

WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH

Why we do what we do

Preparation

Are you prepared for worship this morning? Have you prayed about this worship service? Did you remember it last night? Were you able to get up in time to give some reflection to what you were going to do this morning? Maybe it was just a mad-panic getting here on time, with the kids, and in one piece!

As we come to worship, let's come prepared. Maybe you need to restructure your Saturday evenings so you can come more prepared. Maybe you need to get to bed earlier so that you can get up earlier. You may need to have your children's clothes ready and have thought about what they will eat. You will want to have your heart primed for worship.

We have come before the living God, the Maker of heaven and earth. Let's prepare our hearts to meet him. Let us ask for his help so that we can worship him in 'spirit and in truth', As Jesus taught the Samaritan woman at the well:

(John 4:23-24) *"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. (24) God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."*

Real worship is spiritual and true, that is, it is empowered by the presence of the Holy Spirit and guided by the truth of God's word. Both are essential: the word without the Spirit is dead, and a spirit without the word is false. As Jesus said, (John 14:26) *"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."*

Call to Worship

Micah 4:2-5 ... *"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. (3) He shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide for strong nations far away; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore; (4) but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and no one shall make them afraid, for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken. (5) For all the peoples walk each in the name of its god, but we will walk in the name of the LORD our God forever and ever.*

Did you hear that? It is a call to worship. What is a call to worship? It is an invitation for people to assemble in God's presence. It warns those who are careless and rebellious, and encourages the timid and fearful. In the call we summon one another in order to stimulate each other to worship. We say 'I am going to worship God, you come with me.' You will notice that the call is to come to God so that he can teach us and we can live for him. It also promises better times because God has a plan and he is in control.

Why Sing? - worshipping in song

Singing is a fundamental human expression of devotion to God. Although it seems a little weird these days to get together with a bunch of others and sing, it is what God expects from us. We can pray, teach, encourage or simply adore God in song. It is also important to understand that singing on its own is not worship, but is a part of worship. When we sing we give voice to what is in our hearts, not to try and show everyone how great our voice is!

As a group: *'Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the LORD, saying, "I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him.'* (Exodus 15:1-2)

In solo: – *'And Miriam sang to them: "Sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.'* (Exodus 15:21)

We use instruments to praise God

Give thanks to the LORD with the lyre; make melody to him with the harp of ten strings! Sing to him a new song; play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts. (Psalms 33:2-3)

We encourage and help each other in song

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, (Ephesians 5:18-20)

And,

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (Colossians 3:16)

What is the Offering?

Is this just a good time to take money off unsuspecting people? In the Old Testament Israel was instructed to give back to God a tenth of all that they gained. We read about it first even before Moses came on the scene

'And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. (He was priest of God Most High.) And he blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!" And Abram gave him a tenth of everything.' (Genesis 14:18-20)

Under Moses it was formalized as part of the national tax intake for Israel:

"Every tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the trees, is the LORD's; it is holy to the LORD. (Leviticus 27:30)

The tithe was the part of their wealth that belonged to God. On top of that the people were called to give sacrificial offerings to the Lord as a voluntary gift.

In the New Testament the early church would take up a collection, but it was never called a tithe. We can't insist now that tithing as a command for the church, but we can use it as a guiding principle.

'Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come. And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem'. (1 Corinthians 16:1-3)

We should give cheerfully and honestly

'So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction. The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows

bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.’ (2 Corinthians 9:5-7)

Poverty is no excuse for stinginess.

2 Corinthians 8:1-2 We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, (2) for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part.

This collection is itself an act of worship, as Paul taught the Philippians:

I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. (Philippians 4:18)

What is Prayer?

Prayer is speaking to God The Westminster Shorter Catechism says ‘*Prayer is offering up our desires to God for things in agreement with His will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of His mercies.*

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)

Prayer in public worship is the same, but when we pray we include everyone in our prayers so that everyone can say ‘Amen’

‘Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel and spread out his hands. Solomon had made a bronze platform five cubits long, five cubits wide, and three cubits high, and had set it in the court, and he stood on it. Then he knelt on his knees in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands toward heaven, and said, "O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you, in heaven or on earth, keeping covenant and showing steadfast love to your servants who walk before you with all their heart, who have kept with your servant David my father what you declared to him. You spoke with your mouth, and with your hand have fulfilled it this day..."’ (2 Chronicles 6:12-15)

Reading Scripture - ‘*All Scripture is God-breathed...*’ In Scripture God speaks to us His children. Without Scripture and its exposition the worship of God can become dangerous because the voice of God isn’t heard, but the voice of man.

‘Then he (Moses) took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient..."’ (Exodus 24:7)

All of it, for all to hear...

And afterward he (Joshua) read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law. There was not a word of all that Moses commanded that Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, and the women, and the little ones, and the sojourners who lived among them. (Joshua 8:34-35)

...as with the NT writings...

Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea. (Colossians 4:15-16)

...especially the public reading of the Bible.

Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. (1 Timothy 4:13)

Why a Sermon?

Both in the Old and New Testaments God appointed his leaders to take His revealed word and apply it the context of the people. You will have noticed that in this church that the ministry of the word is very central. This is because God has chosen preaching as the means by which He is glorified in the gospel.

For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. (Romans 10:13-17)

What is proper preaching?

And all the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses that the LORD had commanded Israel. So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month. And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law. And Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden platform that they had made for the purpose. And beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiiah, Uriah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah on his right hand, and Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam on his left hand. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it all the people stood. And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, "Amen, Amen," lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground. Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, helped the people to understand the Law, while the people remained in their places. They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading. (Nehemiah 8:1-8)

As Jesus preached...as the reason why he came (Mk.1:38)

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And they said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" (Luke 4:16-22)

As Paul instructed Timothy, the pastor of Ephesus...

'Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.' (2 Timothy 4:2-4)

Acts 20:7-12 The connection between Paul, Eutychus & long sermons?

There are other components that are a legitimate part of NT worship that we haven't included today like baptism, ordination to full-time Christian work or eldership

Lord's Supper

We are going to celebrate the Lord's Supper. This is something commenced in the OT with the Passover celebration and continued in the NT when Jesus instituted it during the Passover with his disciples. The apostle Paul reminded us of the why and how:

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

(1 Corinthians 11:23-32)

Notices

What are we doing when we give the notices? Is this like an interval time, like we used to have in films? No. The notices come under greetings and fellowship. Whenever Paul wrote a letter, he included greetings and information about people and events which he wanted to be passed on to others. (**Colossians 4:10-18**) These letters he instructed to be read in the church services.

Other things not mentioned today: *Baptism, ordination (laying on of hands), and commissioning workers.*

Benediction

This Latin word literally means 'good-word', that is, a *good word from the Lord*. It translates the Hebrew 'blessing' it contains the idea of 'bending the knee before God in homage'; it means 'blessing, benediction, benefit, favour, peace or happiness.' When we bless one another, we commend the other person/s to God through petitions of praise to God. Paul often included words of blessing at the end in his letters.

In the OT this was the priests' job because they were the mediators:

'Then Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people and blessed them, and he came down from offering the sin offering and the burnt offering and the peace offerings. And Moses and Aaron went into the tent of meeting, and when they came out they blessed the people, and the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people.' (Leviticus 9:22-23)

In the NT we are *all priests* before God, and so can all 'give the benediction', as it were:

'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.' (1 Peter 2:9)