



Jesus, Only Jesus

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Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our “God is a consuming fire.” Hebrews 12:28-29

Read: Leviticus 16; Hebrews 12: Revelation 11:15-19

Today marks my late father’s first birthday in Heaven. I cherished his counsel. During one of our last visits, while playing a top ten Christian tune on my laptop, Dad spoke up quietly, slowly, “Young people like that, I suppose.” He paused, punctuating each word, “Jesus, only Jesus.”

My husband and I have witnessed division and disunity over worship style in at least six previous churches in the past couple decades – the older generation, the traditional choir and orchestra, marginalized and dismissed. Today this trend is known as “worship wars.” Our key passage – and one of the few instructions in the New Testament on worship – reminds us to worship God *acceptably* with awe and reverence for our God is a consuming fire – only what was done for Christ will last.

Instead of hype, why not make space for silence and confession? Instead of seeking a concert-like experience, could we go to worship ready to serve? Instead of competing loud instruments accompanied by yelling, wild dancing, or screaming, why not face down, listening? Rather than I’m-ok-you’re-ok lyrics

and messages devoid of biblical content, why not be reminded of God's holiness – and my sinfulness? Instead of worship wars, could we put on selfless love out of reverence for Christ? Instead of concert-like theaters and entertainment to attract the masses, why not shift the focus to what is acceptable to God? To whom are we directing our worship – to whom are we trying to please? Commandment #1 reminds us: "Have no other gods before Me" (Ex. 20:3).

Pagan priests danced harder, shouted louder, and cut themselves deeper to satisfy their gods (1 Kings 18:27-29). Pagan worship is marked by human sacrifice *for their gods*; as Christians we worship the Almighty God *who sacrificed for us*. What does the Father God require of us? "To act justly, love mercy, and to walk *humbly* with your God" (Micah 6:8). Pagan worship concerns itself with pleasing the gods. In this me-centric, narcissistic culture, people demand a worship "experience." Just because there is a crowd does not mean God is pleased. "Where there are two or three gathered in My Name, there I am..." (Mt. 18:20). As Hebrews 12 admonishes, seek to worship God acceptably, reverently, for the honor and glory of Christ. If your worship context leans into the "wisdom" of market research for a seeker-friendly experience, seek out the remnant - those who continue to worship the Almighty although discarded, and/or marginalized. Seek out those who continue to worship, although there is no "audience." Jesus taught: "the gate is narrow and few there be that find it" (Mt. 7:14). Worship that is acceptable unto the Lord is not concerned with attracting the masses nor the approval of man.

A prayer for today:

Lord, please awaken my heart to what is acceptable and pleasing unto you. Please forgive me for seeking my own desires and pleasures in worship – even my own glory. Help me to listen to your voice and worship in accordance with your ways. Grant me the favor to be in fellowship with those who worship you acceptably, with reverence – for your honor and glory, alone. In Jesus' Name, Amen.