

8th January 2017

What is Worship?

Aim: To understand that worship is our response to the love given to us by God, and then our giving back to God, expressing our love for him.

Reading: Psalm 95.1-7

If I was to squeeze this orange hard enough, I think you'd agree with me that juice would come out of it, yeah?

I wonder what's inside **you**? In your **heart**?

I wonder, if your heart were to be squeezed (metaphorically!) what would come out?

Would it be primarily your love for God? Or for someone else? Or for something else?

What would it reveal to you about the things you value most?

The word 'worship' comes from an Old English word meaning 'worthiness,' and it's really about honouring what we value most.

I'd like to suggest that worship involves the whole of our lives - it's our response to the love given to us by God, and then our giving back to God, expressing our love for him.

('We love him because he first loved us' 1 John 4.19).

In our reading from Psalm 95 we can see that worship is:

about reverence and devotion.

It's about giving thanks to God for all that he has done for us, all he is doing, and all he will do for us.

It's about paying him the respect that is due.

It's about praising God for his awesomeness and holiness.

It's about acknowledging that God is our Creator and Father; and that we should honour all that he is.

Everyone was made to worship! That's what we've been created for! We were made by God, for God.

Rick Warren, in his book 'The Purpose Driven Life,' states very clearly "You were planned for God's pleasure....God chose to create you for his own enjoyment. You exist for his benefit, his glory, his purpose, and his delight. Bringing enjoyment to God, living for his pleasure, is the first purpose of your life." Furthermore he says, "Anything you do that brings pleasure to God is an act of worship."

Pastor Rick references the Book of Revelation, chapter 4 verse 11, where John is given a vision of how God is worshiped in heaven – John sees the 24 elders surrounding God on his throne, falling down to worship, laying their crowns before him, saying,

"You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honour and power. For you created all things, and they exist because you created what you pleased."

The Psalms pour out praise and worship. Psalm 95 is literally an invitation to worship God! It tells us how to praise him, give him glory, to tell others about him and how to live holy lives.

Verse 6 says "Come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord our maker, for he is our God."

In Psalm 29.2 David says 'worship the Lord in the splendour of his holiness.'

He is more than worthy to receive our praise!

Psalm 105.4 tells us to worship God continually!

Worship isn't limited to the songs we sing and the service we attend on a Sunday. It's about showing God we love him all the time. And we can worship God anytime, anywhere, if our hearts are longing to love and serve him.

Which takes us back to what's in our hearts ... when we make God the number one priority in our lives, we can fully worship him, he is there at the centre of our worship.

It's all about who we choose to place first.

As John Wimber puts it, "If we don't worship God, we'll worship something or someone else."

At the heart of worship is surrender (Rick Warren). Giving our lives to God is a natural response to his love and mercy. Paul tells us in Romans 12.1 to fully surrender our lives to God in worship: 'because of God's great mercy to us...offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing him. This is the true worship that you should offer.'

C.S Lewis wrote, "The more we let God take us over, the more truly ourselves we become – because he made us.'

The greatest way we can express our love to God is by giving our lives to him – daily laying aside our desires to trust and follow him.

So how can we worship God anytime and anywhere?

We can look to Jesus and how he lived his life here on earth.

The next time you're walking down the street and you see a stranger approaching, why not give them a smile and maybe say 'hello'? It doesn't matter if they don't respond. You are worshiping God by showing kindness.

That friend of yours who's having a hard time...give them a call, or text them with a word of encouragement. You are worshiping God by showing compassion.

Is there someone you know who you could share the Good News of Jesus with? Take that step forward and tell them about what he's doing in your life! You'll be worshiping as one of God's disciples fulfilling your call as his messenger.

Someone from church starts to tell you about their sore knee during coffee...offer to pray for them. You're worshiping God by trusting in his goodness.

The next time you're tempted to wriggle out of a mistake you've made at work, come clean and apologise for your error. You'll be worshiping God by obeying his commandment to be honest.

Worship is about knowing and loving God.

And God so wants to be involved in our lives, all the little details, every day, whatever we are doing, because he loves us so much. He desires a relationship with us. God made you to love you, and he longs for you to love him back!

In Hosea 6.6 we read, "I want you to show love, not offer sacrifices. I want you to know me more than I want your burnt offerings."

God wants us to love him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength (Mark 12.30). He wants our focus because he is focused on us!

When we get to know God better, we learn to trust him more and more, and as we begin to realise how much God loves us, surrendering ourselves to him becomes easier. And let's remember, God loves us so much, he sent his Son to die for us! When we choose to be a living sacrifice, and obey God's word, we find a Saviour and a friend, most worthy of our praise.

Our entire life can become an act of worship. In Colossians 3.23 Paul tells us, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as though you were working for the Lord and not for people." In this way, God can use us for his purpose. Everything we do can be done for the glory of God if we have his love foremost in our hearts. When we are living our lives in alignment with God's will, we can live a life of worship, so when we come to worship at church, we do so with integrity.

You might like to ask yourself in this week ahead, what is the driving force of my life? What area of my life might I be holding back from God? And in what ways can my worship please God more?

Tonight let's remember we were made for God's pleasure and let's choose to make worship a lifestyle!

Amen.