

To Live Is Christ

C. S. Lewis says that there are three kinds of people in the world. **The first class** is of those who live simply for their own sake and pleasure, regarding Man and Nature as so much raw material to be cut up into whatever shape may serve them.

We are here to acknowledge that we are not random amoebas, but clay shaped very deliberately by the Master Potter, God Almighty, into creatures in His image. The appropriate response for all God's creation is to worship him. Let's do that now.

Psalm 148

*Hallelujah! Praise God from heaven,
praise him from the mountaintops;
Praise him, all you his angels,
praise him, all you his warriors,
Praise him, sun and moon,
praise him, you morning stars;
Praise him, high heaven,
praise him, heavenly rain clouds;
Praise, oh let them praise the name of God -
he spoke the word, and there they were!
He set them in place from all time to eternity;
He gave his orders, and that's it!
Praise God from earth,
you sea dragons, you fathomless ocean deeps;
Fire and hail, snow and ice,
hurricanes obeying his orders;
Mountains and all hills,
apple orchards and cedar forests;
Wild beasts and herds of cattle, snakes, and birds in flight;
Earth's kings and all races, leaders and important people,
Robust men and women in their prime,
and yes, graybeards and little children.
Let them praise the name of God -
it's the only Name worth praising.
His radiance exceeds anything in earth and sky;
He has built a monument—his very own people!*

*Praise from all who love God!
Israel's children, intimate friends of God. Hallelujah!*

Praise The Living God How Great Thou Art

Prayers from the congregation extolling God's greatness

C. S. Lewis says that **the second class** of people in the world are those who acknowledge some other claim upon them," (for our purposes the will of God), "and honestly try to pursue their own interests no further than this claim will allow. They try to surrender to the higher claim as much as it demands, like men paying a tax, but hope, like other taxpayers, that what is left over will be enough for them to live on. Their life is divided, like a soldier's or a schoolboy's life, into time "on parade" and "off parade", "in school" and "out of school".

According to Lewis, most of us belong to the second class, and trying to have your cake and eat it too makes us most miserable. Trying to participate in every pleasure that this world offers, to "buy into the system" while still trying to reserve room for the eternal - it's no wonder that Advil sales are steady!

The Psalmist in Psalm 73 struggled with this and received some insight for us today - *Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.*

Strength Of My Heart

Lewis say that **the third class** is made up of those who can say like St Paul that for them "to live is Christ". These people have rid themselves of the "tiresome business of adjusting the rival claims of Self and God by the simple expedient of rejecting the claims of Self altogether. The old egoistic will has been turned round, reconditioned, and made into a new thing. The will of Christ no longer limits theirs; it is theirs. All their time, in belonging to Him, belongs also to them, for they are His.

Lewis' solution is a Biblical one - the new Self, the new Will, must come at God's good pleasure and be born in us. There is no way that we can produce Him synthetically. Paul puts it this way in 2 Corinthians 5:17.....

therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

"The price of Christ is something, in a way, much easier than moral effort – it is to want Him. It is true that the wanting itself would be beyond our power but for one fact. The world is so built that, to help us desert our own satisfactions, they desert us. War and trouble and finally old age take from us one by one all those things that the natural Self hoped for at its setting out. Begging is our only wisdom, and want in the end makes it easier for us to be beggars. Even on those terms the Mercy will receive us."

(Lewis, C. S. *Present Concerns*. Harvest Books, 2002. 21-22)

Be Thou My Vision

OFFERING

Now And Forever

SERMON