

### Luther on Glorifying God

This confirms our statement that man attains this solely through the faith which clings to Christ, and that no works of ours or of other men or saints shall enjoy this honor and glory. But this does not mean that we should not perform good works. No, it means that in order to obtain mercy before God and eternal life **we must first have only this Christ through faith**; and then **we must also do good works and demonstrate our love**. But this distinction must be scrupulously observed: we dare not attribute to our works and to our life the power and the merit of bringing us to the Father; **we must dedicate them to the purpose of glorifying God here on earth, of improving the lot of our neighbor, and of helping everyone**.

LW v.24, p.

No, **the Gospel is a proclamation about the praise, glory, and honor of God**. And it directs us to praise and glorify God as well, for God wants us to praise and laud Him and to do what pleases Him. Thus when we seek first God's honor and His kingdom (Matt. 6:33), He, in turn, offers to grant us not only this temporal life with all its needs but eternal life as well. John 6:26, LW v. 23

*Isaiah 61:4 That they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord.* ...Here he describes a garden that is planted by God and continues to grow. Its trees, however, are trees of righteousness. All the trees of this garden are called righteous. In the world there are also very large trees like the cedars, but they are trees of unrighteousness and iniquity. But in this garden they will be righteous, planted by God. It follows therefore that a Christian does not just come into being, but he is planted and produced by the work of God. Christ is the gardener. Therefore **a Christian is a divine work and a planting of God**. For through the Word he is uprooted from the world and transplanted into this garden and watered. In this way the prophet comforts himself and sets before himself **Christianity as a most beautiful garden**, as if to say, "Oh, what a lovely garden this will be where Christ will be the gardener. All the godly will be trees of righteousness and peace."

*That He may be glorified.* As stated above: "Your people are all the righteous, so that You may be glorified." **This is our work, to praise and give thanks to God**, as if to say, "In this garden there will be nothing, no ceremonies of the Law and no sacrifices, except a single fruit from the trees, **glorification, praise, and thanks-giving**." The letters will stand on all the leaves. What lovely trees they are, having "thanksgiving" imprinted on them!

4. *They shall build up*, that is, not for themselves, but to be of service to others also. All this we had earlier. He is saying that **Christians are not only such as praise God, but they will also produce others and be concerned about their enlightenment and conversion. These are the two tasks of the Christians, to glorify God and to convert others. He who converts an ungodly man brings the best sacrifice, not offering an ox but a living sacrifice. This is the sum of the prophets, to attribute to the Christian these two sacrifices: to praise God and to convert sinners, instead of all the endless ceremonies of the Law.**

Isaiah 61:4 LW v.17

Nevertheless Christians do not exercise their priestly sacrifice for the purpose of obtaining forgiveness of sins, either for themselves or for others. They obtain forgiveness of sins only through the sacrifice of Christ. It alone is valid for the reconciliation of all men with God. **The sacrifices of Christians exist for the purpose of honoring and glorifying God**. St. Paul speaks of such sacrifices in Romans 12:1: "I appeal to you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God,

to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.” **The cross and suffering produce this kind of sacrifice; for if anyone will confess Christ, he must risk his property, honor, body, and life.** Hence if we are deprived of them because of our confession, then our body and life, possessions and honor, are truly sacrificed to God. These are genuine sacrifices; they please God; they are a sweet savor to Him, because they are made to the praise and glory of God and us a good example for others.

Such sacrifices were rigorously practiced and urged at the time of the dear martyrs. They paid for their confession of Christ with their bodies and lives. Nor was this done only by the bishops and preachers, who led the others; but young children and virgins did the same thing. For example, St. Agnes was a maid thirteen years old. All these have been true priests and priestesses, for they sacrificed their bodies. **They honored God by their service and obedience and strengthened and comforted others by their example.** In accordance with this, the life, activity, and suffering of Christians are genuinely holy and God pleasing sacrifices, provided that they are performed in the faith that we have forgiveness of sins and please God because of His sacrifice, so that thereby God is praised and others are improved and induced to praise and thank God, too.

**The prayers of Christians** accompany such sacrifices because they are driven to pray in view of their various sufferings and afflictions. However, they do not base these prayers upon themselves nor upon their merit, but upon Christ the Mediator. He presents their prayers before God, and they become acceptable and are heard for His sake.

This is the great honor which belongs to Christians: He has anointed us and made us worthy, so that we may appear before God in prayer. **Those who are not Christians can neither teach nor pray nor sacrifice rightly**, no matter how presumptuous and boastful they may be about trying to teach all the world to sacrifice, chatter, sing, and groan in the churches day and night. They do not have this Mediator and High Priest. **Everything must have its source in Him. Only through Him does anything avail in the sight of God. But if, for example, a young child who is baptized prays the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord’s Prayer each morning or evening at the table, it is a true prayer; and God hears him. Such a child prays as a Christian and a priest, born in Baptism and ordained by Christ.**

Every Christian has and practices such priestly works. But above these activities is **the communal office of public teaching**. For this preachers and pastors are necessary. This office cannot be attended to by all the members of a congregation. Neither is it fitting that each household do its own baptizing and celebrating of the Sacrament. Hence it is necessary to select and ordain those who can preach and teach, who study the Scriptures, and who are able to defend them. They deal with the Sacraments by the authority of the congregation, so that it is possible to know who is baptized and everything is done in an orderly fashion. If everyone were to preach to his neighbor or if they did things for one another without orderly procedure, it would take a long time indeed to establish a congregation. Such functions, however, do not pertain to the priesthood as such but belong to the public office which is performed in behalf of all those who are priests, that is, Christians. But this is more than enough on this. Let us proceed to the next verse of the psalm. Psalm 110:5, p. LW v. 13

Deut 4:6. *For that will be your wisdom.*

The third item stems from their superiority and worth over all nations, which follows herewith. “For those who honor Me,” He says (1 Sam. 2:30), “I shall honor them.” If they **glorified God by keeping those statutes and laws**, it would come to pass that the Lord, in turn,

would glorify them, when a reputation for holiness, both of the laws themselves and of the people keeping them, would spread throughout the world and thereby very many would be turned to the true God. And thus even by this glory, by which God would glorify them among the peoples, God Himself would be more glorified. **So it is that all the works of God by which He glorifies His saints serve the godless, so that they, too, may be converted.** This is the love which applies and receives everything we have for the advantage of one's neighbor.

**Wisdom and understanding, I believe, differ from each other in this way: wisdom pertains to the knowledge of things, understanding to judgment. He is wise who knows the relation of faith and religion to God and the relation of law and love to one's neighbor. He, however, has understanding who in both respects is sagacious, prudent, and cautious, so that he proceeds properly in them and is led astray by no deception—in German: *weis und klug*.<sup>14</sup>**

But ponder this still more, with how few words Moses rejects and condemns the entire wisdom and knowledge of men, and shows that the wisdom and understanding of the people of God does not consist of those sharp speculations of the sophists or those magnificent provisions of princes and wise men but of **the knowledge and keeping of the Law of God**. “This [he says] is your wisdom and understanding.” Let someone else, therefore, be wise in governing the substance of the world (since they are also wise to do evil). The people of God should seek wisdom nowhere or know anything except from the Law of its God, where it will find richly and happily how it should conduct itself toward God and men in prosperity and adversity, in peace and war. **Wisdom gained anywhere else is nothing but stupidity before God.** Therefore by this word Moses makes all men, with all their wisdom and prudence, fools in the sight of God. DEut 4:6 . LW v 9

2 Timothy 3:14-15 But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, 15and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able **to make you wise** for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Colossians 3:9-11 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, 10and have put on **the new man who is renewed in knowledge** according to the image of Him who created him, 11where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.

Ephesians 4:21-24 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: 22that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, 23and **be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.**

John 14:7 “If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him.”