

An abstract graphic featuring a dark background with several horizontal lines in shades of blue and green. On the right side, these lines curve upwards and outwards, creating a sense of depth and movement. The word "HIGHER" is written in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters across the middle of the graphic.

HIGHER

Sermon Growth Guide

May 21, 2023

No Other



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Higher - "No Other"

1 Chronicles 16:23-33

Key Verse: 1 Chronicles 16:25 "For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods."

Big Idea: Though God is worthy of our praise, we all too often fail to worthy in His name.

Foundations

The human heart has a problem, a sickness. At our core, under the fall, our hearts are more turned into ourselves than anything else. Instead of our natural state being that of, as the hymn goes, "hearts unfolding like flowers before thee," we struggle constantly with greed and a core, bent desire to be our own god.

John Calvin sums it up well, "The human heart is a perpetual idol factory." (John Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.11.8)

Our key verse today reads "For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods" (1 Chronicles 16:25). There's a working assumption here that humanity constantly wrestles with "gods," with idols, with idolatry.

The first of the Ten Commandments states that we ought not have any gods before the one, true God. The Ten Commandments conclude with a clear call to not covet. These bookend commandments, in many ways, sum up the entire Christian moral code. In the positive, we have the Great Commandment from Christ, to love God and neighbor.

As you circle up this week, leave time for vulnerable acknowledgement about where you are on, let's coin a phrase, *the covet scale*. Be honest with yourself and your Life Group about where this call to submit to the total Lordship of Christ hits you square. Together, foster an environment of formation through prayer and submission to Scripture.

Understanding God's Word

Together, read 1 Chronicles 16:23-33.

Identify the verbs in this week's passage that seem the most uncommon in today's vernacular and discuss their true meaning.

What reason for giving glory to the Lord does the passage offer?

Remind one another of the context of 1 Chronicles 16:23-33. What is going on in this larger section of 1 Chronicles?

Applying God's Word

Though God is worthy of our praise, we all too often fail to worthy in His name.

Identify in your own life where you worthy in something else instead of God. Name it. Own it. With your Life Group, consider a step you can take, in the Spirit's power, to smash an idol in your life and **Lift God Higher**, the main crux of our whole sermon series.

Witnessing God's Word

When outsiders see your life, what do they see you ascribing worth to the most? Is there alignment, integrity, to your answer here with how God is calling you to live? What's your next step in bringing the core of your witness into greater alignment? Additionally, spend time praising God for the amazing growth you do see in your life in how Father God has already rescued your heart's affections.

The human heart has a problem. I know, some of you thinking, “just one?” I’m not talking about the physical heart. I’m not talking about the pacemakers in the room this morning or the triple bypass surgeries scheduled at Memorial and Penrose this week! The human heart has a problem: the core of who we are is sick. Our main idea this morning is this: Though God is worthy of our praise, we all too often fail to worthy in His name. Here’s a two-part big idea. Part one, God is worthy of our praise, so let’s adore Him. Part two, we all too often fail to worthy in His name, so we need to burn the idols that have gotten built up in our hearts. Our hearts are designed by God to magnify the Lord, but so often we find ourselves magnifying nothing much more than our own self-centered interests. The human heart has a problem.

Quick story: If you come to my house (which has three little kids and one on the way!) and bring a new shiny toy, there are three things that are bound to happen. First, excitement. My three boys (1, 3, 5) will unpackage said new toy, hold it up to the light, and play with it. Guaranteed. Second, some form of fight will ensue. “My turn.” “Give me that.” And my favorite, “that’s mine!” The third thing that happens every time is that the toy moves, degree by degree, toward the back of the closet. The next toy arrives, something else appears more sparkly, whatever the reason and whatever the timeline, the felt warmth of said new treasure fades with time.

Now, come on, Thornton boys may be Thornton boys—and God bless Thornton boys, but this pattern: “O wow! Mine! Moving on...” is not isolated to my children. This cycle marked by self-interest and disillusionment is seen across the human race. It’s like we’re wired to behold something or Someone, Someone completely other and worthy, and every time we see something sparkly our hearts jump, turn inward, and move on—restlessly searching for that which is truly unique and worthy of our full attention.

Now, fading warmth toward last year’s Hot Wheels car is one thing, but it’s another thing altogether when one’s warmth toward Christ grows cold. Some things in life are meant to be temporary. Some things in life are eternal. The person of Christ is of eternal worth and ought to register in our hearts as eternally unique and worthy. If you want wisdom, you need to be able to rightly distinguish between the temporal and the eternal. One refrain throughout this series is, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Proverbs 9:10). Listen closely, our souls are in turmoil until we rightly order our affections; we need to know what the Lord

has done so that our hearts can respond to the greatest of realities.

Listen to how King David’s heart responds in verses 23 and 24. The Ark of the Covenant has arrived in Jerusalem and it’s time to celebrate. “Sing to the Lord, all the earth; proclaim his salvation day after day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples.” There’s a pattern presented to us here, the pattern of continuously singing Kingdom praise for all the Lord has done and who He is at His core, loving and faithful. Sing to the Lord! Something marvelous has taken place! Salvation belongs to the Lord! The Lord has made a way! The Lord has delivered His people from death and established for them life!

Our main idea this morning is this: though God is worthy of our praise, we all too often fail to worthy in His name. The first half of this big idea goes like this: our Scripture gives us the clear application that we ought to live in the excitement of Kingdom praise, worshiping the Lord as totally unique and totally worthy of our full attention and adoration. We ought to live every moment of our lives with a Kingdom praise mindset. What is a Kingdom praise mindset? Magnifying God for who He is, not what we might get from Him. I wonder if today is the day that your heart turns even more toward rightly adoring King Jesus. What does this look like? Hear verses 27–29, and your heart begins to overflow with naming the beauty of the Living God: “Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and joy are in his dwelling place. Ascribe to the Lord, all you families of nations, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering and come before him. Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness.” This is what it feels like when your affections are rightly ordered, rejoicing that the Lord reigns and that there is no other god like the living God. What do you do when you’ve been encountered by the living God? You worship Him! You ascribe to Him worth! Ascribe is a funny word to me. It means to give, to glory, to be in conversation saying, “Come on!” Come on, the Lord is strong! (Don’t you agree?!) The Lord works salvation! Don’t you know God is worthy?! Don’t you know splendor and majesty mark my God? Come on, give Him credit! His holiness is completely other, there is no one like our God! There is **No Other!**

Consider the language in our own worship this morning, which echoes this “Come on!” ascribing language. In the Sanctuary this morning, we’re singing the lyrics of “Come, Christians Join to Sing” and “Ascribe to the Lord” and “Behold Our God.” Come. Ascribe. Behold. In the Worship Center, we’re singing,

“Come, Magnify the Lord with Me” and “Come on my soul, don’t you give up on me... get up and praise the Lord!” Are you tracking with me? The human heart is wired for worship and you and I will be completely restless until we are all-in on magnifying the Lord. Why? Because we are designed to lift God higher, above all, zero contestation. This morning, I’m inviting you to take a step in lifting God above everything else in your life. Zero contestation. We’re going to smash some idols today in the power of the Spirit, so get ready.

Twice now in this song here in 1 Chronicles 16 we’ve seen and have been instructed to “proclaim his salvation.” Verse 23: “Sing to the Lord, all the earth; proclaim his salvation day after day.” “Proclaim” is coming to us from the Hebrew “bāšār.” This verb is seen often in war language. After victory has been won, the enemy has been defeated, a herald is given the command to go throughout the land to “bāšār” the victory, proclaim the end of battle and the establishment of peace. “Sing to the Lord, all the earth; proclaim his salvation day after day.”

There’s a great illustration for the idea of proclamation that I heard in church one time. In the mid-19th century, The Locomotive Act is passed in Scotland. The Locomotive Act prohibits trains from moving faster than 12 mph and weighing more than 12 tons. You can imagine the scene. New technology. Dangerous technology. You’re going to do what? Power that 12-ton monster through the village where my kids run about? Insanity. Locomotive Act. Then the decision is made that 12 mph is too fast, so in 1865 we get the Red Flag Act. From 12 mph, we go down to 2 mph. Additionally, we’re going to hire a young boy to walk 60 yards ahead of the train and wave a red flag. Can you see yourself as the boy? Train coming! Watch out! Come on, people, get off the tracks! Behold, the train is just around the bend! Proclamation. “Bāšār.” “Sing to the Lord, all the earth; proclaim His salvation day after day.”

Church, the life you and I are invited into is the “bāšār” life. It should be of no secret whatsoever as we live and move and have our being what our life’s message communicates.

The Lord reigns! Get out your red flag, church! Wave it about in your coming and going. Verse 31: “Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let them say among the nations, ‘The Lord reigns!’” Because the people of God are living their lives worthy of the gospel, living “bāšār” lives, lives of proclamation, lives as an assembly of heralds across the earth numbering in the millions today sent out by the King of Kings to declare that the victory has been won, let the

heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad! The word goes forth, the Lord reigns! “Let the sea resound, and all that is in it; let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them! Let the trees of the forest sing, let them sing for joy before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth.” (v. 32-33)

O, may that be our lives, church. Walking about in such a way—our hearts tuned to the salvation of God in such a way—awesomely aware of the inbreaking salvation of God, the grace of God in Jesus Christ, that our very bones cannot keep from singing, “Sea, resound! Fish, dance! Fields of wheat and barley, grow! Mountains of Colorado, lift up your arms! Valleys of the earth, bow down before the Lord, worship in the splendor of His holiness. For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; He comes to judge the earth. Friends, it’s not a 12-ton train behind you and me. No, no. That which we proclaim is the Lord God Almighty who was, and is, and is to come. The Holy One of Israel. Not a 12-ton piece of metal, but the one eternally holy and endlessly powerful God who comes to judge the earth.

Is God’s judging of the earth a place of comfort to you or discomfort? Joy or confusion? Gladness or anger? Delight or embitterment? Our main idea this morning is this: though God is worthy of our praise, we all too often fail to worthy in His name. Part two: We all too often fail to worthy in His name. Verses 25 and 26: “For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the Lord made the heavens.” Holy God, there is no other. There is no one like God. There is no other. He alone laid the foundations of the earth. He alone is holy. He alone is able to work salvation throughout the earth. He alone can make a way for sinners to be cleansed from all unrighteousness. God alone. No other. Acts 4:12: “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”

God’s gift to us in Christ is the most precious thing we possess, yet so often we treat it like any of our other possessions. Friends, we must lift God **Higher**. We must come to a place of continuously affirming, “For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the Lord made the heavens” (v. 26) We can make an idol out of anything, can’t we? The human heart has a problem. We’re created to be children of the most high God, yet we find ourselves, our allegiances, in total rebellion against the Lordship of Christ.

Here’s my paraphrase to what C.S. Lewis says about humanity’s rebellion against God, “... people behave as if they belong to themselves.

But we are not simply imperfect creatures in need of improvement, we are rebels who must lay down our arms.” (C.S. Lewis, *The Case for Christianity*, 48-49). John Calvin gets to the heart of the matter a little quicker: “The human heart is a perpetual idol factory.” (John Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.11.8) To lift God **Higher**, it must become our tradecraft to identify and dismantle the idols of our lives—and this with the leading and power of the Holy Spirit. For it is “Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,” says the Lord Almighty” (Zechariah 4:6).

This week, Presbyterian minister Tim Keller passed away. So many of our lives have been impacted by the way God worked through Tim Keller’s life, writing, and preaching. In the tribute article found on the homepage of *Christianity Today*, not six sentences into the article, the writer remarks, “...a frequent theme throughout his preaching and teaching was idolatry. Keller maintained that people are broken and they know that. But they haven’t grasped that only Jesus can really fix them. Only God’s grace can satisfy their deepest longings. At his church in Manhattan, Keller told the nation’s cultural elites that they worshiped false gods.”

How can we honestly lift God higher and say “there is no other god like our God” if we do not fully surrender the throne of our heart to the total Lordship of Christ and allow the Spirit to empower us to cast down our idols? I don’t know what idols you might be able to identify in your own heart, but maybe you relate to some of the idols that wage war for my own attention:

Time. We say, “My time is my own. My desires tell me what is right. I should direct my steps according to what I most enjoy.” God says, “You are not your own; you have been redeemed at a great cost. My Word instructs you in what is righteous. Direct your steps within the path I have established for you; therein is your joy.”

Money. We say, “My money is mine! I use my money how I want. Hands off my money.” God says, “Every good and perfect gift comes down to you from me. Honor me with your wealth. Live a generous life. Don’t let Satan have a foothold in your heart through a life of closed fists. I am your provider and I love you.”

Relationships. We say, “I cultivate friendships with people I like. I may not express it like this, but really at the end of the day my relationships serve me. I like how my friends make me feel.” God says, “I love providing friendship for comfort and maturity. But don’t build relationships to serve yourself. Build deep relationships to see the world made new. Build relationships like builders build bridges. Let the church’s relationships build bridges

around the city. Practice the Kingdom life in your relationships by pouring into, opening up, forgiving, and serving. Love indiscriminately as I have loved you.”

Worship. We say, “I honor God on my terms and on my schedule and with the church that I like the best.” God says, “You must have no other gods before me. I am worthy of your full focus. Your heart was made to proclaim my name and my salvation. True worship will always require sacrifice.”

I think in all of these areas the crux of the conversation centers on control. Am I lord of my time, money, relationships, and worship or is Christ Lord of all? Abraham Kuyper is extensively quoted as saying, “There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, ‘Mine!’”

I’d like to circle back to earlier when I was sharing with you at the beginning what will happen when you bring a new toy over to my house. You know, I misled you a little, and I apologize. Call it oversimplification when I said that my kids are always turning to the next thing. That’s not fair and that also does not magnify the Lord for how He is teaching us as a family to worship Him and love each other and love the world. The human heart has a problem for sure, but the human heart is also being made new in Christ Jesus.

I’m holding in my hand my sons’ copy of the *Jesus Storybook Bible*. We read one story every night before bed. When we get to the end of the book, we start over. My oldest son, Amos, looked up into my eyes the other night while I was reading. Amos said, “Dad, why do these stories never get old?” “What do you mean,” I found myself saying in response. Amos looked at a pile of a hundred other books on the floor next to us: “All the other stories get old.”

Let’s pray. Some things in life are temporary, other things are eternal. We praise you, Lord Christ. You alone are worthy of our praise. Help us to lift you higher. Thank you that your Word holds the eternal story of God’s grace in Christ to us. God, though you are worthy of our praise, we all too often fail to worthy in your name. Please heal our hearts to declare your praise. Help us to cast down our idols and offer to you, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, all that we are. There is no one like you. No other. Might you place a red flag in our hand once again, giving us vision for how to run down the track of our life declaring to all with everything we have of your majesty and your splendor. We love you so much. Jesus, our heart’s desire is to lift you higher. It’s in your name we pray. Amen.