Called to be Thanks-Givers and Praise-Singers

**Doxology Reunion**

St. Benedict Center, Schuler, Nebraska, 26-29 August, 2010

1. **Paul’s appeal**

* Col 3:15: ***Be thanks-givers.***
* Reason in 1 Cor 4:7: ***What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?***
* Life of thanksgiving
* Mark of life in the new age in which the offering of thanksgiving will be the only sacrifice (Jer 33:10-11)

1. **Our problem**

* God’s modesty: unbranded gifts
* Our blindness to what goes right for us
* Taking credit for what goes right
* Blaming others for what goes wrong
* Our illusion: self-made people with self-made lives in a self-made world
* Need for self-promotion and self-affirmation: use of praise to flatter and manipulate
* Self-comparison with others and criticism of them
* Culture of criticism rather than appreciation
* Practical atheism
* Blindness to God’s constant involvement with us
* Idolatry: faith in God’s creatures rather than our Creator
* St Paul in Rom 1:21: ***For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.***

1. **The nature of thanksgiving**

* Thanksgiving as an acknowledgement of a gift and its giver
* Word play in Greek
* *Charis* = grace/undeserved favor and thanksgiving
* *Eucharistia*: thanksgiving for a good gift,
* 2 Cor 4:15: ***For it (Paul’s preaching) is all for your sake so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God***.

1. **Thanksgiving as God’s will for us as his holy people**

* 1 Thess 5:18: ***Give thanks in every circumstance/way; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.***
* Thanksgiving as God’s will for us together with our sanctification (4:3)
* Purpose of our union with Jesus in baptism
* Location and manner of thanksgiving
* Not for everything
* In every way, since God gives us many different gifts in many different ways ► Eucharist as greatest gift
* In every circumstance, since God is always giving good things to us everywhere in his creation ► exchange at the end of the Divine Service 3 and 4: ***Bless we/Let us bless the Lord. Thanks be to God.***
* Walking in Christ ► abounding in thanksgiving (Col 2:7)
* Thanksgiving as the offering that pleases God (Col 1:10-14; cf. Heb 13:15-16)

1. **The benefit of thanksgiving**

* No benefit to God: no need for appreciation and gratitude
* Our benefit
* Our reception of God’s gifts: increased receptivity
* Our appreciation of God’s gifts: growing confidence and hopefulness
* Our enjoyment of God’s gifts: increased capacity for enjoyment
* Our praying as receiving from God rather than informing or persuading or coercing him
* Thankful praying: Phil 4:6: ***Do not be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.***
* Wakeful praying: Col 4:2: ***Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.***
* Our edification: Col 2:7: ***Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving***.
* Four pictures
  + Our life as a journey with Jesus
  + We as trees with Jesus as good life-giving soil
  + We as temples of God with Jesus as our foundation and faith as the cement
  + We as springs that overflow with thanksgiving
* Our building up in faith ► thanksgiving ► our building up in faith
* Our testimony to the gospel of God’s grace
* Our sanctification of God’s gifts (1 Tim 4:4-5)
* Our anticipation of heaven here on earth ( Rev 4:9; 7:12; 11:16-18)
* Prelude to praise: focus of gifts received ► focus on the good giver of them

1. **Our call to be praise-singers**

* 1 Pet 2:9: ***But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of the darkness into his marvelous light.***
* We as God’s royal priesthood
* Admission to the light of God’s presence
* Purpose: proclamation of God’s excellence
* We as the new choir that replaces the temple choir (Eph 1:3-14)
* Calling: to be praise singers (1:12; cf. Is 43:31)
* Task: praise of God’s gracious presence (1:6, 12, 14)
* Choir: people and angels (1:10)
* Location: heaven and earth (1:3-4)
* Praise as the best publicity for God

1. **Divine help for our thanksgiving and praise singing**

* Col 3:16: ***Let the word of Christ dwell in you (pl) richly, teaching and admonishing on another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with grace/gratitude in your hearts to God.***
* Stimulation to praise by Christ’s word
* The enriching gospel as the cause and content of praise
* Singing as full-bodied praise
* Two dimensions of praise singing
* Outward: praise as wise corporate instruction and admonition
* Inward: absorption of grace and production of gratitude in our hearts by praise
* Praise as spiritual enrichment by the gospel
* Eph 5:18-20: ***be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.***
* The Holy Spirit as the producer of praise: downward movement through the indwelling word of Christ
* Three dimensions of praise singing
* Outward: congregation address of God’s Spirit-giving word to each other
* Inward: devotional music and song
* Upward: thanksgiving to the Father in the name of the Son by the Spirit
* Circuit: Spirit’s infilling ► song of praise ► Spirit’s infilling

1. **Conclusion: hymn by Horatius Bonar**

***Fill up my whole life, O Lord my God,***

***in every part with praise,***

***that my whole being may proclaim***

***your being and your ways.***

***Not for the lip of praise alone***

***nor ev’n the praising heart***

***I ask, but for a life made up***

***of praise in every part:***

***praise in the common things of life,***

***its goings out and in;***

***praise in each duty and each deed,***

***however small and mean.***

***Fill every part of me with praise:***

***let all my being speak***

***of you and of your love, O Lord,***

***poor though I be and weak.***

***So shall you, Lord, receive from me***

***the praise and glory due;***

***and so shall I begin on earth***

***the song for ever new.***

***So shall no part of day and night***

***from sacredness be free;***

***but with you, Lord, in every step***

***my fellowship will be.***