

Giving Glory to God

By Rev. Sheryl Stewart

Habakkuk 1:1-4, 2: 1-4 2 Thessalonians 1:1-4 Luke 19: 1-10

If I were to say, “Let’s give God glory,” what might you think of?

[If no hands shoot up or no audible answers] I suspect most people would think I’m suggesting hymns to praise or thank God. On a similar note, if I were to suggest we should honor our Mothers and Fathers, you might think I advocate thanks, gratitude, or obedience. All of this is good and obedience comes closest to the mark both for Earth and Heaven, but I’m thinking of something more profound.

Have you ever seen a young person, of either or indeterminate gender walking about with jeans hovering a foot above their knees that look like they’ve barely escaped from a tiger mauling? That child has eye makeup inspired by Uncle Fester Addams and hair designed by Edward Scissorhands during a seizure.

You think: “Do your mother and father know you go out in public that way?”

Or have you seen children running amok in stores, holding screaming tantrums, or bullying each other? Doesn't that make you wonder what kind of lunatic raised these hellions? The behavior and appearance of the child reflect back on the parent. Thus, the best way to give honor to your parents on Earth or your Father in Heaven is to look and act like a loving, decent, godly person.

One of the main reasons for a decline in church attendance is hypocrisy. Christians make God look ugly by being mean, selfish, arrogant bullies and, thus, giving God shame instead of glory.

Habakkuk was distressed by the weak law, absence of justice, wrangling and evil among a nation called to be God's people. His passages remind me of the Bells Carol: "Then, in despair, I hung my head, 'There is no peace on Earth,' I said. 'For, hate is strong and mocks the song of Peace on Earth, good will to men'.

"Then, pealed the bells more strong and deep, 'God is not dead nor doth He sleep.' The wrong shall fail, the right prevail with peace on Earth, good will to men."

In contrast to Habakkuk, the Thessalonians made the saints happy because they could see faith in God by the way they treated each other in love. Notice that the Name of Jesus will receive glory from them as the love from that Name is manifested in them.

And, look at Zacchaeus! People started to disrespect Jesus, saying, “What kind of prophet associates with trash like him?” Hearing that, Zacchaeus demonstrates the change Jesus has made in his life even before their supper! It is that change that gives God the glory!

Here, then, is another thought for a church that believes in universal salvation. It is not just that we will all get to heaven; it is that, by the Holy Spirit Jesus sends, we will all be made as worthy of Heaven as the Son of God already is!

Do you hunger and thirst after righteousness? Jesus promises us, “You shall be filled.” And, the 23rd Psalm promises us, “filled to overflowing,” so that all around us is also fed by holy water. A couple weeks ago, I said we were like the healed leper who returns to give God glory. Today, I expand on that by saying we give God glory most by

living glorious lives of love, kindness, and blessing. This, more than any eloquent testimony or angelic song will make people say, “Wow, what a God those people have! I want to be like that!” And that, dear brothers and sisters, is what we are here for.