

Good evening! I want to welcome you all to our Wednesday evening service. Now, I know what we've been doing for the past several months is using this slot as a prayer service - I want you to rest assured we are not ending that forever. But we wanted to set set aside the next several weeks to talk about something incredibly important.

So we're going to try to unpack some of this and over the next 6 weeks we're going to be talking about Worship.

When you think about your life, about what you do from the time you wake up to the time you go to bed, when think about about what we are doing here - about what we were made to do as God's creatures, about what Lakeside Baptist Church exists for - it all fits under the umbrella of **worship**.

So tonight we're going to start off just by giving some definitions of what worship is. We gotta know what we're talking about before we talk about it.

But before we get too far, I want to stop and pray and ask the Lord's blessing on our time. Let's pray.

Well what is worship? It's not an easy term to define. In fact worship is probably one of the richest terms in the Bible - there's no one word that can fully express all that worship is.

What we want to do tonight is just start to lay the foundations of what worship is in the broadest sense before we understanding worship. And the way we're going to do that is just by going through and talking about three definitions that try to get a grasp of what worship is.

Now, right off the bat, I want to ask you - when you hear the word "worship," what comes to mind?

Singing, praying, reading, etc. are all expressions of worship - and I promise that we'll get to that in the coming weeks, but before we talk about these specific expressions of worship let's try to understand what worship is. In other words, what are we doing when we're singing to God? What are doing when we offer praise to him?

So let's look at our definitions here - and what I want to do is just break each of them down and talk about it.

Here's our first attempt at defining worship:

Definition #1:

David Peterson says “Worship is “engaging with God on the terms that he proposes and in the way that he alone makes possible.”

Let’s talk about this - "worship is engaging with God on the terms that he proposes and in the way that he alone makes possible."

- So the first part of this definition here - worship is what? **ENGAGING WITH GOD**

Now let’s pause here - this is a big deal! Worship is engaging with God! We shouldn’t just breeze past this fact. When we worship God, we are engaging with him. Interacting with the God of the universe. We’ve talked about the Fall this past week in Genesis chapter three, the introduction of sin into the world, and in my mind, the clearest evidence of sin in our hearts is that we take worship so casually! The fact that people need to be encouraged to worship is absolutely staggering! Worship is engaging with Almighty God.

So let me ask you all - how does remembering that we are engaging with God in worship help us to worship?

- **But can we just engage with him any way we please?** Well, simply put, no. We can’t. Look at the second part of this definition - worship is engaging God **ON THE TERMS THAT HE PROPOSES**. You and I don’t get to decide how God wants to be worshiped, he does.

You know, some of us in the room are **huggers**. We love to be hugged and to give hugs and to show affection that way -not everyone is a hugger! And you learn pretty quickly who likes to be loved that way and who doesn’t.

I’m a hugger. I grew up in a very affectionate family. But if you come to someone who does not want to be hugged and try to hug them anyways, that is not honoring them! That’s loving them how we want to be loved, not yielding to their desires.

If our desire is to honor God, then we ought to realize that we have to play by his rules! Church if you search the scriptures, he’s given his church direction in how he desires to be worshiped!

The Old Testament is filled with rules and regulations on how God is to be worshiped. The New Testament is less concentrated in that way but still gives plenty of instructions for how God is to be worshiped when we gather as a church as well as in our daily lives. **Every command in the Bible is instruction from God on how to please God.**

And you and I are just as accountable to obey the commands of God now as the Israelites were 2000 years ago - we'll touch on this next week, Lord willing when we talk about worship from the Old Testament to the New Testament.

Think of the story of Nadab and Abihu - does anyone remember this story?

Lev. 10:1 Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, which he had not commanded them. ² And fire came out from before the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord. ³ Then Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the Lord has said: 'Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified.'" And Aaron held his peace.

Let's look at the last part of this definition:

We worship God in the way that he alone makes possible.

Let's think about this - someone raise their hand and explain this to me. How does God alone make worship possible?

Phil. 2:13 for ^hit is **God who works in you, both to will** and **to work** for ⁱhis good pleasure.

This is another way of saying that all our best efforts to please God are ultimately all of God's grace. You and I are dust. And worse than that - we're sinners. The only way that we can worship God is if God draws us to himself in worship.

We can't muster up the strength to worship God apart from his help. God alone makes worship possible.

Now, again, we're going to think about this next week, but consider how God has made worship possible all through the scriptures. In the OT, what was the center of worship? **Sacrifice.**

Look with me to Genesis 22

Gen. 22:5 Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you." ⁶ And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son. And he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together. ⁷ And Isaac said to his father

Abraham, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"⁸ Abraham said, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together.

Gen. 22:9 When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built the altar there and laid the wood in order and bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood.¹⁰ Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son.¹¹ But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."¹² He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me."¹³ And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.¹⁴ So Abraham called the name of that place, "The Lord will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the Lord it shall be provided."

God's greatest aim in everything he does is that he receive glory and honor and praise - and we can rest assured he will do what it takes to meet that great end.

What's the great sacrifice of the New Testament?

His Son, Jesus Christ. The perfect lamb of God - without blemish or spot.

And how does this sacrifice enable our worship of God?

The only way sinful man can worship holy God is through the sacrifice of God's son. He is the lamb who was slain in order to make worship possible. It's through him that we are able to engage with God the Father.

Alright, so that's definition number 1 - let me pause here for any questions you have.

Definition #2

Piper: "True worship is a valuing or a treasuring of God above all things."

OK - so this is narrowing in on true worship - as opposed to false worship. The object of true worship is.... who? God. The object of false worship is.... anyone or anything else!

God is jealous for his glory. He alone is worthy of our worship. He says “my glory I will not give to another - Isaiah 48:11.

Now, let me hear from you - what is this definition getting at?

I think the strength of this definition is that **it gets at the HEART of worship**. The heart of worship.

What does our heart have to do with worship?

True worship goes deeper than external acts of devotion or praise. It's about the heart. Unless you are treasuring God in your heart, whatever you're doing with your hands or saying with your mouth, you are not worshipping God.

And to take that a step further - whatever you treasure the most in your heart, that is what you ultimately worship!

Look with me to Matthew 15:7-9.

Jesus is rebuking the Pharisees here. The Pharisees thought they had it all right - they thought they were the holy ones because they kept a long list of rules and regulations, but Jesus comes on the scene and tells everyone that you can follow this book as best you can, but if you don't treasure God in your heart, then it's all in vain.

7 You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said:

8 “This people honors me with their lips,

but their heart is far from me;

9 in vain do they worship me,

teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”

So someone raise your hand and tell me - what's the big deal? What is Jesus correcting in the Pharisee's worship?

He's addressing a disconnect between what they are showing externally and what the true reality is on the inside.

Church, it is incredibly dangerous to think that just because you come to church week in and week out and just because you sing the songs and just because do your best that you're good with God - Jesus says that we need to be careful to examine our hearts. **Do we truly love God and treasure him above all things?**

Again, this points us back to the last part of our first definition, doesn't it? True worship is only made possible by God himself.

One of my favorite hymns is Come Thou Fount. In the third verse of that song it has a line -

3 Oh, to grace how great a debtor
daily I'm constrained to be!
Let thy goodness, like a fetter,
bind my wandering heart to thee:
prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
prone to leave the God I love;
here's my heart, O take and seal it;
seal it for thy courts above.

Our hearts are prone to wander, and the Lord himself must take and seal our hearts to worship him.

So here's two application points for you. I know we're talking about worship broadly and not really getting into the specifics of worship together quite yet, but here's some homework for this upcoming Sunday when we do gather together for corporate worship.

First application - prepare your heart to worship God. Prepare your heart to worship God. And I'm going to make you a guarantee - if you have your heart fixed on God throughout the week, preparing and eagerly anticipating when we can come together and worship as a church body together, then our worship together will be rich. It'll be full and encouraging and honoring to the Lord.

Pastor Mike and I are thinking through ways to help you prepare for the worship service but a couple of very simple ways to prepare - listen to the songs we'll sing and meditate on the text we'll hear preached.

Second application: It's a question that I want you to ask yourself after church this Sunday - did I really worship God? Did I really worship God? Nobody in this room can answer that but you. But you know in the depth of your heart whether you worshiped God or just went through the motions. And if you didn't worship God, why not? Why not? And before you look for reasons on the outside, which all of us are inclined to do, I want you to look first at your heart. That's where true worship begins.

Any questions before we move to our last definition of worship?

Definition #3

True worship is a Spirit empowered, Christ-centered response to the glory of God

I like this definition, you know why? Because I wrote it. So it must be the best one, right?

Who can raise their hand and tell me what this definition brings to the table for us?

Remembering that true worship is about God, is for God, and is made possible only by God himself, this definition brings in each person of the triune God we worship.

God is a Trinity - God in three persons, Father, Son, Holy Spirit. Each person plays a distinct role in worship. We don't have the time to fully unpack that - we never will - but let's hit each one briefly. We'll work from the end of this definition back to the beginning.

1. Worship begins and ends with God - it's a response to who he is - it's a response to his glory.

We sometimes sing the song - "Behold Our God, seated on the throne, come let us adore him." True worship begins with beholding God, and when we see him, when our hearts are led to adore him - who he is - then we're led to worship him. And worshiping him brings him glory!

1. True worship is centered upon Jesus Christ

How is true worship Christ-centered?

- He makes worship possible. He allows us to be in the presence of God

Have you ever considered why we pray in the name of Jesus Christ? It's because we cannot come before God in our own name. We have to come to him in Jesus Christ. It's the only way we can come before God and worship him.

Look with me to Revelation chapter 5 - this is a picture of what is going on in heaven. It's a vision of heavenly worship.

Rev. 5:11 Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering ^zmyriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, ¹² saying with a loud voice,

"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might
and honor and glory and blessing!"

13 And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying,
“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”

14 And the four living creatures ^Csaid, “Amen!” and the elders fell down and worshiped.

Jesus Christ is the lamb who was slain - he is the one who is to receive blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever.

I'll just say - **This is distinctly Christian.** This probably doesn't come as a surprise to you, but we worship Jesus Christ. We believe that he's more than just a man - he is the God-man. He lived a perfect life, and he died the death of a sinner and he took upon himself the wrath of God against sin.

He died, was buried, then what happened? He rose from he grave! He lives! And this passage shows us what he's up to - he is with the Father receiving praise and glory due to his name.

Look who receives the praise here - verse 13 - “To him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.” He receives the same glory as God the Father.

Muslims do not worship this way. Mormons do not worship this way. Jehovah's Witnesses don't worship this way. Buddhists don't worship this way.

Worship of Jesus Christ and worship of God the Father in the name of Jesus Christ is distinctly Christian and it is entirely right and true.

Last, worship is empowered by the Holy Spirit.

13 When ^tthe Spirit of truth comes, ^uhe will ^vguide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but ^wwhatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. **14** He will ^xglorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. **15** ^yAll that the Father has is mine; ^ztherefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

So according to Jesus, we don't wander aimlessly into the truth of God - the Holy Spirit guides us into all the truth. And when he does so, when he declares the truth of God to our hearts so

that we know and behold God, then what happens? He brings glory to God in the praise of his saints. The Holy Spirit empowers and enables our worship.

You and I have an incredible privilege. We live in the age of the Holy Spirit. This makes our worship both possible and also incredibly powerful!

Jesus did not abandon us when he ascended into heaven - he left us with a helper. Think about this - when Jesus was on Earth, he was limited in what he could do. Truly, he was - he is God - yes, but he is also man. And as a man he had certain limitations - he bore with us in our weakness. If people wanted to come worship Jesus, they had to come worship Jesus. Crowds flocked to him. They came to him by the droves to see him and to hear him teach and to see him perform miracles, and then eventually to arrest him and crucify him.

How is it that our brothers and sisters in Kenya can worship Jesus? Or our brothers and sisters in China? or Australia? All the way across the globe - the Holy Spirit is present within the hearts of believers across the world, enabling and empowering their worship of the Triune God of the Bible.

Now, this has been a lot. But friends this is just week number 1. I'm excited to keep diving into this topic with you all because it is so important not just to each of us individually but to us as a church. Let's be a people who worship the Lord with all of our hearts.

Let's pray.