mouth . . .]

[The King steps quickly in front of his son facing the camera and waving both hands negatively.]

King: *Stop that! Stop that! You’re not going to do a song while I’m here!*

[Music stops. He turns to his son and grabs his arm, pulling him down in front of him.]

King: *Now listen! I’ve . . . in twenty minutes you’re getting married to a girl whose father owns the biggest tracts of open land in Britain!*

Prince: *But . . . I want the girl that I marry, . . . to have . . .*

[He stands up and away from the window, then steps into the room with a sweeping motion of his hands.]

Prince: *a certain . . .*

[Music starts to play and birds sing]

Prince: *special . .*

Clip from *Monty Python* continued

[Music plays louder]

Prince: *something!*

[He places his hand over his heart and then waves dramatically, leans on the table in front of him and opens his mouth to start singing.]

[The King steps in front of the camera, blocking his son from view.]

King: *Not allowed! Cut that out! Cut that out!*

[He looks about as the music slows and winds down to stop. Then he turns around, grabs his son by the shirtfront, and drags him up to look at him face to face.]

King: *Look! You'll marry Princess Lucky, so you better get used to the idea!*

[He slaps him across the face and the prince reaches to hold his wounded cheek.]

[The scene changes to a later time. The prince is seated at the table with Sir Lancelot in chain mail standing by him.]

Prince: *You got my note!*

Sir Lancelot: *Ah, well, I uh, I got - A note!*

Prince: *You've come to rescue me!*

[He grabs his arm in excitement and pulls him towards him. They look in each other's eyes.]

Sir Lancelot: *Ah, Well, no, you see, Well, no I . . . (looking away from the prince.)*

Prince: *I knew someone would! I knew that somewhere out there . . .*

[The Prince waves his arm and grabs the other's hand again]

Prince: *There must be . . .*

[music starts playing and he filings one arm in the air]

Prince: *someone!*

[The King runs into the room waving his hands to stop]

King: *Stop that! Stop that!*

[The music abruptly winds down to a stop]

King: *Stop it! Stop it!*

[The scene changes to show a bunch of people in the grand hall for the wedding of Prince Herbert and Princess Lucky.]

Prince: *I was saved at the last minute*

King: *How?!*

Prince: *Well, I'll tell you.*

[Musicians start to play]

King: *NO! Not like that! NO! Stop it! St-o-o-o-p it!*

[The music keeps playing and people start to stand up and move about and dance.]

My ego is the proud king running around my sad soul before the great wedding banquet saying, "No singing. Stop that – not like that! This is my castle and I'm in control!" My ego must die.

Psalm 150:1 "*Praise God in His sanctuary.*" (In the Sanctuary, things die: bulls, goats, and lambs sacrificed to the burning presence of God.

Psalm 50 God says, "*I do not rebuke you for that, but I desire a sacrifice of thanksgiving,*" a "sacrifice of praise."

When I praise the Lord, something dies in the sanctuary that is me. So the Psalmist writes *“Praise the Lord.”* Ephesians 5:20 Saint Paul writes, *“Give thanks always and for everything.”* *“Always and for everything.”* When I give thanks for anything, I assault my ego. (I don’t have to do it well. I can be very divided.) But when I say, “Thanks for the cheeseburger” I’m confessing, “I don’t deserve the cheeseburger.” And then I can enjoy the cheeseburger.

When I say, “Thanks for letting me serve you, Lord,” I’m confessing, “I don’t deserve to serve you, Lord. And then I can enjoy serving the Lord. For, love is not the burden I bear. Love bears the burden that is me. When I say, “Thanks for everything,” I’m confessing, “I don’t deserve anything and everything is a gift,” and my ego dies and praise happens. It’s a gift.

So, if you get nothing else from this sermon, just start thanking God for everything. Listen to 1 Timothy 4: 4

*“Everything created by God is good and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.”*

Understand? A naked woman is not evil, but the way your ego looks at that woman *is* evil. Thank God for her and it will burn your ego and change the way you look at her, or don’t look? A bottle of wine is not evil, but the way your ego takes that wine is evil. Thank God for the wine and you’ll begin to do what God wants you to do with the wine. Thank God for everything, even the experience of nothing. Not the nothing, but your experience of the nothing. Why? Because God is using your experience of nothing to help you know something. God is using your encounter with evil to help you know and forever love the Good.

It’s like that song Vince sang at the offertory:

You only need the light when it’s burning low  
Only miss the sun when it starts to snow  
Only know you love her when you let her go  
And you let her go.

Maybe “we only know we love God when we let Him go . . . and we let Him Go.”

Adam had God and God is the Good. But Adam didn’t know God is good or that His Word is Good. He did not have “knowledge of the good.” So on the sixth day of creation, God said, *“Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you will not eat, for in the day you do eat of it, dying, you will die.”*

That’s God’s Word, but Adam didn’t know it was good. So mankind took knowledge of the good on a tree in a garden and lost the good (he crucified the good). That day is this day, and we will all die, but we will all know “the Good.”

Do you understand? The cross is the tree, and the tree works. God didn’t command us to crucify the good—that’s evil, but God arranged for us to crucify the good so we would lose the good, encounter evil, and He could give us the Good, and we would know the Good, choose the Good and praise the Good in freedom. Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead is “the Good.” And knowing Him is eternal life.

The cross is the *“tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”* And the cross is the *“tree of life—eternal life.”* The cross annihilates your ego. The cross creates endless praise in its place. To know God is to praise God—is to be finished in the image and likeness of God. So, God *“consigned all men to disobedience that He may have mercy on all.”* So, *“Everything that has breath will praise the Lord.”*

See?

It's in the dark that we come to know the light and so . . .

It's no accident that David wrote his best praise songs in the darkest caves.

It's no accident that Jesus sang those songs as He hung on the cross.

It's no accident Paul and Silas sang in the Philippian jail and the earth shook and the doors were opened.

It's no accident that Friedrich Handel wrote *The Messiah* and “Hallelujah Chorus” when he was flat broke, his right side was paralyzed, and he appeared to be a failure.

It's no accident that God met him there and for twenty-four days Handel didn't leave his house but poured out praise and produced his epic work: *The Messiah*.

It's no accident that Jim Baker lost everything and learned to praise God in a prison cell. (That was God's gift to Jim Baker to teach him to praise.)

I'm just saying, *“Thank God always and for everything,”* and you will mortify the flesh. That means you will deliver up your ego for crucifixion, and when your ego dies you will no longer try to praise; it will just happen. And if you won't deliver up your ego for crucifixion, God will still arrange for it to happen. In Psalm 149, the Psalmist wrote, *“Let the High praises of God be in their throats and two-edged swords in their hands to execute vengeance on the nations, peoples and kings.”*

In the Revelation, Jesus—who is the double edged sword, the Word of God, Judgment of God and vengeance of God—strikes down the nations and kings (Revelation 19:15 Revelation 19:18, Revelation 21: 4) and the birds eat the flesh of nations, kings and all people. And then the nations and kings bring their glory into the New Jerusalem—they praise.

It's no accident that when Israel entered the land, God commanded the choir to lead the army. The high praises of God destroy the ego. They mortify the flesh. They break down the walls and set you free to dance in your underwear before the throne of God, like King David. But they not only set you free, they set all creation free.

“Peter, Praise the Lord and Let, Let, Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.” It's as if all creation is waiting for me to praise the Lord (as Paul writes in Romans 8: 19), waiting for “the revelation of the sons of glory,” waiting for Peter to learn to praise the Light in the land of darkness. “Peter, let everything that breathes praise the Lord. No one deserves to praise the Lord.” And if you think you deserve to praise the Lord, you haven't seen the Lord or His creation.

You know physicists have shown that intention in an observer's mind collapses the quantum state of subatomic particles that make up all creation. And so, some have postulated that there are an almost infinite number of universes corresponding to the almost infinite number of choices made by observers – that is us.

Yet, in Scripture, it's like there's truly just one universe that God makes with one choice, one judgement, one will, one Word, one intention that became flesh and we know as Jesus. That universe is truly real, and in that universe, *“everything (everything, everything) that has breath*

*praises the Lord.*” God breathes life into them, and they return it as praise. And no one says, “Know the Lord,” for they all “know the Lord” and worship the Lord constantly losing themselves and finding themselves in ecstatic joy. It’s God’s choice, and yet it’s also become their choice, and that choice is free and absolute love. It’s unending grace.

However, in time and for a time, we each make our own choices and create our own kingdoms. We each construct our own self-centered, arrogant, proud, grumpy, little, lonely universe in which we refuse to praise the Creator and think we are our own creator. It’s a futile world, a false world, a lonely world and sometimes we call it hell.

As long as your ego sits on the throne, As long as you refuse to “*LET*” “*everything that has breath praise the Lord,*” you shut yourself out of God’s creation and trap yourself in outer darkness. That’s why it’s so absolutely important that you forgive your enemies . . . and let them “praise the Lord.”

That’s why it’s so important that you believe that Jesus took away the sins of the world so you can let the whole world “praise the Lord.”

That’s why you must believe that God has reconciled all things to Himself in Christ Jesus so that you will let all things “praise the Lord.”

See? It must’ve been really hard on the egos of those twelve Jewish disciples to let a Roman centurion, who just crucified the Lord, drop to his knees and be first to “praise the Lord.” It must’ve been really hard on the religious ego to let a former prostitute and demoniac, like Mary Magdalene, be the first to “praise the Lord” on Easter morning. It must’ve been really hard on the egos of those early Christians to let a religious, genocidal Jewish terrorist like Saul of Tarsus “praise the Lord” and write the Bible.

Yet, in the end, I think this is the judgment: Will you let Roman centurions, demoniacs, prostitutes, Pharisees and terrorists “praise the Lord?” Will you let everything that has breath “praise the Lord?” Will you surrender your damn little universe and “praise the Lord?”

### **Communion**

So, the Lord sat at the table and on the night we all delivered up The Good, on the night we took His life, He gave His life saying, “This is my body given to you; take and eat.” And “This cup is the covenant in my blood; drink of it, all of you. This is the Good.”

And now, will you praise the Lord?

And “*LET everything that has breath praise the Lord?*”

Let there be light.

Let there be an entire new creation.

Let there be you—true you—the one that praises the Lord.

### **Worship Song**

“Blessed be the Name of the Lord.”

### **Prayer**

Blessed be your name Lord God. Your name is Jesus, and it means God is salvation. I wouldn’t know that if you didn’t give and take away . . .and give again. So, Lord God I thank you that even when you take away it’s a form of giving for you’re giving us knowledge of yourself that you are grace and everything is a gift. You desire that we would enjoy you forever, and ever,

and ever. That's the reason you made us. That's the reason you're making us. Thank you Father, for in Jesus I see that you are good.

### **Benediction**

I hope you see the practical application of this sermon: start thanking God for everything. What's so cool about it is that you can't screw it up. If you thank Him for the wrong thing you're really thanking Him for nothing . . . and you can just let it go.

But start thanking Him. As you do it begins to destroy your ego. It's a discipline to thank Him, and over time you will see that God takes more, and more, and more away until there's nothing left to thank Him for but Himself. On that day you won't be thanking Him for reflected good you'll be thanking Him for *the* Good.

You will have died with Him, and then you will live with Him, and you will let everything that has breath praise the Lord, and you will praise the Lord because you're home. Believe the Gospel in Jesus' name, Amen.

*Disclaimer: This document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.*