

## Worship Sermon 12/03/17

**Reading:** Romans 11:33- 12:13

<sup>33</sup> *Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!*

*How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!*

<sup>34</sup> *'Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counsellor?'*

<sup>35</sup> *'Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?'*

<sup>36</sup> *For from him and through him and for him are all things.*

*To him be the glory for ever! Amen.*

*Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

<sup>3</sup> *For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. <sup>4</sup> For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. <sup>6</sup> We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; <sup>7</sup> if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; <sup>8</sup> if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.*

<sup>9</sup> *Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. <sup>10</sup> Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves. <sup>11</sup> Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. <sup>12</sup> Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. <sup>13</sup> Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practise hospitality.*

### Introduction

My topic this morning is 'worship'.

- It is an everyday word in the church
- We have spent time in worship this morning.
- We acknowledge it is an important part of every Christians life
- And should be part of our day to day experience.

As we have just read in Romans.

- Paul exhorts us to "*Offer our bodies as living sacrifices to God*"
- He tells us "*This is your spiritual act of Worship*" (12:1)

But if I am honest it is not something I find easy

- I don't often worship on Monday morning like I did in church the day before.
- And even in church I've sung words more because I wish they were true than because they are.
- I believe if we cut away the 'Christian Speak' I am not alone
- Many of us feel inadequate in this area but don't like to say so.
- Maybe we are afraid of looking like the unspiritual one.

I am encouraged that even well-known Men of God have admitted to struggling too.

- Mike Pilavcnded Soul Survivor teaches worship as the highest priority in our lives yet admits his church lost their way in worship despite having some of the most vibrant worship leaders in the country.  
(That is where the song By Matt Redman – 'When the Music Fades' originated)
- Selwyn Hughes, who dedicated his life to Christian counselling believed worship was the first law of spiritual success. If we get that right many other problems resolve themselves.
- Richard Forster, in his book 'Celebration of Discipline' says "*If the Lord is to be Lord, worship must have the first priority in our lives.*" Yet admits he has struggles daily to make every moment an act of worship.
- Finally, A W Tozer, known for his theological insight. apparently spent a whole week's retreat teaching a group of ministers on the topic "Worship - The Missing Jewel of the Evangelical Church."

So, we are not alone in finding worship hard.

- In fact, that is how it should be.
- For worship to be real, it must cost us something.
- That is why Paul calls us to 'offer ourselves as a living sacrifice.'
- Worship should cost us all we have
- When David was offered land to build the temple, he insisted on paying for it.
- As he says in 2 Samuel 24:24  
"*I will not offer to the Lord, my God, sacrifices that have cost me nothing*"

I am reminded of the story of a man teaching his little son to play hide and seek.

- The boy kept giving himself away
- The father was explaining the purpose of the game was to stay hidden.
- When it suddenly dawned on him
- From his son's point of view the aim was to be found.
- There was no fun sitting in a cupboard by himself.
- The Joy was in his Dad catching him.

It is the same with God

- He desires to be found by us.
- He may stand back sometimes to build our faith and to teach us perseverance
- But the aim is that God will be found if we seek him.
- Deuteronomy 4:29 tells us

*“But if you seek the Lord your God, you will find him if you look with all your heart and with all your soul.”*

Which brings us to the question why?

- Why should we worship if it costs so much?

### **Why should we Worship?**

1. It is a commandment.
  - The First commandment is *“You shall have no other God’s before me”* (Ex 20:3)
  - When tempted by the devil Jesus replied *“It is written, Worship the Lord your God and serve him only”* (Matt. 4:11)
2. God Deserves it.
  - *“Great is the lord and most worthy praise”* (Psalm 48:1) is one example of many such statements in the Bible
  - The reason I chose to begin the reading in Romans 11 was to include Paul’s statement of the wonder of God.
  - We are told when Job heard of the destruction of his goods and death of his children. *“He fell to the ground in worship”*
  - That is an important truth - We worship, not because of what God has done for us, but because of whom God is.
3. We were created to do it
  - We all worship something, if not God then someone or something else.
  - That was the problem with Adam and Eve’s fall.
  - They put the satisfaction of their own desires before God.
  - Look around us – Everybody worships something
  - Themselves, Pleasure, Careers, wealth, Health, Good looks, Fame, Family.
  - That is what all adverts play to

Jesus said we could not serve two masters we either served God or Money.

- That is equally true for anything else.
- God intended we were to worship him.

4. We benefit from it.
  - Clearly for worship to be worship it must be God centred on not based on what we can get out of it.
  - The question is not *“Did I get anything out of it?”* but *“Did it please God?”*
  - Nevertheless, putting God in His rightful place in worship helps us to put everything else in perspective.
  - We receive healing and anxieties are soothed away

5. It prepares us for heaven.

- Worship is the main activity of heaven
- In his revelation John describes the four living creatures around God's throne and tells us *"Day and night they never stop saying "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come."* And whenever they do this the elders *'Fall down and worship'* (Rev 4: 8 – 10)

### **What is worship?**

*"To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, to devote the will to the purpose of God"*

**William Temple** (Former Archbishop of Canterbury)

It is to put God in his rightful place

- The Bible says *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom"*. (Prov. 1:7)
- When we do this, it will have an effect on our life.
- As we worship God our lives are transformed.
- Remember what we read from Romans 12:2 earlier  
*"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind."*
- I have 7 thoughts on this - each beginning with the letters of the word worship.

1. Witness

- When the disciples met Jesus after his resurrection we are told in Matt. 28:17  
*"When they saw him, they worshipped him"*
- It was in this context of worship Jesus gave them the great commission to *"Go and make disciples of all nations"*.

But witness is not just telling others about Jesus

- It is expressing all that God has done, all he means to us.
- The word worship is often translated from the Hebrew word Hallel,
- This is the root of Halelujah
- And means to to praise, boast of, celebrate, to be clamorously foolish.

Another frequently used word is Yadar:

- This means thanksgiving, literally to extend the hand
- It is used 90 times - 53 times as praise; 37 as thanks; 16 to confess.

When we worship God, and see him in his glory we cannot but speak of Him.

- We sing ' Tell out my soul the wonders of the Lord'
- In Psalm 26:6-8 David says

*"I go about your altar, LORD, <sup>7</sup>proclaiming aloud your praise and telling of all your wonderful deeds.*

*<sup>8</sup>LORD, I love the house where you live, the place where your glory dwells.*

## 2. Obedience

- Jesus said *"If you love me you will obey my commandments"* (John 14:15)
- It is impossible to worship God if we don't obey him.
- In the same way as you can't have faith without works - you can't have worship without obedience
- The aim of worship is to please him and not ourselves.

That is where Cain went wrong

- He tried to give what he wanted to God
- Instead of doing what God required of him.
- It is an easy mistake to make. To give to God what pleases us rather than asking what he wants of us.
- This has a cost, but then we are called to be sacrificial in worship.

## 3. Reverence and Awe

We must learn to revere God. He is all mighty God,

- Paul reminds us, as we read earlier, *"We should not think of ourselves more highly than we ought"* (Rom 12:3)
- Habakkuk reminds us  
*"The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him"* (2:20)
- When Isaiah "saw the Lord on his throne, high and exalted" his reaction was to say *"Woe is me for I am undone, For I am a man of unclean lips"* (Isaiah 6:5)
- When God had spoken to Job, his reaction was to say  
*"My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore, I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes"* (Job 42:5,6)

Communion with Jesus is not the same as familiarity.

- John was the disciple whom Jesus loved.
- His special friend
- But when he saw Jesus in his glory He *"fell at his feet as though dead"* (Rev 1:17)
- We need to recapture the majesty of God

The most commonly used word for worship in the OT is *Shacah*

- *Shacar* means to bow down, a physical expression of respect and humility.
- In the New Testament, it is *Proskuneo* which means to come towards to kiss.
- It can also be used to describe the action of a dog licking his master's hand.

#### 4. Spirit Filled

We are told to worship God in spirit and truth. (John 4:23)

- Paul tells us "You received a spirit of sonship and by him we cry Abba Father" (Rom 8:15)
- We cannot worship God unless he enables us to by his Spirit
- We need to acknowledge our complete dependence on him.
- This doesn't mean it has no physical element.
- Remember Paul's words – To offer our bodies as a living sacrifice is a spiritual act of worship.
- If I am at the centre of my life, then my soul controls my spirit and body
- And I am a sinful selfish being
- If God rules my spirit by His Holy Spirit, then my soul and body are ruled by God
- And I am able to worship God with my whole being.

#### 5. Holiness

- We are made Holy
- It is through worship that we meet with God and are made more like Him.
- It is no accident that it is in reference to keeping the Sabbath that God first described himself as Jehovah-mekoddishkem – God who sanctifies (Ex 31:13)  
*"Then the Lord said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, "You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so that you may know that I am the Lord, who makes you holy""*
- It is when we spend time worshipping God that we find it is he who sanctifies and makes us holy.
- We cannot make ourselves holy through the six days we work, but God does it through the day we rest and worship Him.

#### 6. Intercession

- By this I mean prayer for each other.
- Jesus tells us "If you love me you will obey my commands" and *"My command is this: love each other as I have loved you"*. (John 14/15)
- We cannot love God if we don't love each other
- Part of that is to pray for them
- The last part of the reading this morning was all about serving each other as part of our worship for God.

But intercession can go further than this.

- We should, as part (and only part), of our worship be crying out to God for the pain and hurt and disobedience of the world in which we live.
- Many men of God prayed in repentance on behalf of their nation.
- Read the Psalms - How many of them are worshipping in the context of crying out to God in distress.
- We have lost the dimension of 'Lament' in worship
- Mike Pilavachi says

- *"When it comes to worship, how self indulgent it is for us to come and say, 'forget everything out there, let's just sing our happy songs.'" How dare we keep it all for ourselves? When we come to worship, of course we need to rejoice, to praise and to give thanks, but we also need to bring our intercessions and songs of lament."*

## 7. Praise

- This is the one we are most familiar with
- saying 'Thank you'. Honouring God for what He has done
- The Hebrew words used are
  - Tehillah (To sing praises, literally to sing Hallelujah)
  - Zamar (To sing with music) and
  - Samach (to be glad, rejoice. An outburst of spontaneous joy expressed in action.)
- In the New Testament, the words *Euchristo* and *Euchristiaia* are used and means Thank you
- It is the root of the word Eucharist. Another name for communion
- So it is literally 'The Thank You Service'

## Conclusion

That doesn't mean it is easy

- The Bible is full of references to 'the Sacrifice of praise'
- Paul exhorted us "to offer our bodies as living sacrifices"
- It still costs us. We have to give of ourselves.
- All of us Body soul and spirit.
- Jesus tells us the greatest commandment is to *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."* (Matt. 22:37)

These are words quoted from Deuteronomy

- And I want to finish by reading them. (Deut. 6:4-9)

*<sup>4</sup>Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one. <sup>5</sup>Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. <sup>6</sup>These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. <sup>7</sup>Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. <sup>8</sup>Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. <sup>9</sup>Write them on the door-frames of your houses and on your gates.*

*Amen.*