

“Core Values: Worship”

John 4:7-26 • Deuteronomy 6:1-9

First Presbyterian Church, Corpus Christi, TX

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How many of you remember the movie *City Slickers*? It came out about 25 years ago and starred Billy Crystal and Jack Palance. The story is about a group of three men who are experiencing a mid-life crisis. Their marriages are falling apart, their careers have stalled, and they're miserable. So they decide to do the only logical thing – they spend two weeks going on a cattle drive out west.

The cattle drive is led by a tough old cowboy named Curly played by Jack Palance. In one of the most memorable scenes of the movie, Curly and Mitch, played by Billy Crystal, are riding together to round up some stray cows. Curly stops and asks Mitch, “Do you know what the secret of life is?” Mitch says, “No, what?” Curly holds up his finger and says, “It's this.” Mitch says, “your finger?” Then Curly says, “One thing. Just one thing. You stick to that and nothing else matters.” And he tells Mitch that *he* has to figure out what that one thing is.

What Curly was saying is that we're all faced with lots of decisions in life. We all have more opportunities than we can take advantage of. In fact, many people today end up kind of paralyzed in life because they're afraid they may miss a better offer. There's even a name for this. It's called FOMO – Fear of Missing Out. They end up not committing to anything because they're worried they may miss something else.

This morning we are continuing our look at our Core Values and today we want to talk about the core value of *worship*. We have said that we believe people thrive best when public worship is a regular part of their life. In other words, worship is the thing that you should be afraid of missing out on. God made you to worship and so when you are worshipping Him you are doing what you were designed to do.

One day some lawyers came to Jesus and asked him, “what's the greatest commandment in the law?” Jesus looked at them and said, “It's this.” They said, “your finger?” Jesus said, “One

thing. Just one thing. You stick to that and nothing else matters. You shall love the LORD your God with *all* your heart and with *all* your soul and with *all* your might.” Of course he was quoting from our reading from Deuteronomy 6. This passage was probably the best known of all Scripture passages for the Jews. It was their John 3:16. It was like their Lord's Prayer and they would recite it every day and what it describes is worship.

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. I'm going to tell you the secret of life. It's one thing. Your purpose in life is to worship God. It's what you were designed to do. 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 Jesus is traveling North from Jerusalem back to Galilee and the shortest path is through

Samaria. Samaritans and Jews didn't get along during the time of Jesus, even though they really were cousins. Most Jews would take the long way around so they didn't have to go through Samaria. But Jesus and his disciples go that way. That's how he is. And he stops at a well and sits down. Before long a Samaritan woman comes along and Jesus asks her to give him some water. We don't have time today to get into the details of the story but let's just say Jesus is breaking all kinds of social barriers and the woman even points it out. She says, "Your people don't talk to people like me. What's going on?" Jesus uses that opportunity to turn the conversation to spiritual matters. He takes a conversation about water and says, "you know what's better than water? Living water. Having the Holy Spirit in you. When you experience God personally it's going to be like a spring gushing inside you."

Let me tell you, when you experience God's presence personally it results in worship. 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." Worship means expressing your 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. 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. As Romans 12:12 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. We are to offer God our entire self.

The third component of worship, then, is to use your abilities for God. In Romans 12 Paul 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. 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. 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. 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. 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. Pray every day. Pray for our church. 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 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. Because worship, real worship, is the secret of life . It's about one thing. Loving God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. When you figure that out, nothing else matters.

Amen.