

O Worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness

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Isaiah 45 vv 1-7 p731, Psalm 96, I Thessalonians 1 vv 1-10 p1186, Matthew 22 vv 15-22 p990

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Three sublime words: worship, beauty and holiness. Worship is the Christian's greatest joy, our eternal theme. And beauty, the beauty of God. What can we say? His beauty is beyond our imagining. Yet the glimpses we are vouchsafed of the beauty of God inspire our lives. They inspire our worship. O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.

What is holiness? It is the apartness of God. God is utterly, infinitely greater than His Creation, transcending everything that there is in the created order. He is beyond, beyond our comprehension, beyond our feeble efforts to reach Him, beyond the stars and the planets, beyond the laws of science, beyond time itself, beyond space, beyond the mystery of life, beyond the intricacies of this world, beyond all the creative achievements of humanity – our art, our music, our literature, our architecture, our laws, our social order, our moral effort. In a sense it is improper to speak of God at all for all our words are inadequate to speak of Him or to dare to attempt to describe Him, or even, perhaps unworthiest of all, to address Him.

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Psalm 96 calls on the whole earth to worship God. His glory is to be proclaimed throughout the world. It is for all peoples to recognise and to worship. God's glory is manifest in the natural order – in the universe and in everything in it. All creation proclaims the glory of God. Not only the natural order, but the moral order too reflects the glory of God. He comes to judge the earth. There is justice. There is mercy. There is love.

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness – His holiness and ours. Because, you see, He makes us holy. He sets us apart. As we go about our daily labours in accordance with His Will, we are God's co-creators. As we obey His commandments, as we love, so we work with God. So we are on the Lord's side. Our words are infinitely inadequate, but God sends His Word – Jesus. Our love is so cold, but God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son. It is all of God. He makes us holy through faith in Christ, faith which is His gift to us of His grace. We come to the marriage feast of the Son wearing the wedding garment which He has provided – the righteousness which is through faith. God makes us holy and therefore we may worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. He makes us like Him – holy and beautiful, beautiful in goodness and righteousness. It is God, therefore, who enables us to worship. It is He Who inspires us. It is He Who enfolds us eternally in His love.

Set apart by God, set apart for God, our end is eternally to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Knowing Him as He knows us, seeing Him as He is, made like Him through His grace alone, our experience is and will be eternal joy in Jesus Christ Who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.