



Worship

Session 13 – 21st October 2018

Bible Readings

Joshua 6.1-20; Matthew 17: 1-6

Sermon Notes

It seems that we have handed back the power we could be exercising in God's world because we worship other idols. We have swapped God's future for a lie, we have worshipped and served the created rather than the creator (Romans 1).

God wants to release us from the grip of idols and instead worship Him and in doing so be renewed according to his image. Through worship of the Living God we are sustained and bear fruit in our calling.

Idolatry puts us in the hands of lifeless powers - we become slaves to addiction and live lukewarm, impoverished spiritual lives.

In our Matthew reading, Peter, James and John glimpse the wonder and glory of God and fall face-down at his feet. That's all they can do - along with many before them – see Daniel, Moses, David and Paul.

We are created to be transcendent beings. Worship sets us free to live as intended - we come into the presence of the creator to be freed from addiction and idolatry – to live the way He designed us to live.

Don't worry - you don't have to understand music theory to be moved by music – you don't have to understand theology before you can be moved and transformed through worship – you don't have to fully understand the cross of Jesus before you can know yourself loved and forgiven through Jesus' death and resurrection.

Worship might not be comfortable – God's consuming fire burns up what is worthless, refining that which is of value. God is the source of love and that love is potent. Dare we allow God to be the thunder in our souls? Worship is the oxygen of the soul. When we worship it is impossible to remain the same. Worship is subversive - light is brought into darkness – hope replaces despair. We are healed in worship.

So how do we worship? Worship goes far beyond our church gatherings – it oozes into the very fabric of our everyday lives. Worship is just love directed at God. We begin to see the world from his vantage point and discover that His love is the most powerful force in the universe.

“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.” Romans 12:1

Let's worship together now in church and in our daily walk with Jesus this coming week. Let's prepare our hearts for the divine encounter.

Key Quotes

“God meets us in high and holy ways. He meets us in lowly and meek ways. He meets us in thunderously glorious ways; he meets us in quiet intimate ways. He meets us in complex ways and simple ways, furious ways and merciful ways.” JOHN PIPER.

“The wondrous cross is the place where love and sorrow meet. The place where thorns compose so rich a crown. The place where we count our richest gain as loss.” ISAAC WATTS.

“No-one who knows him can ever be flippant in his presence.” TOZER.

“God wants to give us the chance of joining his side freely. God will return – but why wait to worship until then? When you see the whole natural universe melting away like a dream and something else comes crashing in: so beautiful to some of us, and so terrible to others, that none of us will have any choice left.... It will strike irresistible love or irresistible horror into every creature. It will be too late then to choose your side. There is no use saying you choose to fall facedown, when it has become impossible to stand up.” C. S. LEWIS

Discussion Questions

Read Isaac Watts’ hymn lyrics above. Surrender to God brings us to a place of intense vulnerability but is also where we find our home and discover our purpose. How do you feel about that paradox? Does it make you hesitant or uncertain about worship? How do you respond to the risky nature of that surrender?

Read the Matthew bible reading. Why did the disciples fall face-down? Describe a time, maybe a brief moment, when you experienced a glimpse of the Glory of God? What happened to you? How did you feel?

Idolatry puts us in the grip of the created – by contrast, in worshipping the creator we are sustained and become fruitful. If you are willing – please describe how has this been true in your life? Is this also true of us as a church – how? And of us as a nation – how?

What sorts of things have you found helpful in worshipping God? How did you discover them?

Prayer

Creator God, we glimpse your beauty in setting sun, mountain top, eagle's wing. We sense your power in thunder crash, lightning flash and ocean's roar. Creator God we praise you!

Lord Jesus, we see your love, stretched out upon a cruel cross. We stand in awe at your sacrifice, pure love poured out for humankind. Lord Jesus we praise you!

Holy Spirit, we see your power in lives transformed, hearts on fire. We listen for your still, small voice, comforting, guiding, calling. Holy Spirit we praise you!

Personal Reflection

Read C. S. Lewis' picture of what it might be like when Christ returns. Imagine yourself into this momentous event. Where are you in the story – one who is already face down in worship – or one who just won't be able to stand up in the surprise moment of Christ's coming?

Encouragement

If the Holy Spirit should visit us in worship with the sweet but fiery breath of Pentecost, we would be greater Christians and holier souls. Beyond that, we would also be greater poets, greater artists and greater lovers of God and His universe. MATT REDMAN.

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