

Tea Tree Gully Community Church

Priests Unto the Lord

1Pe 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises (proclaim the excellencies (ESV)) of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful (marvellous) light.

1Pe 2:5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Preamble

From Nov 2009 to Jan 2010 I presented a series of four messages on the area of worship.

Part 1 What is worship?

Part 2 Why worship matters

Part 3 Wrong worship v right worship

Part 4 Wrong worship v right worship (aspects of worship)

I don't intend to cover all that was done then, now. But I want to revisit some things and reference to others.

These notes are all available on the website as pdf's for those who want to read further and fill the gaps.

Along with these is another booklet titled The Truth about Worship that compliments them. It also contains something of the spirit of what I want to convey today.

I also want to look at some things not covered before, that I feel God is wanting to say to us now. We are in a season poised in God, where expectation is growing that God is about to do something new. It is with this thought as a backdrop that I share the following. It's a simple but challenging message.

Read: Texts above. Expand on thoughts re corporate worship.

There are things God will do for you in public worship that aren't necessarily available to you in private worship. It was in the context of public worship that the early church experienced certain miraculous activity of the Holy Spirit.

Public worship is designed to benefit others as well as yourself – to encourage and bless and build up others.

God expects us to worship and he awaits his people in the place of public worship. To ignore or neglect public worship is to insult God as the head of a family of which we are a part. (**Eph 3:14-15**)

A New Season Imminent

After David was settled in his palace, he said to Nathan the prophet, "Here I am, living in a palace of cedar, while the ark of the covenant of the LORD is under a tent." **1Ch 17:1**

After the king was settled in his palace and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, he said to Nathan the prophet, "Here I am, living in a palace of cedar, while the ark of God remains in a tent." **2Sa 7:1-2**

David had been a personal worshipper of God since his youth and has been called the man after God's own heart. He was a worshipper and had communed with and blessed God in his journey of life. But here there is the added dimension of a corporate nature regarding worship and honouring God's presence.

Once King David was settled / established in his position of authority / responsibility he desired to make the presence of the Lord a priority, to give it a place of honour and prominence.

Today I believe God is saying the same thing to us. It's time to give added impetus, focus, priority to the presence of the Lord - and in how we come to worship.

Yes we do acknowledge his presence now in our midst and it is significant. But there is more. If we are willing it will come in greater measure and power as we give of ourselves in worship and seek more for His presence.

Let's recap briefly on some things before sharing the thrust of this message which is a word in season regarding worship for us.

Worship

The priority of worship

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, **Heb 12:28**

Question: What is acceptable worship? (Refer to booklets mentioned earlier)

Quote: A.W. Tozer

"We're here to be worshippers first and workers only second. The work done by a worshipper will have eternity in it."

All meaningful ministry flows out of fellowship with God.

While service should flow out of, and be part of our worship to God, worship of God is far more than service.

Worship is the engine room from which we serve.

Definition of Worship

Worship is:

“Our response (our minds attention and our hearts affection) both in personal and corporate settings to God – for who he is and what he has done, expressed in and by the things we say and the way we live.”

It involves acts (expressions) of worship and a life of worship.

It includes private and corporate worship.

It involves all three areas of our being – spirit, soul and body.

What worship is and isn't

Thanksgiving is not worship. Praise is not worship

Worship can and should include both praise and thanksgiving, but praise and thanksgiving can both be given without the engagement of the heart.

Worship goes deeper.

Praise and thanksgiving can both be given with the heart detached.

Worship must involve the heart.

The Lord says: "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me... Isa 29:13

An Illustration of Worship

Illustration: An example of Praise vs. Worship

The same type of car is owned by two different people, Tom and Harry.

Both Tom and Harry both praise their cars. Its attributes, features, design, capabilities, comfort and reliability.

Tom acknowledges these things and that they are worthy of positive comment and he genuinely enjoys the benefits thereof. But it doesn't consume his thinking. It doesn't go any further, it doesn't affect other areas of this life or impact upon other decisions or priorities he makes.

Harry also acknowledges all the same things; in fact he can't stop talking about the car and its great features. His focus, thinking and heart are consumed by the car. To him it has greater value, greater importance in the scale of his priorities than Tom. Harry doesn't just let anyone drive his car in case it may get damaged.

His heart is so consumed with his pride and joy that he even lays awake thinking about it, mentally reconstructing in his mind the beauty of its colour, shape and sparkling lines and features. The feel of the smooth powerful acceleration and the way it holds the corners on the road. The beading water on the glossy paint as it gets washed and the gleam of the final polished finish.

He worries about it getting damaged, leaving it in the street or car park. He even gets up in the night to just go and look at it in the garage.

Even other areas of his life get re-adjusted to accommodate to tending to his passion. His car has become an object of worship!

But what if I don't have that same pre-occupation with God?

The question is, "How well do you know him? How close are you to him?"

Quote: "An unknown God cannot be trusted, served or worshipped."
(Arthur C Pink, Attributes of God)

We are exhorted in Hosea to draw near to God and with assurance of the result.

Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD; his going out is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth." **Hos 6:3**

Bringing a Sacrifice

The Bible exhorts us that we should bring a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.

I will sacrifice a freewill offering to you; I will praise your name, O LORD, for it is good. **Psa 54:6**

Sacrifice thank offerings to God, fulfill your vows to the Most High, **Psa 50:14**

A sacrifice is something that costs us something especially when we don't feel like doing it. King David understood this.

Summarize: Story of David paying for the threshing floor to sacrifice to the Lord

See **2 Samuel 24:17-25**

But the king replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the LORD my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing." So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen and paid fifty shekels of silver for them. **2Sa 24:24**

If it doesn't cost you anything, you haven't sacrificed

Let them sacrifice thank offerings and tell of his works with songs of joy. **Psa 107:22**

I will sacrifice a thank offering to you and call on the name of the LORD. **Psa 116:17**

Discuss: The concept of intentionality in our worship – coming to give. Let us not come empty handed to receive, or casually without intent, remaining disconnected, or unfocussed at the commencement of our gatherings

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual (reasonable) act of worship. **Rom 12:1**
you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. **1Pe 2:5**

So a sacrifice is something that costs us something especially when we don't feel like doing it. We are to bring sacrifices of thanksgiving and praise with an engaged heart of worship to bless the Lord.

But that's not the end of it.

Giving and Getting

Quote: Jack Hayford (Leadership Journal Spring 1999)

“Worship is God’s gift to us, intended for our blessing and benefit. He doesn’t need it we do”

True worship sacrifices and then expects something from God. **Heb 11:6** puts it clearly: “**He that comes to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who humbly (earnestly) seek him**” (This in essence is faith, without which it is impossible to please God as the first half of the verse says).

So God is worthy of praise but we benefit from it.

Illustration: Personal testimony of God’s supernatural refreshment during worship at music practice which lasted for days.

Only Priests Can Carry His Presence.

In Old Testament worship only the priests could come into God’s presence having brought the acceptable sacrifice of animals. The Holy of Holies or the Most Holy Place was where the priests would meet with God in his manifest presence.

Read: **2 Sam 6:1-11** Story of David and transporting the Ark of the Presence of God.

When David heard that the household of Obed-Edom was prospering in all ways, he became more diligent to find out what went wrong the day Uzzah died. He apparently turned to the Scriptures for insight. (see **Chronicles 15:2**).

David found that only priests could carry the Presence - forever.

No one but the Levites (priests) may carry the ark of God... the Lord chose them to carry the ark (of his presence) and to minister before Him forever.

1 Chron 15:2

When we see a promise that has the word forever in it, it automatically means there’s a principle involved that carries over into this New Testament age of grace and beyond into eternity. It means *forever!* How does this work?

The shadows and types of the Old Testament point to a greater fulfillment in and through Christ. In short through Jesus (see **Heb 9** for why/how) all who are believers enter the priesthood of God to worship and serve him. God, now rather than

inhabiting a place, indwells us individually and inhabits a people (corporately) through worship.

In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. **Eph 3:12**

You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth." **Rev 5:10**

Only priests can carry His Presence

you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. **1Pe 2:5**

Note: This truth regarding the priesthood of all believers was lost some time after the early church and reestablished with Luther 1500's re the priesthood of all believers. No go-between needed as had been erroneously accepted by the uneducated masses, controlled and manipulate by the clergy of the day. But this truth although lost was never obsolete

The presence of God will not rest on ox carts or anything else we make. He rests on us! This truth needs to impact us afresh in private and especially corporate worship.

Extravagant Worship

Read: 2 Samuel 6:12-19 David's unhindered worship before the Lord.

This was a time of celebration, expectation and worship amongst the people. King David stripped himself of his kingly garments and put on a priests tunic, basically a priests undergarment. This is not something a king would be seen in normally.

It's worth noting that the Ark of the Covenant (the Presence of God) followed David into Jerusalem. Wherever David danced, God followed. He responds to our offerings.

In this story it's the offering of thanksgiving and praise expressed in dance.

As King David said in **Ps 35:9-10a**

My soul will rejoice in the Lord and delight in his salvation. My whole being will exclaim "Who is like you, O Lord?"

(My whole being – Spirit soul and body worship).

There are those who respond to God once his Presence is realized. But some respond before He actually comes

They are the ones who usher in the Presence of the King of Glory.

Read: 2 Samuel 6:20-23 Michal despising David

Extreme worship always looks to be extreme foolishness to those who stand at a distance. Some things can only be understood from within. Such is the case with authentic worship.

Michal was appalled at David's lack of regard for how people perceived his passion, his humility in attire, and his actions in public. Her disregard for the Presence of God revealed that she carried some of the same lack of value for the Presence that her father Saul had lived by when King.

Whenever someone despises extravagant worship they put themselves in an extremely dangerous position. Barrenness is the natural result of despising worship. We were created to worship God.

Conclusion - Our Challenge

Questions:

How prepared are we personally to enter into worship when we arrive to meet for corporate celebration?

Did we get up early enough to not arrive rushed in our spirits?

What have we been feeding on during the week?
(all the more important with the dust of a media drive world).

What are you willing to bring as a sacrifice in our worship unto the Lord?

Are there things you'd like to do in expressions of worship that you don't do because you're thinking of what others will think?

How much do we treasure God's presence?

Let us not quench the Holy Spirit.