

September 13, 2009
Here We Come To Worship ...
Psalm 19

Introduction

We come together this morning to worship God. This is one of the fundamental purposes for which, as people, and we, as a church, were created and called into being. It is so much a fundamental part of who we are that one of the great statements of faith states that "*Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.*"

Worship is not JUST a human activity:

Psalm 19:1 *The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.*

² *Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge.*

³ *There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard.*

⁴ *Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.*

In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun,⁵ which is like a bridegroom coming forth from his pavilion, like a champion rejoicing to run his course.

⁶ *It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is hidden from its heat.*

All of creation worships God.

What is Worship?

Marva Dawn writes, "*Worship is our joyful response to the immense grace of our God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*" When the heavens worship God, they do so "*in joyful response to the immense grace of God*" in the language they speak - the language of blue skies and thunderheads, sunrises and sunsets, stars and nebulae. In the same way other passages of Scripture speak of the trees waving their branches, flowers blooming in praise, birds and animals praising God just by being birds and animals - everything in creation worships its Creator.

Worship is not just a "human" thing. All of creation worships God - not as you and I do, of course, but in their own unique ways.

That may seem odd to us because our - human - worship is planned, active, and self-conscious. We sing songs, pray prayers, read Scripture, listen to teaching, etc., etc. These are all good things. They are important ways we consciously worship God. But as human beings, we can begin to think worship is something we do - for God's benefit, or to attract people to our church, or to minister to people's needs.

But Psalm 19 reminds us that an essential part of who we are created to be - in our fundamental identity - is as worshippers of God! At the core of our humanity is a need to praise God.

Worship is you or I or us - together - coming before God and giving Him honour and glory *as our joyful response to the immense grace of our God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.* Worship is celebrating that "God is good" today and every day, through the pleasant times and the hard days, on sun-drenched hilltops

and dark valleys.

Our focus is on God: we give Him the thanks, praise, and adoration He is due. We are here to glorify the King of Kings, to express our love to our Saviour, to bless the Holy Spirit. Someone may see us worshipping sincerely and be drawn to God! - great ... but that is an unintended consequence; it is not the purpose of worship. Some of us in pain or struggling may feel genuinely blessed - great! ... but that is not the purpose of worship. The primary purpose of worship is to glorify God.

Graham Kendrick writes, *"Worship is first and foremost for His benefit, not ours, though it is marvelous to discover that in giving Him pleasure, we ourselves enter into what can become our richest and most wholesome experience in life."*

Who do we worship?

"The heavens declare the glory of ____?" Whom? God!

God is the One who reveals himself in creation. God's fingerprints are seen across the universe: every time a star shines, it tells of its Creator. Every time a flower blooms, it reveals God's glory. Every time a baby is born, it is a miracle of God's grace. God's voice is heard in the beauty of his creation. Paul writes, that, *"Ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities - his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God"* (Romans 1:20).

God is also the One who reveals himself in his Law, his Word, our Scripture.

Psalm 19:7 *The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul.*

The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

⁸ *The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart.*

The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

We believe God created the heavens and the earth. We believe God created us. We worship God, our glorious Creator.

And we also believe that God, as our Creator, knows what is right, true, and best. He is Wisdom. In the Bible, wisdom comes when we recognize we are God's people - created by Him - in His world - which is also created by Him - and we seek His guidance, meaning and purpose for our lives. Because we worship Him, we choose to obey Him! We worship God - and we live out our faith by following His commands and principles.

We worship God - our Creator, our King - and the One who can teach us how to live wisely in this world ... if we choose to listen ... if we choose to obey.

C.S. Lewis writes, *"Christ says, 'Give me all. I don't want so much of your time and so much of your money and so much of your work. I want you.'"*

Our worship flows from our relationship with God

Psalm 19:9 *The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever.*

The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous.

¹⁰ *They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold;
they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb.*

¹¹ *By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.*

"Fear of the Lord" may sound like an odd way to talk about relationship! When we think of "fear" we think of "terror," or "dread." This is not what our relationship with God looks like. In fact, the Bible describes our relationship with God as that of a perfect, loving, sacrificial, benevolent Father relating with his beloved children - in fact we, His kids, are invited to call Him "Dad" (the Aramaic word is "Abba"). Jesus calls us "brothers and sisters" and "friends."

At the same time, God - Father, Son, and Spirit - are more than my divine "buddies." God is the Creator. He is the all-knowing One. He is the all-powerful One. He is the perfectly holy One. If I am at all wise I know that God is infinitely "more" than I am or could ever hope to be. And so our relationship also has a strong sense of reverence, adoration, awe, and wonder to it. A word that could be used to describe that sense of reverence and worship is "fear."

God is the One who came to live among us as Jesus. As the Master Teacher He taught us how to live wisely and well. As our loving Creator He was willing to take upon Himself our sin - your sin and mine - that we might know God in all His fullness and glory. As our suffering Saviour He was willing to experience the punishment I deserve. Yes, He welcomes me as His brother and friend, but I still feel a sense of unimaginable thankfulness and unworthiness in His presence - He is God, and I am not. There is a sense of "fear" in His presence.

Because I "fear Him" - in the sense of reverence and awe, I will listen to His words. I will follow Him. He is the Mentor, Teacher, Friend, Tutor, Guide, Master, and King I need. My life is a journey through which I want to know Him for fully, love Him more dearly, obey Him more completely, and follow Him more closely. I want my life to be one in which I *"love the Lord my God with all my heart, all my mind, all my soul, and all my strength."*

Worship is my desire to praise Him, to thank Him, to love Him, and to give my life to Him.

The moment you wake up each morning, all your wishes and hopes for the day rush at you like wild animals. The first job each morning consists in simply shoving them all back; in listening to that other voice - God's voice - taking that other point of view - God's point of view - letting that other larger, stronger, quieter life - God's life - come flowing in. The first job of every day is standing back from all your natural fussings and frettings - coming in out of the wind - and enjoying God's peace and presence. It's about spending time with the One who created you, the One who loves you - the one whom you love - and letting His heart and His soul become one with yours.

Over time good friends - including spouses in a healthy marriage - become better and better friends. Their relationship grows. They spend time together. They respect one another. They seek the best for one another. And they become more and more like each other. We are called to become better and better "friends" of Jesus. To spend time with Jesus. To respect Jesus. To seek the best for Jesus. To become like Jesus.

Worship changes how I live

Jesus says that *"My purpose is to give you a rich and satisfying life"* (John 10:10). That abundant life comes from obeying His commands - after all, as the Creator of the universe He does know how life works best! Who wouldn't want that? But why, then, do we choose to live a double life? Why don't we honestly, sincerely - with every ounce of energy we possess and every bit of discipline we can muster - strive, strain, scrape and claw our way to live integrated, holy, holistic lives in which Christ is honoured always and in every way.

François Fénelon writes, *"What God asks of us is a will which is no longer divided between Him and any creature."* God asks us to love Him, first and foremost. He asks us to follow Him, first and Foremost. God asks us to live for Him, first and foremost.

That sounds so much easier than it is to live. Few of us want a "divided will." Few of us want to live a schizophrenic life in which we are one - spiritual - person on Sunday morning and another - not-so-spiritual - person on Sunday afternoon and the rest of the week. Few of us want to live "righteously" in a Bible study and live anything-but-righteously the next day. But we struggle.

Paul writes, *"I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. I love God's law with all my heart. But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death?"* (Romans 7:21-24)

He goes on to say, *"Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord."* (7:25)

An essential part of our worship is being honest with God - and with ourselves - that we are not perfect, holy people. We struggle to be the holistic people of God we aspire to be.

We can come in our humanness, our brokenness, our guilt, our shame, our struggle - and know His love, His grace, His forgiveness, and His blessing.

Psalms 19:12 *Forgive my hidden faults.*

¹³ *Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me.*

Then will I be blameless, innocent of great transgression.

¹⁴ *May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart*

be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Dallas Willard writes, *"If we intend to become like Christ that will be obvious to every thoughtful person around us, as well as to ourselves. Of course attitudes that define the disciple cannot be realized today by leaving family and business to accompany Jesus on his travels about the countryside. But discipleship can be made concrete by loving our enemies, blessing those who curse us, walking the second mile with a oppressor - in general, living out the gracious inward transformations of faith, hope, and love. Such acts - carried out by the disciplined person with manifest grace, peace, and joy - make discipleship no less tangible and shocking today than were those desertions of long ago."*

Can I live a life that is not divided? Can I worship my God through my life as well as through my songs? Can I worship my God in the way I live as well as in my words? *"Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord."*