

**Coming Closer**  
**Heart of Worship Series**  
**March 3, 2024**

Good morning church family. It's great to see all of you. Thanks for praying for Corene and I as we traveled to Alabama to spend time with my family celebrating my mother's 85<sup>th</sup> birthday. It was good to spend time with her and my brother and sister. It's good to be back home worshipping with all of you.

I hope you've been enjoying this series on worship. I know I have learned a lot as we dive into the bible to see what God has to say about worship. Mackenzie did a great job last weekend helping us to realize that **worship is ultimately a lifestyle**. A set of choices that we make – rearranging things in our life – so that God is number one in our lives. As we've said worship is much more than a song – much more than our hour and half that we spend together in corporate worship on Sunday's.

Worship is multifaceted: It can be expressed in a multitude of ways:

- **Prayer** – is spending time with God. He loves us and wants to spend time with us. Intimately sharing what's going on in our lives - and listening to His voice - so we know how-to live-in order **to bring a smile to His face**.
- **Reading the bible** – is another way to worship God. God wrote us a love letter – telling us how important we are to Him – How much He loves us – and how we can bring Him glory – by living a life that is good for us and pleasing to Him. That's a sign of respect! **Honoring His Word**. That's part of worship.
- **Giving gifts to God** – All through the bible we saw people giving gifts to God. Thanking Him for His generosity, kindness, mercy, and forgiveness. Sharing a tenth / or more of the bounty that God had bestowed on them.
- **Singing, dancing, and shouting for joy** – is another expression of worship. **Psalm 33:1-8** says: Sing joyfully to the Lord, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise Him. Praise the Lord with the harp; make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre. Sing to Him a new song; play skillfully and shout for joy. For the word of the Lord is right and true; he is faithful in all that He does. The Lord loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of his unfailing love. By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth. He gathers the waters of the sea into jars; he puts the deep into storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the people of the world revere him.

- **Following Jesus's example and serving our fellow man** is another way of worshipping God. Jesus said the second most important commandment – was to love our neighbor as ourselves. It makes Him proud and brings Him glory when His brothers and sisters emulate His way of life. In John 13 after washing the disciples' feet Jesus said: "Now that I have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set an example that you should do as I have done for you."

Speaking of washing feet - I learned some new things this week in studying for this message. In Exodus 25 – 30 God lays out detailed plans for how He wanted Israel to worship Him. I know it's Old Testament – and we don't live under the Old covenant anymore – but there are things / principles that were true then – that I think we can learn from – in our worship today.

In Exodus 25-30 God lays out this detailed list of how / and when – His people could approach Him and live. Once again – God is holy – and His people weren't. They were content to let Moses and other leaders talk to God up close and personal – and they just wanted to stay back where it was safe. But God desired to live among His people – so He devised this plan – where He could **camp out** with His people. They were living in tents – and He was leading them into the Promise Land with a cloud by day and a fire by night. But **He wanted to get closer** / more personal in His interactions with His people. So he set up this arrangement of tents that were surrounded by a courtyard – where He could live amongst His people.

The courtyard was approximately 75 feet wide and 150 feet long – with walls that were approximately 8 foot tall. It was a portable sanctuary that could be picked up and moved to the next location as God led them into the Promised Land.

As I said there were all kinds of details – the size, the shape, the materials, the colors, the tools used, the clothing for the priest, everything was meticulously laid out in detail.

I want to pick up the story in **Exodus 29:35-46**.

- God wanted to dwell among His people!
- Aaron and his sons and the tribe of Levi – were set apart (consecrated) to be used for God's Holy purposes. (Remember 2 weeks ago we saw that all of us who believe in Jesus Christ and are following after Him – are Priest! "You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but

now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy...1 Peter 2:

- They had to be cleansed – made holy – purified - by the blood of animals.
- Bulls and lambs were killed on a daily basis – to make atonement – pay the penalty for their sins.
- There were sin offerings, drink offerings, grain offerings, burnt offerings, all kinds of sacrifices were made to honor God in His Holiness.
- These offerings were a pleasing aroma to God.

**Daily sacrifices were made** – so God could meet with His people and speak to them! “There I will meet with the Israelites and the place will be consecrated by my glory. I will consecrate the Tent of Meeting and the altar and will consecrate Aaron and his sons to serve me as priests. THEN I WILL DWELL WITH THE ISRAELITES AND BE THEIR GOD. They will know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them out of Egypt so that I MIGHT DWELL AMONG THEM. I am the Lord their God.”

GOD JUST WANTED TO BE NEAR HIS PEOPLE!!!

So as we are learning to worship God better and more fully – what can we learn from these chapters?

As I look at the courtyard - and see how God set things up – three things come to mind.

**One was the gate.** On the east end of the courtyard there was a gate that you entered to get close to God. **Psalm 100:4-5 says:** “Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.”

So as we prepare to meet with God – it seems that He appreciates it when we appreciate Him! We are to enter His gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise – because of His goodness, faithfulness, and enduring love.

As we prepare for Easter in a couple of weeks – I remember how on Palm Sunday Jesus came riding into town – and it said “the people 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!’”

In **John 10:7-15** Jesus reminds us that HE IS THE GATE!

- The way to the Father is through HIM!
- All who enter through Him will be saved!
- HE came that we could have life and have it to the full.
- He is the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep.

**Second thing I want to focus on – The Altar – Exodus 27:1-8**

In his book “How To Worship A King” Zach Neese says: “The first thing a person would see coming through the tabernacle gates was the altar of sacrifice. Glittering with the brass that overlaid it, the altar was made of acacia wood. It stood between five and six feet tall with a square base. Each corner of the altar was capped by a brass or bronze horn. Worshippers brought their sacrifices to the tabernacle and bound them to the horns of the altar with cords, then transferred their sins to the animal by laying a hand on the animal’s head and pronouncing their sin. The animal’s throat was then cut and its blood poured out at the foot of the altar, and the body was then placed on the four horns. After butchering the animal, the priest burned a sacrificial portion on the altar as a sweet aroma to the Lord.”

That was worship in the Old Testament. He goes on to say: “What a powerful, visceral image. Imagine what a worshipper’s senses were communicating as he approached the altar. The sounds of life and death intermingled. The smell of waste and blood and burned flesh. The sight of evisceration. **The emotions involved in requiring another to die on your behalf.** And the weight that was lifted from the heart once the sacrifice was complete.”

**Part of worship is going to the altar!** We don’t take bulls and lambs to the altar – but we do cry out to Jesus – THE LAMB OF GOD WHO TAKES AWAY THE SINS OF THE WORLD. AND WE CONFESS OUR SINS TO HIM!

Just like Israel of Old – God is Holy – and we are not. **1 John 1:9** says: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us of our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

**Hebrews 13:11-16** “The high priest carries the blood of animals into the most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. And so, Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood. Let us then go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore. For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking to the city that is to come. Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips

that confess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.”

We've been challenged to offer our bodies as living sacrifices – Holy and pleasing to God. **The altar is about laying down our lives – allowing God to burn up our flesh so we can come closer to Him.**

In John 4 Jesus explained to the woman at the well that “True worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. God is Spirit, and his worshippers must worship in Spirit and in truth.’

Worship is about submitting our lives to the Lordship of Christ.

### **The third thing I'm learning about worship from the Old Testament – Laver The Basin for Washing – Exodus 30:17-21**

- If we are truly going to worship God – we need clean hands and clean hearts!
- The tabernacle was divided into the 3 parts – the outer court where people could come offer their gifts and confess their sins – then there was the holy place – where the priest did much of their ministry – and once a year the high priest could enter into the holy of holies.
- But before the priest could go into the Holy Place – they had to wash their hands and their feet – so they would be clean – **and not die!**
- Before they ministered to God and His people – they went to the Laver
- I think of doctors and how they scrub up before they go into surgery because they don't want to contaminate their patients with germs.
- In the same way we live in a dirty world – where we pick up the dirt and filth of the world. Remember Jesus washed the disciples feet – but he told Peter he didn't need a whole bath.
- Jesus death on the cross (the altar of sacrifice) takes care of the payment of our sin. The laver – the basin of washing – is how God continually cleans us up through His Word. Ephesians 5:25-27 “Husbands love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, **cleansing her by the washing with water through the word**, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.”

- The Laver – The Basin for Washing was made of mirrors. So as the priest washed with water – (cleaning the outside) – he was also seeing his reflection – God dealing with what was going on in the inside.
- God’s Word is like a mirror – **James 1:19-27**
- Don’t merely listen to the word. **DO WHAT IT SAYS! OBEDIENCE IS A BIG PART OF WORSHIP**

**The Gate** – Enter into it with thanksgiving and praise! Remember Jesus is the gate. The One that makes it possible for us to get near our God.

**The Altar** – is where sacrifices are made. Honest confession. Continually crawling up on the altar and presenting ourselves to God

**The Washing Basin (Laver)** – Daily spending time in God’s Word – letting it wash away the things of this world – which hinder our relationship with God.

Worship Team

**Benediction Hebrews 13:20-21**

Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.