

Greetings Redeemer family,

Each week we begin our service with a Call to Worship. It's more than just a convenient way to get everyone paying attention before we begin to sing. This corporate reading of God's Word is a reminder that it is God who initiates our relationship with Him. He reveals Himself to us, and draws us by His Spirit to into His presence. Everything we do - in song, prayer, listening and learning – is all in response to God's gracious invitation.

We find ourselves in this humble position each week – as the unworthy recipients of God's kind invitation to worship Him. This week we are completing our summer series on the Fruit of the Spirit with a “bonus track” on humility. While not a part of Paul's formal list of the Fruit in Galatians 5, humility is certainly all over scripture as an evidence of God's work in our hearts and lives.

This week's call to worship from Psalm 47 reminds us of the great glory of God, that even the mighty kings of the earth must humble themselves before Him. Yet this does not mean that the presence of God is some stuffy, staid, and formal affair. Instead, the Psalmist paints the picture of a joyful celebration, full of shouts and clapping. So come excited to worship this Sunday. Let our services at Redeemer be full of reverence and rejoicing.

*Clap your hands, all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy.  
How awesome is the LORD Most High, the great King over all the earth!  
He subdued nations under us, peoples under our feet.  
He chose our inheritance for us, the pride of Jacob, whom he loved.  
God has ascended amid shouts of joy, the LORD amid the sounding of trumpets.  
Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our King, sing praises.  
For God is the King of all the earth; sing to him a psalm of praise.  
God reigns over the nations; God is seated on his holy throne.  
The nobles of the nations assemble as the people of the God of Abraham,  
for the kings of the earth belong to God; he is greatly exalted.*

Our first two hymns similarly call our hearts and souls to remember the great salvation we have in Christ. Although we were completely unworthy, we have been highly favored by His grace. He chose to rescue us out of ruin and rebellion. He adopted us when we were orphans. He has cleansed us from our guilt of sin. This very good news is a wonderful reason for us to turn and glorify God together.

*Arise, my soul, arise, shake off your guilty fears  
The bleeding sacrifice on my behalf appears  
Before the throne my surety stands  
Before the throne my surety stands  
My name is written on His hands*

*Arise! (Arise!) Arise! (Arise!)  
Arise, arise, my soul arise  
Arise! (Arise!) Arise! (Arise!)  
Arise, arise, my soul arise  
Shake off your guilty fears and rise*

*Father, long before creation  
Thou hadst chosen us in love,*

*And that love so deep, so moving,  
Draws us close to Christ above.  
Still it keeps us, still it keeps us.  
Firmly fixed in Christ alone.*

I love the truth captured in that line: that the love of the Father draws us to and keeps us fixed in Christ alone. This idea of the people of God being centered on Christ was crucial in the writing of our next hymn, "We Come O Christ to You." Margaret Clarkson wrote "We Come O Christ to You" at the request of Stacey Woods, who was the general director of Intervarsity Christian Fellowship in Canada and the United States. He asked her to write a hymn that might help to unify the scattered student groups of the young organization. The result was this hymn about the person and work of Christ, who is the source of our life (st. 1), the Way (st. 2), the Truth (st. 3), the Life (st. 4), and the one we worship as Savior and King (st. 5).

*We come, O Christ to you, true Son of God and man,  
By whom all things consist, in whom all life began:  
In you alone we live and move, and have our being in your love.*

*You are the Way to God, your blood our ransom paid;  
In you we face our Judge and Maker unafraid.  
Before the throne absolved we stand, your love has met your law's demand.*

*You are the living Truth! All wisdom dwells in you,  
the Source of every skill, the one eternal TRUE!  
O great I AM! In you we rest, sure answer to our every quest.*

*You only are true Life, to know you is to live  
The more abundant life that earth can never give:  
O risen Lord! We live in you: in us each day your life renew!*

*We worship you, Lord Christ, our Savior and our King,  
To you our youth and strength adoringly we bring:  
So fill our hearts, that all may view your life in us, and turn to you.*

One of the ways that we can categorize the life and work of Jesus is through the categories of "humiliation" and "exaltation." The Westminster Shorter Catechism defines these terms in this way.

*Q. 27. Wherein did Christ's humiliation consist?*

*A. Christ's humiliation consisted in his being born, and that in a low condition, made under the law, undergoing the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, and the cursed death of the cross; in being buried, and continuing under the power of death for a time*

*Q. 28. Wherein consisteth Christ's exaltation?*

*A. Christ's exaltation consisteth in his rising again from the dead on the third day, in ascending up into heaven, in sitting at the right hand of God the Father, and in coming to judge the world at the last day.*

In love, Jesus – the “very God of very God” - humbled himself and became man. He suffered homelessness and hunger, was betrayed, mocked, crucified, and laid in a borrowed tomb. In all of these things, he was truly humiliated. Yet this was not the end. He rose victorious over the grave, is now seated at the right hand of God, and will come again to righteously judge the world. In this, He is highly exalted.

As we talk about the glorious person of Christ, and the place of humility we ought to have as His people – it is only appropriate that we confess that we are often full of pride. The fact is that too often the driving focus of our life is not Christ and His Kingdom, but ourselves and our personal idea of success. Yet He invites us to come to Him again, to experience His grace, and find in Him springs of true fulfillment.

*Lord Jesus,  
I have sinned times without number, and been guilty of pride and unbelief,  
and of neglect to seek you in my daily life.  
My sins and shortcomings present me with a list of accusations,  
but I thank you that they will not stand against me, for all have been paid at your cross.  
Deliver me from every evil habit, every interest of former sins,  
everything that dims the brightness of your grace in me,  
everything that prevents me taking delight in you.  
Amen.*

Having confessed our sins, we hear this encouragement from the book of Hebrews (12:2-3) to look again to Jesus, who is “the perfecter of our faith.” He is our source of grace and strength in this life.

*Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

Following the sermon, we will close singing the great Wesley hymn, “And Can it Be?” Written shortly after his conversion, this was one of the first of Wesley's nearly 6000 hymns. It reflects on the amazing grace of God poured out on us in our salvation. This grace leaves us amazed and overwhelmed with the desire to worship. Here we find the joy of biblical humility – that we are no longer consumed with the toilsome labor of making much of ourselves, but are freed to adore and enjoy the greatness of God in Christ.

*And can it be that I should gain  
An interest in the Savior's blood?  
Died He for me, who caused His pain?  
For me, who Him to death pursued?  
Amazing love! How can it be  
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?*

Amazed by the love of God in Christ,  
Tim Sharpe  
Worship Director  
Redeemer PCA, Lynchburg, VA