

## Absolute Worship

“A time will come, however, indeed it is already here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth, for the Father is seeking just such people as these as His worshippers. God is a Spiritual Being and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:23 & 24)

This sermon is continuing the theme ‘Why Christians Praise and Worship God’. However, this sermon is not about worshipping the Lord in church, but is about worshipping Him at home, in our private place away from people. As we spend time alone with God, we draw closer to Him and as we draw closer, He reveals more about Himself to us. Those private times are when He teaches us through His Word, gives us answers to questions, tells us secrets, gives us prophecies, opens our spiritual eyes, gives us revelations, heals our bodies, strengthens our soul and prepares us for events that lie ahead.

It is not enough to worship God in public. True worship is something we must practice every day. It is an amazing fact that God the Father is seeking worshippers. Why would God, Who created the whole universe, seek worshippers? The initial revelation of salvation comes initially through His Word. But deeper and fuller revelation comes only through worship. That is why God wants us to worship Him, because He wants to reveal Himself to us. He created us to have a relationship with Him. This sermon is not about worship in the church, it is about private worship.

Every word that describes the worship of God, describes a posture of the body, and we should not come into the presence of the Lord without some kind of offering. Exodus 23:15 and 34:20 says; ‘None of you shall appear before Me empty handed’. Psalm 96:8; ‘Bring an offering and come into His courts’. Psalm 100:4; ‘I will enter His gates with thanksgiving and enter His courts with praise’. Psalm 95:2 & 6; ‘Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to Him with songs of praise! O come let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker’.

What is the most important thing we can offer to God? What is the thing He desires most? The most important thing we can give God is ourselves, and that is what He is waiting for. He wants us; He wants our physical bodies. Paul says that in Romans 12:1; “I appeal to you therefore brethren, in view of all the mercies of God, to dedicate your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God which is your reasonable service.” In all that Paul said in the previous eleven chapters of Romans, showing us the complete provision of God's grace through Jesus and His sacrifice; and having given us that glorious presentation, Paul culminates it all in this one verse in Romans 12:1. In other words, in the light of all that God has done for us through Jesus' enormous sacrifice, what is our reasonable response? It is to present our bodies a living sacrifice. Why does Paul say living? Because in the Old Testament the sacrifices were killed. God doesn't want us to be a dead sacrifice but serve Him as a living sacrifice.

There are many different sacrifices we can offer to God. Worship and service are just two. When we worship God, we must not give Him sweet religious language; but worship God in complete sincerity; in truth. No insincerity and no meaningless sweet words. We must not speak words we don't mean, and we must not sing words we don't mean. That is flattery and God hates it (Psalm 78:36 & 37). God will not accept insincere worship with words of flattery or greedy motives. He tests our hearts and we must be approved by God. We must speak to please God and not men (1 Thessalonians 2:4 & 5). God will not accept worship that is tainted in any way. We must have pure hearts.

Worship is not entertainment nor is it just a presentation. Worship is the most solemn and edifying thing we can do. When we accept God into our lives, He establishes a two-way covenant with us and God expects us to play our part. One obvious 'mark' of a covenant Christian, is the way they worship God. Speaking and singing truth to the Lord in worship in complete sincerity, with a pure heart, and being 'lost' in the Spirit; concentrating on His holiness, is how a covenant Christian worships God. Fully in spirit and in truth; in absolute worship.

We need our bodies, pure and holy, to worship God. Our body is the 'container' in which we bring our offering to God. One act of worship is to bow the head (Genesis 24:26; Exodus 4:31; 34:8).

Our hands play a very important part in worship. We can clasp our hands together, we can raise our hands (Psalm 63:4; 134:2; 141:2) we can clap our hands (Psalm 47:1) we can reach out our hands (Psalm 143:6) we can spread out our hands (2 Chronicles 6:12 & 13; Psalm 88:9).

We use our mouths to worship (Psalm 63:3 & 5) we can shout to God (Psalm 47:1) and we know of course that we can sing to Him (Psalm 47:1).

We can stand in the presence of the Lord (2 Chronicles 6:12; Zechariah 4:14).

We can kneel (2 Chronicles 6:13; Psalm 95:6; Ephesians 3:14). One day every person will kneel before the Lord (Isaiah 45:23; Philippians 2:10).

We can lie face down, prostrate before Him, and it is the best position to hear the voice of the Lord as Abraham did in Genesis 17:3. Joshua lay prostrate and worshipped the Lord and asked, "What does my Lord say to His servant?" (Joshua 5:14) so that is a good position to be in to hear from God. Even our Lord Jesus lay on His face before the Lord and prayed (Matthew 26:39).

Another way we can worship God is to remove our shoes (Exodus 3:5; Joshua 5:15; Acts 7:33).

Dancing is a wonderful form of worship because we use our whole body (2 Samuel 6:14; Psalm 149:3).

When we worship we should never sit down. Why? Because there is no scripture that has us sitting during worship; it is God Who sits as King on His throne as we look to Him in worship (Psalm 29:10 & 123:1). We do however, need to sit and listen (Luke 2:46; 10:39). When we worship, we dance, sing, clap, lie prostrate etc, but when we are listening, we are to be silent and hear what the Lord is saying. We can't talk and listen at the same time.

What is worshipping? Singing, bowing down, kneeling or standing, it is just simply being in the presence of God. That is the purpose of worship; fellowshiping with our Creator. How many of us spend time in the presence of God without asking for anything? Certainly we are to continue to make our wants known to God, but how often do we just bask in His glory? Soak in His Presence? Taste the sweetness of our salvation and rejoice in Him just for Who He is, not for what He can do for us? How many of us can quench our spiritual thirst by sitting in His cloud, or snuggling up under His shadow or under His wings? How many of us have made Him our refuge? (Psalm 91). How many of us spend time, just the Lord and us alone, in silent worship and appreciation? That is what worship is all about. Worshipping only in public, in church does not bring you to that secret place. We need to worship Him every day in our quiet times, set aside to be alone with Him. We worship Him because He is our God (Psalm 95:7).

If we worship money, that is our god. If we worship sport, that is our god. If we worship our pet, that is our god. But if we worship the Lord of glory, then He is our God. That is the way we acknowledge Him as our God. That is when we really hear His voice. If we read the

story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38 to 42, we can see that Mary listened to the Lord. Like so many Christians today, Martha was too busy serving the Lord to really serve the Lord and listen to His voice. Many people are like that today. They are so busy with outreaches, travel and other things, they don't have time for sitting and listening. They often don't make time for their children and watch as their children turn away from God and rebel, because all the children saw as they grew up, was their parents doing things that took them away from home.

People who spend time sitting in the Lord's presence and worshipping Him, do not fall into sin because their relationship with God is more important than temptation. We sometimes see church leaders fall by the wayside, because they do not spend time sitting at Jesus' feet and soaking in His Presence. If God has called us to lead, then we need to prioritise and lead by example, and that example is: the Lord and worship first, family commitments second, then ministry and service third. Raising a family only takes about 20 years and children are a vital investment for the future. Children need their parents to be at home, because emotionally neglected children go astray. Once the family have grown and left the nest, then there are plenty of years left to work full time for God.

Remember Jesus said there is need of only one thing, and it was Mary who chose the best part. Martha was too busy. What is the best part? Sitting at the feet of Jesus and listening to Him speak. We need to learn to do nothing – in a meaningful way. Church leaders need to take a whole day off each week, just to spend that time with Jesus. We need His direction and guidance, and when we allow the Lord to lead the way, we succeed.

What happened to Martha's sister Mary in the end? Mary was the woman who anointed Jesus' head and feet with expensive perfume and Jesus said what she did for Him, would be told wherever the Gospel is preached. Mary has gone down in history as being the only person who anointed Jesus for His burial – before He died (Matthew 26:7 to 13; Mark 14:3 to 9; Luke 7:37 to 50; John 11:2 & 12:2 to 7). Mary was the first person Jesus spoke to after He rose from the dead (John 20:11 to 17).

Where would Mary have gained the inspiration to anoint Jesus? Sitting at His feet and listening to Him. Mary was the only person who seemed to realise what Jesus was saying regarding His death. When the women came to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body after His crucifixion, they were too late because He had already risen. Mary was the only person who had the privilege of anointing Jesus. The Lord shares His secrets with those who worship Him and sit with Him like Mary did. Worship is not always making noise. Worship can be in complete silence. We can only encourage you to be daring – dare to do nothing but sit and wait for God to speak to you.

In Acts 13:2 the Lord said to separate for Him, Barnabas and Saul for the work to which He had called them. When did they hear the word of the Lord? While they were worshipping. To find out what the Lord wants, we need to worship. Isaiah 6:1 to 4 shows us a picture of heavenly worship. The seraphim covered their face and feet with their wings. That is a sign of worship. The seraphim flew using their other two wings and that is a sign of service. They worshipped twice as much as they served. We need to follow that pattern because we can't improve on the heavenly style of worship. They sang out, "Holy, holy, holy. The whole earth is filled with the glory of God." Their worship was a response to the holiness of God.

Turn to Revelation chapter 4. In this short chapter of only 11 verses, the word 'throne' is used 14 times; 12 times for the throne of the Lord God. This is the throne room of the

universe. It is the place from where the universe is governed. The emphasis throughout this chapter is on worship. The church as a whole, should also be governed by worship, both in the church services and in private by the congregation. In Revelation 5:8 & 14 the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures lay prostrate and worshipped the Lamb. In verse 11 the angels worshipped. There were millions of angels all around, all doing one thing – worshipping. Then every created thing became involved in the worship, all crying out together. The whole universe will be taken over by worship, starting at the throne with the seraphim, the four living creatures, the twenty-four elders, the angels and finally every creature. And Who is the centre of it all? The Lamb Who was slain! Then at the end of it, the four living creatures will say, “Amen!” That is a picture of the universe at worship.

We need to focus on the Lord and not on our feelings. Worship is not ‘feeling good’. Worship is spiritual. If we rely on ‘feeling good’ before we worship, then most of the time we won’t be in the right ‘mood’ to worship. Once we start worshipping, then the thirst for more of God kicks in, and we have trouble stopping. Worship is direct personal contact with the Living God, regardless of how our emotions are dictating to us. We need to exalt Jesus equally as much as we exalt God the Father. When we worship the Lord, we need to quote scripture because there is nothing more powerful than God’s Word. They are the perfect words of worship. As we read in Exodus 23:15 and 34:20, God does not want us to come to Him empty handed. We can come to Him with thanksgiving, a pure heart, sincerity and we can give Him glory, we can give Him praise, we can adore Him and we can worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Amen and God bless you.

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