

Reverence and Awe

Habakkuk 2:20

***"the Lord is in his holy temple;
let all the earth keep silence before him."***

One of the things that I admire in our Catholic brethren is their awe and reverence when they walk into a church. Either they stop talking altogether, or their conversations dwindle to a whisper. Then when they walk down the aisle facing the Cross they genuflect before the altar. Say what you want about all the things they get wrong; this is something that I think they get right.

When I was younger, people looked forward to getting to be in the presence of God and they would get to the church early. My father would start the service by saying, "**The Lord is in His Holy Temple**" and the congregation would immediately cease all conversations and respond, "**let all the earth keep silence before Him.**"

1. We are not all that...

I know that the Bible tells us that we can go boldly before the throne with our petitions, but boldness is one thing, familiarity is another.

Job, who was blessed by God because of his righteousness, after he is tested and does not curse God, he encounters God and tries to plead his case.

As faithful as Job has been, he is trying to justify himself before God and is answered by God with:

"Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?" Job 38:4

He is reminded that he is not all that...

Even Jesus, who was His Son, and was one with the Father, had reverence and did not take His relationship with the Father for granted:

Phil 2:5-6

"Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,"

When I kneel to pray, when I hear Him through His Word or encounter Him in worship, I am reminded of how low I am compared to him. My righteousness is like filthy rags before Him:

Isa 64:6-7

We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. 7 There is no one who calls upon your name, who rouses himself to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have made us melt in the hand of our iniquities.

2. Intimacy with reverence

I am so thankful to have an intimate relationship with God, which was made possible by His Son's sacrifice, and continues to be facilitated by His Holy Spirit. However, I am constantly reminded the He is God, and I am not.

Remember the old Vineyard song: "He is the Potter; we are the clay"? We are the works of His hand and we should approach Him as the creation approaches its Creator, with awe and reverence.

Isa 64:68

8 But now, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.

3. Worship Him in Awe and Reverence

Heb 12:28-29

Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, 29 for our God is a consuming fire.

When I was a kid, I was my mother's only child and her world revolved around me. I knew how much she loved me. I grew up feeling very secure in my relationship with my mother. However, from a very young age, I knew that there were boundaries. If she was talking to someone, I wasn't allowed to just barge in and interrupt. Some kids just start talking, or start going, "mom, ma, mommy.." or they start tugging at their mom. I was taught that if I needed to talk to my mom while she was talking to someone, I was to quietly come and touch her on the arm and then wait quietly and patiently until she paused the conversation and acknowledged me.

Ps 111:10

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!

Ps 33:8-9

Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him! 9 For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.

Let us not forget that God detests sin and is in enmity with it. All those who stand in opposition to Him will be consumed by eternal fire. When I was a teenager, the fear of my father finding out what I was doing and the accompanying punishment kept me in line much of the time. It led me to make wiser decisions than my contemporaries who were only interested in the here and now and the pleasure of the moment. Fear of my father led me to count the cost and to measure whether the pleasure of the moment would outweigh the cost of the punishment in the future.

Isa 11:1-3

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. 2 And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and

might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. 3 And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord.

Literally: "for the fear of God is a sacrifice of adoration, a pleasing aroma continually ascending to God.

4. Reverence and Awe of whom He is.

Matt 27:51-54

And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. 52 The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, 53 and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. 54 When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

Put yourself at the foot of the cross in that moment when Jesus died. In the temple, in the Holy of Holy's behind the curtain lay the place where once a year the High Priest would go in to prepare a sacrifice for all the people of Israel. So holy a place that bells were sown into the hem of the priests' garment so that as long as they heard the bells they would know that he was still alive. So Holy a place that they tied a rope around his ankle in case he did something wrong in the presence of God and wound up dead they would be able to pull his body out. In that moment the curtain that separated the Holy of Holy's from the rest of the temple was torn from the top down so that they would know that it was God who did it. Many of the dead were resurrected and appeared to their loved ones. All of creation itself is groaning at the death of its creator; so much so, that even the Centurion who is presiding over the crucifixion is filled with awe and proclaims, ***"Truly this was the Son of God!"***

And yet, we come into His presence like we're walking into the local Publix?

No!

Let us come before Him with reverence and awe!

Let us come before Him recognizing Him as Almighty God!

Let us come before Him with the recognition of the fact that He holds our very existence in the balance!

Let us come before acknowledging Him as Lord of Lords, King of Kings, the Alpha and the Omega, and the creator and sustainer of all things!

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