

Sermon ✝ July 10, 2022
Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12
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Today I want to start our conversation about worship as one of the *Faith Habits* with a clear statement of the purpose of Christian worship.

We worship to acknowledge God as God. Christian worship is not about us. Christian worship is about coming before God, about having God as the focal point of our lives for just a few moments, not ourselves.

When people come to worship with their primary concern as themselves, they miss the joy, wonder and power of what we are about in this place. We worship God—not ourselves—because of the righteousness of God.

Now, I fully understand that "righteousness" is a difficult word for us to get our hands around. But think of it this way—because God's character is right and true, because God's heart is pure and God's intentions are always just and honorable, we describe God as righteous.

How do we know this about God? Because God has proven it to us. The author of the book of Hebrews says that God has clearly shown us who God is in Jesus:

“Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds.”

He *is* the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being. If you want to really *know* God, look at who God is by what God did in the person and work of Jesus of Nazareth and what you'll see there is a God who is righteous.

All this *righteous* God asks of us is that we worship. The prophet Micah records God's call in these words: *“God has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”*

That's just one of the many and clear commands of God that we worship. Worship, the word, means *worship*. God calls us to worship because God alone is *worthy* of our worship. God has proven that *worth-ship* throughout the centuries in God's dealings with the people of God but especially and most clearly in the coming of Jesus, God's son.

If you desire to worship God rightly and richly, here are five steps that can lead you into a right heart for worship:

- † First, come to give glory to God; that is, get your purpose and attention straight.
- † Second, greet others. We *come* as a community because that is how God designed worship from the very beginning.
- † Third, be expectant. God tells us that worship is "walking with God." Come expecting just such an experience.
- † Fourth, pray; that is, take time to ask God's Holy Spirit to prepare you for what can happen, to work through all the imperfect and faltering efforts of those who lead and bring you before the God who alone is God.
- † Fifth, meet the Savior. Somewhere in the midst of what we do, Jesus Christ will keep his word. He has promised that "wherever two or three gather in my name, there shall I be also." Powerful Christian worship begins with its clear purpose in mind; this is first and foremost about God, not us.

When worship is about God, we discover the benefits of our worship. Worship brings us concretely into the friendship of God and the benefits come to us because God rubs off on us.

Again, the author of the Book of Hebrews understands this and writes, "*For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.*"

The more frequently you and I worship, participate in this friendship with God, the more God's character shapes us. It is a simple fact of life—if you choose to be around cynical, bitter people, sooner or later you will become cynical and bitter. If, on the other hand, you surround yourself with those of grateful hearts and those who choose to see the best in others, guess what? That is what you will become.

With worship as a core practice of our faith, we receive a life enriched . . . God will *rub off on* us. Having God *rub off on* us means that we develop life with depth. Having God rub off on us means that we develop life with breadth.

When Jesus Christ enters our lives, he brings with him all kinds of other friends. We will meet the poor and the outcast, we will meet the humble and the servant. And be prepared! . . . when we worship weekly, when God rubs off on us, our friendship circle will expand. You'll begin to see heaven in places and people you never thought possible. You'll meet eternity in such mundane encounters as with flight attendants, business owners, secretaries and custodians. And if you watch carefully enough, you'll see God's love in the child or spouse, friend or colleague with whom you most closely live.

What our God asks of you and me is commitment. A commitment to keep the friendship going and growing.

A friend of mine in college, Dave, was an art major ... a potter ... he worked with clay. He could, of course, make mugs and pots and other utensils, but he could also bring out of a lump of clay wonderful images beyond those mundane works, images that soar and sing. I remember watching him throw some clay. He took that lump of inert matter and plopped it onto his wheel only to look at it carefully and then take it off. Three times he did that. And when I asked him why he did, he told me an amazing thing, "*If the clay isn't centered right,*" he said, "*no matter what you do, it won't work. Centering the clay is the single most important part of my work.*"

Worship is God's call to grow your soul. Worship is our opportunity to *center our lives*. We center our lives because here we think long term.

If my friend had only the task of getting that clay done, he would not have so carefully centered it. He knew from past experience the consequences of such short term thinking, and with the care of a master artist, he had something that would last, something that would express his very self . . . so he kept centering that clay.

Worship grows our souls because here we choose, again and again, to be far-sighted.

So much of our lives is caught up in doing. God celebrates our being. Worship is God's call for us to be and in *being* we see differently.

My friend, Dave, *saw* differently than I did. In a lump of clay he could see and feel a beauty hidden from my eyes.

Worship offers us a practice of nearness to God,
... a spiritual centering that grows beautiful souls
... and lives that leave blessings behind them.

Worship, our opportunity to touch eternity, is God's call and blessing.

When was the last time you touched eternity?