

The Worship of the Church Various Scriptures

Introduction – I wonder how many mirrors we have in our church today. We carry mirrors, hang them on our walls, use them to get ready every single day. Our job to display God to the world. The word that we used last week was REFLECT. We are to reflect the character and glory of God back to Himself, to one another, and to the world around us. We are the mirror through which people see God!

Illustration – Now in our bathroom we have a mirror that has no frame. It is for basically seeing where to part my hair and for Jenny to see where to apply the makeup. But in our bedroom we have a mirror with a nice frame. It is not just there for seeing our faces, it is also for decoration. And the church is like the mirror with the picture frame. We might ask what are the picture frames that God has given to most highlight His character and glory? And the answer that the Bible gives is that there are basically 3 picture frames for displaying God's glory...

- Worship...
- Discipleship...
- Evangelism...

So for the next few weeks we are going to take each of these “picture frames” that God has given us to frame His glory and to structure what we actually DO as a church. This week, we are going to consider THE WORSHIP OF THE CHURCH.

And here's the first thing that we need to understand about worship... Worshiping God is not altogether safe!

1. A Worship Warning...

- a. There are numerous places in the Scriptures that highlight the “danger” of worshipping God.
 - i. In the Old Testament two priests offered what the Scriptures called “strange fire” and God struck them dead. Uzzah touched the holy ark of the covenant and God struck him dead.
Another time, God's prophet, Isaiah, had a vision of God and though he wasn't struck dead he was undone. He could only groan out a confession of sin in the presence of God.
These events demonstrate that sinful people cannot worship God just any way that we please. We must come to God as He has prescribed.
 - ii. In the New Testament a couple sold some land and made an offering of part of the profit. Nothing wrong with that! But they did it in such a way that implied that they were giving all of the price of the land. And because that was a lie and because it was done, not for God but for their own praise, God struck them dead too!
Again, this isn't to somehow show that God is fickle and angry, but it does demonstrate that God is holy and that the purpose of worship is to bring HIM praise not to bring ourselves attention.
- b. The best summary of this warning that runs throughout the Scriptures is **Hebrews 12.28-29**
– ²⁸Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let

us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, ²⁹for our God is a consuming fire.

- c. **Application** - The clear implication when these verses talk about acceptable worship is that there is such a thing as unacceptable worship. And from these stories that we've already mentioned we can see that unacceptable "worship" would be things like approaching God carelessly, not worshiping God in the ways that He has prescribed, and most importantly unacceptable "worship" is "worship" that exalts self instead of God!

More application – And... we should pursue our worship with REVERENCE and AWE. There should be a holy and seriousness about our times or private and public worship! They should always be joyous, but never be flippant! And my friends, this is SO important. We should never come to church just to talk to friends or organize the next church event. We should come to offer praise and worship and ourselves to GOD, the holy Creator of the universe, the Almighty Savior of sinners, the One described by Hebrews as a "consuming fire"!

- d. **Transition** – And that brings us to a very important questions...

2. Why Do We Worship?

- a. The basic answer is that we worship God because of WHO He is, His character; and we worship because of WHAT He has done.

God is HOLY! – The Bible teaches us to worship God because of His holiness.

- Think with me about the most exalted times of worship in the Bible. Those times where there are visions around the throne of God. Both in Isaiah's vision and John the Apostle's vision of the worship of heaven the angels are crying out "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, is the Lord God Almighty!" (Isaiah 6.3 & Revelation 4.8)

- Various Psalms call for worship because of God's holiness:

Psalm 29:2

Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;
worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness.

Application – We are to worship God because He is holy! God deserves to be honored because He is so pure, so right, so good. Every aspect of His being is holy.

We also worship God because...

- b. God is CREATOR! – The Bible also gives examples of praise of worshiping God because He is the Creator. This is obvious. He is the creator, we are the creatures. We belong to Him and owe our everything to Him.

- **Revelation 4.11** – Worthy are you Our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they existed and were created.

Illustration – I realize that when we are talking about God's greatness as the creator that it is hard for us to come up with an illustration. And this one is only a weak illustration, but it may help. Our dog worships me! ☺ I'm the one who walks her the most, and feeds her the most. So she worships me. When we are going for a walk she is constantly checking where I'm at, and where I'm headed. If we are walking as a family, she pretty much wants me to be holding the leash. I'm not her creator, but I am her owner. And we should constantly, as God's creatures, have our heart and our eyes upon Him. We should be looking for ways to please Him. We should be turning to Him for our needs to be met.

Transition – We should worship God because of His holiness, and we should worship God because He is our Creator. But most of all, we should worship God because...

c. God is SAVIOR!

- **Psalm 95.1** says, "Oh come let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our SALVATION!"

- **Revelation 5.9-10** – records the worship of heaven as:

Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals,
for you were slain,

and by your blood you ransomed people for God

from every tribe and language and people and nation

and you have made them a kingdom of priests to our God,

and they shall reign on the earth.

- We should worship God because He has saved us from hell!

- We should worship God because He has saved us from our sins!

- We should worship God because He has saved us from our own self destruction!

- **Romans 5.8** – God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us!

- Our sins deserve wrath, Christ purchased our forgiveness! And salvation is not something that we earn, it is a gift! We receive God forgiveness by faith, not by works! It is received not earned!

- Not only does God deserve our praise because He sent Jesus to die for our sins, but because we personally would never have believed on Christ for salvation without the Holy Spirit personally calling and convicting us. We worship God because of the grand plan of salvation from before eternity, but we also worship God for particular redemption. Christ died for YOU! The Spirit drew YOU to the grace of God and the cross of Christ!

Application – God deserves our worship because He from the very beginning planned our salvation!

Transition / Application – So far, we've seen the reality that worship is a serious matter. Our God is a consuming fire and we should worship Him with reverence and awe. We've also seen that the reasons that we worship God are that He is holy, He is Creator, and He is Savior. But before we move on to our 3rd point, I want to mention one final application for this point. When we pray and praise the Lord, we need to spell those things out. We need to pray to God and praise Him in specifics. We need to praise Him for His specific character qualities, His holiness, purity, love, and goodness. We need to list His various actions in the plan of salvation, choosing us and drawing us, sending His Son, raising Jesus from the grave, and promising to return. That is one of the ways that God's glory is reflected back to Him in our worship. Next...

3. How Do We Worship?

a. Of course, I know that we worship God in private as well as together, but for the sake of this series on the church...

b. We worship God TOGETHER!

- **Hebrews 10.24 -25** – And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

- We are meant to worship God together! God's people have always been in community, not scattered individuals. God chose the nation of Israel as His worshiping community. Jesus chose 12 apostles. There were 120 in the upper room at Pentecost. Churches were established everywhere the Apostles spread the gospel.

- There is something actually wrong with the idea that we can worship God better sitting

beside a lake or standing at the foot of a mountain. We can never worship God in private as completely as we can when we are together with God's people, that is just the way that God has designed it.

- It is so clear that the commands to worship God that are given in the Bible are given in the plural. They are given to a worshipping community. Which should say something about our church attendance.

Transition – And then there are a number of other elements of worship that are summarized in one passage...

- c. **Colossians 3.16-17** – 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. ¹⁷And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

- This passage highlights 5 basic elements of worship...

i. Proclaim and Receive the Word of the Lord...

- "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly..."

- Part of what we do in worship is allow the Lord to speak to us. We attend to His voice.

- Paul told Timothy to "preach the word".

- Paul told the Corinthian church "Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."

Illustration – You know how various pundits will talk about politicians running for office "staying on message" or "getting off message". They are referring to the need to clearly and simply articulate a simple, understandable theme. George W. Bush's message was "compassionate conservatism". President Obama's was "hope for real change". One of the things than a political opponent will try to do is to get a politician "off message". Well, when the devil gets us off the Word of God, he has gotten us "off message". And we can be confident that when we are steadily proclaiming and listening to and obeying God's Word, that we are "on message".

- **Application** – In fact, even in the Old Testament, when the Scriptures weren't completed, God elevated His Word over other forms of revelation. Listen to **Jeremiah 23:28-29** - Let the prophet who has a dream tell the dream, but let him who has my word speak my word faithfully. What has straw in common with wheat? declares the LORD. ²⁹Is not my word like fire, declares the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?

- We worship God by LISTENING to the Bible!

- ii. Sing Praise to God... - - **Colossians 3** not only tells us to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly, it tells us to sing psalm and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in our hearts to God.

- Singing may seem countercultural, but it is commanded by God and it honors Him.

- Our entire culture is set up for listening. We attend concerts, we have I-pods that allow us to personalize our listening tastes. We have home stereo systems that pulse with our listening pleasure.

- But when it comes to worship, we listen to the preaching and we participate in the singing!

Illustration – Recently there's been a lot of focus on college sports. Some people

are fans some people are fanatics! Some attend games, and others participate in the event! They paint their faces, they wear the right clothes, they probably even pray!

Now I can't say that I'm much of a sports fan. I don't know the names or the records of the players. But I do know when you are supposed to clap and cheer! Even a guy like me knows when to participate!

Application – And God wants us to participate in the part of the worship that is singing. It is NOT a spectator sport. It is God's people gathered to praise Him. Some of you don't sing. You are disobeying God and you are missing the blessing that God designed to come when we praise Him with our voices.

Just like part of the joy of a football game is not just seeing the home team win, it is jumping up and shouting when the intercepting is snagged or the field goal is kicked; part of the joy of worship is standing with your brothers and sisters and lifting your voice to God in praise!

Transition – How do we worship? We worship by listening to God's Word and by singing His praise, but we also worship when we...

iii. Pray Dependently...

- Paul only mentions one aspect of prayer in Colossians 3.16-17 – thanksgiving. But in I Timothy 2 he instructs churches and pastors more fully regarding the place of prayer in worship...

1 Timothy 2:1-4 - First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, ²for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. ³This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

1 Timothy 2:8 - I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling;

- At some point in these various sermons on prayer, I'll probably preach an entire sermon on praying together as a church, but at this point, let me just say that prayer should saturate everything that we do when we worship God.

- Part of worship is dependence on God, and prayer is how we express this aspect of worship.

Transition – Back to Colossians 3.16-17, there are just two more things that we need to notice about worship as we close...

iv. FROM THE HEART... Did you notice how Paul instructed the church to sing with **thankfulness in your hearts to God**. Worship is a matter of the heart.

- Again, this is radically countercultural. Our culture is set up as a performance culture. We spend countless hours watching American Idol and Dancing with the Stars as people perform and are rated by the audience.

- Some of us are afraid to sing because we think we have an unpleasant voice.

- Listen to me, God wants worship that is from the whole person! And that includes the heart. The notes could be perfect, but if the heart is not right, it is not a joyful noise.

By the way, because it is an offering to the Lord, it should be done to the very best of our ability, but it should never be done in comparison to another person's abilities!

- Children, when you play or sing for the Lord at church. It is not a performance for

the audience, it is praise to God. And it must be done for Him, from the heart!
- And then finally... Worship must be offered to God...

v. THROUGH THE LORD JESUS CHRIST!

- Notice again **Colossians 3.17** – “And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”

- Remember how I started this morning off by saying that worshipping God is not altogether safe? We are only able to offer praise to God because Jesus has died in our place!

- It is through Him that our praise is acceptable. It is through Him that we are not undone and destroyed in the presence of God! It is through Him that we can enter the very throne room of God who is holy, holy, holy!

- One of the most important things to understand about worship is that Jesus died so that our worship might be acceptable to God now and so that in glory we might worship Him in the splendor of holiness!

Conclusion – There are a number of questions that we should use to examine our hearts as we consider the mandate of the church to worship the living God...

- Do you take worship seriously?
- Do we worship God in reverence and awe at Community Bible Church?
- Do we consider the reasons that we worship God? Or is church attendance and hymn singing just a habit?
 - Do we really worship God because He is holy?
 - Do we worship Him because He is Creator and we owe it to Him?
 - Do we worship God because He has SAVED us?!
- And how do we worship Him?
 - Have you ever considered the fact that we cannot just worship God in any way that we please?
 - Are you committed to worshipping God TOGETHER?
 - Do you worship God by listening to the Word?
 - Do you sing and pray to Him? Are you participating or spectating?
 - And do you worship from the heart?
 - And do you regularly remember that apart from Christ worship would be impossible?

Let's pray!