



May 2012 - *God Invites Us to Enjoy Him*

Early in his Christian life, C.S. Lewis struggled with the idea that God demands our praise and commands us to give Him glory. However, he soon realized that this “stumbling block” was due to his misconception of God and a misunderstanding of what praise really is. He writes in his book, *Reflections on the Psalms*:

The most obvious fact about praise—whether of God or anything—strangely escaped me. I thought of it in terms of compliment, approval, or the giving of honour. I had never noticed that all enjoyment spontaneously overflows into praise unless ...shyness or the fear of boring others is deliberately brought in to check it. The world rings with praise—lovers praising their mistresses, readers their favourite poet, walkers praising the countryside, players praising their favourite game – praise of weather, wines, dishes, actors, motors, horses, colleges, countries, historical personages, children, flowers, mountains, rare stamps, rare beetles, even sometimes politicians or scholars. I had not noticed how the humblest, and at the same time most balanced and capacious, minds, praised most, while the cranks, misfits, and malcontents praised least...Except where intolerably adverse circumstances interfere, praise almost seems to be inner health made audible....I had not noticed either that just as men spontaneously praise whatever they value, so they spontaneously urge us to join them in praising it: “Isn’t she lovely? Wasn’t it glorious? Don’t you think that magnificent?” The Psalmists in telling everyone to praise God are doing what all men do when they speak of what they care about. My whole, more general, difficulty about the praise of God depended on my absurdly denying to us, as regards the supremely Valuable, what we delight to do, what we indeed can’t help doing, about everything else we value.

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... If it were possible for a created soul fully... to “appreciate”, that is to love and delight in, the worthiest object of all, and simultaneously at every moment to give this delight perfect expression, then that soul would be in supreme beauty... The Scotch catechism says that man’s chief end is “to glorify God and enjoy Him forever”. But we shall then know that these are the same thing. Fully to enjoy is to glorify. In commanding us to glorify Him, God is inviting us to enjoy Him.¹

While God as our Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer certainly deserves our praise, isn’t it amazing again to realize His lovingkindness towards us, as in commanding us to give Him praise, He is offering us the supreme in joy and fullness of life. It makes you want to shout out loud and share the goodness of God with others.

I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

ISAIAH 61:10 (NIV)

¹ C.S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1958), pp. 93–97