



Introduction to Worship Series

Series: The Wonder of Worship

Psalm 145:1-13

January 18, 2018

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This morning we are starting a new sermon series on worship and to be quite frank, it scares me a little. As you know beloved, I am accustomed to preaching through a book of the Bible expositionally, going verse by verse, applying the Word of God. I'm still convinced that is the main way that preaching should be done in the church, but there are times when I believe it is appropriate to preach through a theme, expositionally of course, verse by verse through different texts that all relate to the same theme and I believe this is one of those times.

So why this sermon series on worship? That's a good question and the answer is multifaceted to say the least. Worship is vital to our spiritual, emotional and physical well-being. We are by definition a worshipping people, worshippers of the risen Christ our Lord and King. And yet the truth is that worship can often become like an untended marriage – it can lose its vitality and primacy in our lives. The longer that we worship, the more we gather together, quite often we can take worshipping God for granted and fail to appreciate the magnitude of what it is that we are called to do as the people of God. Why we worship, how we worship, what constitutes worship, how to cultivate worship, why worship really matters can become fuzzy in our minds and we can fail to think and reflect meaningfully and purposefully on the grandeur and wonder of worshipping God. Faithful, robust, consequential, life-defining, soul enriching, God-magnifying and Christ-exalting worship demands constant attention, constant consideration and constant pursuit. We need this series for several reasons. Let me just give you a few along with some representative Scriptures, by no means exhaustive, that point to the very real importance of vibrant, reverent, and vital worship, Why do we need this sermon series on worship?

We need this series on worship because God is worthy of our best and most complete worship. The psalmist makes this so clear in Psalm 145 where he writes: "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall commend your works to

another, and shall declare your mighty acts. (Worship is a treasure to be valued and cultivated and passed on and instilled in the lives of the next generation in the church) On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate (Worship requires real thought, real reflection on the glory and greatness of all that God is and all that God has done). They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds, and I will declare your greatness (This speaks to the corporate nature of worship and the need for all of us to be fully engaged when we come to meet with the Lord). They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness and shall sing aloud of your righteousness (Worship is to have a tone of celebration of God's goodness and righteousness). The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The Lord is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made (Worship is to be filled with wonder at the grace and mercy of God toward sinners, of His goodness to all in the temporal sense, His provision for the needs of all, but particularly for His blessing and provision, in Jesus Christ, for the salvation of sinners because His eternal unchanging love). All your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord, and all your saints shall bless you! They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom and tell of your power, to make known to the children of man your mighty deeds, and the glorious splendor of your kingdom (Worship is to have an element of witness and testimony to the lost). Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations. The Lord is faithful in all his words and kind in all his works (Worship is to be given to God in light of the fulfillment of His redemptive plan and the glory of His reign throughout the ages)." (Psalm 145:3–13, ESV) What does the Psalmist say? God is worthy to be praised for His unsearchable greatness, for His mighty acts, for his glorious splendor and majesty, for His goodness and righteousness, for His grace and His mercy, for his steadfast love, for His kingdom and dominion. Go back with me and look at the comprehensive nature of the worship of which God is worthy, the kind of worship He deserves...blue text.

God is worthy to be praised. But praising God is not just a good idea...

We need this series on worship because God commands our worship. In Psalm 89 we read: "Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts! Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth!" (Psalm 96:8–9, ESV) Then in Psalm 99, "Exalt the Lord our God; worship at his footstool! Holy is he!" (Psalm 99:5, ESV) Twice, in Rev. 19 and then 22, the angel commands John to "Worship God!" These are not suggestions, not helpful ideas – these are the commands of God to His people, but not just His people, but to the whole world. God commands our worship.

Why does He do that? Why does God command that we worship Him? It is not because God needs us to worship Him in order to make Him feel good or because He won't be complete until He gets our worship. It is not that we somehow make God complete. God is complete and sufficient in Himself. No, God commands our worship because it is both right –He deserves it, but as well, God is seeking our worship and praise because he knows we will never be satisfied, never made whole, apart from worshipping Him. Never. That He commands our worship is great love on His part. This truth needs to the next...

We need this series on worship because it is the reason for which we have been saved. Jesus said, “But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.” (John 4:23, ESV) The purpose of our redemption, the goal of God’s gracious work to redeem us from the pit of our sin and our enmity with Him is so that we would be worshippers of the Living God through Christ our Lord. It is why Peter reminds us: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” (1 Peter 2:9–10, ESV) We have been made God’s people; we have received mercy, why? So that we would worship God. It is the reason we have been saved.

We need this series on worship because we need to worship God rightly and faithfully. We need to know how to rightly worship God, what pleases Him, what honors Him, what blesses Him. We are not free to do whatever we want to do and call it worship, to offer whatever we wish and call it acceptable. God is the One who defines what is proper worship. Jesus made it clear, again in John 4, saying: “God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” (John 4:24, ESV) Worship must be in spirit and it must be in truth.

We need because the worship of God is the theme of creation and eternity. Where is all of creation heading; what will be the theme of eternity? God makes it clear in Philippians 2:9-11: “Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:9–11, ESV) Christ is to be worshiped and praised to the glory of God the Father. Revelation gives us a picture of eternity and what is the center of it? Worship. “And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who

lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying, “Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.” (Revelation 4:9–11, ESV) Revelation 5: “Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”” (Revelation 5:11–13, ESV) Worship is the theme, the goal of it all. And for that reason:

We need this series on worship because worship is the ultimate priority of our lives. We are all worshippers, everyone is. Everyone either worships an idol of his or her own making or we worship the true and living God. Worship, whether we realize it or not, is the ultimate priority of our lives. Everyone, religious or not, has a god around which they orient their lives, living to serve the glory of that god. That is an undeniable fact of life. And make no mistake, we will become like the god that we worship. The Psalmist speaks of the idols of the world and says: “Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat. Those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them.” (Psalm 115:4–8, ESV) We become like what we worship. Either like the false gods of our imagination, or like the God who is. “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.” (2 Corinthians 3:18, ESV)

Worship matters and our worship of God should be the most momentous, most meaningful, most urgent and most glorious thing we do. When we gather together for corporate worship, exalting the God of glory, enthroning Him in our praises, enthroning Him in His rightful place in our hearts, God is here with His people in very real way. There is no greater privilege on earth for the redeemed children of God than to stand in the presence of God and worship him in Spirit and truth through his Son. This is what needs to be reawakened in our hearts and souls, beloved.

Worship should be the most momentous, most significant thing that we engage in. But for our worship, both personal and corporate, to be this significant, then we must begin with focusing our hearts and minds on the holiness and the glory and the beauty of the one we must know and love and worship. For worship to be as glorious as it should be, for it to lift us out of the suffocating pressures of this world and to full us with adoration and praise, for it to be life-changing and life-defining, it must be inspired by a vision of God so great, so exalted that what we call worship will be transformed from a routine weekly gathering of people into a transcendent meeting with the God of glory. One that lays hold of us to join the heavenly choirs of saints and angels who are even now gathered around the throne of God, so that our hearts and minds are filled with such a vision of God that we will truly love and serve Him even now, in this life. Too ambitious, too grandiose, too pretentious ...I don't think so. Not when I read the Word of God.

***These notes are exceedingly minimal. Much of this sermon was preached extemporaneously. For a fuller version, please listen to the audi recording.

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