

The Gospel Praise of Christ

By Dennis Prutow

sermonaudio.com

Bible Text: 2 Chronicles 7:6

Preached on: Sunday, February 25, 2007

Westminster Evangelical Ministries

Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary

7418 Penn Avenue

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15208

Website: <http://www.wordfortheweek.org/>

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/rptsprof

I want to zero in on verse six this morning in 2 Chronicles seven and I will go ahead and read that text again. “The priests stood at their posts, and the Levites also, with the instruments of music to the LORD, which King David had made for giving praise to the LORD—‘for His lovingkindness is everlasting’—whenever he gave praise by their means, while the priests on the other side blew trumpets; and all Israel was standing.”¹

In my worship class at the seminary I have the students do interviews with their pastors on various aspects that we are not able to fully discuss in our class. But one of the interviews I have them do is with their pastor on worship itself and what the definition of worship is and how the pastor prays for worship. And it is a good opportunity for the students to visit with each of their pastors and to discuss these things and for the pastors to interact with the men. And so I often get very good feedback from the students about these sessions and as I read the reports I find that the bulk of the definitions with regard to worship have to deal with—would you guess—glorifying and enjoying God. Does that sound a little familiar? It is, of course, from our Catechism. And as the discussion proceeds I often find that the pastors and the students—assenting to their pastors—really look at worship in terms of what the pastors due and what the members of the congregations do and so the accent in worship falls on what the people are doing. And you would guess, I suppose, that this is also the case.

But as I approach worship in this particular class, the accent I place upon worship is not so much what the people are doing, but what God is doing. And it seems to me that that really is the important thing and in part this comes to us in our praise.

Let me put it to you this way. What is the nature of the Bible? The Bible really is God’s revelation of himself to you and me. What is the nature of the Church? The Church is God’s special dwelling place in the world. What is the nature of worship? Worship is God and Jesus Christ communicating covenant grace to his people.

You see the accent I am putting on it—and I think it is biblical—is what God is about, what Christ is about. And I think this is true with our praise also that in the end our praise really amounts to this. Your praise amounts to this: Christ continuing to give praise to his Father who is in heaven. And how does he do this? Christ continues to give praise to his

¹ 2 Chronicles 7:6

Father by making you his instruments and giving you his songs. This is what happens and this is the privileged position that you have and that I have in the Church, that Christ is in the midst of his people. He is in our midst. He is here and he is making you his instruments of praise and he gives you his songs so that he, in essence, is lifting his voice to his Father in praise and he continues to do so in his Church today.

I would like you to see how this works out in our text this morning. In the middle of the text we find a little snippet of a song. Did you pick that up as we read the text? “For his lovingkindness is everlasting.”² It is a phrase that comes from Psalm 106, “For his lovingkindness is everlasting.”³ And this snippet of praise comes in the context of the overall worship of the people of God, the public worship of the people of God.

I have already given you the context, the context of the dedication of Solomon’s temple and you get the context of worship, public worship, at the beginning of verse six. “The priests stood at their posts, and the Levites also.”⁴ And at the end of verse six, “...while the priests on the other side blew trumpets; and all Israel was standing.”⁵

The Levites at the gate of the holy place facing the altar and on the other side of the altar the priests and the priests with their trumpets and the Levites with their instruments and they would raise their voices, the Levites, the singers would raise their voices. The Levites, the singers would raise their voices to God in covenant praise as the text tells us. “For His lovingkindness is everlasting”⁶ and that word, once again, lovingkindness, is the Hebrew terminology for covenant love and it is the love that God expresses to his people by way of his covenant.

If you turn back in your Bibles to 1 Chronicles 16 and we looked at that passage a little bit earlier and I noted when we did so that in the middle of that passage we have representative psalms and these psalms are Psalm 106, Psalm 96 and Psalm 105. And you will see in 1 Chronicles 16 and verse 15 that the psalm that the worshippers were singing was this.

Remember His covenant forever, The word which He commanded to a thousand generations, The covenant which He made with Abraham, And His oath to Isaac.⁷

The promises that God made to Abraham and to Isaac and to Jacob, the apostle Paul calls these promises in Galatians, “the gospel.” And when Abraham believed the promises given to him by God he was believing the gospel and it is the same gospel that is given to you and to me. It is the same gospel that was fulfilled in Jesus Christ the Lord.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid. (See Psalm 106:1; Psalm 107:1; Psalm 118:1, 29; Psalm 136:1-36 and other Scriptures)

⁴ 2 Chronicles 7:6

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ 1 Chronicles 16:15-16

And so these songs that they sang and the songs that we sing are songs remembering God's good work for us on our behalf.

And then if you look at 1 Chronicles 16:34, "O give thanks to the LORD, for He is good;"⁸ and then those words again, "For His lovingkindness is everlasting."⁹

This is our rest. This is our hope in our great God and Savior that his love and his kindness expressed to us in his promises is, indeed, everlasting. It is a firm foundation for us.

But then going back to 2 Chronicles 7:6, now here is the context and here is the essence of the praise, this covenant praise. You note that David has appointed these Levites, these singers that are mentioned. It seems to me we need to get that. And David has also appointed the songs that were given. Keep your finger there in 2 Chronicles seven and go back again to 1 Chronicles 16 and let's remind ourselves of what David did, 1 Chronicles 16:4, notice "He," that is David, "appointed some of the Levites as ministers before the ark of the LORD, even to celebrate and to thank and praise the LORD God of Israel."¹⁰

David appointed these singers. And, of course, we will note that David was a type of Christ, a forerunner to Jesus Christ. He was the covenant head of the community of Israel at the time because he was the king. And David also, it seems, appoints the songs themselves. He not only appoints the singers, but he appoints the songs themselves.

We get an intimation of this in verse seven of chapter 16 of 1 Chronicles. "Then on that day David first assigned Asaph and his relatives to give thanks to the LORD."¹¹ And then verse eight launches into the song that they are to sing. And what is the song? Well, it is one of the psalms. It is one of the psalms. It comes from Psalm 105. "Oh give thanks to the LORD, call upon His name; Make known His deeds among the peoples."¹² And so David, you see, not only appoints the singers, but David appoints that which is to be sung by those singers in the temple and in the tabernacle.

Hezekiah later, in his own reforms when he reinstated the proper worship of God during his time, said very specifically, "Now the songs and the songs of Asaph the seer are to be sung by the Levites within the temple."¹³ And that whole idea was then institutionalized and, of course, David appointed Asaph. Asaph was one of David's men. And so, in the end, the songs that Asaph gave to us really come in the corpus of the songs of David.

And so as we look at this we see also, very interestingly, friends, that God not only through David appointed the songs and the singers in the Old Testament, but may I

⁸ 1 Chronicles 16:34

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ 1 Chronicles 16:4

¹¹ 1 Chronicles 16:7

¹² 1 Chronicles 16:8; Psalm 105:1

¹³ See 2 Chronicles 29:30

submit to you that God through Jesus Christ appoints the singers and the songs in the New Testament Church.

Do you remember what he says in Colossians? “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly singing to one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.”¹⁴

Who are the singers then appointed by God? You are. You are. Praise God that that’s the case.

And what are the songs? They are those psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to which Paul alludes and specifically speaks which are the psalms of the Old Testament. Maybe we need in another time to explore Colossians 3:16 to see that specifically, but that is what they are. And so praise God, you see, we are the singers and the songs have been given to us.

Well, let’s go back again. Having seen this, let’s go back through 2 Chronicles 7:6 and note something else that is given to us in this text. “The priests stood at their posts, and the Levites also, with the instruments of music to the LORD, which King David had made for giving praise to the LORD.”¹⁵ Did you pick that up? Let me read it again. “The priests stood at their posts, and the Levites also, with the instruments of music to the LORD, which King David had made for giving praise to the LORD.”¹⁶ The words “instruments of music” are really the vessels of song, the instruments of song, the instruments of sacred song. And the text tells us that David made those instruments. The word “made” here is the same word we find in Genesis one and Genesis two where God speaks of making the heavens and the earth in six days. God created the heavens and the earth. David made these instruments for the worship of God in the temple.

See, he didn’t take instruments off the street, as it were. He didn’t take cymbals and harps and lyres that were commonly used by the people. No. That is not what he did. But he constructed himself these instruments for the specific purpose of their being used in the worship of God in the temple. They were vessels for song. And the word “instruments” or “vessels” there is the same word as the vessels and the instruments for the use of sacred worship in the tabernacle that Moses constructed.

When Moses constructed the tabernacle of old under the direction of God it was not only the brazen altar that was constructed, but it was also the basins and the bowls and the dishes and the fire pans and all of those other instruments that were utilized in the sacrifices. They were the sacred vessels of God. And now these instruments, made by David, also are sacred vessels of worship constructed specifically for that purpose by David just like Moses constructed those earlier vessels and instruments. And when you read later, when you read later of all of those temple vessels of worship being brought back from Babylon. They not only included the bowls and the pans and the dishes and the hooks and all of the other accoutrements of the altar and the sacrifice proper, but they

¹⁴ See Colossians 3:16

¹⁵ 2 Chronicles 7:6

¹⁶ Ibid.

included the instruments, the sacred instruments that David constructed and made for the purpose of worship in the temple.

My wife is in the process now of making curtains for our living room and she has spent a good deal of time selecting the material for those curtains so that they would be of the proper type and the proper color to match the other things in the living room. And we have spent a good bit of time looking at those curtains. They were not bought off the shelf. They were made, you see, made by her for this specific purpose, not for a general use in everybody's house, but for a specific use in this particular house. And that is the case with these musical instruments. They were made by David specifically for the use of song in worship to God in the temple, not for other purposes. They were not taken off the shelf. That was not the idea.

And so when you read this in 2 Chronicles 7:6 you should keep that in mind.

In addition, notice what else 2 Chronicles chapter seven and verse six tells us. "The priests stood at their posts, and the Levites also, with the instruments of music to the LORD, which King David had made for giving praise to the LORD— 'for His lovingkindness is everlasting'—whenever he,"¹⁷ that is, David, "gave praise by their means, while the priests on the other side blew trumpets; and all Israel was standing."¹⁸

Now we ran by that quickly also. I am not sure you have picked up what the text says. Let's look at it again. "The priests stood at their posts, and the Levites also, with the instruments of music to the LORD, which King David had made for giving praise to the LORD— 'for His lovingkindness is everlasting'—whenever he,"¹⁹ that is, David, "gave praise by their means, while the priests on the other side blew trumpets; and all Israel was standing."²⁰ While David gave praise, whenever David gave praise by their means... That is, by the means, by the hand of the Levites and these instruments.

Now, what have we already said? What did I already say? David is dead. Look at the end of 1 Chronicles, 1 Chronicles chapter 29 and verse 28. Here is the citation regarding the death of David. "Now the acts,"²¹ verse 28, "Then he died in a ripe old age, full of days, riches and honor; and his son Solomon reigned in his place."²²

David is gone. David is dead and yet what does the text tell us? David continues to give praise to God by means of the singers and the instruments that he constructed. Now I think we can grasp with some understanding what the text is telling us. David appointed those singers. They were, in one sense, his singers. And David made those instruments and so there is, in one sense, the fact that they are his instruments. And so when those

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ 1 Chronicles 29:29

²² 1 Chronicles 29:28

singers, his singers sing and his instruments are played David continues to give praise to God. I think that's the idea.

In the book of Hebrews there is a notation with regard to Abel having a better sacrifice or offering a better sacrifice than Cain. And the writer to the Hebrews says that in this he bears testimony to the fact that his sacrifice was better than that of Cain's and though he is dead, yet he still speaks by that testimony.²³

And you remember that the Jewish theologians in the New Testament would often indicate "Moses says, Moses says, Moses says..." Moses has long been dead, but through his Word Moses continues to speak and we understand that principle. And we say the same thing about the apostle Paul, that Paul tells us. Well, he is dead. He is in the grave, but by his words he still speaks.

And so it is that in that Old Testament context that David, through the appointed singers and through the appointed instruments continued to offer up praise to God. And may I remind you, friends, that David was the forerunner to Jesus Christ, that David was a picture of Jesus Christ, that David was a type of Christ. And Jesus Christ, the greater David, now in the public worship of God has his instruments and his song to sing.

Jesus Christ, as I have already indicated, appoints you his singers. The vision of God given through Moses early on in the history of Israel was simple in Exodus 19 that God wanted a kingdom of priests. He didn't want just a select few priests, he wanted a kingdom of priests. And you, friends, are that kingdom. You are the Levites. You are the ones whom God has appointed to lift your voices in praise to God. You are the singers. You are the choir. And God is the audience and God through Jesus Christ has made you his instruments, his vessels, how often that terminology is utilized in Scripture. He has made you his vessels.

Do you trust Jesus Christ? Then God by his Spirit has given you a new heart and he has put a new spirit within you and he has put his law within your heart and he has recreated you and he is molding you and making you into his image. You are vessels of mercy, vessels upon which mercy has been shed and grace has been shed. You are vessels of grace and you are chosen vessels the Bible tells us and you are vessels chosen by God to sing to his praise, his covenant songs.

And haven't we already said that God has given to you his songs, that Jesus Christ has given to you his songs?

Let me direct you to just one other text quickly, Psalm 22 and verse 25. Note what it says, Psalm 22 and verse 25. "From You [oh Lord] From You comes my praise in the great assembly."²⁴ Not from some place else, but from you. You are the origin and the root of my praise. It is your song that I sing. By the power of your Spirit do I sing it. And you have appointed me thus to sing.

²³ See Hebrews 11:4

²⁴ Psalm 22:24

And if what we are saying holds true and David is the archetype or the type and Christ is the antitype, the archetype, then what held true for David is holding true for Jesus Christ even now. And I submit to you, friends, that Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, is using you as his singers with his songs to lift up covenant praise to his Father in this, his Church.

What a wonderful thing God has been pleased to give to you and to me. What is the nature, then, of our praise? The nature of our praise really is Jesus Christ giving praise to his Father through you his instruments using his songs.

And isn't this how we ought to be rooted and centered? Isn't this the center of the bull's eye as it were? See, again, what is the nature of Scripture? The nature of Scripture is God, Jesus Christ revealing himself. What is the nature of the Church really? It is the dwelling place of Jesus Christ, the place where Jesus Christ is pleased to tabernacle. And what is the nature of worship? I submit to you, again, the nature of worship is Jesus Christ dwelling with his people to impart to them, to you and to me his covenant grace. And what is our sacred song then? It is Jesus Christ continuing to offer covenant praise to his Father using you, his instruments singing his songs.

This is the privilege of praise, your privilege in Jesus Christ.

Let's pray together.

Father, a good God you are, merciful, gracious, full of loving kindness, using the vessels, clay pots for your praise. Thank you that your Son Jesus Christ is pleased to use us in this way. May we realize more fully this is the case and then offer praise to you in Christ as his instruments using his songs. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.