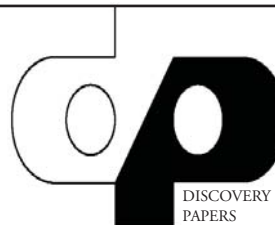


COME AND WORSHIP THE LORD

SERIES: WORSHIP



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Worship glorifies God

Many years ago I attended a fundraising concert that Michael Card was giving in San Jose. His goal at that concert was to raise money for Bibles written in Chinese. He told a story that evening about a Christian man imprisoned in China for spreading the gospel. This man's assignment once a week in prison was to stand in a large open sewer using a rake to scrape out the filth. He worked in sewage up to his knees and beyond apparently, but one thing that he discovered about this horrible job was that it was the only free place for him to worship God in the whole prison. While doing his sewer work he could sing praise songs loudly to the Lord, he would recite Scripture verses and generally hold his own private worship celebration in the quiet of this disgusting place. What a will and desire to worship this man had. How amazing it is to realize that this private worship service was somehow used to bring God glory even beyond the prison walls. His worshiping witness went all over the world—even to San Jose California where I first heard of it, and many other Chinese people received Bibles in their own language due to his worship in that vile place. One thing is for sure, this was not the first time that this man worshipped his God. He was a practiced worshiper. When he needed the words of Scripture and the songs of praise to call on in that sewer he had them stored in his memory ready to come out when he needed them.

One day worship will win out over all oppression and evil in the world. For worship is the eternal activity of heaven. It is not a small thing we do when we worship God from our hearts, but the grandest thing given man on earth to do.

Worship is an active choice

Worship takes some effort. It requires us to come give all of ourselves to God and that means refocusing our minds and hearts away from our distractions and some very serious issues in our lives. We have illness in this congregation, we have unemployment, underemployment, fear for our futures and as many cares as there are people. But we also have God with us this morning. And that is the good news. For if God is with us who can stand against us? When we trust him and worship him even in the midst of our real concerns something happens inside us, we are transformed.

And our spirits are set free to soar.

Worship allows our spirits to soar

For worship entered into wholeheartedly, daily and in our weekly times together is what we owe God, for he is worthy to be praised. The root of the Hebrew word for worship is to bow down. I like the physical action which accompanies the Hebrew word for worship, because it involves the body as well as the mind in humble obedience to God. Sometimes my self-conscious mind is all to present in worship service. I long to soar with the eagles in worshiping God, but sometimes my constraint in worship frustrates my better impulses. There is something present in me and perhaps you as well, that holds me back, some awareness that too much of that soaring is dangerous, or silly or something that I don't know how even to describe. Perhaps at the core of this failure to engage freely in worship is the false idea that if I open myself to love without reservation it may not be returned. That I might be left disappointed and bereft in what my heart desires most which is a close intimacy with God through Jesus Christ. And so I sit quietly in my pew. Taking in what is offered, but holding back in responsiveness. I will confess that in sitting back I can be a critic. Passivity in worship brings that out in us I think. Have you ever noticed that in yourself? How much better to be a creative, engaged worshipper on Sunday mornings – it is so much more fun! I invite us all to come out of our self-consciousness and come worship the LORD, fully, corporately, and intentionally, and see where the spirit leads us. We have the greatest reason for our worship – God is with us

God with us is our reason for worship

Our study today concerns the ark of the LORD entering Jerusalem for the first time. It was a grand occasion accompanied by a parade of worshipping Israelites (tens of thousand worshipers actually), dancing, singing, offering burnt sacrifices, blowing trumpets, clanging cymbals with King David head of the worshipping parade.

Why so excited? What is so great about the ark? Well, the ark was where the presence of the LORD dwelt. To see the ark of the LORD among his people in David's age was to see God's presence on earth. All light, all truth, all love, all life, all power, all goodness, all hope is found in the presence of the LORD. As David places the ark in the center or heart of Israel as a nation he is declaring God the center of his people, their King. His throne was in heaven and his footstool was the ark. This is what David is celebrating as he brings the ark of the LORD into Jerusalem for the first time and places it in the tent of meeting. Then David appointed the Levitical priests to worship before the tent of meeting every day and gave Asaph the choir director a Psalm to teach to the people so they could wor-

ship together as a community.

David teaches Israel to worship

David's psalm of thanksgiving bound the people of Israel together as a worshipping community. It was their story. It recounted God with his people, who he was and what he had done for them, so that they would remember and remain faithful to their God. And it was sung so that future generations would learn about God and worship him too. The Psalm concludes with the future promise that the Messiah of God will one day come and reign over all the earth with justice, truth and love. This part of the Psalm calls them to faith, to hope in what is unseen but promised from a faithful God.

All of David's psalms are remarkable, but this one which was Israel's first liturgical psalm has to be David's utmost for God's highest. This psalm of thanksgiving was remembered and sung in the Temple and every synagogue allowing every generation of faithful to share the same salvation history and worship God with truth and heartfelt passion.

Let me give you an overview of the Psalm and then we will talk about the parts. The first 11 verses of this psalm call on Israel to worship the LORD giving him thanks, singing praises to him, glorying (boasting or reveling) in Him, and looking (seeking) him always. Then verses 12-14 call on Israel to remember the wonders God had done, and verses 15-22 remember God for keeping his promises to Israel. Verses 23-33 anticipate the day when all the nations of the earth and even creation itself will come under submission to God's reign. Finally, in verses 34-36 David gives thanks again and closes the worship psalm. This psalm is sweeping in its scope, telling Israel what to do now to worship God, recalling the past so they don't forget who they are as a people, and looking forward to the final events of history when the Messiah shall reign over all the earth. This psalm has a great deal to teach us about what is important in our worship.

David's Psalm of Thanks—a medley of Psalms 105, 106, and 96

Verses 7-22 call on Israel to praise God (see Psalm 105:1-15). Verse 7:

That day David first committed to Asaph (the choir director of Israel) and his associates this psalm of thanks to the LORD:

Verses 8-11 are David's call to worship: **Give thanks** to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done. **Sing to him**, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts. **Glory (boast)** in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice. **Look (seek)** to the LORD and his strength; seek his face always.

What does David call on Israel to do first?

1. Give thanks to God.

Verse 8: Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done.

Thankfulness has a way of dispelling complaint I have noticed. It is very hard to be cross and to be thankful at the same time. What a great place to begin in the worship of God. Think for a minute of just one thing you are thankful for right now – this very morning.

David has in mind specific promises God has kept with his people over time which he lists in verses 15-22 of this poem. But thankfulness is not limited to past acts which God has done. He is constantly at work in the lives of his people and in the world around us. Thankfulness is something we cultivate as we notice what God is up to. The apostle Paul fills his letters with thankfulness because he sees God's workmanship everywhere. If you ever want to study giving thanks just study Paul's letters.

David also points out that thankfulness to God declares the truth about God and proclaims him before those who may not know him yet. Ps 40:10 Says, "I do not hide your righteousness in my heart I speak of your faithfulness and salvation, I do not conceal your love and truth from the great assembly." 145:4 "One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts." Worship is wordy. It tells about God and reveals Him to others you don't know God yet. Sometimes I think we think worship is to be hidden or private, but what David is talking about hear is witness.

I wondered about that. The Chinese man in our opening did not worship for anyone other than God yet God used him to touch the world. I think that is the mystery of our worship as a church and as individuals. Somehow when we proclaim the truth of God it never comes back without effect. It transforms us, and our world, because God uses it to glorify himself, but how he does this is often unknown to us.

2. Sing praises to God

Verse 9: Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts.

Ps 33:1, 3 says "Sing joyfully to the LORD, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him... Sing to him a new song." Eph 5:19-20 says, "Sing and make music in your heart to the LORD, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything."

What is singing all about?

Singing lines up the heart and the mind and is a good way to remember truth. The inner attitude David aligns with singing is the joy found in knowing God. I love to sing, but what is it like if you don't or you have no talent for it? My husband sings awfully, but he does it loudly and has told me that he hopes God improves his voice in heaven.

Singing is for the pleasure of God and the uplifting of our hearts.

I don't know if Isaac Watts had a good singing voice but

he sings praises with his words:

"I sing the mighty power of God that made the mountains rise, And spread the flowing seas abroad, and built the lofty skies.

I sing the wisdom that ordained the sun to rule the day: The moon shines full at his command, and all the stars obey.

I sing the goodness of the Lord, that filled the earth with food; He formed the creatures with his Word, and then pronounced them good.

Lord, how thy wonders are displayed, where e'er I turn my eye, If I survey the ground I tread, or gaze upon the sky.

There's not a plant or flower below, but makes thy glories known; And clouds arise, and tempests blow, by order from thy throne;

*While all that borrows life from thee is ever in thy care, And everywhere that I can be, God's love is present there.*¹

Luci Shaw adds a fourth verse:

I sing God's presence at the birth in Bethlehem's dark night; Christ living, dying, rising, turns my darkness into light.

*Present thou are in bread and wine, Lord. Now thy grace impart, And by thy Holy Spirit's power, be present in my heart.*²

This poem praises God and lifts my heart. What a double benefit! This is singing without music! So, remember that worship is not music (though it often includes it); it is calling God our treasure and loving and serving him with our whole lives.

What do you delight in about God? Tell Him.

3. Glory (boast-revel) in our relationship with God

Verse 10: Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.

To glory is to boast in God or as Eugene Petersen writes to revel in God. Which means to brag about how great he is (not how great we are, or our church is), but how great God is. Getting out of ourselves and focusing on God and his greatness actually brings joy if we allow it to do its' work in our hearts. Why wouldn't it. God is really awesome to know.

Boast in your relationship with Him.

4. Seek the LORD

Verse 11: Look to the Lord and his strength: seek his face always.

This expression means we turn the eyes of our heart to God to help us, to heal us, to be with us, and not try to fill all the empty places of our lives with things and people and busyness. This takes effort and practice. We need God every day. Like bread which we need everyday to exist so we need God's word, everyday to live our spiritual lives. How do we seek God? We seek God through this

word, we seek him through prayer, and we seek his face always in the circumstances of our lives. Seeking God out is intentional. Sometimes I feel as dry as the desert, so I try worship songs, or reading Scripture, or try going for a walk or painting a picture.

Like a marathon runner who trains daily so he/she will be ready for the race, so we train ourselves to seek the LORD daily through Scripture study, and prayer.

How has God met you?

And we remember

5. We remember This last practice of worship is perhaps the most important. David gives the most time to it in this psalm. Verses 12-14:

¹² Remember the wonders he has done,

his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced,

¹³ O descendants of Israel his servant,

O sons of Jacob, his chosen ones.

¹⁴ He is the LORD our God;

his judgments are in all the earth.

Yahweh delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt, by judging Pharaoh with plagues, and parting the Red Sea for her to pass through. These wonders were done on behalf of Israel and showed God's power over all creation. If he can do that for Israel, what can't he do?

What do you remember God doing in your life which encourages your faith?

I recently heard that the most dangerous thing to a recovering addict is not a cross over substance like taking cocaine when you are an alcoholic, but it is forgetting how painful the addiction was that is the most dangerous threat to recovery. The farther Israel was from her slavery in Egypt the easier it was to forget the pain of slavery. And so it is with us. We constantly have to retell and remind ourselves to worship God through remembering all he is and has done on our behalf.

David tells worshipers what to remember.

Verses 15-22:

¹⁵ He remembers his covenant forever,

the word he commanded, for a thousand generations,

¹⁶ the covenant he made with Abraham, the oath he swore to Isaac.

¹⁷ He confirmed it to Jacob as a decree, to Israel as an everlasting covenant:

¹⁸ "To you I will give the land of Canaan as the portion you will inherit."

**19 When they were but few in number,
few indeed, and strangers in it,
20 they wandered from nation to nation,
from one kingdom to another.
21 He allowed no man to oppress them;
for their sake he rebuked kings:
22 “Do not touch my anointed ones;
do my prophets no harm.”**

God keeps his promises. David is recounting how God has proven he keeps his promises to his people throughout history. He has made good on his promise to Abraham that he would be the father of nations and that he would live on the land of Canaan. That came true for Israel in David's time. Beyond keeping his promises God is a God who chose the insignificant and the least of these to be his own. He protected and guided his small people to the land of promise, which demonstrates his character. He is full of grace and mercy and the outcast and poor are those he seeks out with his great faithful love.

When times get too easy we sometimes forget God and think we run our own lives. When things get hard we sometimes think God has abandoned us. Remembering God through Scripture and our own life stories keeps on track with the truth. That God is with us.

A woman who remembers

As I was preparing for this teaching series on worship one of my good friends called very early one morning with terrible news. Her daughter serving overseas with the Peace Corps had been in a terrible car accident. She was in a coma in Kazakhstan and that was all the parents initially knew. That first day friends and family gathered and we prayed and sang songs of worship, and prayed some more and then the family flew out to be with their daughter. I wanted to read you part of a blog posting that my friend wrote early in this difficult journey:

“I would like to thank the Peace Corps for their unwavering commitment to Jamie since her accident. One of their doctors drove eight hours in a blizzard to get to Jamie who was in a Kazakhstan hospital at that time. They have worked tirelessly to bring Jamie back to the US to receive the best medical care possible. Thank you. Please remember to pray for all of our Peace Corps volunteers serving all over the world. It is not an easy job.

The US Air Force pulled out all the stops for Jamie. We are staggered by their service for one Peace Corps volunteer... Please pray for our soldiers serving around the world. They are an incredible group of men and women.

I also want to thank you... As I look at my daughter's broken body my heart aches, my body can hardly move, and the tears are endless. She is my baby and my heart is broken. By God's grace, I take each moment as it comes. I breathe in and I breathe out, breathe in, breathe out. I walk forward one step at a time, right foot, left foot, right foot, left foot. And I pray, and I pray, and I pray. I pray fervently for a full

recovery for my Jamie-girl. I know how much God loves her and how much she loves Him. Ron, Ryan, Lailah, and I are clinging to one another as we cling to the cross of Christ. God's will be done on Earth, as it is in Heaven.

The doctors have told us that Jamie is responding to our voices and our touch. We pray and pray and pray over her and tirelessly read scripture to her. Our Jamie is a fighter, and so are we, and so are you. As we sit by her bed holding her right hand or caressing her feet (toenails painted in bright pink) we tell/beg her to not give up: to fight for her life. Please continue to pray without ceasing. God hears our prayers... Some of you have shared scripture verses and they have ministered to us... They are like a soothing balm to our troubled souls.

And finally, and most importantly, I thank God: the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the Author and Creator of life, the Exalted One, our Savior, our Lord, the Great Physician, the great I Am, our Abba (Daddy). Daddy, please continue to wrap your loving arms around my baby girl. I know how much you love her, enough to send your son, Jesus, to die for her. I trust in You, abide in You, rest in You, and have faith in You. Please heal my baby, a 100% recovery. Thank you Father for the many miracles we have witnessed since Monday. I give to You, my God, all the glory, all the honor, and all the praise.

What more can one say about worship? My friend has shown us the way. Both in attitude and in content she has glorified God. And has done it in a completely authentic way. Both her pain and her joy in God are present in this note. Her thankfulness in the midst of these circumstances amazed me. Her response in worship did not develop overnight. This kind of worship reflects a heart which has carefully sought God out through daily prayer and Scripture study and honesty before God. This is what worshiping God can make of our character if we will enter into it fully – it is beautiful.

Thanks be to God who allows us to be part of one another's lives of faith. For worshiping God together with you encourages my faith, and our worship together brings pleasure to our God. What a win-win situation.

David's Psalm has taught us a great deal about worship. He has taught us to give thanks, sing praises to God, boast in Him, Seek Him out, and Remember who he is and what he has done in salvation history of which we are a part. He has also said that our worship is effective. Our worship is a witness to the nations that God is, and that he is good. It glorifies Him and it changes us. We are transformed into people who rejoice in our innermost being when we worship God from our hearts. But David also leaves us with a hope for the future in this Psalm. For he ends with promise that one day all the earth will come under the reign of God's Messiah.

Christian worship focuses on Jesus

David looked forward to that day and we have seen the inbreaking of that kingdom come in Jesus, the Messiah of God. He is Immanuel, God with us. May David's dancing, celebrating, rejoicing in the presence of God with

his people be our model for our worship. For those of us who have received Jesus, we live each day with the Holy Spirit of God dwelling within us. We have every reason to worship – for God is with us. One day he will reign over all heaven and earth just as David foresaw in this Psalm. In that day every knee shall bow and tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

May we this morning together, and every day of our lives, bow before him with our thanks, prayers, and hearts full of rejoicing. For he alone is worthy.

The nations and all creation worship the LORD!

Let's come and worship the LORD together as we respond in worship with these last stanzas of David's thanksgiving Psalm:

Verses 23-36:

**23 Sing to the LORD, all the earth;
proclaim his salvation day after day.**

**24 Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous deeds among all peoples.**

**25 For great is the LORD and most worthy of
praise;
he is to be feared above all gods.**

**26 For all the gods of the nations are idols,
but the LORD made the heavens.**

**27 Splendor and majesty are before him;
strength and joy in his dwelling place.**

**28 Ascribe to the LORD, O families of
nations,**

ascribe to the LORD glory and strength,

**29 ascribe to the LORD the glory due his
name.**

**Bring an offering and come before him;
worship the LORD in the splendor of his
holiness.**

30 Tremble before him, all the earth!

**The world is firmly established; it cannot be
moved.**

**31 Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be
glad;**

**let them say among the nations, "The LORD
reigns!"**

**32 Let the sea resound, and all that is in it;
let the fields be jubilant, and everything in
them!**

**33 Then the trees of the forest will sing,
they will sing for joy before the LORD,
for he comes to judge the earth.**

**34 Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his love endures forever.**

**35 Cry out, "Save us, O God our Savior;
gather us and deliver us from the nations,
that we may give thanks to your holy name,
that we may glory in your praise."**

**36 Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel,
from everlasting to everlasting.**

Amen and Praise the LORD!

NOTES

1 Isaac Watts. *I Sing the Mighty Power of God.*

2. Luci Shaw and Timothy R. Botts, *Horizons: Exploring Creation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992).