

**JEREMIAH 33:3 "CALL TO ME" GROUP BIBLE STUDIES – LEADER'S STUDY -
LUTHERAN HOUR MINISTRIES**

LESSON #10 –A CHRISTIAN'S CALL TO PRAISE

A CHRISTIAN'S CALL – I wish I had said it, but the quote comes from Billy Graham. He said, "People go to a football game today and shout their heads off, or go to a circus and cheer act after act. They become enthusiastic about everything conceivable, but when it comes to spiritual matters, they think we are supposed to become sober and wear black, and never have a good time or enjoy a religious event." Doctor Graham is correct, which is why this lesson deals with a Christian's enthusiastic call to praise. We begin with prayer:

THE PRAYER – Dear Lord, for those times when we have come to you with our under-confident requests and half-hearted *hallelujahs* we offer our repentance and regrets. Create in us new hearts that are a bright witness to Jesus Christ, the true Light of the world. In His Name we pray. Amen.

ILLUSTRATION - Years ago, a man owned a service station. Having been told that enthusiasm was a wonderful thing, and would produce some serious results, he called a meeting of the men who worked with him. He said, "This week we are conducting an experiment in enthusiasm. I want you to check the oil filter of everyone who drives in here. If they need it, I want you to make an enthusiastic presentation to them about what a new oil filter can do for them." The men did as they were asked. At the end of the week, a comparison showed they had sold 700 percent more oil filters that they ever had before. What was the difference? One word, enthusiasm.

SATAN'S SUMMONS – Unfortunately, we live in an age when Satan has successfully promoted the idea that religious enthusiasm is to be avoided. Somehow, a great percentage of church-goers have picked up the idea that "a warm welcome in church is something given by a greeter; singing in church is for choirs; that praying in church is the job of a minister; and powerful praise is something you see on television." The great tragedy is that this kind of coldness is contagious, seeping from one heart to another, until there is no longer any warmth in worship.

THOUGHT: Through the prophet Jeremiah, and many others, the Lord encouraged His people to call to Him. There is no doubt that He wants us to do so with "enthusiasm." This word, *enthusiasm*, comes from two, smaller, Greek words: *en* meaning within, *theos* meaning God; literally, *God within*. When God is within us, we cannot contain ourselves. As a Christian, you know your joy has to show through to others. Look at this chapter and list some of the unpraiseworthy actions of the Pharisees.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH 1 – Matthew 23

TEXT

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| v. 4 | What kind of living is to be rejected?
What should we do with the burdens of others? | Tying heavy burdens on other people
Help them carry them |
| v. 5 | What kind of living is to be rejected?
How should we do our good works? | They do everything for men to see them ...
they don't praise God
Privately, so they have the reward of the Father in heaven |
| v. 7-8 | Is it wrong to praise other people? | They love to have others praise them,
but it is God, alone, Who deserves praise
No ...only to want praise for ourselves, and at the cost of God |
| v. 24 | What should be most important? | We take small things and make them seem overly important
Sharing Jesus as Savior - calling others to Christ |
| v. 27-28 | What should be most important?
In short.... | Worry about the outside appearance of our lives
but forget that the inside is most important
A life of praise for what Christ has done for us
With God in us (en-theos), we should be enthusiastic |

FIRST APPLICATION: In the sixth century, an Egyptian monk, by the name of Agathon, was asked by his brothers, "Amongst all our different activities, Father, which is the virtue that requires the greatest effort?" He answered, "Forgive me, but I think there is no labor greater than praise to God. For every time a man wants to praise, his enemies, the demons, try to prevent him; for they know that nothing obstructs them so much

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as praise to God. In everything else that a man undertakes, if he perseveres, he will attain rest. But in order to praise, a man must struggle to his last breath."

Agathon was a man who took his prayer and praise seriously. For most of us, living a life of praise does not have to be a life and death battle. It should rather be an act of joy. List, if you would just a few of the things for which a Christian should come to the Lord in praise:

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| Forgiveness of sin. | Eternity in heaven. |
| Knowing we are not alone. | Having Someone we can talk to. |
| Not mourning as those who have no hope. | Have Someone to share our burdens. |
| Those are the things for which most people give praise. But how about some of the smaller things, like: | |
| Good health...or good health for many years. | For accidents that didn't happen. |
| For being spared from a terrorist. | For a really good meal. |
| For having a good friend. | For a parking space near the door. |

All of these things....and hundreds more like them.... can lead to a life of praise.... if we see them. In our second Scripture search let's see Christ's call to a life of praise:

SCRIPTURE SEARCH 2 - CHRIST'S CALL -

TEXT	QUESTION	WHOSE WILL WAS ANSWERED
1 Thess 5:16-18	What are we to do?	Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks at all times.
Psalms 75: 1	For what are we to praise the Lord?	For having His name near to us.
1 Timothy 4: 3-4	What has God given us that can lead to a life of praise?	Everything.
2 Cor. 9: 11	For what should we be filled with praise?	Opportunities for generosity.
Psalms 92: 1	Why should we have this life of praise?	Because it is good.
Hebrews 13: 15	What is the praiseworthy Name on our lips?	Jesus.
Philippians 4: 6	What is not compatible with a life of praise?	Anxiety.

In case the point is not made, take a quick look at these passages and see who praised the Lord:

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| Luke 5: 24-25 - Man with palsy | Luke 8: 38-39 - Demoniac | Luke 13:10-13 - Woman bent over |
| Luke 17: 12-16 - One leper | Luke 18: 40-43 - Blind Bartimaeus | John 4: 49-53 - Centurion for his son |

THOUGHT & ILLUSTRATION - Having looked at that last batch of Bible verses, one thing occurs to me. The people who really should have praised the Lord SHOULD have been the people who never had palsy, who were never possessed, who were never crippled, who were never lepers, who were never blind, or who had a high fever.

Christians shouldn't need to have a disease to remind them to praise the Lord. Before Jesus, there was a Greek City state called Sparta. The Spartan soldiers, always ready to fight, advanced into battle singing cheerful songs. In contrast were the Persians. When they entered the conflict, the officers had to drive their regiments into the conflict with whips. You need not be a Napoleon to figure out that a few Spartans were more than a match for thousands of Persians.

That is the way it should be with Christians. We should never be forced to a life of reluctant praise. Rather, with God in us, we should be more than glad to fight against the apathy, boredom, depression, and discouragement that the devil throws at us. Redeemed by Christ, we are enthusiastic soldiers of the cross.

Can you list just a few ways your church can, or should become enthusiastic?

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| In singing. | In prayers of thanksgiving. | In charity to others. |
| In welcoming others. | In visiting the sick. | In worldwide missions. |
| In debt retirement. | _____ | _____ |

THE WAY OF PRAYER – Dear Lord, be with us. We do not ask for false enthusiasm. Instead we pray for a new heart and mind that will see and praise You for the wondrous things You have done. Amen.