

Desiring Our Deliverer

Brother Lawrence began life as Nicholas Herman, born to peasant parents in Lorraine, France. As a young man, his poverty forced him into joining the army, and thus he was guaranteed meals and a small wage. During this period, Herman had an experience that set him on a unique spiritual journey; it wasn't, characteristically, a supernatural vision, but a supernatural clarity into a common sight.

Brother Lawrence, knew much pain and suffering in his eighty years on earth. He was critically injured as a youth in a war fought on his native soil, the Thirty Years' War. This was a war that, even today, still stands out as one of the most brutal wars in history. One of his legs was permanently crippled and he suffered pain and complications that left him vulnerable to infection and fever.

He joined a monastery and was assigned to the kitchen where, amidst the tedious chores of cooking and cleaning at the constant bidding of his superiors, he developed his rule of spirituality and work.

Lawrence writes, "Men invent means and methods of coming at God's love, they learn rules and set up devices to remind them of that love, and it seems like a world of trouble to bring oneself into the consciousness of God's presence. Yet it might be so simple. Is it not quicker and easier just to do our common business wholly for the love of him?"

Brother Lawrence never complained. In later life he suffered two serious illnesses that required close medical attention. After coming through the second illness, he thanked the doctor and, in Brother Lawrence's gently humorous way, told the doctor he wasn't sure he had done him a favor.

He respected the doctors of his day and knew that God very often worked His healing through them. When asked by one of the younger members of his community, how he managed so well, he took the opportunity to spend a few minutes sharing his experience of the practice of the presence of God and the necessity of putting God first. This is also summed up in one of his letters:

"Whatever remedies you use, they

will succeed only so far as God permits. When pains come from God, only He can ultimately cure them. He often sends sickness to the body to cure diseases of the soul. Comfort yourself with the Sovereign Physician of both soul and body." ...

What Brother Lawrence's life and experience reflected was that. A Personal Relationship with God Depends on our Desire for God to be Greater than our Desire for Deliverance from hardship
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John 12:12-19

¹²The next day the great crowd that had come for the Feast heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. ¹³They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting,

"Hosanna!"

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

"Blessed is the King of Israel!" ¹⁴Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it, as it is written,

¹⁵"Do not be afraid, O Daughter of Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt."

-Until this point, Jesus had discouraged expressions of support from the people

-Here He allowed public enthusiasm.

-Doubtless some in the group were true believers, but the general impression is that most of the people had no real heart interest in the Lord.

-Palm trees were among the earliest cultivated trees. They were a symbol of victory and success as well as of beauty. Images of the trees decorated the temple, and its branches were used as part of the Feast of Tabernacles' celebration.

-“Hosanna” is a transliteration of the Hebrew and the Aramaic, meaning “save now, we pray.”

-The spontaneity of the crowd and the palm branches (a symbol of the nation) suggest liberation.

-They quote from Ps. 118:25, a psalm of thanksgiving for deliverance from an enemy.

-Their euphoria, however, was at fever pitch because they expected their messianic hopes to be fulfilled along nationalistic lines through military conquest

¹⁶At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that they had done these things to him.

-The disciples did not catch the prophetic significance of Jesus' act.

- After Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension, the disciples finally understood that the Old

Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah had been fulfilled in Jesus.

¹⁷Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word.

¹⁸Many people, because they had heard that he had given this miraculous sign, went out to meet him. ¹⁹So the Pharisees said to one another, "See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!"

-Jesus was forcing the Jewish leaders to act, because it was God's will that Jesus die on Passover.

-With frenzied exaggeration, Pharisees cried out that **the whole world** had **gone after** Jesus.

-They did not realize that the interest of the crowd was but a passing thing, and that those who really were willing to worship Jesus as the Son of God were very few.

-To understand this passage it is important that we know the audience

-in order to do this we need to look back at their history

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-In 1446bc a tremendous act of God occurred that would change the course of human history forever

-on a cool spring night an angel of the Lord descended on Egypt

-this angel was on a mission from God

-He was to collect the lives of all the first born sons in the land with one important stipulation

-he had orders to pass over those homes that had lamb's blood smeared around the door frames

-the only houses he was aloud to enter were those homes that did not have the blood smeared around the door

-those that had the blood smeared around the door frames were the Hebrews, the people of God

-those that didn't were the Egyptians

-the angel went from house to house gathering the lives of the Egyptian first born males whether they be human or animal

-this was God's judgment on Egypt for their harsh treatment of his people but more for the stubbornness of Pharaoh who time and again refused to let God's people go and who time and again subjected God's people to harsh and unfair punishment

-Pharaoh was the one bringing this terrible calamity on his people

-when morning came there was not one Egyptian household that did not have some one dead in it

-the wailing and crying filled the air

-now Pharaoh relented and insisted that the Hebrews go

-he insisted that they leave Egypt before any other more Egyptians should die

-since that night in 1446bc the Hebrews that came to be known as the Jews celebrated God delivering them from the hands of their enemies
-every year at this time they would celebrate God's justice in delivering them from the torturous oppression of their Egyptian masters

-God rescued his people and forty years later he established them in their kingdom
-can you imagine?
-they went from being a nation of slaves subjugated by the Egyptians to being a nation subject only to God
-it would have been a wonderful story if these people were faithful in obeying God
-unfortunately time and again they rebelled
-they put their own desires for sin and other Gods before their desires for the true God
-Time and again God would punish them by making them subject to other oppressive nations
-in 586 b.c. God had had it with the Jews
-860 years after rescuing them from the Egyptians God took their kingdom away from them and made them subjects of the Babylonian empire and then the Persian empire and then other empires until this point in time in the Gospel of John when they are subject to the Roman Empire
-but guess what they did
-every year in spring
-they would remember Passover

-That is they would remember the day death passed over them
-That is they would remember when God broke the back of their oppressors
-when God, having the power of life and death, took the lives of the Egyptians and in so doing rescued the lives of Hebrews, giving them their Kingdom
-this would be a story that the people would tell their children and their children's children from generation to Generation
-and every year, year after year they would celebrate the Passover
-they would celebrate the mercy of God
-They would celebrate the tremendous justice that God had for his people
-this story
-This history would give hope to the people of Israel
-That God was their deliverer in days of old
-In the times of the Egyptians
-And according to the prophets God would deliver his people once more and restore them to be the nation that they once were
-they would be rescued
-God's messiah would come
-He that had the power over life and death would come again
-and then in 30 a.d. something different happened
-something wonderful
-a man has come and they thought he may be the messiah

- we must keep in mind that the people have been looking for a messiah for centuries especially when they were forcibly ruled by other nations
- a deliverer, a warrior
- some one that would, by force, destroy the Romans just as God destroyed the Egyptians
- slightly prior to Jesus entering the picture some Jews followed some one they thought was the messiah but wasn't
- some one they thought could take back the kingdom for them but didn't
- but this time, this guy was different
- Jesus wasn't just some one with a lot of zeal or hatred for the Romans or a passion to be God's deliverer
- this was some one that had power
- And not just any power but the power of life and death
- After all he actually raised Lazarus from the dead
- look at what John writes concerning these people
¹⁷**Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word.**
- ¹⁸**Many people, because they had heard that he had given this miraculous sign, went out to meet him**
- Jesus had the power to raise a guy from the dead the people thought
- it was a sign
- It had to be a sign

- at Passover God took life in order to deliver the Hebrews from their captors
- this man can restore life
- the end must be near
- The Jews will be victorious again they would have thought
- The Jewish nation will triumph over the Romans like they did over the Egyptians
- The Jews will have their kingdom restored
- The Jews will be free of their oppressor once more
- quick get the palm branches
- this will be a Passover to remember
- the messiah has come
- the warrior king has come to destroy the Romans and restore the Jews to their kingdom
- "Hosanna!"**
- "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"**
- quick get the palm branches
- to celebrate
- this is it!
- this is it!
- here he comes
- don't get me wrong some of the people would have been believers
- but most of them were not
- most of them were Jews passionate to be delivered
- Jesus knew what was in their hearts and accepted their praise regardless
- God even knew how his son would be received

- As a warrior to destroy the Roman empire
- this is why Jesus rode on a donkey that hadn't been ridden before
- Jesus repudiates the Jews military and political aspirations by sitting on a donkey,
- symbolic of humility and peace, rather than mounting a horse, a symbol of conquest and war
- The crowd's idea of the Messiah's purpose was far different from His own.
- Jesus came to liberate the people from sin's oppression and not from that of Rome.
- most would have ignored the symbolism of riding the donkey
- even the disciples didn't get it
- the people wanted a warrior and would accept no other messiah as they had been taught from year to year that the messiah would be a warrior
- it was this belief that blinded them to what Jesus' purpose was
- it was their desire to be delivered from their enemies that prevented them from desiring the messiah
- their praises of Hosanna were with the condition that Jesus was going to deliver them from the Romans
- is it any wonder why they rejected him a week later when they saw their warrior king arrested?
- The Jews could not see Christ for the messiah he was and is because their desire for delivery from their Roman rulers was greater than their desire for

their deliverer they failed to realize that...
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A Personal Relationship with God Depends on our Desire for God to be Greater than our Desire for Deliverance

- The life that has as its paramount a desire for God is one that desires God to be glorified more than one to be delivered from hardship
- to be fair there were most definitely people in the crowd that desired Jesus for who he was rather than what he could bring
- they would have been, however, a minority in the crowd
- their passion and desire was founded on God and not on what they could get from God
- Their life's goal and the goal of such people today was and is for God to be glorified, that is to say to be giving the credit for every good thing in one's life even if it is at the cost of the individual
- to be completely yielded to God
- Such a person will not put comfort as their goal but God accomplishing his will
- because of their desire to see God glorified such a person will be confident that everything in one's life is not only in God's authority but under His control
- there are many things that mark this person as desiring God
- I will mention three

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Peace: the tranquil state of soul assured of its salvation in Christ and so fearing nothing from God and content with its earthly lot

eg Lawrence. *"In the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquility as if I were upon my knees at the Blessed Supper*

- The person that desires God is not in continual worry or fear
- there is no such thing as a mishap or an interruption
- everything in this person's life is a part of God's plan
- whether he sees the fruition of it or not
- accomplishment is not the person's goal, obedience is
- it is the person's passion for God that prevents him from the infection of worry, bitterness, and cynicism

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Joy: contentment, gladness, and satisfaction. A gift of God unknown to non-Christians. Pure joy is joy in God and both as its source and object

-During sickness and health and amid tremendous growth and change in his monastic surroundings, Brother Lawrence lived his life in holy freedom and continual joy.

- joy is the consistent attitude of the person that desires God

- this person is confident in God's perpetual love and desire for his people
- it is this knowledge that gives him joy in life
- knowing that God is with him
- knowing that there is nothing to be concerned about
- knowing that some day his joy will be complete in eternity

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Faith: "is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." Hebrews 11:1

- this person sees God working in his life everyday - this person is excited to pray as he continues to see God answering prayer
 - he sees God working in his life because he keeps his perspective wide
 - he doesn't limit himself to see God answering his prayer in only one specific way
 - not at all
 - this is how he is able to see God work in his life
 - he doesn't carry around a bias that tells him that God will answer prayer only this way-he is not so proud and arrogant to assume he knows what is better than God
 - his reward for his humility is to see God working
- Brother Lawrence: I abandon myself in His hands that He may do what He pleases with me."
- We each have at one time or another tried to go faster than grace. We try to get ahead of God and His perfect plan for us. We secretly think we

know a better, faster, or easier way. Sometimes the results are humorous, sometimes disastrous, sometimes successful. Yet anything we think we do out of our own effort is bound to disappoint sooner or later.

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**The Moment our Passion for Deliverance Exceeds our Desire for God our relationship becomes Impersonal
Eg parent and child**

- Look at the Jews
- the Jews wanted to be delivered from the Romans who hurt and oppressed them
- there's nothing wrong with that
- what was wrong was that they desired to be delivered from their captors more than their deliverer
- they were angry
- they were bitter
- they were narrow minded in how God was to act
- their passion to be delivered was so great that their desire for their deliverer was almost non-existent
- Notice in particular that the crowd did not stay with Him
- .
- there is no sin in praying for deliverance from hardships in life
- Jesus Taught us to pray for deliverance from temptation
- we pray all the time to be delivered from sin, sickness, joblessness, pain of all sorts, confusion, ignorance, fear, and doubt to name only a few

-a desire to be delivered from things is not only natural it is endorsed by God to pray for such things
-but wanting to be delivered more than wanting the deliverer reduces God to the equivalent of a vending machine

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- I want freedom more than you
- I want health more than you
- I want comfort more than you
- This is what the Jews were saying when they cried out "Hosanna"
- They weren't crying out in praise to God
- They crying out in praise for their suspected impending delivery
- What they failed to realize is that they were being subjugated by the Romans so that they would learn a greater desire for God than for deliverance
- it is the same reason that God brings discomfort in to our lives
- Infirmity, losses, disappointments, despair, and helplessness are methods God employs to draw His Own to Him. Then, in His own time and way, God begins to reveal His will for them
- it is God breaking our pride and our desire for comfort by making our lives less comfortable so that we will desire him
- it is the process of growing in our faith
- it is part of the process of growing in desire for Him more than anything else

-having a desire for deliverance more than the deliverer will stunt spiritual growth

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-not that it can but it will

-look at the Jews

-their relationship with God was stunted by a passion for deliverance

-their relationship with God was so stunted that even when they were face to face with the Messiah they desired political power through military conquest more than even God

-what a waste

-how many of us would have loved to have been among the number shouting "Hosanna"?

-how many of us would have loved to have followed Jesus and been in his presence while he was still on earth

-here he was and the people cared less for seeing him and more for what they hoped they could get from him

-we are all grateful for the eternal life that we have been given

-but if that is that is only this about our faith we count as a benefit there is a problem

Eg confirmation baptism getting it done

-what a terrible impersonal way of describing the wonderful blessing of being a part of God's family

-even if the profession of one's faith is sincere and will usher one into the kingdom of heaven at the end of one's life

-what kind of a life is it if eternal life is the only goal in one's faith

-it is a superficial and pathetic existence

-lacking in the understanding of God's tenderness and love

-it is a life of maintained ignorance as to the person of Jesus Christ because that person's sole goal is not to know God but to avoid hell

-what a lonely, passionless, almost pointless existence

-The coins of faith have been dropped into the vending machine of God and we merely sit around awaiting the candy bar of eternal life in heaven to drop

-how sad

-How tragic

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Desiring our Deliverer

Brother Lawrence was a model of humility. Why should we get to know him? Brother Lawrence did not hear voices, perform miracles, found an order or religious community, start a church, lead a cult or sect, or have wealth, power, or status. Brother Lawrence simply loved God. He lived in God's presence and loved Our Father in a way that is available to each of us

"We ought to give ourselves up to God with regard both to things temporal and spiritual and seek our satisfaction only in the fulfilling of His will."

"I think it appropriate to tell you how I perceive myself before God, whom I behold as my King. I consider myself as the most wretched of men. I am full of faults, flaws, and weaknesses, and have committed all sorts of crimes against his King. Touched with a sensible regret I confess all my wickedness to Him. I ask His forgiveness.

When we set our life goal, as did Brother Lawrence, to be the "best worshipper of God we can possibly be," each day is a fresh opportunity to revive and renew our most important relationship, the relationship with Our Father. This is a relationship that lasts for eternity.

To make God our priority and "to act purely for the love of God" is the essence of the practice of the presence of God. This is why anyone, at any age, and in any circumstance can practice God's presence.

Only when he reconciled himself to the thought that this struggle and longing was his destiny did he find a new peace: his soul "had come to its own home and place of rest." There he spent the rest of his years, dying in relative

obscurity and pain and perfect joy.

- The Jews didn't desire their God more than being delivered from the Romans
- If they did they wouldn't have cried out for Christ to be crucified a week later
- some people are confused ask how the same people that were shouting Hosanna would a week later cry for Jesus to be crucified
- I think its easy to understand from this context
- the people were passionate and zealous to be delivered from Rome
- when the saw Jesus had been arrested they were embarrassed and even indignant
- they would have though that they placed their hope falsely in another false messiah
- they would have felt lied to even though Jesus never promised that they were going to be redeemed from Roman occupation
- they could easily be provoked by the Pharisees to cry for Jesus' death
- their narrow minded singular desire to rescued from the Romans blinded them to significance of the messiah and the greater victory he would win on the cross

- are we blinded with a singular desire for deliverance from calamity, from hell, from hardship from discomfort

- is that our goal in this life
- if so we are blind to the tremendous works of God
- there is a way to have peace daily
- There is a way to walk with joy
- there is a way to have faith
- it is a process and I won't pretend that I can tell you how to accomplish it here
- but I can tell you where to begin
- if you are concerned that you may be desiring deliverance or rescue more than the deliverer there is something we can do and we see it in the prayer of Jesus

Look at **Luke 22:42** A very powerful prayer.

- In order to eliminate any doubt in our mind as to whether we are desiring God more than what he can give at the end of our prayer we need only ask that God's will be done

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- asking for God's will to be done at the end of our prayers with knowledge that in so doing it might not be your will or what we want but what God wants
- it might mean continued discomfort or in terms of Jesus it may mean not getting what we are asking for at all
- but such a heart felt prayer guarantees a desire for God above all else
- it guarantees that glorifying God is paramount
- it guarantees maintenance of a personal relationship
- it guarantees access to the treasures of God that

include Joy, peace and faith

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- and if we can do such a thing
- As we come to practice the presence of God, we gain the full realization that nothing we think, say, or do is secret or separate from God. We cannot run. We cannot hide. We can no longer have our own way or have what we want when we want it. Most importantly, we come to understand that God really does know us better than we know ourselves. His way is better and easier. His timing is the perfect pace of grace. Even when it seems that the whole world is against us, if we persevere and continue in our conversation with God, His grace will smooth the way.

And if we live such a way as to desire God's will first and foremost

Then when we can Cry out "**Hosanna!**"

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

"Blessed is the King of Israel!" to the glory of God now and forever Amen!