

Scripture Reading

A Reading from the Book of Prophet Daniel (*Daniel 3: 51-52, 57, 58, 62, 76, 82, 88*)

Then these three in the furnace with one voice sang, glorifying and blessing God: "Blessed are You, O Lord, the God of our ancestors, praiseworthy and exalted above all forever; and blessed is Your holy and glorious name, praiseworthy and exalted above all for all ages. Bless the Lord, all you works of the Lord, praise and exalt Him above all forever. Angels of the Lord, bless the Lord, praise and exalt Him above all forever. Sun and moon, bless the Lord; praise and exalt Him above all forever. Everything growing on earth, bless the Lord; praise and exalt Him above all forever. All you mortals, bless the Lord; praise and exalt Him above all forever. Hananiah, Azariah, Mishael, bless the Lord; praise and exalt Him above all forever. For He has delivered us from Sheol, and saved us from the power of death; He has freed us from the raging flame and delivered us from the fire. The Word of the Lord. R. Thanks be to God.

Reflection – The act of thanking and praising God uplifts our spirit and soul like no other

God is absolutely worthy of our praise. We cannot make God greater through our praise but we can return the glory that is His, make ourselves holier and be drawn closer to the Lord. Wonderful things happen when we praise God. In the case of Prophet Daniel's three young friends (cf. Daniel 3), their praise and steadfast faith in God in the midst of a great trial led to the special grace given to King Nebuchadnezzar to open his eyes to see the angel of the Lord in the furnace together with the three young men, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and to open his hardened heart to conversion to the true God.

God demands our thanks and praise (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:18). All of God's created things give praise and glory to Him through what they do in accordance to the Divine Will. The birds sing their note of praise placed in their throats by God. The flowers praise God by blooming and giving off scent. The mountains reflect God's glory by towering majestically into the clouds. All of God's creation gives praise and glory to God except His human children, many of whom have no time for God. When Jesus was journeying into Jerusalem with His disciples, the multitude broke into exaltation and praise of God. When the Pharisees asked Jesus to stop them, He replied, "I tell you, if they keep silent, the stones will cry out!" (cf. Luke 19:40). What shame and confusion we will be thrown into when the stones start praising God on our behalf because we fail to do so!

God's works and ways demand our praise. *Let everything that has breath give praise to the Lord (Psalm 150:6).* Out of love, God created man in His own image. Like Him, we have an intellect to think and reason. Like Him, we have a heart to receive love and to give love. Like Him, we have a free will. Like Him, we last forever! *I praise You, because I am wonderfully made; wonderful are Your works! (Psalm 139:14).* We were made for His loving, grand, divine purpose. To know Him, love Him and serve Him. To be members of His family as His adopted sons and daughters in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son. To share His eternal joys and gladness in His glorious Kingdom where "eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, and what has not entered the human heart, what God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Corinthians 2:9).

God's love and mercy demand our praise. *For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but might have eternal life (John 3:16).* God's work of creation is only overshadowed by His work of redemption. Proving His all-consuming love for His sinful human children beyond all doubt, God the Father sent Jesus, His only begotten Son to be a perfect, blemish-free sin offering in order that the precious Blood of His Son may be shed to bring all His human children to their original holiness so that they are fit to enter the gates of His glorious Kingdom. Like a good father, God is totally engrossed with His children. He knows even the number of hairs on our head (cf. Matthew 10:30). He is always thinking about us (cf. Psalm 139:17). His paternal divine Heart shares all our joys and sorrows (cf. Psalm 56:8).

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, You are exalted above all. I was made to render You glory and praise. *My soul yearns and pines for the courts of the Lord. My heart and flesh cry out for the living God (Psalm 84:3).* The greatest joy of my soul is to render praise and glory due to You alone, my Highest Good. When I praise You, I put myself in my rightful place in Your holy presence. I am not full of myself with a hardened heart but am full of God, with an open heart to receive His divine graces. My body also dwells secure (cf. Psalm 16:9). Gloom is chased away, my entire being is in perfect harmony when my heart, mind, soul and spirit are uplifted in praise of God (cf. Psalm 8:2, Isaiah 61:3). Like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, let me call all of God's creation to amplify my praise of God. May the nine choirs of angels standing before the throne of God amplify my praise mightily throughout the heavens. Mary, Mother of Salvation, give me the grace to thank and praise God always in everything I think, say or do. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus. www.twohearts.hk