

“Time Out! . . . to Praise”—Luke 2:20

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Time Out! . . . to Praise”, is Luke 2:20 → *The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

“Hallelujah!” I can’t count the number of times I’ve heard this word used as an expression of joy or affirmation by people, many times sarcastically. “Hallelujah” is a transliteration of two Hebrew words meaning “praise the LORD” (i.e. “praise Yahweh”). I can recall in my childhood how people who constantly used the phrase “praise the LORD” were labeled by others as “religious fanatics” who made people feel uncomfortable with all their “Jesus talk.” On the basis of such a stereotype then, we must be “religious fanatics” when we gather for worship! A glance of the liturgy in our hymnal reveals the word “hallelujah” (or it’s Greek counterpart: “alleluia”) is sung by us in Divine Service *Setting One* twenty-one times! “Alleluia” actually summarizes the purpose for us taking “time out” for worship.

Our text records the shepherds *glorifying and praising God* in response to

*all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.* Not only had they seen a vision of angels *praising God* but they had also seen the *sign* about which they were told—*a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.* (cf. Luke 2:12) Aside from the fact that His birth circumstances were rather “strange,” what was so special about this baby that the shepherds left the manger scene *glorifying and praising God*?

The key words of the angel’s message to these shepherds are recorded in Luke 2:11 → *Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, **Who is Christ the Lord.*** For hundreds of years the Jews had been waiting for the Christ—the One anointed by Yahweh to deliver and save His people. The shepherds received special revelation from Yahweh that the fulfillment of the ages written on the pages of God’s Word in the Old Testament was present **for them** in the Person of this baby in a manger! God’s working in their lives produced a “time out” to glorify and praise Him for His faithfulness to His promises, despite the depth of their understanding of this message!

“Alleluia!” in relationship to Yahweh is spoken in worship from a humble recognition of His working in our lives. When we confess the Creed we humbly recognize His work of creating, sustaining and preserving all life (i.e. the first article). We confess His redeeming work for the forgiveness of our sins and eternal life in the Person & Work of Jesus (i.e. the second article), proclaimed

by the angel to the shepherds as Christ, the Lord. We do this together as “the communion of saints” gathered to praise the LORD (i.e. the third article)! When we gather to worship we call a “time out” for *glorifying and praising God for all we have heard and seen, as it has been told to us in God’s written Word!*

According to 1 Chronicles 16:4-7 King David made sure “time out” was appointed regularly for *glorifying and praising God*. It says he *appointed some of the Levites as ministers before . . . the LORD* in the worship tent (i.e. a tabernacle) he had made, *to invoke, to thank, and to praise the LORD, the God of Israel*. He even appointed various people *to play harps and lyres and to sound the cymbals*, with priests who were *to blow trumpets regularly before the LORD*, as well as appointing a choir to sing thanksgiving to the LORD! Yahweh had fulfilled His promises to His people by establishing them in the Promised Land through His anointed king! “Hallelujah! Praise the LORD!”

It is for this reason that the place you encounter the “Hallelujah!” proclaimed most frequently in the Bible is in the Psalms (some 30+ times). It grew out of the worship of Yahweh in the tabernacle and temple becoming the Old Testament hymnal. You will notice it is included in the front of our hymnal and much of the words in our worship are taken from the Psalms. In our corporate worship we follow the words of Psalm 111:1 → *Hallelujah! I will give thanks to Yahweh with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the*

***congregation.***

To praise the LORD is simply to tell Him how great He is as you reflect on His works in your life. There are times this can be a challenge because we constantly struggle with the affects of sin in our lives: sicknesses, tragedies, victimizations and our own sinful thoughts, words and actions. Through such affects of sin we are tempted to sin by giving the devil a foothold, leading us to blame God in unbelief and doubt rather than praise Him! Thus, *glorifying and praising God* can only be born out of confessing your sins and clinging to your *Savior, Who is Christ the Lord*. This is one reason why the Divine Services in our hymnal begin our worship with Confession & Absolution. Without taking “time out” to praise the LORD in worship together we can miss the benefits of His eternal work in our lives through the Person & Work of Jesus!

To glorify Yahweh is to give Him the credit for His gracious working in your life. Psalm 29:2 commands us to *ascribe to the LORD the glory due His name; worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness*. The epitome of His gracious working in your life is in the Person & Work of Jesus. Jesus is the embodiment of His holiness *for in Jesus the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily*. (cf. Colossians 2:9) 2 Corinthians 4:6 says that *God . . . has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God **in the face of Jesus***

**Christ.** God is glorified by us when our words and actions are done by faith in our *Savior, Who is Christ the Lord!* Thus, God is glorified not only in “time out” for worship but in every vocation of your life because of who you are in Christ!

Notice *the shepherds **returned**, glorifying and praising God.* They went back into the vocations of their life as new people. This is very important because it is the only way that this *good news of great joy . . . for all the people* (cf. Luke 2:10) will actually come to all people. The shepherds glorified God by pointing people to Jesus and giving God the credit. They could have easily walked away from the whole experience and thanked the angels, giving them the credit for this revelation. However, that would have constituted idolatry since only the LORD is to receive the credit for His gracious working in our lives. Even the angels are commanded in Psalm 29:1 → *Ascribe to the LORD, **O heavenly beings**, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.*

Having taken “time out” together to praise and glorify the LORD as we have received His gracious working in our lives through His means of grace in worship, we go back into our daily vocations of life in the world with a desire to glorify the LORD in those vocations. It is a desire to see God glorified as Christ is present in our words and actions as workers, family members, church members, citizens and so forth. It is a desire to see God glorified as others

experience the *good news of great joy . . . for all the people* (cf. Luke 2:10), taking “time out” to confess their sins, trusting in their *Savior, Who is Christ the Lord* and receiving His forgiveness! Then all of God’s people will exclaim, “Alleluia! Praise the LORD!” Amen.

*Be filled with the Spirit,  
addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,  
singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart,  
giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father  
in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

(Ephesians 5:18-20)

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