

The Weight of Glory

There are places that put a lump in your throat, bring tears to your eyes, cause your gaze to fall and your voice to drop to a whisper. Maybe, like me, you have stood silently in the rain observing the sentinel at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, sat in the 130-year-old pews of the Ryman Auditorium visualizing the artists that have graced its stage, or gazed upon the beaches and waves below the Normandy American Cemetery where thousands of young men gave their lives on D-Day. These places, and many like them, overwhelm their visitors with a sense of honor.

It seems that in today's culture it is necessary to define the word "honor", for the word has lost both meaning and, more importantly, practice. To honor someone means to esteem and respect them in light of their position or actions. Furthermore, it means fulfilling and keeping certain obligations that demonstrate this high regard. Honor could be described as awe, reverence, and adoration. In the Old Testament it is often used interchangeably with the word "glory" and used in the context of worship.

God begins the book of Malachi by proclaiming His love for Israel (1:1-5). Yet, there is a sharp contrast between God's devotion and love for His chosen people, and their heartless disrespect for their Father (Jer 31:9) and Master (Is 42:19). Even more surprisingly, the ones who should have understood God's deserved honor most readily, were the ones who made God's worship offensive and shameful - namely, the priests. So, Malachi challenges the priesthood to give God the glory He deserves:

"A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the Lord of hosts to you, **O priests, who despise my name ...**" (Malachi 1:6)

How could it have come to this? How could the priesthood - those familiar with His statutes and commandments - despise God's name? Why would God need to rebuke His sons and servants of their negligence, apathy, and hardheartedness? Could it be that they had forgotten that their Father loved them, that their Master owned everything, and that, as King, He deserved devotion and obedience? Is it possible that we, a royal priesthood (1 Pet 2:9), also lose sight of God's glory and worth?

A few years ago a friend of mine introduced me to one of C.S. Lewis' books that I was only familiar with by its title, *The Weight of Glory*. My friend indicated that other than the Bible, it had become the most influential book in his life, so much so that he read through it every year. Before he moved out of the area, my friend gifted

me his copy of Lewis' book and it has received a special place in my library ever since. In any case, the author makes this powerful observation and indictment of people finding gratification in lesser things:

Our Lord finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. **We are far too easily pleased.**

Wow! Honoring the Father, fearing the Master, worshiping the King, is not merely giving God what He deserves. It also has a powerful effect upon *us*! Apparently, the priest's boredom with God caused them to ignore His commands and experience His rejection. In contrast, an arresting awe of God functions dynamically as His transforming grace is bestowed on us! As we honor the Lord, walk in the Spirit, and live in His presence, we share in His glory. Paul encourages us with these words: "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another" (2 Cor 3:12-18). Just another reason to make worship a constant, enthusiastic, and conscious way of life!

Psalm 100:1-5 (ESV) - "Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth! Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into his presence with singing! Know that the Lord, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name! For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations."