

FROM THE SERVANT GENERAL

ON WORSHIP (Part 3)

BLESSING GOD

God is a God who blesses. From the very start, God blessed His people. God blessed Adam and Eve (Gn 1:28), Noah (Gn 9:1), Abraham (Gn 12:2), and so on through the generations, to our very own time today. We look to God for His blessings, we implore Him to bless us, we rejoice whenever we experience His blessings.

Even when we bless each other, what do we say? We say “God bless you.” We do not say “I bless you.” Ministers might say “I bless you,” but it is a blessing “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” It is still God who blesses, with the minister as just an instrument.

Blessing God

But here is something striking. We can also bless God. In fact, we are told in the Bible to bless God. ¹

“Bless our God, you peoples” (Ps 66:8a)

“Come, bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord” (Ps 134:1a)

“Bless the Lord, my soul; all my being, bless his holy name! Bless the Lord, my soul” (Ps 103:1-2a)

Understand what the Bible is telling us: it is not just that we can be a blessing to God, but that we can actually bless God. It is not just God who blesses us, but we in turn can bless God as well. “It is we who bless the Lord, both now and forever.” (Ps 115:18)

Now it is right for us to praise God, to worship God, to thank God, to exult God. That is the proper relationship between a creature and the Creator, between the servant and the Master. But to bless God? What does this mean?² Isn’t a blessing imparted by the greater to the lesser, by the one higher placed to the one lower placed? How is it possible for us to bless God?

How to bless God

What does God bless us with? God blesses us with good things—with His grace, with His mercy, with His gifts. When we say to another “God bless you,” what do we desire for that person? We desire the good things of God—health, prosperity, protection,

¹ There are many other passages, not just in the Psalms (for example, Ps 16:7a, Ps 100:4b, Ps 104:1a), but also in Sirach (39:14c, 39:35, 43:11, 45:26a, 50:22a, 51:12b), Daniel (3:57-90), Tobit (13:15).

² The Catechism of the Catholic Church has this to say: “Blessing is a divine and life-giving action, the source of which is the Father; his blessing is both word and gift. When applied to man, the word ‘blessing’ means adoration, and surrender to his Creator in thanksgiving.” In this paper, we look to a deeper meaning of “blessing God.”

happiness, and so on. We desire that that person be able to live his life according to God's wonderful plan for him. At times we may be specific, as in "May God bless you with healing." But most of the time we might just say "God bless you."

So what does it mean if we bless God? God is the Almighty. God owns everything. Is there anything that God needs? Is there anything we can give God that He does not have? Is there anything we can add to God?

The answer is yes, there is. Now that is a very striking and provocative statement. What could we possibly have that God might want but not have?

The answer is: ourselves.

God created human beings, not because He was lonely or incomplete or in need of anything. God created human beings out of love, to share His life and to live eternally with Him in paradise. When they disobeyed and lost paradise, God continued to work for their restoration. Ultimately God sent His very own Son Jesus to suffer and die for His creatures so that they might be restored to Him, and again have the possibility of making it to paradise.

God desires His people and did not spare anything, including His own Son, to have them back. Though He was complete, He made Himself incomplete. After all His blessings, when His people still reject Him, God wonders with a plaintive cry: "O my people, what have I done to you, or how have I wearied you? Answer me!" (Mi 6:3).

So what God wants most but might not possess are His people! This is because God endowed people with free will and respects that free will. God will not impose His love on people. Thus they can reject Him.

So even with their salvation already won by Jesus on the cross, people still reject God. Such rejection grieves God. "But they rebelled, and grieved his holy spirit" (Is 63:10a).

Without His beloved people, then God, according to His own eternal plan, is not complete. Without the people that He loves, without His plan being accomplished, God is not blessed.

How then can God be blessed? This happens when people return to Him and live their lives according to His divine will, thus assuring their entry into eternal life with Him in heaven. This has been God's plan all along.

Blessing God and worship

Now when we turn our lives over to God, a vibrant expression of that is when we worship. It is right and it is expected that God's people will worship Him. When we worship God in Spirit and truth, then we manifest that we are indeed His people. When we are sincere in worship, we show that we are renewed in His Spirit, that we accept Jesus as Savior and Lord, that we are His disciples.

And so blessing God is very much connected with worship.

"Bless our God, you peoples; loudly sound his praise" (Ps 66:8)

"Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, bless his name" (Ps 96:1-2a)

“... in assemblies I will bless the Lord.” (Ps 26:12b)
“I will bless the Lord at all times; praise shall be always in my mouth.”
(Ps 34:2)

When we praise God in the assembly, if that is truly an expression of who we have become and how we have been restored to God, then we are blessing God.

Blessing God and evangelization

Now God created all human beings and want them all to live eternally with Him in heaven. Jesus died for all humanity. So God will be fully blessed when *all* the peoples turn back to Him.

“Your procession comes into view, O God, your procession into the holy place, my God and king. The singers go first, the harpists follow; in their midst girls sound the timbrels. In your choirs, bless God; bless the Lord, you from Israel’s assemblies. In the lead is Benjamin, few in number; there the princes of Judah, a large throng, the princes of Zebulun, the princes of Naphtali, too.” (Ps 68:25-28)

This is why we must evangelize, so that God will be fully blessed. We are to proclaim the good news of salvation in Jesus day after day among all peoples, so that all the earth will also turn to God, and manifest this in worship.

“Sing to the Lord, a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, bless his name; announce his salvation day after day. Tell God’s glory among the nations, among all peoples, God’s marvelous deeds.” (Ps 96:1-3)

This is why a community assembly with communal worship is part of a people’s preparation to continue with the work of evangelization. After their worship and assembly, God sends them forth to proclaim Christ to the society and world that they are returning to. ³

Blessing God in the assembly

When we pray over someone and invoke God’s blessings upon the person, we lift our hands and extend them, palms out, towards the person. In the same way, when we praise and worship, we lift up our hands to God. “Lift up your hands toward the sanctuary, and bless the Lord.” (Ps 134:2).

When we worship, Jesus is there, for where two or three are gathered together in his name, there he is in their midst (Mt 18:20). And where Jesus is, so too are the angels and saints.

³ This is the same with a Eucharistic celebration (Mass).

Thus it is a great blessing for us to worship. And it is a great incentive to us to bring all peoples to worship with us.

“Bless the Lord, all you angels, mighty in strength and attentive, obedient to every command. Bless the Lord, all you hosts, ministers who do God’s will. Bless the Lord, all creatures, everywhere in God’s domain. Bless the Lord, my soul!” (Ps 103:20-22)

Never forget: with the privilege to come before the Lord in worship, we are not the only ones who are blessed. The One we worship is blessed as well.

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