

An Examination of Worship

Introduction

Good morning, it is a pleasure to be here with all of you to engage in the worship of God; to lift His name and to examine truths we find in His word.

It has been some time since I have visited Lilac Road, probably about a year and a half which it does not seem possible that it has been that long. But my ability to gauge the passage of time was seriously thrown off last year and still hasn't fully clicked back into place.

As we all know, the past year and half has certainly been eventful. Each of us has faced challenges and difficulties but here we are. We have made it to this point, Sunday morning April 18th, 2021. We have come together to honor the one who has sustained us through thick and thin, who gave His Son as payment for our sins, and who will see us through to heaven if we are faithful.

So, let's talk about His things. This morning, I want us to examine:

- The idea of worship. What is it?
- Look at a few examples from the Bible
- Looks at dangers associated with faulty worship
- Look at steps we can take to improve our individual worship, which can then have an impact on others

What Does it Mean to Worship?

- 1) It can help to start at the definition and meaning of the word itself.
- 2) The root of the English word "worship" can be traced back to the idea "worth-ship"
 - a) Literally the idea is that worth /value is being assigned to an object, and it is being conveyed / or carried
 - b) In this original configuration, "worth-ship" this does not necessarily have to refer to a religious activity
 - c) This is a concept that we are familiar with:
 - i) You can look at piece of land and say, "I want this land, this is worthy of my money"
 - ii) You can look at the work of someone else and say, "that was a great job"
 - d) However, the word worship is decidedly religious in nature
 - i) It is to assign worth/value to a deity (God) via action.
 - ii) It is not worship of God to have a thought or acknowledge value but then fail to assign that value to God's account
 - (1) For example: You can be on a mountain and look out over a beautiful value and say, "that is amazing". However, if you do not assign that beauty to God's creative skill/power, it is not worship.
 - (2) For a Biblical example: Nebuchadnezzar praised himself for the greatness of his empire, which did not turn out well for him. (Daniel 4)
- 3) Proskuneo - "To bow down to" or "To kiss the hand of"
 - a) This is the idea of expressing fealty to a sovereign (think knights bowing down to the king)
 - b) Less flatteringly you can think of a dog who licks "kisses" the hand of its' master
- 4) Worship is deliberate
 - a) It does not just happen all the time (the living sacrifices error from Romans 12)
 - b) Value has to be actively, thoughtfully conveyed

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Examples of Worship

Looking at the Bible there are several examples of worship mentioned in both the Old and New Testament. For the sake of this lesson I have chosen to break out worship based on the following distinctions: individuals / groups / the Church

- 1) Individual – Jacob leaning on his staff (**Hebrews 11:21**)
 - a) This is interesting because the word worship is not in Genesis 48 or 49 when Jacob is doing the blessing
 - b) What we do see is Jacob referring to God as his “shepherd” and “redeemer” when blessing Ephraim and Manasseh (**Genesis 48:15-16**)
 - c) We also see Him in the next chapter granting blessings (more like prophesying about the future of each tribe)
 - d) This was not a formal “worship” service, but he was making declarations of faith and assigning his survival and good fortune to God
 - e) This is something that we need to do as well.
- 2) Group – Paul & Silas in prison (**Acts 16:25**)
 - a) These men were in a difficult spot. They were literally sitting in a dark jail cell after having been beaten and yet what are they doing? Praying & Singing
 - b) We do not know what they said or what they sang, but we do know others were listening
 - c) This brings up two important points:
 - i) **Worship can take place when we are feeling high or feeling low**
 - ii) **Worship done properly, is evangelistic because it points other people to God**
 - d) In the next few verses, we see through a series of events that leads the jailer to being baptized along with his family
- 3) The Church – the Christians were gathered to partake of the Lord’s supper and hear a message from Paul (**Acts 20:7**)
 - a) Collective worship is an example that we see mentioned or referenced at every local congregation in the New Testament
 - b) It is intended to glorify God and be evangelistic
 - c) It is intended to be encouraging and strengthen the bonds that tie us together
- 4) We all need to engage in worship in all three of these scenarios: as an individual, with groups, as a congregation

Dangers with Worship

- 1) We assign worship to the wrong place
 - a) Idolatry in the Old Testament (**Ezekiel 8:16-18**)
 - b) John in Revelations was rebuked for starting to worship an angel (**Revelation 22:8-9**)
 - c) For us:
 - i) Sports (example of roommate)
 - ii) Family focused
 - d) You shall love the Lord your God with... (**Deut. 6:4-6**)
- 2) It becomes habit (tradition) rather than thought driven
 - a) One of the problems with God’s people in the OT was they said the right things but did not mean it (**Isaiah 29:13-14**)
 - b) How can we tell?
 - c) There is a lack of emotion
 - i) We tend to minimize emotion because the broader religious world is overly focused on emotion

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- ii) However, if we are never touched or convicted or moved by the words and songs then there is a problem because emotions stem from thought and we are motivated by emotions.
 - (1) We do not change unless we feel the sting of sin.
 - (2) We are not compelled to help others unless we see their plight and are moved with empathy.
 - (3) We do not pour out true worship unless we feel reverence for the God who made us.
- iii) We need to have “organic” emotion in worship. Emotion that is thought driven.
 - (1) I believe this is one of the reasons why God gave us singing. (**It Is Well With My Soul**)
 - (2) At baptisms, when we think about what is happening; it is entirely appropriate to be overwhelmed with emotion.
- d) There is carelessness
 - i) Example of Nadab and Abihu (**Leviticus 10:1-3**)
 - ii) How can we tell?
 - (1) Missed words in songs
 - (2) Forgetting about preparing your offering
 - iii) We do not need to be paranoid, but we should be engaged
- e) We object to any proposed changes without examination, without considering if the proposed change is Biblical
 - i) New songs
 - ii) Changing the order of service
 - iii) Focusing more on the Lord’s Supper
- 3) We make the experience about us rather than on God
 - a) We focus on our preferences
 - i) Let’s only sing the songs we like
 - (1) Ivory Palaces – example of song we would not sing
 - ii) Let’s dim the lights and get the smoke machine going create an “environment” of worship
 - iii) I didn’t like today’s sermon or Bible class
 - b) We stop changing to be like Him
 - i) God is selfless – Jesus sacrificed himself so that we might live. When he left heaven to come to earth, it was not because He wanted to be a human being for the sake of being a human.
 - ii) God is deliberate – His actions are not empty but rather purposeful
 - (1) There is nothing lackadaisical about God
 - iii) When worship becomes about us, we are feeding our own character flaws
 - (1) As Americans we already get to much of what we want
 - (2) Worship is not about us
 - c) We stop stirring up one another to love and good works (**Hebrews 10:19-25**)
 - i) One of the best by products of worship is the impact we can have on each other
 - ii) Singing is a form of “teaching and admonishing” / encouragement
 - iii) Paul & Silas were able to help each other in the jail cell in Philippi

How Do We Improve Our Outlook on Worship, Individually and as a Congregation?

- 1) It starts by focusing on God
 - a) What has he done? (Nature / Planets)
 - b) Is he worthy of praise? (This is an easy answer if you think about what he has done)
 - c) Has he done anything for you? (Again, this is an easy answer.)
- 2) Read from Psalms
 - a) There are lots Psalms that help a person get into the correct mindset for worship
 - b) Example: Psalm 100 or 105 or **Psalm 19:1-4a**

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- 3) Be Deliberate & Purposeful
 - a) Michael Jordan would zone out during timeouts because he was thinking about the next series of events
 - b) We need to zone out from the world before services
 - i) Cut back on the newspaper
 - ii) Stay off your Twitter feed
 - iii) Think about what will be happening during the worship service
 - iv) What will I think about during the Lord's Supper?
 - v) If you are serving in the worship service, plan ahead
 - (1) Practice your songs ahead of time
 - (2) Create an outline or list for your prayer

Conclusion:

- What we need to be individually and congregationally, are people who are engaged in worship with our hearts and minds
- As we said at the beginning of the lesson, worship means to assign value and praise to God.
 - Out of all of the things for which He is worthy to be praised, the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross is top of the list
 - Through His sacrifice Jesus created away for our sins to be forgiven which allows us to have a direct relationship with God
 - However, just because Jesus has created a way for us to be saved, does not mean everyone is automatically saved
 - There is action that we need to take on our part.
 - We need to repent of our sins, we need to confess that Jesus is the Son of God and therefore our king, we need to be baptized so that our sins will be forgiven, and we need to remain faithful to our king
 - Now I realize there is a lot of controversy surrounding the topic of salvation in the religious world and if you would like to discuss the topic I am happy to do so after this service is concluded.
 - However, if you need to be baptized or if you are a Christian who needs to make a public confession of sin or simply needs to make known your need for support, please come forward now as we stand and sing.