

What is Worship – Part 1

Sermon Delivered on January 13th, 2019
AM Service

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Text:

John 4:19 The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. 20: Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. 21: Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. 22: Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. 23: But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. 24: God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

Introduction

Ever since the fall of man into sin, God has been calling us back to that for which He created us. God has been calling mankind back to worship.

*“O come, let us sing unto the LORD:
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.
Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving,
and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.
For the LORD is a great God,
and a great King above all gods.
In his hand are the deep places of the earth:
the strength of the hills is his also.
The sea is his, and he made it:
and his hands formed the dry land.
O come, let us worship and bow down:
let us kneel before the LORD our maker.
For he is our God;
and we are the people of his pasture,
and the sheep of his hand.
To day if ye will hear his voice,
Harden not your heart, as in the provocation,
and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness:”
Psalm 95:1-8*

The call of God upon our lives is a **call of worship**. The call of God has not changed because **the One worthy of our worship has not changed**. But what is worship? This is the question which

we ask this morning. **Everyone has their own idea of what worship is.** However, our opinion really doesn't matter. What matter is what God says what true worship is. **O, how we need the Spirit of God to teach us** because there is so much confusion about worship not only among unbelievers in the world but even among true believers. **May the Spirit of God lead us into the true answer.**

Many times when people think of worship they think of music. But, if we search God's Word faithfully, we will discover that **worship is much more than singing.** Last Sunday, we were reminded that worship is what we were created for, **it's what we will spend eternity doing.** Since worship will be **our eternal activity and greatest joy in heaven,** we ought to be practicing it now. As a matter of fact, what we are doing Sunday after Sunday in the house of God is **preparing us and getting us ready for the eternal worship service** that we will spend with eternal glorious God.

To help us prepare for eternity, with God's help I will be bring a series of messages on worship. **Why series of sermons on worship?** Because there is no way I can adequately preach on a topic like worship in one or two sermons. So, I want to begin our journey with a message I am calling "**Worship - It all begins with God!**" In this series we will cover the what, who, why, how, where and when of worship. We will talk about the **Priority,** the **Person,** the **People,** the **Principle,** the **Precept,** the **Posture,** the **Place,** the **Period,** the **Purpose,** the **Promise,** the **Prerequisite,** the **Precondition,** the **Preparation** and the **Power** of Worship. I want us to come to understand the nature of true biblical worship so that we can render the worship that our great God requires and deserves.

In introducing this theme of worship I pointed out three things, namely: **worship is natural to all man** – we are all worshipers. The question is not are we worshipers? We all worship something or someone. The only question is whether we will worship the right One in the right way. Secondly, **worship matters to God** – God is seeking true worshipers and He is earnest in doing so. He is so earnest that it cost the life and the blood of His own Son. Thirdly, **worship begins with God** – a true worshiper is a result of a seeking Father. Without a seeking Father there will be no true worshipers.

So much for the review, let's now ask the question, what is worship? There is so much talk about worship today. But we need to ask, what is worship and how may I render acceptable worship? This morning let's talk about "what worship is not" and then next week "what it is".

I - What worship is not

1. It is not about location

John 4:19 The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. 20: Our fathers worshipped **in this mountain;** and ye say, that **in Jerusalem** is the place where men ought to worship.

After calling Jesus a prophet, the woman at the well suddenly brings up the disagreement between the Jews and the Samaritans over the correct place to worship God. We are not sure why. She may have been trying to divert the discussion away from her exposed sins of adultery.

The Jews worship in Jerusalem but Samaritans in Gerizim. Who is right, the Jews or the Samaritans? Which location is proper place of worship?

Our Lord responds in ...

[John 4:21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.](#)

Up to that time the proper place of worship is Jerusalem. The Jews were right but the hour is coming where the true worshippers will neither worship in Mount Gerizim nor in Jerusalem. The 'hour' refers to the hour of His death on the cross to pay the death penalty due for our sins. The temple in Jerusalem, where they were to sacrifice animals to foreshadow Jesus' sacrifice on the cross until He accomplishes it.

Worship is not about geographical location. Jesus never indicated a building, location or even a country as the place to worship God after His sacrificial death on the cross.

But doesn't the Bible also say that Christians should go to church?

The word "church" is found 120 times in the New Testament. The Greek word translated "church" literally means an **assembly** or **gathering of people**. The **Church** according to the Bible is a **gathering or assembling of Christians, not a place to go**.

2. It is not about getting

If I come and gather with the church and my focus is on myself and getting my needs met, learning something, hearing a sermon that blesses me, being blessed by the singing, **then I missed the point of worship**. We worship **to please God and glorify Him alone**. We do not worship God for what we get out of it or what He will do for us. **We worship Him because He is worthy of worship**. Warren Wiersbe says, *"If you worship because it pays, it won't pay."*

People today are attracted to 'feel-good' messages that promises health and wealth; many are **attracted to the kind of preaching that promises a problem free life** to all who will turn themselves to God. Worship is not about you and me. It's not about 'getting our needs met.' It's not about a performance from the pastor and singer and choir. Worship is not about getting but about giving.

A. W. Tozer once said, *"Whosoever seeks God as a means toward desired end will not find God. God will not be used."*

Our motive should be to please God and glorify Him alone. It is not what we can get from God but what we can give Him.

Psalm 42:1 As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. 2: My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?

It is God that we desire not just His gifts and His blessings. The purpose of worship is not to get something for ourselves. We worship because God alone is worthy of our worship. We worship Him because of who He is and not because of what we feel and not just what we get.

3. It is about entertainment

There are people, who come to church to be entertained, because they like the music or they like the preacher. But listen to what our Lord said about worship in ...

John 4:22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. 23: But the hour cometh, and now is, when the **true worshippers** shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the **Father seeketh such to worship him**. 24: God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

What our Heavenly Father is seeking are true worshippers. He is not seeking people that worship Him according to their tastes and desires or their sources of truth. We have to realize that worship is about God, not us.

This is one of the struggles in churches today. Ron Boatwright wrote, *“United States has produced the most entertainment-oriented people the world has ever known. We have more forms of amusement than has ever been known to man, but we still want more. In our age everything is designed to appeal to our emotions and to entertain us. We seem to have forgotten our worship service is to bring glory and honor to God, and not to entertain ourselves. When we have choirs to sing to us and concerts to entertain us, we are not worshipping God; but we have become the spectators who are being entertained. Worship is not a spectator event. We dare not become spectators, because in worship it is God who is the spectator.”*

This is the reason why **there is a great pressure** among church leaders today **to make worship services more entertaining** to people. Some churches feel that **to keep people coming** to their church they have to keep coming up with **more fancy and elaborate productions** where **the music has to be louder and faster and longer** and **the message has to be shorter**. This is a sad sign that we have departed from the true nature and purpose of worship. **There is a great need** in our day to remind ourselves that worship is not about entertainment. It's not to please ourselves and to please and glorify God.

4. It is about escape

How many times we hear preachers say, *“when you come to the house of God to worship leave your burdens outside and forget them?”* That's a sad mistake. When we enter God's house we do not leave our cares and burdens outside. But rather we should carry our cares and burdens with us into the worship service and lay them at the feet of Jesus; because that's the place where we can get the right perspective and deal our burdens God's way.

Remember Asaph's confession in [Psalm 73](#)? In this Psalm Asaph recalls his doubt and depression. His struggle arises from what he observes in life, namely, **the sorrow and suffering**

of the people of God combined with **the pride and prosperity of the wicked**. Is it really worth it to be a faithful and dedicated Christian? Is it really worth it to serve God? Especially when we see so many who disobey yet left unpunished in this life. It seems to be that the wicked are “better off” than the godly? But praise God Asaph got out of his doubt and depression. How?

Psalm 73:16 When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; 17: Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.

Asaph was honest with God. He brought all his burden, doubts and depression into the sanctuary before God. And what was the result? He did not come into the presence of God and merely forget his problem for the time being, he found a solution.

“Worship puts God at the center of our vision. It is virtually important because it is only when God is at the center of our vision that we see things as they really are.” - Roy Clement

Psalm 46:1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

In our troubles, God is our refuge and strength where we can run and hide in Him and He does hide us. He “hides” us so that He might help using our troubles.

“We are not refugees looking for escape; rather, we are wounded and weary soldiers who need rest and rehabilitation so we can go back into the battle. People who worship for “escape” don’t know what true worship is, and they are wasting their time. True worship should lead to personal enrichment and enablement, the kind of spiritual strength that helps the believer carry the burdens and fight the battles of life.” - Warren Wiersbe

Closing Thoughts

Worship - what is it not? Worship is not about **location**, it’s not about **getting**; it’s not about **entertainment**; and it’s not about **escape**.

While the whole world is busy pursuing their own pleasure, desperately seeking meaning and purpose in life and blindly bowing down to their own idols, God is seeking true worshipers. God is seeking people who would worship Him not because what they can get, seeking people who would worship Him and not to be entertained and seeking people who would worship Him not as an escape but would worship Him because He is worthy of praise and worship.

“People desperately search for the things that only God can give them while at the same time they are fleeing from Him.” - Thomas Aquinas

Has the Lord spoken to your heart about this matter of worship? Don’t run from Him. If your worship is not what it ought to be and if it is not worship that is pleasing to the Lord, **come to Him like the woman at the well**. It is impossible to be a true worshipper unless you have been born again. Our Lord revealed Himself to the Samaritan woman as the living water. Come to the living water. Come to Jesus!

The Samaritan woman's life was radically changed when she received the living water. She started telling others about Jesus Christ and many believed because of her testimony. The best Christian witness is out of the overflow of great delight in our Lord.

AMEN!