

**The Priest of our Worship  
The Priests of Creation**

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**1) Offering Us in Himself: The Priest of Our Worship**

As the eternal Son of God, our Lord has from before time been offering himself to his Father in perfect love. We might say he has ever been completely obedient, though the human implication of a hierarchy involved in obedience obscures the reality. The three co-equal persons of the Trinity give themselves to each other so absolutely that the most abject human obedience to another is pitifully shallow in comparison to the depths of such offering of one divine person to the other, and yet all of this is done not in servility but in total freedom. The very nature of the relationship between the eternal Son and the Father involves everlasting offering of one to the other. The incarnation, then, meant the entry into our time and space, even into our humanity, of this eternal offering of the Son to the Father. The Son enacted his love for his Father within our humanity, thus fulfilling the obedient response required of us as well as expressing the perichoretic union that had never been and can never be broken. So we must understand self-offering as part of the eternal person of the Son and as vital to our nature as human beings in relation to the Triune God. As he offers himself to his Father, as he has ever done from all eternity, the Son of God now offers his humanity—our humanity—for that is an everlasting part of who he is. He offers himself in the present as the one who has accomplished our salvation, who has united himself to us, and who remains constant toward us in that eternal identification of love. (Gerrit Scott Dawson, *Jesus Ascended*, London: T& T Clark; Phillipsburg, P& R, 2004, p. 129)

Hebrews 2: 10-13 Our Worship Leader

Such a passage transforms our understanding of worship, filling us with new layers of imagination as we visualize the unseen reality around us. The glorified, ascended, still incarnate Jesus is in the Holy Place, within the true tabernacle (Heb 8: 2) of which every earthly house of worship is at best a shadow. Yet in the Holy Spirit he is not removed from us. The Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus, and brings his presence to us in worship, most especially in the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments. And the Spirit

lifts us up, spiritually, in our worship to the throne of God where Jesus serves as our advocate, priest, intercessor and worship leader. Through the Spirit, then, the ascended Jesus comes to be in our midst and through the same Spirit we are brought in Christ our High Priest into the Father's welcoming presence.

So in worship, we may visualize Jesus standing in the midst of our sanctuary. His arms are outstretched and his head is raised to heaven. He has gathered us all and he is offering us to his Father even as he offers his praise. In our congregation, his congregation, Jesus sings to his Father: "Father here I am. Here with the children, the family you gave me. Father here I am! Within the gathered church I will lead your praise. To my brothers and sisters I will make you known. Father here I am!"

This means that in the midst of every sanctuary, Jesus is leading our praise. In the tiniest church in the remotest region to the grandest cathedral in the heart of the city, Jesus is worshipping his Father, bringing his brothers and sisters with him into the presence of God. For the Son of God who became man is still fully human, still in the flesh, still incarnate. As a man he worships God. He has blazed the way before us. He has pioneered in his own flesh the path. And he scoops us up, gathers us in his arms and presents us in praise to God the Father as those whom he has cleansed and redeemed and sanctified. All of that is going on in the midst of our sanctuary, when we are there, sitting some mornings like bumps on a log, sleepy, distracted, bored, confused, and waiting for lunch. We may call to worship the people with the astounding news that Jesus is here with outstretched arms declaring to us the name of God, and declaring to God the names of his brothers and sisters assembled.

The church on earth is allowed a share in this ministry of the ascended Jesus. For we have been invited to come along, not just as passive spectators, but as participants. God has made us to be storytellers, artists, musicians and preachers. It is given to the likes of ordinary people to raise the song, to paint the picture, to tell the tale, to bring forth into the world the news of the Son who gathers us up in his praise. So the Psalmist has declared, "Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise in the assembly of saints... Let the people of Zion be glad in their King... praise his name with dancing, and make music to him with tambourine and harp. For the Lord takes delight in his people" (Ps 149: 1-4). God loves to hear the praise of his Son. And he loves to hear our praise. Feeble as it may be, God loves to hear it. We have been granted the gift to make merry in the presence of the Father, to make music for the ears of the High King to adorn the heavenly court. We have been granted to give it our best effort, knowing that it is inadequate but that Jesus the worship leader lifts it up, cleanses it and makes it perfect.

Calvin beautifully summarizes this thought in relation to the priesthood of the ascended Jesus:

Christ now bears the office of priest, not only that by the eternal law of reconciliation he may render the Father favourable and propitious to us, but also admit us into this most honourable alliance. For we though in ourselves polluted, in him being priests (Rev. 1:6), offer ourselves and our all to God, and freely enter the heavenly sanctuary, so that the sacrifices of prayer and praise which we present are grateful and of sweet odour before him. To this effect are the words of Christ, "For their sakes I sanctify myself" (John 17:19), for being clothed with his holiness, inasmuch as he has devoted us to the Father with himself. (otherwise we were an abomination before him), we please him as if we were pure and clean, nay, even sacred. (Calvin, *Institutes*, 2. 15. 6)

Because Christ is our worship leader and the perfecter, not only of our faith but our worship, we are remarkably free now to come before God's presence in him, with singing, dancing, and great rejoicing. (Dawson, *Jesus Ascended*, pp. 135-8).

## **2) Gathering Praise: The Priests of Creation**

### **The *Te Deum* (We Praise Thee)**

#### **Acknowledging the Source**

*We praise thee, O God; we acknowledge thee to be the Lord.  
All the earth doth worship thee, the Father everlasting.*

#### **Calling to the Angelic Hosts**

*To thee all Angels cry aloud, the Heavens and all the Powers therein,  
To thee Cherubim and Seraphim continually do cry:  
Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabaoth,  
Heaven and earth are full of the majesty of thy glory.*

#### **Gathering Across Time**

*The glorious company of the apostles praise thee.  
The goodly fellowship of the prophets praise thee.  
The noble army of martyrs praise thee.*

*The holy Church throughout all the world doth acknowledge thee,  
The Father, of an infinite majesty,  
thine adorable, true and only Son,*

*also the Holy Ghost the Comforter.*

### **The Locus of All Adoration**

*Thou art the King of glory, O Christ,  
Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father.  
When thou tookest upon thee to deliver man,  
Thou didst humble thyself to be born of a Virgin  
When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death,  
Thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers.  
Thou sittest at the right hand of God, in the glory of the Father.  
We believe that thou shalt come to be our judge.*

*We therefore pray thee, help thy servants,  
Whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood.  
Make them to be numbered with thy saints,  
In glory everlasting. Amen.*