Good morning. Let me begin today, as we conclude our series on the body of Christ, with this question: Have you paused recently to consider the awesome creativity of God? It’s an attribute of His that we don’t talk about much, but we see it in nature, in the design of humanity, in our relationship with Him, and in our relationships with each other. David celebrates God’s creativity when he writes, “The heavens declare the glory of God” (Psalm 19:1). We see it in the invention and design of the church and in the ways that we, both individually and corporately, are given to worship Him, many of which we will exercise this morning.

Church, listen. As believers and followers of Christ, all of life is worship. Worship begins with a heart in spirit and truth that is satisfied in Him. Worship is not merely an aspect of our being, but it is who we are as image-bearers for our God. Listen. The key to praising Christ is prizing Him. Let me repeat that: The key to praising Christ is prizing Him! This means maintaining Jesus as our undisputed priority as careful stewards and managers of His grace. As we have received Him, we both supernaturally and practically walk in Him. Worship is *not* a Christian code word for music. However, music is a vehicle, a means by which we bring our worship. And speaking of God’s creativity, He created music! But the worship doesn’t end when the music stops. But, Pastor Chris—you will ask—what is the correct worship style? My answer is simple—the best worship is authentic, honest, and sacrificial. Spiritual and truthful worship helps keep us from sin and encourages our operating in the spirit of generosity. God is to be worshipped in the way *He* wishes, not the way we wish. Any complaint about a hymn or other church music has little effect because the music is not for the complainer! Worship should emerge from our prizing Christ!

Think of God’s creativity and sovereignty in the design of the church. Look again at Luke’s report on the activities of the early church just after Pentecost (see Acts 2:33-47 in passages in support of this sermon, after the text). The account in Acts tells of stewarding of grace and resources, of joyful sharing—worship in all its forms. What we see there is confirmation that worship is a lifestyle response to the Gospel—a unity in diversity of gifts and resources, stewarding of a pervasive generous spirit of worship. This picture of worship provides motivation for us to prepare ourselves for corporate worship—reading the scripture, praying for focus, making sure we are prepared to make and keep the Main Thing the Main Thing.

Think of all the ways which we believers can worship this morning: Responding to the grace given, in joyful fellowship, we present praise, prayer, readings of God’s word, participation in Holy Communion, stewarding our resources through tithes and offerings. Regarding giving, did you know that Jesus spoke about resources, money, possessions, and lifestyle twenty-nine times throughout the four Gospels? This focus constitutes fifteen percent of what he has said in scripture. These moments in His ministry represent a crucial part of His teaching about believers’ corporate reassurance and treasuring of His blessings. This church—our Shepherd congregation—is an incredibly generous church, whose members understand that sharing and giving of resources, including our finances, our time, our prayers, and our carrying of each other’s burdens are acts of treasuring Christ in obedient worship. And as your brother and co-servant and pastor, I want to encourage you in those acts of generosity and say thank you for being good stewards of the grace of our God. Where our treasure is, our hearts will be also (Matthew 6:21; Luke 12:34; Colossians 3:1). These behaviors, these good habits, do not represent a means to an end; no, they constitute a lifestyle. All of life is to be worship—is to reflect a spirit of generosity and worship flowing from a spirit of gratitude for the grace we receive from God. And here’s a truth of paramount importance: You can never out-give God! Thus, we can give of our time and resources and trust God with them. It’s not about the amount. It’s about gratitude, obedience, and sacrifice in praise of Him. I submit to you that in Jesus’ teaching, it’s more about worship economy that financial economy. It’s about devotion It’s about treasuring Christ as gain. Generosity is not something God wants from us. It is something He wants *for* us.

God multiplies grace in our lives. Worship is a dialogue between God and humanity, between Christ and His bride. It is expressed individually and corporately. It is stewardship of our faith, an outpouring of all that we are and all He is making us into by His grace. Worship is an expression of the soul’s condition:

15 Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. 16 And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased. (Hebrews 13:15-16).

Worship expresses knowledge of God and valuing Him above all things. Thank you to each of you for being a part of this local body of Christ. Thank you for allowing me to be your pastor. Let us together diligently guard our stewardship of grace. Being a part of the body of Christ is a high honor and calling. We shouldn’t be casual with it. Worship means commitment and practice of all ways to recognize and to appreciate the grace of God—prizing Christ!

Passages in support of this sermon:

*Colossians 2:6-10*

6 So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, 7 rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

8 See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces[a] of this world rather than on Christ.

9 For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, 10 and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority.

*Acts 2:38-47*

38 Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” 41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.