

Tea Tree Gully Community Church

Worship (part 1) What is Worship ?

Gen 22:5

He (Abraham) said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you."

Pre-amble

What is worship?

Have you ever thought about it?

The word worship will conjure up all sorts of images from different people. I was recently at a Saturday morning seminar on worship and that question was asked – What is worship? The answers were interesting and quite different from the different people who offered an answer. But the common link with almost all of them was that they were given from the perspective of Christian culture and in a sense were incomplete.

Quote: A W Tozer, *Worship the missing Jewel* pg 10

We're here to be worshippers first and workers only second. We take a convert and immediately make a worker out of him. God never meant it to be so. God meant that a convert should learn to be a worshipper, and after that he can learn to be a worker. Jesus said, "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel." Peter wanted to go at once but Christ said, "Don't go yet. Wait until you are endued with power." Power for service? Yes, but that's only half of it; maybe that's only one-tenth of it. The other nine tenths are that the Holy Spirit may restore to us again the spirit of worship. Out of enraptured, admiring, adoring, worshipping souls, then God does His work. The work done by a worshiper will have eternity in it.

So what is worship?

A fresh look at worship, over several weeks including what is worship (how do we define it), why does worship matter, Wrong and right worship (including the pre-requisite for right worship) and the heart and expressions of worship.

Introduction

Read: Opening text above.

This is the first time in the Bible that the word worship is used. On the surface of it, it sounds like a rather trite statement. "You stay here and the boy and I will go over there and worship." There's no expansion on that statement regarding thanksgiving or praise or singing etc as we read and are exhorted to do so often in Psalms.

However what would take place was a great demonstration of worship because it involved the very things which are so often lacking in the lives of those who would purport to be worshippers of God today. (e.g. faith, trust, obedience, God as first priority – which acknowledges God's value above all else.) - don't read this.

Some examples of worship mentioned in the Bible include:

Ps 29:2 **Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness**

Ps 100:2 **Worship the Lord with gladness**

Ps 99:9 **Exalt the Lord our God and worship**

Ps 86:9 **The nations you have made will come and worship before you**

Heb 12:28 **Worship God acceptably with reverence and awe.**

Heb 1:6 **Let all God's angels worship him**

John 4:24 **God the father is looking for those who will worship in spirit and in truth**

But not all worship mentioned in the Bible is good e.g.:

2 Kings 10:28 **So Jehu (King of Israel) destroyed Baal worship in Israel**

God said to the Israelites regarding other nations,
.....the worship of their gods will certainly be a snare to you.

2 Kings 17:37 **Do not worship other gods**

(not a suggestion or warning but a commandment) and

Col 2:18 **Do not let the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize.**

(Gnosticism , spirit beings)

Let's look at two statements to unpack:

1. Worship is the activity of the human soul
2. What or who we worship is not so much defined by what we say (we do) as by what we do (which includes what we say)

Worship is the activity of the human soul

Worship is not what Christians do. It's what people do. Every person ever created was created to worship. We don't have a choice whether we worship or not. We have been wired to worship. We didn't get any choice in that.

We only have a choice over who or what we worship (cf our conscience which we cannot control, we can only ignore or respond to it).

We need to come to terms with the fact that we are worshippers, not because of what we do but because of who we are i.e. the way we have been made – and we do what we do because of who we are. We don't have a choice to opt out and say I'm not going to be a worshipper, or have a kind of neutral life and not worship anything, because that is impossible.

Even atheists worship something (philosophy, their own ideas, themselves etc). They have an obsession with disproving God. They are trying to define something that according to their doctrine doesn't exist.

What or who we worship is not so much defined by what we say (we do) as by what we do.

(mention here re Christian phrases, platitudes so often used).
We don't say to God our worship we live to God our worship.

When we start to get into a discussion on worship with someone, the perceived definition of what that means is often far too narrow. Whether we are talking to fellow Christians from a different experiential or theological background or whether we are talking to non Christians who have images of altars and stained glass windows.

When you mention the word worship there's suddenly connections made with God, beliefs, religious people, religious rites, traditions etc but worship is much broader than that.

‘Worship is not simply going to church to “worship God”.’

Worship is when you or I determine something is worth something to me/you we say it has value or worth and we worship that thing. Everyone does that ! - living their life saying they value something. They are living to value that car, house, super / retirement, travel/holiday, their children, pleasure, themselves etc.

Once we start to look at things from that broader perspective or definition everyone can relate to that. Everyone is living to worship something. Their actions, their priorities say “I worship this or I worship that”. My life, my being is given to worship that object of worship.

It’s a simple truth but it can be very confronting.

Acts 17 – Paul and the Greeks – The unknown God.

Since the beginning of time, history has shown us there has never been a shortage of things/objects/idols of worship. Archeology confirms this from ancient artifacts, temples, rituals, idols, shrines, altars of sacrifice etc. People have been doing what they were created to do – that is, worshipping, since man was made.

Read: Acts 17 v 16 – 23

The Greeks had a whole suite of gods they would worship.

It strikes a parallel with the world we live in today. People worship all sorts of things and yet there still seems to be something missing. We have all been created to worship, but to worship not just anything, but God the Father and Jesus Christ crucified for us and risen again. We were created for him.

But to those who don’t know him he is the ‘unknown God’.

Even today people in their quest for fulfillment say in their hearts (U2 Song title “but I still haven’t found what I’m looking for).

Read: Acts 17 v 24 – 28

Expand on passage above re reaching out and knowing God.

The god of this world has blinded the eyes of unbelievers. 2 Cor 4:4

They are stumbling, groping in the darkness. (see v27 for he is not far from each one of us). But he can be known!

Quote: Helen Keller (who was deaf, dumb and blind) of Jesus by the Holy Spirit.

“I always knew he was there, I just didn’t know his name.”

In being wired to worship, our challenge is not to worship but what we worship. Paul didn’t say to the people in Athens “you don’t know how to worship”. They were into worship alright but he pointed out that they had missed the mark regarding the object of their worship. (He used it not so much to talk about worship per se as he did a great handle for evangelism and introducing them to the Unknown God).

Show video clip:

13:30 to 23:00 on session one of Worship. That thing we do. (9.5 mins)

Summarize several points:

1. So often we are more moved by little gods than by a great big God.
2. Very confronting. Where do your bread crumbs (time, investment, affections, energy, focus etc) lead to ?

Where your treasure is there your heart will be also. Mat 6:21

3. If we follow the treasure trail we can find where the heart is.
It’s not your words but your way of life that says what you worship.

Regarding Worship

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

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 possession (or idol).

His car has become an object of worship!

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

But we can and have come to know the unknown God, but how well do we know him. How well do we worship him?

This is the God with a capital G that we were made to worship.
Behold your God.

Play audio track:

365 names of God, track 12, God of Eternity, track time 2:45

Quote: On Brother Lawrence, pg 812, Nelson's Complete Book of Stories,
Illustrations and Quotes

When Brother Lawrence lay on his deathbed, rapidly losing physical strength, he said to those around him "I am not dying. I am just doing what I have been doing for the past forty years, and doing what I expect to be doing for eternity!"

"What is that?" they asked.

"I am worshipping the God I love!"