

“We all that we are”
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Readings:

Romans 12:1

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Mark 12:30-31

INTRODUCTION

- Some time ago, while I was still adjusting to life in Canada, I experienced a curious situation.
 - I was talking to a Canadian and, in the middle of the conversation, I made a very Brazilian gesture.
 - He looked at me, smiled politely, and said:
 - "Sorry, I didn't understand... could you repeat that?"
 - And I found myself thinking,
 - "How come you didn't understand? I practically... I drew it with my whole body!"
- At that moment, I realized how Brazilian communication is full of gestures, expressions, and intonations, while here the focus is on words:
 - clear, direct, and precisely chosen.
- It was like discovering I had two languages:
 - Portuguese
 - and my own gestures!
- This cultural difference sparked a question in me:
 - If even communication between us can be so diverse, sometimes more physical or more verbal, how does God expect us to worship Him?
 - With words alone?
 - Based solely on emotions?

- With just the body?
 - Or with something much bigger: with everything that we are?
- Because the God who created us whole also invites us to worship Him whole.
- These questions led me back to Scripture and the Reformed tradition to reflect on God's call to worship with our whole being.
 - Deuteronomy 6 commands us: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might."
 - In Mark 12, Jesus expands on this understanding by also including the mind.
 - In other words, worship is not a partial act.
 - It's a holistic movement.
 - A complete delivery.
- Today, I want to reflect with you on this holistic worship that involves the body, the community, and daily life.

1. Worshiping God involves us completely.

- If we ask what the purpose of our existence is from a Christian perspective, the answer is clear:
 - To love God and to love one's neighbor.
 - And this love is not just a hidden emotion, nor is it merely an intellectual decision.
 - It needs to be seen, experienced, expressed.
- John Calvin said that faith should not remain "hidden in the heart," but should be manifested in words.
- For Calvin, there has always been an essential connection between what is visible and what is invisible, between what is abstract and what is concrete.

- This explains why, in our tradition, we celebrate the Word and the Sacraments.
 - We nourish not only the mind, but also the body.
 - Not just to convince the intellect, but to shape the whole person.
- Reformed faith recognizes that gestures, rituals, and ceremonies are not mere accessories, but instruments of worship when they reflect the true connection between what is within and what is without.
 - between the heart and the body.
 - The exterior confirms the authenticity of the interior.
- For example:
 - Calvin observed that kneeling in prayer is a powerful expression of humility.
 - When we kneel, it is not only the mind that bows; it is the whole body that surrenders before God.
 - And this external gesture can influence and even awaken the internal attitude.
 - making it more intense.
- Both are important for our faith: inner and outer.
- In an analysis of societies marked by consumerism, Dean Chapman observes:
 - that prayer has ceased to be a frequent practice.
 - precisely because the culture begins to value only what can be seen, measured, or bought.
 - Spiritual exercises that require introspection, such as prayer, are set aside.
 - Chapman says that when this happens, we cease to perceive the richness or poverty of our own soul.
- Faced with such a scenario, Calvin would call us back to the body:
 - "Kneel down and pray."

- Because sometimes it is the outward gesture that rekindles the inner commitment.
 - Sometimes it is the body that reminds the soul of the path it forgot to take.
- The text we read in Deuteronomy highlights the importance of the abstract and the concrete, and how they form an integral educational element,
 - emphasizing that the law of love should be visible in concrete symbols.
 - “Bind them as a sign on your hand”.
- Worshiping God involves us completely.

2. Worshiping God is a communal activity.

- But worship is not just a physical act; it is also a communal one.
- The Christian faith was never intended to be lived in isolation.
 - Coming together as a community is a formative act.
 - It is a place where we are encouraged, corrected, strengthened, and inspired.
- When we come together, we motivate each other to continue believing and living our faith.
 - And we do this with concrete practices:
 - celebrating communion,
 - praying together,
 - listening to the Word,
 - singing hymns,
 - confessing the faith,
 - sharing at the Lord's table.
- The word "community" inherently carries the idea of incorporation:
 - of bodies together,
 - of lives that intertwine.

- True communion happens when what is internal in each of us is lived and revealed externally.
 - When the faith of another strengthens mine, and mine strengthens the faith of another.
- No one worships alone.
 - Because even when we are physically alone, we worship as part of a larger body, a people, a communion of saints from all times and places.
- Communal worship reminds us that God did not save us to live in isolation, but to be a people who praise Him with one voice.
- Complete worship, with all that we are, includes:
 - everything that we are,
 - But also, all of us.
- There is no worship of God without love for one's neighbor.
 - 1 John 3:14 is one of my favorite verses and it says:
 - “We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers and sisters. Whoever does not love abides in death.”
 - Salvation,
 - which sometimes sounds like such an abstract concept,
 - It can be seen in a concrete way through love.
- Love for one's neighbor then becomes the visible evidence of true faith.
 - He reveals that we have been touched by the life of Christ.
- Love is not just a commandment,
 - But it's a sign that grace has reached us and is transforming who we are.

- Worshiping God is a communal activity.

3. EXTENSION OF WORSHIP

- If we want to grow in this holistic worship, we need to bring in elements that help us engage our whole being: o mind, body, emotions, spirit and intellect.
- The word is this:completeness.
 - "Integral" refers to that which cannot be divided.
 - Human beings are not separate boxes.
 - To worship God, we do not become purely rational beings.
 - We are a whole that God carefully formed.
- Therefore, in our worship practice, we can incorporate simple elements that help us to fully engage.
 - Not imposed gestures, but invitations;
 - Not mechanical rituals, but natural expressions of faith.
- For example: when in a call to worship we say
 - "We surrender our lives to you in worship," we can open our hands as a sign of surrender.
 - It may be something simple, small, but it tells the body what the heart wants to do.
 - It outwardly embodies, in a simple way, something that is so profound internally.
 - Don't worry, I'll help you with that during the worship services.
- But this wholeness is not limited to worship.
 - It extends to life.
 - Isaiah 1:15 denounces a people who raised their hands in worship but ignored justice in their daily lives.

- “When you stretch out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood.”
 - They forgot that the hands raised in the temple should be the same hands that serve and help during the week.
- The same is true for us:
 - The hands that are raised on Sundays should practice justice on Mondays.
 - The mouth that sings praises should announce good news, words of peace and life.
 - The mind that understands the Word is the same mind that practices patience, compassion, and discernment.
 - The heart that burns in worship should be the same heart that loves, forgives, and welcomes those outside the church.
- Every aspect of who we are was created by God:
 - The body, the mind, the emotions, rationality, the spirit.
 - None of this is accidental or disposable.
 - Everything was given to be consecrated to the Lord.
- Therefore, we love not despite who we are, but with what we are.

CONCLUSION

- As we learn to live and practice this wholeness of worship, something powerful happens within us.
 - Our eyes become more attentive to seeing God's presence in everyday life.

- Loving our neighbor becomes more natural because we begin to realize that we are all called to the same act of selflessness.
- We understand better that everything comes from God and everything belongs to Him: from our bodies to the food on our table.
- We become kinder to ourselves, knowing that God receives us completely and works in us completely.
- Holistic worship adds layers to our faith.
 - What once seemed abstract is taking concrete form.
 - What was concrete points us to deeper mysteries.
 - The body teaches the soul, and the soul inspires the body.
 - Community shapes us, and daily life expresses that shaping.
- And so, with every breath, every gesture, every thought, every emotion, and every relationship, we live out the commandment that lies at the heart of the Christian faith: To love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength—and to love our neighbor as ourselves.
 - May this be our rational form of worship.
 - Amen.

Bibliography

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4. Zachman, *Image and Word in the Theology of John Calvin*, 12, 351, 356.