

# PREPARING FOR WORSHIP

## Notes from Rodney L. Barbour

### July 11, 2010

**Theme:** Pastor Alan writes about our Summer Sermon Series: *12 Smooth Stones: Favorite Bible Passages. The Bible is laced through and through with poignant passages that inspire, comfort, encourage, direct and teach us. Everyone has their favorites; this summer we'll touch on a dozen passages that seems to consistently rise to the top of most people's lists. Like smooth stones in the pocket of your favorite summer shorts, they have a familiar feel to them. Let's pull them out and turn them over and over in our hearts; plan to join with the rest of us in re-visiting some old friends as we examine them to see what new insights they offer up.*

**Preparation for Worship:** Today we focus on one of the most memorized scriptures and we begin with one of the most sung and beloved choral anthems, John Stainer's "God So Loved the World" (John 3:16). The opening of worship seeks to divert our attention from our current activities and daily routine to an awareness of who Christ is and his presence among us. When we don't know Christ, or take time to enjoy and celebrate his presence, we make choices as though this life were all we have. In reality, our time is just the introduction to eternity. Begin today's worship enjoying fellowship with Christ and "evaluating" all that happens from his perspective.

**Call to Worship:** In today's call to worship we praise each person of the Trinity (God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit) as we remind ourselves of a few of their attributes. As each brings different joys and blessings to our lives, it is good to extend our awareness, and offer our praise to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Leader: Praise be to you, O God the Father:

People: You created all things by your power and wisdom and so loved the world that you gave your Son to be our Savior.

Leader: Praise be to you, O God the Son:

People: You became human like us in all things, except sin, died for our offenses, and rose again for our justification.

Leader: Praise be to you, O God the Holy Spirit:

People: You lead us into all truth and spread the love of God in our hearts. All praise and glory be to you, O God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for ever and ever.

Amen.

**Hymn of Praise:** Today's hymn continues the theme of the call to worship and sets our praise to music. The chorus of this hymn is based on Psalm 103. This psalm tells us of God's great love for us. It lists several things God does for us (as does the hymn) which tell us what he is really like. And, we respond in praise: "Bless the Lord! Bless the Lord, O my soul!"

Vs1

Sing praise to the Father, Creator and King, whose mercy has taught us  
a new song to sing;

Who made us, and loved us tho' rebels and lost, and planned our redemption at  
infinite cost.

Bless the Lord, bless the Lord, bless the Lord, O my soul,  
For the grace that redeems, for the love that makes whole;  
O come and adore him, his glories proclaim, and worship before him-the Lord is his  
name!

Vs2

Sing praise to the Savior, Redeemer and Friend, for grace past all telling,  
for love without end;  
Who stripped off his glory, put on mortal sin, and died in our stead, full atonement  
to win.

Bless the Lord, bless the Lord, bless the Lord, O my soul,  
For the grace that redeems, for the love that makes whole;  
O come and adore him, his glories proclaim, and worship before him-the Lord is his  
name!

Vs3

Sing praise to the Spirit, the gift of God's love, who quickens our hearts  
with new life from above,  
Who woos us, subdues us, and seals us his own, and faultless presents us  
before the White Throne.

Bless the Lord, bless the Lord, bless the Lord, O my soul,  
For the grace that redeems, for the love that makes whole;  
O come and adore him, his glories proclaim, and worship before him-the Lord is his  
name!

Vs4

Sing praise to the Father, sing praise to the Son, sing praise to the Spirit,  
great God Three in One;  
The God of salvation, of glory, of grace, who wrought our redemption—  
my soul, sing his praise!

Bless the Lord, bless the Lord, bless the Lord, O my soul,  
For the grace that redeems, for the love that makes whole;  
O come and adore him, his glories proclaim, and worship before him-the Lord is his  
name!

**Confession and Pardon:** Realizing all the good things God offers us, we can only realize how we misuse his resources and how we fall short of what he expects from us. Today's confession gives us the words to ask God to forgive our sins and shortcomings, and words of comfort and forgiveness as God hears our confession and repentance.

**Leader:** Eternal and merciful God, you have loved us with a love beyond our understanding, and you have set us on paths of righteousness for your name's sake.

**People:** Yet we have strayed from your way; we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, through what we have done and what we have left undone.

**Leader:** We praise you and thank you that you chose to allow us to confess and repent of our sins again.

**People:** Grant us the grace to die daily to sin, and to rise daily to new life in Christ, who lives and reigns with you, and in whose name we pray. Amen.

\*ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Leader: In my anguish I cried to the Lord, and he answered by setting me free.  
The Lord is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation.

People: In Christ, God answers us and sets us free! In Christ, we are forgiven!  
Thanks be to God.

**Scripture/Sermon:** Before you come to worship, be sure to read John 3:1-17.  
The entire gospel comes to focus in this verse. True love is not static or self-centered; it reaches out and draws others in. God sets the pattern of true love here, the basis for all love relationships---if you love someone dearly, you are willing to give freely to the point of self-sacrifice. God paid dearly with the life of his Son, the highest price he could pay. Jesus accepted our punishment, paid the price for our sins, and then offered us the new life he bought for us. When we share the gospel with others, our love must be like his---willingly giving up our own comfort and security so that others might join us in receiving God's love.

**Closing Song** This final hymn ties together the thoughts of today---the blessing and benefits from Psalm 103 and Jesus, buying us with his precious blood from John 3:16. This is an amazing and joyful song and we should sing it as the apostle Paul directs in 1 Corinthians 14:15--"sing with the Spirit and with the understanding also"! In verse two "Ebenezer" comes from 1 Samuel 7:10-12 (a memorial to God's faithfulness). Jesus' love, sacrifice and redeeming love for us become the memorial stone, rock or "mount" on which we base our faith.

Vs1

Come, thou Fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing thy grace;  
Streams of mercy, never ceasing, call for songs of loudest praise.  
Teach me some melodious sonnet, sung by flaming tongues above;  
Praise his name---I'm fixed upon it---name of God's redeeming love.

Vs2

Here I raise my Ebenezer, hither by thy help I've come;  
And I hope, by thy good pleasure, safely to arrive at home.  
Jesus sought me when a stranger, wandering from the fold of God;  
He to rescue me from danger, bought me with his precious blood.

Vs3

O to grace how great a debtor daily I'm constrained to be!  
Let thy goodness, like a fetter, bind my wandering heart to thee:  
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love;  
Here's my heart, O, take and seal it; seal it for thy courts above.

*See You Sunday Morning in Worship!*