

Feb. 11th, 2023, The Heart of Worship – Why We Worship

Welcome – Lent begins this Wednesday; it is a church tradition that we sometimes observe. Typically, it is time when people fast from something (Like food or indulgence) – Focus on getting our hearts right with God. Leading up to Easter. The timing of this new series was not intentional, but I find it intriguing that we start ‘The Heart of Worship’ this morning.

Summary: Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care (Ps 95: 6-7). God desires and deserves our worship, but how do we come before him? What are the ways to honor his name? Join us as we examine what worship is and how we can prepare our hearts, our lives to enter his gates with thanksgiving.

-I know this is going to sound strange but I really struggled with this sermon. The kick-off title is ‘Why we Worship’. It seems like such a simple question to answer, perhaps I can blame it on my tendency to overthink things.

-Pray

-The reality is all humans will worship something... We are wired that way, not unlike animals are instinctive about certain things.

Romans 1: 18-21 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse... (*Let’s pause for a moment*)

-Looking at the big picture: Our universe is huge, it’s beyond even our imagination. There are more stars in the universe than there are ants on our planet and yet scripture tells us God knows each star by name. Looking smaller: Each atom resembles a solar system with a star (Nucleus) and planet (Electrons) orbiting around it. Infinitely as far as we can see beyond us and yet at the same time infinitely as far as we can see internally... There has to be a God.

Romans 1: 21-23 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.

-They made God into something that they could control, something they could handle. Before we make fun of them for worshipping ‘things’ (*Hold up cat statue then switch it out with cellphone*) I don’t think we are a lot different, but I know some of us will argue that many of these things are good. This is something that is a part our culture and we have to deal with.

-Let’s examine a story found in 2 Kings...

2 Kings 17: 25-33 (*When the Northern Kingdom fell the king of Assyria brought his own people and settled them in the towns of Samaria to replace the Israelites*): ‘When they first lived there, they did not worship the Lord; so, he (God) sent lions among them, and they killed some of the people. It was reported to the king of Assyria: “The people you deported and resettled in the towns of Samaria do not know what the god of that country requires. He has sent lions among them, which are killing them off...

-It might be helpful to know that people in those times believed there were gods of different regions. There is the story of Naaman, a foreigner from a country often hostile to Israel. He went there and was healed from his skin disease, and he said in **2 Kings 5:17** to “please let me, your servant, be given as much earth as a pair of mules can carry, for your servant will never again make burnt offerings and sacrifices to any other god but

the Lord.” He believed that if he could physically transplant the dirt from Israel and mix in some of God in his hometown.

-So you can see the mindset that there were gods of certain areas that needed to be appeased.

-Back to the **2 Kings 17: 32-33 story. (Then the king of Assyria sent)** one of the priests who had been exiled from Samaria to come to live in Bethel and he taught them how to worship the Lord. Sounds good but let’s read on.

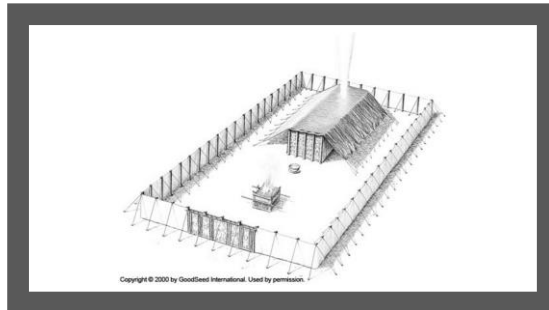
.... They worshiped the Lord, but they also appointed all sorts of their own people to officiate for them as priests in the shrines at the high places. They worshiped the Lord, but they also served their own gods in accordance with the customs of the nations from which they had been brought.’

-Two things jumped out to me, first, they were clearly influenced by their culture, it impacted their worship. It was duplicity – Their worship was divided – something we need to be wary of... What is it that commands your attention? Is it our culture or is it our God?

-Jesus said in **Matthew 6: 21** ‘For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.’

-The second thing that stood out is why did they want to know what God requires? So, they didn’t get eaten by lions... Makes sense, but what’s interesting this is a basic fact that motivates people in all religions – What’s in it for me, how do I make myself right with my concept of god(s)? All religions recognize there is a god, something beyond themselves. And most of the rules and guidelines are to appease these gods so life goes well for us. It is self-serving. Christianity is different. Let me explain it in this way...

-Most religions correctly conclude that something is wrong the relationship between us and God. And their solution is that some type of sacrifice is necessary. You can see it even the original tabernacle that Mose built. What was the first thing you saw when you entered – The altar, you could get no closer to God until a sacrifice was made.



-Now this is where Christianity pivots from all other religions. Let’s read...

Hebrews 7: 23-26 Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. Such a high priest truly meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.

Hebrews 7: 27 Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.

-Not only is He the priest, but He is the sacrifice.

John 14: 6 Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

-No one can get close to God without the sacrifice, the tabernacle foreshadowed that for us. Jesus allows us to get close to the holiest place the presence of God.

-What should our response be with this knowledge? Let’s look at our scripture text for today... ‘THEREFORE

As I always say when we read scripture, we need to pay attention to the words – what is the ‘Therefore’?

Romans 11: 33-36 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! ³⁴ “Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?” ³⁵ “Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?” ³⁶ For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

-God is so amazing let us not make him into something that we control or just another idol we worship with some of our attention. THEREFORE...

Romans 12: 1 (A Living Sacrifice) Therefore, I urge you, brothers, and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

- ‘In view of God’s mercy,’ when you enter His courtyard and you see Jesus and your heart is moved then worship with your life.

-Some may ask what does this look like actually lived out? In Ephesians 5, Paul gives us a glimpse in...

Ephesians 5: 1-2, 15-20 Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God... Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

-Why We Worship – It’s because of Jesus...

~Invite Worship Team forward~

-We are going to sing an oldy but goody. Sometimes it’s easier to enter His courts with what is familiar and that is the intent, but let’s be careful to make sure our worship is focused on Jesus – He is why we worship!

Benediction: Here’s a cool thought from CS Lewis. In one of the statements of faith it talks about the chief end of man is to glorify God, in other words, our main purpose is to worship Him. CS says this: **(It)** “...says that man’s chief end is ‘to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.’ But we shall then know that these are the same thing. Fully to enjoy is to glorify. In commanding us to glorify Him, God is inviting us to enjoy Him.” — C. S. Lewis