

IS GOD ON AN EGO TRIP?

(Luke 17:11-19)

Does what bothered C. S. Lewis ever bug you?

(“A Word About Praising,” C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*)

God demands praise, but he deserves it and we enjoy it

- God demands praise because he *deserves* praise
- All enjoyment spontaneously overflows into praise
- Praise not merely expresses, but completes the enjoyment
- The worthier the object, the more intense the praise
- Enjoying God leads to praising God
- In demanding us to praise him, God is inviting us to enjoy him

Jesus expressed as much to a lone leper (Luke 17:11-19)

“A Word About Praising,” C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*

“When I first began to draw near to belief in God and even for some time after it had been given to me, I found a stumbling block in the demand so clamorously made by all religious people that we should “praise” God; still more in the suggestion that God Himself demanded it.” (90)

“What do we mean when we say that a picture is ‘admirable’? We certainly don’t mean that it is admired (that’s as may be) for bad work is admired by thousands and good work may be ignored. Nor that it ‘deserves’ admiration in the sense in which a candidate ‘deserves’ a high mark from the examiners—i.e....that a human being will have suffered injustice if it is not awarded. The sense in which the picture ‘deserves’ or ‘demands’ admiration is rather this; that admiration is the correct, adequate or appropriate, response to it, that, if paid, admiration will not be ‘thrown away’, and that if we do not admire we shall be stupid, insensible, and great losers, we shall have missed something.... He is that Object to admire which (or, if you like, to appreciate which) is simply to be awake, to have entered the real world; not to appreciate which is to have lost the greatest experience, and in the end to have lost all.” (92)

“The miserable idea that God should in any sense need, or crave for, our worship like a vain woman wanting compliments, or a vain author presenting his new books to people who never met or heard of him, is implicitly answered by the words ‘If I be hungry I will not tell thee.’” (93)

“All enjoyment spontaneously overflows into praise until (sometimes even if) shyness or the fear of boring others is deliberately brought in to check it. The world rings with praise—lovers praising their mistresses, readers their favourite poet, walkers praising the countryside, players praising their favourite game—praise of weather, wines, dishes, actors, motors, horses, colleges, countries, historical personages, children, flowers, mountains, rare stamps, rare beetles, even sometimes politicians or scholars. I had not noticed how the humblest and at the same time the most balanced and capacious minds, praise most, while the cranks, misfits and malcontents praised least.” (94)

“I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation. It is not out of compliment that lovers keep on telling one another how beautiful they are; the delight is incomplete till it is expressed.” (95)

“I had not noticed either that just as men spontaneously praise whatever they value, so they spontaneously urge us to join them in praising it: ‘Isn’t she lovely? Wasn’t it glorious? Don’t you think that magnificent?’ The Psalmists in telling everyone to praise God are doing what all men do when they speak of what they care about.” (95)

“The worthier the object, the more intense this delight would be.” (96)

“It is along these lines that I find it easiest to understand the Christian doctrine that ‘Heaven’ is a state in which angels now, and men hereafter, are perpetually employed in praising God. This does not mean, as it can so dismally suggest, that it is like ‘being in Church....’ To see what the doctrine really means, we must suppose ourselves to be in perfect love with God—drunk with, drowned in, dissolved by, that delight which, far from remaining pent up within ourselves as incommunicable, hence hardly tolerable, bliss, flows out from us incessantly again in effortless and perfect expression, our joy no more separable from the praise in which it liberates and utters itself that the brightness a mirror receives is separable from the brightness it sheds.” (96)

“The Scotch catechism says that man’s chief end is ‘to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.’ But we shall then know that these are the same thing. Fully to enjoy is to glorify. In commanding us to glorify Him, God is inviting us to enjoy Him.” (97)