

Remember, Thank, and Praise

by Dennis J. Prutow

Rose Point Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America

November 5, 2006

I would like you to turn now, if you would, to 1 Chronicles 16. I want to read the first seven verses. If you look in your Bibles you will probably see that at verse eight, there is a long Psalm recorded. At the end of the chapter there is another piece of narrative. These two pieces of narrative have to do with the organization of the services of song before the Lord. The Psalm portions packed in-between are representative songs that David had in mind as he inaugurates the song service in the Old Testament.

1 Chronicles 16, beginning at verse 1.

And they brought in the ark of God and placed it inside the tent which David had pitched for it, and they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before God. When David had finished offering the burnt offering and the peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD. He distributed to everyone of Israel, both man and woman, to everyone a loaf of bread and a portion of meat and a raisin cake. He 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: Asaph the chief, and second to him Zechariah, then Jeiel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Mattithiah, Eliab, Benaiah, Obed-edom and Jeiel, with musical instruments, harps, lyres; also Asaph played loud-sounding cymbals, and Benaiah and Jahaziel the priests blew trumpets continually before the ark of the covenant of God. Then on that day David first assigned Asaph and his relatives to give thanks to the LORD.

May God be pleased to help us understand this particular text and to give us at least a little inkling as to what it might have to do with each one of us.

I have entitled the sermon “Remember, Thank, and Praise.” This title really comes from the end of verse 4. In the New American Standard Bible it speaks of celebration, thanks, and praise. The words are really “to remember, to thank ,and to praise.”

If you’re like me, you have questions with regard to worship. These worship questions seem to be unending in the Evangelical Church today. Unfortunately, in some congregations, these worship questions have resulted in what some have called ‘worship wars.’ People have been so vehement in particular congregations with regard to what ought to take place, that as these discussions and worship wars have taken place. There has been little thought to the times and the epochs related in Scripture. And the reason I say this is that if you are going to answer questions about worship and you go to Moses,

you need to realize that worship in the times of Moses took certain forms. If you are going to answer questions in regard to worship and go to David you need to understand that in the time of David worship took certain forms. There is a transition from Moses to David. And if you are going to go to the New Testament and answer questions with regard to worship, again you must understand that the form of worship alters or changes in the New Testament. So the times and the periods to which you go and find arguments to undergird worship have to be understood in their respective contexts. I think you will see what I mean as we progress this morning.

But there is one thing that continues to remain the same although the times change and the forms of worship change. God still calls His people to remember Him and to thank Him and to praise Him. And although the outward forms may change and do change, as we go through the history in Scripture, God calls His people always to remember Him and to thank Him and to praise Him. And so it is with you today. And so I say to you that even though the form of worship has changed from what we see in the Old Testament and is different today, the essence of that worship remains the same. God calls you to remember and to thank and to praise Him. I hope we can see how this works out in our text this morning.

As we come to 1 Chronicles 16 and verse 1, it is very obvious that there is a change taking place. "And they brought in the Ark of God and placed it inside the tent which David had pitched for it." The Ark of the Covenant had long been in a city to the east of Jerusalem, Kiriath-Jearim. For some 20 years it had been in that place, after it had been released from the Philistines in the time of Samuel. It remained there. Now David, desiring to bring the Ark of the Covenant up from that place, wanted to place it in Jerusalem. And so David constructed a tent for the Ark of the Covenant in Jerusalem. This was not the tabernacle that Moses built. The tabernacle that Moses built was in Gibeon, which was north east of Jerusalem. The tabernacle remained in that location.

Now David, wanted to bring the Ark of the Covenant, which represented the presence of God and the glory of God--the throne of God was on the top of the Ark of the Covenant--David wanted to bring the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem. He had a particular reason for this. In 1 Chronicles 13:3, David gives us the principle reason. He says; "Let us bring back the Ark of our God to us, for we did not seek it in the days of Saul." In the days of Saul, as it were, the glory had been removed from Israel and the Ark of the Covenant was not in Jerusalem. And now, having captured the city and having been made king of all of Israel, David desires with all of his heart to have this representative symbol of the presence of God brought into Jerusalem, into his capital city. So this is exactly what he does. This is what we see in the first verse of 1 Chronicles 16.

And then in verse 7 you will notice, it says; "And then on that day David first arranged [or assigned] Asaph and his relatives to give thanks to the Lord." There was not only a change in bringing the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem, but now David was

inaugurating the worship of song and praise before God, that is, before the Ark of the Covenant in Jerusalem. Heretofore, there had not been this kind of praise given before God and before the Ark in the tabernacle. And so there is a significant shift and change that is taking place in the form of worship in Israel.

As David brought in the Ark, he offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord. You see this in verse 1 again. “And they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before God.” They brought the Ark of the Covenant in, the symbol of God’s presence. They wanted to seek God and His presence and so they went before the Ark. They offered peace offerings before the Ark of the Covenant. This would be similar to our gathering together in public worship to seek the face of God publicly. This is the idea here.

The burnt offerings in the Old Testament which David offered were whole burnt offerings in which the whole animal was placed on the altar except the skin. The whole animal was burned before the Lord. This was for atonement, for propitiation. This reminds us of the fact that Christ is our propitiation. Jesus Christ is the one who takes all of the wrath of God in fire and consumes that wrath for us. This is the idea of the whole burnt offering. Only the skin was preserved and it was given to the priests. Perhaps this was a foreshadowing of the fact that the clothing and the righteousness of Christ is given to us.

And then there were peace offerings that were offered before the Lord. And when you read in Leviticus you read that the peace offerings were placed very specifically on top of the whole burnt offering. The book of Leviticus is very specific in this regard. The peace offerings were placed upon that whole burnt offering. This represents Jesus Christ and His propitiation. In other words, it is only on the foundation of Jesus Christ that we have peace with God. And this the idea in those peace offerings. And those peace offerings celebrated the fact that the people were in right standing with God because of the atonement that had already been made.

And another significant thing about the peace offerings was that the peace offerings were shared and eaten by the people. It was only the internal organs of the animal that were burned. The Old Testament is a little graphic here, the internal organs that are a little more flammable are placed on the altar. They rise in smoke before God. Then the meat itself is shared by the people in communion. This was their communion service, much like our communion service today. They had communion with God and ate in the sanctuary. You see a little bit of a note of this in verse 3. David “distributed to everyone of Israel, both man and woman, to everyone a loaf of bread and a portion of meat and a raisin cake.” Matthew Henry indicates that David was probably acting here as the Father of all of the people of the nation as he offered up the peace offerings before God. He wanted his nation to be like a large family before God, the Children of God, as it were. He gave them tokens of the bounty of the kingdom and of the sacrifice in this bread and meat and raisin cakes.

And then David does an extraordinary thing, it says in verse 2; “He blessed the people in the name of the Lord.” I want you to know, friends, that this was the duty of the priest in the Old Testament economy. The priest stood before God and blessed the people; “The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make His face shine on you, And be very gracious to you; The Lord lift up his countenance on you, And give you His peace.” This is the common benediction we hear. It is the Aaronic benediction. It was commonly the priest who stood before the altar and then, after the sacrifice blessed, the people. David assumes this position, not arrogantly I think and not out of place I think. And he offers sacrifices before God. Unlike Saul who stepped out of place and offered sacrifices before God, David as a type of Jesus Christ, the great Prophet, Priest and King, stood at the head of his kingdom as a prophet, priest and king and offered sacrifice and blessed the people of God. So we have a view of worship and the Kingdom under our great Head and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

What else did David do? David appointed the Levites to sing before the Lord. Look at verse 4. “He appointed some of the Levites as ministers before the Ark of the LORD, even to celebrate and to thank and to praise the LORD God of Israel.” In verse 7 again, we get the note of the fact that this is a new thing that is taking place. This is a new thing which is transpiring in the worship of God. Times are changing. “Then on that day David first assigned Asaph and his relatives to give thanks to the LORD.”

David was not doing this on a whim. David was following the Word of God in doing this. Look at verse 4 again. “He appointed some of the Levites as ministers,” or servants, some of your versions may say. I would like you to keep your finger there in 1 Chronicles and turn back to Deuteronomy, those of you who are following along in your Bibles. Turn to Deuteronomy chapter 10, verse 8. David is following Moses. David is following the ancient Word of God stipulated by Moses. Deuteronomy 10:8, “At that time the Lord set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the LORD.” This was one of their duties, to carry the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord. “And to stand before the Lord to serve Him and to bless His name until this day.” A second duty was to stand before the Lord to serve Him or to minister to Him. This, it turns out, was a future duty that Moses was outlining.

What do we see in Chronicles? This work of service, this work of ministry, was the lifting of voices to praise before God. In this there was a blessing of the name of the Lord. This is what is in view. Chronicles is interpreting Deuteronomy for us. This is the idea of progressive revelation, of movement in the history of Israel. And now, in the time of David, there is a new thing, as set forth originally by Moses. And so, now that the Levites were no longer going to be charged with carrying the Ark of the Covenant from place to place and carrying the Tabernacle from place to place. They were going to have a new duty. David appoints them as ministers of music in his worship service. Perhaps I'd better be careful how I utilize this terminology. It is not utilized in a similar way

today, is it? I think not. The Levites then, as we study them, were set up in choirs to lift their voices in praise before God, before the Ark of the Covenant. Much of the Book of Chronicles sets forth how these choirs were to be organized. Yes, they were ministers of music.

And they had certain instruments, the Bible tells us. Look at verses 5 and 6.

Asaph the chief, and second to him Zechariah, then Jeiel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Mattithiah, Eliab, Benaiah, Obed-edom and Jeiel, with musical instruments, harps, lyres; also Asaph played loud-sounding cymbals, and Benaiah and Jahaziel the priests blew trumpets continually before the ark of the covenant of God.

There were trumpets that were sounded and there were cymbals that were clashed and there were harps that were played. The trumpets were actually part of the original service inaugurated by Moses. I want you to listen to me carefully here because these trumpets were not trumpets accompanying the singing. This was not their purpose at all. They were played over the sacrifices. They were blown over the sacrifices to announce the time of the sacrifice.

And when, verse 6 tells us they were played continually it does not mean that they were played without interruption. Let me try to explain it to you this way; the word “continually” refers to the fact that the offerings, the burnt offerings, were offered continually, every morning and every evening. This is the idea. And on the Sabbath day they were doubled, morning and evening. This was done continually. This process was carried out continually.

In the New Testament, Paul says we are to “pray without ceasing.” He does not have in mind that we are to be on our knees 24/7. This would not be very practical. He takes his statement from the Old Testament sacrifices. He means there ought to be regular morning and evening prayers. This is what he means by praying continually. When the trumpets were blown continually, they were blown over the sacrifice in the morning and they were blown over the sacrifice in the evening. They announced the presence of God and they announced the sacrifices.

The cymbals were not played continually either. It was Asaph who was given the cymbals and he was the precentor. We need a precentor in our singing. The precentor leads the choir. The cymbals were clashed as a signal for the singing to begin. This was the use of the cymbals. And then there were also harps and lyres.

Let me give you an indication of what these instruments mean. Would you turn in your Bibles to Revelation Chapter 1, beginning with verse 10, where the trumpet is mentioned. Notice how John refers to the trumpet. John says; “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day,

and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet.” You see, John does not speak of an actual trumpet here. He hears a loud voice, *like the sound of a trumpet*. The voice says, “Write in a book what you see, and send it to the Seven Churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.” John then says, “I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me.” This was the voice that sounded like a trumpet. “And having turned I saw seven golden lamp-stands; and in the middle of the lamp-stands I saw one like a son of man.” And who is it that has a voice like a trumpet? It is Jesus Christ who announces His presence and announces the fact that He has a mission for His people. He is the one who has a voice “like a trumpet.” The text does not speak of an actual trumpet but of a voice or a sound “like a trumpet” sounding loudly and clearly, an alarm or a call. This is what the trumpet indicates. And if it is the Son of Man who is the one with a voice like a trumpet, needless to say we may understand that He has a Spirit impelled voice. The trumpet symbolizes a Spirit empowered voice.

Then if you would, turn to Revelation 14. Here we have a mention of the harps. What does the Book of Revelation say about the harps? Revelation 14: “Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written in their foreheads.”

This is a great assembly, representative of all believers who have the Name of Christ written and stamped in their foreheads, that is, they are marked by Christ. Here is a wonderful group of believers. And where are they? Verse 2, “I heard a voice from Heaven.” What were they doing? Verse 3, they sang, they gave praise to God. And what did they sound like when they sang? Look at Verse 2 once again. “And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps.” Contemplate the picture. You have seen one lady strumming a harp in a symphony. Can you contemplate tens of thousands of harps? Tens of thousands would sound like rushing water and like thunder coming from heaven. The voice of the choir was *like* harps. These harps therefore represent the Spirit empowered voices of the choir. They represent the Spirit empowered praise of the people of God. This is a wonderful thing to contemplate.

Please go back, if you would, to 1 Chronicles 16. Here we have instrumentation representative of spiritual power in praise and the announcement of God’s presence. Here before the Ark, the trumpets sound. God is present. The people are gathered to bring their Spirit empowered praise to God who comes to meet with them. And what do they do? They are to sing, as verse 4 tells us. They are to celebrate and to thank and to praise the Lord God of Israel. The word “celebrate” here means “to remember.” They are to remember and to thank and to praise the Lord God of Hosts.

I now draw your attention to the representative Psalm that David gives us. Look for example at verse 12. "Remember His wonderful deeds which He has done." This is what we are called to do. Verse 15, "Remember His covenant forever." God, my friends, has been pleased to affect a relationship with you. You need to remember this. As you do so, what do you need to do? You need to thank Him; you need to thank Him. Look again at this representative Psalm, verse 8 first of all. "Oh give thanks to the Lord, call upon His Name. Make His deeds known among the people." If God has affected a wonderful relationship with you, what ought you to say? "Thank you Lord; thank you Lord!" This is what the people were called to do. Verse 34, "Oh give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, For His loving-kindness is everlasting." Verse 35, "Then say, 'Save us O God of our salvation, And gather us and deliver us from the nations, To give thanks to Your Holy Name.'"

Why has God saved us? Why has God drawn us together as a people? So we can sit and mope and complain? No! So we can give thanks to Him. So we can praise Him. We are to remember and to thank and to praise the Lord God of Israel. And this representative Psalm has an interesting way of putting the idea of praise. The idea of praise here has the root, "hallelujah" or "praise the Lord." The way it is translated in the New American Standard Version in verse 10 is, "Glory in His holy name." "Boast in Him." "Lift your voices in praise to God," or "say to Him, Hallelujah." This is why the whole Book of Psalms ends with a crescendo of praise before God. And so it is also in verse 25 in this representative Psalm. "For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised." And also in verse 35, "Then say, 'Save us, O God of our salvation, And gather us and deliver us from all the nations, To give thanks to Your holy name, And glory in Your praise.'"

Why has God saved you? Why has God brought you together as a congregation? Oh friends, God brought you together as a congregation, to remember Him, to remember the good things He has done; to thank Him for the good things that He has done, to thank Him for all that He has done for you in many, many years of life, decades perhaps; and to lift your voices in praise to Him and to say, "Hallelujah, You are the good God, and I am thankful for You, and I give You the praise You are due." This is what David called for and it was a new thing. It was a brand new thing in the worship of Israel.

I say to you friends, times have changed again, times have changed once again. Christ has come. Do you remember the woman who approached Jesus at the well? And as they debate, she points up to Mount Gerrizim. Then she refers to Jerusalem. And she asks a question of Jesus. "Is it here, in the temple on the top of Mount Gerrizim, where the Samaritans worship, is this where we are to worship? Or is it in Jerusalem? I'd like to get into a discussion on worship with you Jesus." Does this sound familiar? How does Jesus respond? Neither! Neither! For the hour is coming when the true worshipper shall worship God in Spirit and Truth, for such worshippers God is seeking.

And so there was a change that was made. There was a change made from the old dispensation of the Tabernacle and the Temple and the sacrifices and the trumpets and all the accoutrements that go with that old sacrificial system. But what remained was sacred song, in remembrance of God, in thanksgiving to God, and in praise to God. And although the times have changed, friends, the essence of worship remains the same. God calls you to lift your voices to Him, to remember Him, and to thank Him, and to praise Him.

It is sad in our day that we continue to have these worship wars. Spurgeon was an old puritan scholar. He maintained the position that if you bring the trumpets and the harps and all the accoutrements from the Old Testament into New Testament worship, you are Judaizing the Gospel. You are going back to the ceremonial Law which was done away with in Christ. And he would instruct his congregation. "God has given you the gift of the Holy Spirit in your hearts. He placed a deep joy in Jesus Christ in your hearts. You do not need to go back to Old Testament times and resurrect what was in the past to help you in worship in the present. The power of the Holy Spirit of God in your praise is sufficient." The instruments in the Old Testament pointed forward to Spirit empowered praise in the New Testament. This is the point to which we come and to which the text draws us.

The times have changed friends. The times have changed. We no longer live in that Old Testament period. We have the Holy Spirit given to us. And we may, with Spirit empowered voices, lift our praise to God. And although the times and the forms of worship have changed, the essence remains the same. You engage in Spirit empowered worship to remember and to thank and to praise the God of all.

Let's pray together.

Father, fill our hearts with your Spirit, that we may properly, truly, spiritually, give you praise. We are feeble, Yet You have saved us out of muck and mire and darkness. And we belong to you. Thank you. Give us praise from our hearts, over our lips, by the power of the Spirit, to remember and to thank and to say to You, Hallelujah.