

## ***“What Did You Bring to WORSHIP”***

*Exodus 20:1-11 • Romans 12:1-13*

First Presbyterian Church, Corpus Christi, TX

Rev. Charles S. Blackshear • January 25, 2015

Take a look around you. What did you bring to worship? You probably have a cell phone. Ladies, you have your purse. Maybe you brought some papers or a book. Anyone bring a Bible? How about a pen to take notes? Think back a little bit. What did you have to do to get here this morning? You had to get in your car and drive here. Before that you had to get up and get dressed, eat breakfast and brush your teeth. If an alarm clock woke you up, you had to set it before you went to bed last night. My point is that being here this morning required you to do some planning and to put out some effort. You made a decision to show up and you did what you needed to do to get here. But there's more to worship than just getting here, and it has to do with what you bring.

Last Sunday was Vision Sunday. We started talking about what kind of church we want to be and what kind of Christians we want to be. We also introduced a verse I want every one of us to memorize, Acts 2:42. Let's say it together. Repeat after me. "They devoted themselves / to the apostles' teaching / and the fellowship / to the breaking of bread / and the prayers." Based on the first church found in Acts 2, we introduced the five core values or core practices of fully-devoted followers of Jesus. Disciples *worship* regularly, *connect* with other believers, *grow* in their faith by studying the Bible, *serve* others, and *invite* people to come discover Jesus.

Today we look at the first one, worship. This is probably the most important of the core values because worship is the most important thing you can do in your life and so it's the most important thing we do as a church. You were made to worship God. He made you for his pleasure. Some people spend their entire lives trying to figure out what their purpose is. I'm going to save you a lot of trouble. Your purpose is to worship God. The first question of the Westminster Catechism, which many of us had to learn as children, asks, "What is the

chief end of man?" In other words, what's your primary purpose? The answer is, "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever."

The truth is that everyone worships. The question is who or what do you worship? Rick Warren says, "If we fail to worship God, we always find a substitute, even if it ends up being ourselves." That's the warning that God gives us in the Ten Commandments. We are not to worship anything except God. So let's begin by trying to find out what we mean by worship. What exactly *is* worship? Before we can answer that, there are a few things that are NOT worship, and I think it may surprise you. Music is not worship. Now you're thinking, "music is such an important part of our service. How can you say it's not worship?" Music can help us worship, but it's not worship. What else is *not* worship? Preaching is not worship. Reading the Scriptures is not worship.

If none of those things that we do every Sunday are worship, then what *is*? In John 4:23, Jesus tells the Samaritan woman at the well, "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." I think a good definition of worship is this: love the Lord your God with *all* your heart and with *all* your soul and with *all* your mind and with *all* your strength. Worship means expressing our love for God for who he is, what he's said, and what he's doing.

It seems to me that true worship has basically three components: focusing your attention on God, expressing your affection for God, and using your abilities for God. This is where Scripture reading and preaching come in. Their primary purpose is to focus our attention on Christ and what he's done for us. The Apostle Paul told the Corinthian Christians, "I decided not to talk to you about anything except Jesus Christ and him crucified." But it's not just the pastor's job to point you to Christ. Each one of us has the

responsibility to focus our attention on God every day. We need to be in the Word of God every day because that's where we hear him speak. Recently I heard someone say, "Complaining about not hearing from God while your Bible is closed is like complaining about not getting texts while your phone is off." If you want to hear from God, go where he has already spoken. R.C. Sproul says, "There is an inseparable relationship between your affection for Christ and your affection for the Scriptures."

We can express our affection for God in a number of ways. Music can be an important part of our expression but the true worship is our heart telling Christ how much we love him. Prayer is an important part of expressing our love for Christ. The secret to effective prayer, by the way, is to pray longer than you have words to pray. In other words, spend some of your prayer time listening. Your prayer life should be more like a conversation than an email. Verse 12 of our passage says, "be constant in prayer."

Maybe the best word to describe how we express our affection to God is "surrender." Paul tells us, "present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." In the Old Testament, the people were to bring animal sacrifices to God. The animal was to be perfect. It represented bringing their best to God and it meant giving up that valuable animal as a way of remaining dependent upon God. Here we're told to offer ourselves as that sacrifice. This sacrifice isn't just expensive, it costs us everything. We are to offer God our entire self. The problem with living sacrifices, though, is that they can crawl off the altar. That means you have to make the decision to offer yourself to Christ over and over again.

The third component of worship, then, is to use your abilities for God. Verse 6 reminds us that we each have different gifts from God and that he expects us to use them for his glory. Not only that but we owe it to each other to exercise those gifts. Verse 4 says, "For as in one body we

have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another." If you aren't using the gifts that God has given you to help build his church, the whole body suffers and we can't become the church that Christ calls us to be.

The last thing we need to learn about worship this morning is that it is when we are truly worshiping God that he then transforms us. Worship is where heaven and earth meet. God is seeking true worshipers and he meets us in our worship and changes us to be more like Christ. Verse 2: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." Worship is where we change our minds. In fact, the Greek word for repent literally means "to change your mind." When we worship the risen Christ we change our thinking from what *I* want to what *God* wants.

Now you may be thinking, "Sometimes I don't really get much out of worship." That's because you're doing it wrong. Worship is not about what you get but what you give. It's about giving yourself to God. What you will find is that it is in the giving that you will also receive. So how can you learn to worship? It's not hard. Remember, you were made for this. First, show up. Even if you don't feel like it. Some of the times I have experienced the presence of God the most in worship were when I didn't feel like showing up. And if worship is where your mind is renewed then you need to be here to be transformed by the Holy Spirit. Remember that we are members of each other. When you're not here, other people don't get the full experience of the Body of Christ.

Second, expect to experience the presence of the Holy Spirit. God is here but if you're not expecting him you can easily miss him. Expect to hear God in the Scriptures, the music, the preaching, and the prayers. Expect to see Christ in the other people. Expect God to change you.

Third, realize that worship is not something

that you do for an hour a week. Worship is something that you do every day. It's the way you live your life. Everything you do for God's glory is worship. Daily worship reflects your priorities. Spend time reading the Bible every day. Even if it's just a short section. There are a number of websites that will email you a Scripture every day. Pray every day. Pray for our church. There's a list of people to pray for on the back of your bulletin. This week pray for someone who wasn't here today. Sign up to be a Prayer Partner. Most of all, spend time telling God how much you love him.

The people who get the most out of our worship services are those who come prepared to worship because they are already worshipping. If you develop the habit of worshipping God in all areas of your life, the truth is that you won't ever want to miss Sunday worship. And when you come, you bring a heart and mind that is already focused on Christ. You bring a love of God that is ready to be expressed publicly. You bring a desire to be changed. And you bring gifts and abilities that you are eager to put to work. So what *did* you bring with you to worship?

*Amen*