

Live Out Loud: Something to Sing About

Ephesians 1:3-14

Pastor Jon Haakana

Introduce series...Live Out Loud...Book of Ephesians...Today – Something to Sing about.
What makes you sing? Not a little whispered song, but a belt out the volume song.

It doesn't take much to make me sing. It might be a simple statement made in a personal conversation that rings a bell of some song lyrics of years ago. It might be a song that has embedded itself in my memory. It doesn't matter – I sing. It's what I do. More than a few times, I just start singing away; only to have someone near and dear say to me, "Tone it down."

As Christians, do we encourage one another to tone it down? How often do we engage in living out our Christianity so that we can barely hear the heartbeat of our lives above the roar of the crowds around us? Rather than living a life that boldly shouts a declaration of God's grace, we have retreated into a life of reserved apology.

Now, I know that some of you are wondering – "What is he talking about? Does he expect us to be loud and obnoxious about our faith?" Let me say, for some of us that might be an improvement over a faith that is lifeless and uninspiring – but that is not what I am talking about.

My brother and I have always been very passionate about sports and very competitive, especially when it came to us or our children. There were times where we had drawn attention to ourselves because of how loud we were at games. I even got called out by someone once, and was reminded that it was only a game.

Prior to the 2007 Super Bowl in Miami between the Indianapolis Colts and Chicago Bears, there were those that described it as the most boring Super Bowl week in years because of the personal faith of the two coaches. Yet, others said that the faith of Lovie Smith and Tony Dungy was a refreshing change since their faith filtered down to the team – making preparations for the game became the story – and not some off the field extra-curricular activity. After victory TD knelt with players in locker room... When the faith of the coaches becomes a story in the Super Bowl – that is living out loud.

Ephesians teaches us about a life that is lived out loud – in full volume, unashamedly expressing our love and devotion for God. This is the life that breaks the silence about sin and forces Satan to retreat. This is the life that declares God's victory over prejudice and shouts his victory over sins oppression. This is the life that speaks into the darkness and stirs it with the light of God. Ephesians is living out loud for a God who has forever changed who we are.

Paul's blessing that begins Ephesians (a common trait of his Epistles) is a statement of worship proclaiming the praiseworthiness of a God that has lavished his blessings on his people. The opening verse, literally means "Blessings on the one who blesses us with every

spiritual blessing,” emphasizes the worship thrust of this blessing. God, as the one who has poured out his blessings on us, is worthy of our full-blown celebration in worship.

I have a sense that we in the contemporary church have forgotten how to worship. I offer no fix-it plan for worship, but I am convinced that the key to worship is not in procedures or rituals, but in experiencing God; not in a plan for worship, but in time set aside for worship and eyes sensitive enough to discern God and his work. Knowledge of God leads to wonder and worship.

So let’s begin to rediscover something to sing about by beginning where Paul began. From his declaration of God’s worthiness of our worship, Paul includes three additional “to the praise of …” statements. Each statement is attached to a specific way that God has acted to bless his people. Each blessing thus serves notice of a reason that we have to direct our worship to God, and as we understand the depth of God’s activity on our behalf worship will cry out from the depths of our soul.

Additionally, each of these blessings is not a stagnant piece of information. Each is a piece of information that stirs us to live a life in full-volume, leaving it all on the field.

1. God has brought us into his family.

God has determined to adopt us into his family (vs. 5) - “even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will – to the praise of his glorious grace,” (vs. 4-5).

The adoption was certified through Christ’s gracious act of redemption (vs. 6). Redemption goes beyond our normal understanding of God’s grace being forgiveness. Redemption carries that idea of being set free from slavery (vs. 7). Grace is poured out on his people to the extent of overwhelming them (vs. 8).

Our adoption is a change of identity. We are no longer who we once were. Paul goes on to emphasize that fact in the rest of his letter. Each chapter and section speaks to our change of identity and the different thoughts, motives, and actions that the change in identity brings about. We are transformed from a life condemned by sin, redeemed by the death and resurrection of our Savior, and then adopted into God’s family through Baptism because of Jesus.

The concept of being God’s children is picked up again at 5:1 - “Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

This transformation of identity is also expressed in our location. No less than 9 times in these twelve verses does Paul describe something about us as being “in Christ.”

2. God has opened the avenue for us to know him.

The “mystery revealed” is a key concept in Ephesians. The second reason to praise God is that the mystery which had been undisclosed has now been revealed (vs. 9) - “making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time...”

Clearly this text emphasizes the activity of God with regard to the past, present and future. All too easily people assume God is not active because they do not see obvious actions from him. But God is rarely ‘public’ with his actions. In fact, Isaiah 45:15 says that God is a hidden God, or as one scholar put it, ‘an elusive presence.’ God does not force himself on us, but our hidden God does reveal himself and is active in making his grace and his purposes in Christ known. We almost need a sign that reads “Slow down – God at work.” Confidence that God is at work fulfilling his purposes preconditions us to anticipate his work and be receptive to it.

Since God has revealed his activity, purposes and will, he has also revealed himself. Glory is essentially a term of revelation (vs. 12). Knowing God is a key idea in Ephesians. It is the centerpiece of Paul’s prayer for them at the end of chapter 1. It is the cornerstone of his ministry to the Gentiles – making known the mysteries of God, and his prayer that they would understand the full extent of God’s immeasurable love for them.

3. God has paid the deposit on our eternity.

God has given us the Holy Spirit to identify us as his children (vs. 13). “In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit...”

Yet the Holy Spirit is not only a blessing for now – to guide us in living our lives in the current age. It is a guarantee that God insures us of his eternal provision for us (vs. 14) “... who is a guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”

Hey, I thought we were already redeemed. This verse makes it sound like our redemption is a future activity. Redemption is something that is “already-but not yet.” We have realized aspects of our salvation in the present age. However, some aspects of our redemption will not be completely enjoyed until our redemption is completely consummated at Christ’s return.

The Holy Spirit is God’s guarantee that we belong to him and that he will do what he has promised. The Holy Spirit is like a down payment, a deposit, a validating signature on the contract. The presence of the Holy Spirit in us demonstrates the genuineness of our faith, proves that we are God’s children, and secures eternal life for us. His power works in us to transform us now, and what we experience now is a taste of the total change we will experience in eternity.

Conclusion

Each of these blessings that we have received from God should encourage us to crank up the volume on our faith until it bursts out in a full-volume demonstration of his activity in our

lives. Living to the praise of God means leaving it all on the field. Not holding anything back. Now that's something to sing about! Amen.