

Breakthrough Praise
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Today is the last sermon in our Breakthrough series. We've looked at many keys to breakthrough in this series – but one of the main keys is praise - so I'm speaking on Breakthrough Praise.

Today is Palm Sunday where we celebrate Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem the week before His crucifixion and resurrection. His presence resulted in an outpouring of praise and worship.

Matthew 21:1-17 talks about what happened when Jesus entered Jerusalem that day.

A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?" The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."

After this Jesus went to the temple and drove out the money changers. Then He healed the sick.

But when the chief priests and the teachers of the law saw the wonderful things he did and the children shouting in the temple area, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they were indignant. "Do you hear what these children are saying?" they asked him. "Yes," replied Jesus, "have you never read, 'From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise'?"

Notice that when Jesus shows up things happen!
 Some things get turned over and some things get put right.
 Some people get upset and some people get healed.
 Some people praise and some people put it down.
 Some people experienced breakdown and some experienced breakthrough!
 All those people saw the same Jesus – but they all had a different experience of His presence! It all depended on their perspective.

You see – your perspective of God will either result in praise or rage. And if you choose praise it will lead to breakthrough but if you choose rage it will lead to breakdown!

We all need breakthroughs - our church and our nation need breakthroughs - and breakthroughs happen in an atmosphere of praise. We are believing for another triumphal entry of Christ on earth in the form of revival and an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on our nation.

That too will be accompanied by an outpouring of praise and worship. I want you to understand that praise releases supernatural power that alters every realm – physical, spiritual and even societal.

Our praise and God's presence always go together. One always precedes the other. Simply put – when our praises go up, God's glory comes down! And when Jesus shows up – supernatural things happen! Breakthrough happens!

But what I want you to understand today is that praise precedes breakthrough and praise results in breakthrough! Psalm 67:5-7 says

May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you. Then the land will yield its increase, and God, our God, will bless us. God will bless us, and all the ends of the earth will fear Him.

Notice the progression here. What comes first? Praise or increase? Praise or blessing? Praise or breakthrough? Praise comes first – and *THEN* – the earth yields its increase.

So – when we praise God – we can expect things to happen. That's because:

1. Praise Ushers in God's Manifest Presence

This happened when Solomon dedicated the temple to the Lord. 2 Chronicles 5:13-14 says

The trumpeters and singers joined in unison, as with one voice, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments, they raised their voices in praise to the Lord and sang: "He is good; his love endures forever." Then the temple of the Lord was filled with a cloud, and the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the temple of God.

Notice that praise preceded God's presence. And what was this praise like? It was united in one voice. And that voice of praise was to be heard! Praise starts in your heart – but it doesn't stay there! Jesus said in John 4:23-24

Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and His worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.

True worship starts in your heart but it is expressed in truth – in an appropriately Biblical manner. In the Bible, praise is almost always something that can be seen and heard because physical actions are a direct representation of the condition of the heart. Jesus said in Luke 6:45

For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.

In other words – what’s in your heart will flow out of your mouth! If there is no praise coming out of your mouth – what does that say about what is in your heart?

Speaking praise is just one of many biblical ways to praise God— including singing, shouting, dancing, lifting or clapping our hands. According to Scripture, these various expressions of praise please God Lord and bring blessing to God. Praise is not about what pleases you – but what pleases God!

Many people never experience breakthroughs in life because they never break through whatever is holding them back from praising God. They don’t sing or clap or shout and they wonder why they’re stuck. They don’t praise and they wonder why they don’t experience the presence of God. Psalm 89:15 says

Blessed are the people who know the joyful shout. They walk, O Lord, in the light of Your presence.

Again – we see that praise results in God’s presence. Praise transports us into the realm of the supernatural power of God.

And when God hears the sound of united praise it attracts His attention. In other words, God says, “When you praise, I’ll show up.” That’s true in church and it’s true in everyday life.

We saw that in the story of the triumphal entry of Christ into Jerusalem. Praise ushered in the presence of Jesus Christ. We need to learn from that and so we can have a triumphal entry of Jesus Christ into our lives today. We all have areas where we need the presence and power of God to invade our lives. We have sicknesses, weaknesses, sins, addictions, strongholds – all of these are areas where we need to proclaim the victory of Jesus Christ.

We need His triumph in our marriages – families – work – finances – health. We need His victory every minute of every day of our lives. The question is: How do we attract God to our situation? What is God looking for? Psalm 22:3 says

But You are holy, You Who inhabits the praises of Israel.

God dwells in praise. So whenever you need God in a situation, you need to begin to praise Him. He’s looking for praise. It gets His attention.

We all need breakthroughs - and to experience those breakthroughs – we need breakthrough praise!

2. Praise Wins Spiritual Battles for Breakthrough

When Jehoshaphat was king – 2 nations came to attack Israel. The people began to pray and God gave a prophetic word through a prophet.

2 Chronicles 20:21-22 says

Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the Lord and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying: "Give thanks to the Lord, for his love endures forever." As they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated.

We see here that praise precedes victory. Remember in the story of the triumphal entry – Jesus said *From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise.* He's quoting Psalm 8:2 and the whole verse says:

From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.

He did not say, out of the mouths of mature Christians, strong believers, or wise leaders I have ordained praise. Who does the power of breakthrough praise come through? Out of the mouths of babes and nursing infants.

A nursing infant has absolutely no power or strength. None. They are helpless and can do nothing for themselves. Jesus said – it's out of that kind of weakness and helplessness that I have ordained praise that silences the enemy.

It's not our strength that defeats the enemy.

It's not our wisdom or goodness that defeats the enemy.

In fact, IT'S NOT ABOUT US AT ALL!

It's all about Jesus – who already defeated the enemy.

Through praise we enforce the victory that Christ already won.

Praise is a declaration of faith in the triumph of Jesus Christ.

Praise is a demonstration of faith in God's supernatural power.

Instead of focusing all the time on that tough situation, on that mountain, on the devil - **START TO PRAISE GOD!**

Praise is a way to wage spiritual warfare.

Praise silences the enemy!

Praise also binds the enemy!

Psalm 149:6-9 says

May the high praises of God be in their mouths and a double-edged sword in their hands... to bind their kings with fetters, their nobles with shackles of iron, to carry out the sentence written against them. This is the glory of all His saints.

Remember – our warfare is not against flesh and blood. There are demonic strongholds that take the high places in our lives and in our nation. The way to bring down a high place is with high praise! Not low praise or little praise - But high praise!

The main Hebrew word for praise is Halal – the root word of Hallelujah. Halal means to celebrate with exuberant, loud boasting in the LORD! That is breakthrough praise.

We usually think God moves in response to strong people or wise people or important people. But look what 1 Corinthians 1:27-31 says:

God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things - and the things that are not - to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before Him.

It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God-that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."

God is not looking for strong people – wise people – or influential people.

God is not looking for people who boast in themselves.

God is looking for praisers who will boast in Him.

God is looking for people who know they are weak and He is strong.

God is looking for people who know they are foolish and He is wise.

God is looking for people who will put no trust in themselves and who will put all their trust in Him.

God is looking for praisers.

3 – Praise releases burdens that hinder breakthroughs

There are people here today carrying heavy burdens. You're living with a spirit of heaviness. This is not necessarily a demonic spirit – but it means your heart is heavy. This weight seems to bear down on you wherever you go.

In one of his first sermons, Jesus read Isaiah 61:1-2

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord...

Verse 3 goes on to say

To comfort those who mourn in Zion, To give them beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; That they may be called trees of righteousness, The planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.

Notice that we get strong like a tree planted by the Lord and God gets glorified when we put on a garment of praise for a spirit of heaviness. In other words, “exchange your burden for praise.” I’ve had times when I’ve had to make this exchange.

I remember our first service at the YMCA on Palm Sunday, 2002. We were getting ready to have our first big outreach on the next Sunday, which was Easter. We spent thousands of dollars getting ready, buying equipment and sending a mailing to the community.

We were getting ready to start the service and noticed a YMCA employee and some friends were in the weight room working out. We asked them to stop since we were getting ready to start church. They got an attitude and called the manager. He got on the phone very angry and said he did not want us to meet there anymore. Here we were - faced with the possibility of the first service at the Y also being the last service at the Y.

All this happened right before the service began. We felt like we had been kicked in the stomach. Only Deb and I and a couple of others knew about it. We were faced with a choice. Either let it affect our attitude or press through and offer up a sacrifice of praise. Either let it get us down or lead us to lift Jesus up.

We did the latter – we made the choice to rejoice. We pressed through and worshipped not knowing whether or not we would have a place to meet the next week. We worshipped the God who is worthy of praise no matter where we meet.

And you know what happened?

In the middle of praise and worship a peace flooded my heart. I just knew everything was going to be all right. And you know what - it was.

I called the manager the next day and he was very apologetic. He said, “I’m sorry, I don’t know what got into me. I still want you to meet here.” And we met there for a year and grew from 30 people to 100.

I believe a breakthrough happened when we put on a garment of praise for a spirit of heaviness! It released the peace of God into our hearts and it released the power of God into a difficult circumstance. Breakthrough comes when we praise God even when we’re burdened.

4. Praise Sets Us Free

Many of us are bound up in sin or addictions or life-controlling problems like fear, lust, pride or anger. Those things are like chains on our minds and our lives and they keep us bound up and held back in life.

In Acts 16 Paul and Silas were beaten and thrown into prison for preaching about Jesus. Acts 16:25-26 says

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose.

The main thing I want you to see from this is that the circumstances of life should be irrelevant in our determination to praise God.

When Paul and Silas were thrown into a prison cell they began to pray and sing to God. Their hearts were in the right place. They were already free before they were physically set free! They were free to offer God breakthrough praise and that led to a breakout from prison.

There is power in praise! It leads to a breakthrough, it sets us free. So, do not let your degree of praise be determined by your changing circumstances but by the consistent, unchanging character of God.

Whatever the prison may be that you find yourself in today...

- A business enterprise you should never have taken on.
- A relationship you should never have entered into.
- Some habit or addiction

Breakthrough praise will set you free!

On Palm Sunday some religious leaders tried to stop people's praise. In Luke 19:40 *Jesus answered and said to them, "I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out."*

Jesus taught us that He will be praised one way or another.

We were created to praise God and if we don't, He'll create something else to praise Him!

We are commanded to praise God and if we don't He'll command something else to praise Him!

I don't know about you – but I refuse to allow a rock to do my praising!

I refuse to offer my Lord and Savior wimpy worship or patty-cake praise!

We all need God to show up in our lives and our families today.

We all need breakthroughs so we all need to offer God breakthrough praise!

We must choose praise no matter what!

No person is going to take my place of praise!

No circumstance is going to take away my praise!

No devil in hell is going to steal my praise!

In all things I will give thanks.

I choose to rejoice in the Lord no matter what because He is always worthy of praise!

Praise silences the enemy and invites God into our situation.

Praise releases the power of God to work on our behalf.

Praise releases the burdens and bondages that hinder our breakthrough!

Can you offer God some breakthrough praise this morning?

Can you give Him glory for who He is? King of Kings! Lord of Lords!

Alpha and Omega! Beginning and End! Savior! Healer! Provider! Deliverer!