

6.11.16 Worship

Over the past few months I have been thinking about worship. What it is and what it isn't; What it means to me in my experience and what I would like it to mean for others. I've been on a bit of a journey and I want to share that journey with you today. It is a journey I haven't necessarily finished but part of a process and to perhaps cause us to think and have some dialogue about it.

Maybe you might like to take a minute to think about what you think worship is and then I will share more of my thoughts:

For some of us worship might mean the music on a Sunday morning. The definitions will increase to include everything we do in the service to everything we do for God in our everyday lives.

It is clear that there are two main things to think about when we begin to define what we mean by worship and that is because it is divided into two main areas: Personal and Corporate Worship.

Corporate Worship

The definition of corporate worship can be characterised by our past experience of church and the experience of God in our lives. This view can be reinforced week by week as we meet together so today I want to ask you to listen to what I have to share and really think about what worship means to you.

I would like to suggest to you that corporate worship is more than singing songs together or even saying nice things about God, but it is a heart response to what God has done for us.

Personal Worship

Whenever we do anything because of what God has done for us it is worship.

We see our own sin and Jesus free gift of grace to us this causes our worship to be personal and intimate.

We can see beautiful scenery or have special things happen which causes us to worship God as creator/healer/supplier of needs etc.

When we are in our darkest hours we know that we can trust God anyway because we know our final destination so we Praise and worship Him because of who He is.

[When we are squeezed Jesus should ooze out]

When we come together as a group of Christians worship becomes a corporate act.

So corporate worship is similar but different.
Similar because we do it for the same reasons
Different because something special happens when we do it together.

I talked a couple of months ago about encouragement and how important it is to encourage one another. This is something we do as we meet together.

Hebrews 10 vs 24 – 25 which I referred to on that occasion says:
“And let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

This reminds us not to stop meeting together. We could think – well I worship God all the time whatever I am doing we don't need to go to meet with others at church.

But

Something special happens when we meet together it is about spurring one another on but it also about the verse that comes before those verses I was re-reading that this week:

v23 “Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess for He who promised is faithful.”

It is easy to become discouraged when we are on our own and to forget what God has done for us. We can forget to thank him for his many blessings to us. We can forget that the awesome God of heaven – King of Kings and Lord of Lords – came to earth as a human child and lived on earth for 33 years before dying on a cross to provide a sacrifice for **OUR** sins.

Remember the story of Elijah who had done amazing things for God and caused the death of the Baal prophets and priests. He runs away and hides because he gets afraid. He asks God to let him die because he feels like he is the only believer left. Being alone is okay sometimes but it especially not okay when we feel low, vulnerable and wonder whether we are deluding ourselves believing in God. We need believers around us who encourage us to hold on to the hope we profess. Others remind us about the faithfulness of God.

When we worship together we derive encouragement from worshipping God together. We remind each other of who God is, what He has done in our lives, how he wants us to live our lives.

Thus worshipping together involves some interaction between us. It might be singing songs together that build our faith and encourage us, it might be listening to testimonies from the front about how God has met needs, it might be in talking to one another over coffee to hear about what God has done in each others lives and to be sensitive to needs when someone is struggling and needs us to hear and to pray with them and to remind them who our hope is in.

Ephesians 5 v 18 – 21 says this:

“Do not get drunk on wine which leads to debauchery, instead be filled with the Holy Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord always giving thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

Colossians 3 v 15 – 17 says this:

“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

Although both of these mention singing they also include the spoken words of encouragement and teaching. They also talk about how we behave.

Old Testament

While looking at this topic I did a bit of a look at what the Old Testament talks about with worship.

2 Chronicles 16 v 29

“Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name.
Bring an offering and come before him,
Worship the Lord in the splendour of his holiness”

That verse talks about worshipping God for who he is.

2 Kings 17 v 36

“But the Lord, who brought you up out of Egypt with mighty power and outstretched arm, is the one you must worship. To Him you shall bow down and to Him offer sacrifices”

That verse was reminding the Israelites whom they should be worshipping because of what he had done (rather than idols)

2 Chronicles 29 v 29 – 30

“When the offerings were finished, the King and everyone with him knelt down and worshipped. King Hezekiah and his officials ordered the Levites to praise the Lord with the words of David and of Asaph the seer. So they sang praises and bowed their heads and worshipped.”

These verses tell about being together as one people (purification of the temple)

Psalm 95 v 6

“Come let us bow down in worship,
Let us kneel before the Lord our maker”

Psalm 100 v 2

“Worship the Lord with gladness
Come before him with joyful songs.”

There are some key things from these verses, which I found really humbling:

Bring an offering to God – a sacrifice in OT times but we still can give the Lord offerings, this might be interpreted in many ways but I was struck by the idea of sacrifice.

[When we meet together to worship together on a Sunday we meet at the most for 2 hours including the coffee time. There are 168 hours in the week. If you have 8 hours sleep per night you have 112 left. 2 hours for corporate worship is not that much of a sacrifice each week is it? What about if we really sacrificed and got to church by 9.45am so we were all ready to start our act of worship together at 10am?]

Bow down to the Lord in response as worship – when I sing about bowing down I want to bow because I am bowing to the lord as a sign of respect. If you meet royalty you would bow or curtsy as a sign of respect, why not to God?? We should treat the Lord with Holy respect and Honour, sometimes with a sign or symbol of that respect.

Singing with gladness – I love singing with gladness, it really lifts the spirits. It has been scientifically shown to improve a person’s feelings of happiness. We sing to a God who can lift our Spirits because of who He is.

Dancing, playing of musical instruments, celebrating etc. Mentioned in lots of other places.

Let us turn to 1 Chronicles 15 v 25 – 29. This is the passage where King David is bringing back the ark of the Covenant or the sign of God’s presence back to Jerusalem after it had been captured by the Philistines. In this instance we see:

David and the Levites took care over their appearance

There were singers and choirs

Shouts

Sacrifices

Musical instruments

Celebration and dancing

The celebrations were so wild that Michal David’s wife despised him for his behaviour in public. When was the last time you celebrated God to that level??

New Testament

Matthew 2 v 2 talks about travellers (Magi) coming from the East

“Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.”

Jesus caused them to want to worship him even as a baby.

Matthew 4 v 9 we see the devil tempting Jesus who shows that he is jealous for worship

“All of this I will give you’ he said ‘if you will bow down and worship me.”

Jesus teaches about worship in John 4 v 24 – 25

“...when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth.”

Through this I see that something I have skimmed over before and that is that the Holy Spirit should be present in our worship, assisting us and inspiring us. He is the one who unites us and reminds us about the Lord. When we are encouraging each other it is through the Holy Spirit working in each one of us.

The response to Jesus and His saving work should be worship

Matthew 28 v 9 when the women see Jesus at the tomb:

“Suddenly Jesus met them, ‘Greetings’ He said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshipped him.”

Elsewhere Paul urges us to worship, for example

Romans 12 v 1:

“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 act of worship.”

As part of my journey I have been very much influenced by this book by A.W. Tozer called ‘Whatever happened to worship’. It was published in 1985 from sermons he wrote in 1962 but didn’t have time to publish before he passed away. What he says is still relevant today:

“I can safely say, on the authority of all that is revealed in the Word of God, that any man or woman on this earth who is bored and turned off by worship is not ready for heaven.” P14

“Something miraculous and life changing takes place within the human soul when Jesus Christ is invited in to take His rightful place. That is exactly what God anticipated when He wrought the plan of salvation. He intended to make worshippers out of rebels; He intended to restore to men and women the place of worship which our first parents knew when they were created.” p22

Application

So to sum up what am I trying to say?

We worship God in spirit and in truth that means aided by the Holy Spirit and knowing the truth of Scripture.

We worship because of who God is

We worship because of what he has done

We should not rush to judge others for their heart response to God

When we do anything as a response to who God is or because of what God has done for us it is worship.

Let us carefully consider how we might express our worship to our Saviour.

Let us turn to Colossians 1 v 15 – 23 to finish. Before I read it

Let the word enter our hearts and let us worship from our hearts, in a way that is meaningful to us

Maybe in singing, shouting

Maybe in silence

Maybe standing, dancing, raising our arms to heaven

Maybe kneeling

Maybe playing musical instruments

Maybe laughter

Maybe crying

Maybe in verse

Maybe in tongues (our spiritual language)

What is our response to God?

That is what worship is all about in its rawest form. It is our response to GOD, not to the worship team, the leaders, our friends, it is our response to God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Believe me when He looks at your heart response He is always pleased.

Now let us read this passage: