

## Lesson 9: Purposes of the Church – Worship

### **Opening:**

Over time, many children have heard the words “eat just a few more bites of your vegetables and you can get up from the table and play.” Or maybe you heard it from a coach “if we just try a little harder next time, we will win against that team.” We live in a society that teaches us to just try a little harder and we can get to where we want to be. If you want a better grade, put in more study time. If you want a better job, put in the hours of work to get the promotion. If you want better relationships put in the time to be a better friend, spouse, or co-worker. In some ways this makes complete sense. Doing these things won’t ensure success, but it does increase the likelihood of accomplishment.

The Christian life is very different. Transformation is God’s work. It is not about us trying harder, but our focus being oriented in the right direction – toward Him. He transforms us into His design. That is one of the reasons that we worship Him.

Look at the following passages of Scripture that speak about God’s work of transformation. Write down what they tell you about the role of God in this process. Then write down any role we have as a response to that work of God.

2 Corinthians 5:16-19 \_\_\_\_\_

Ezekiel 36:22-27 \_\_\_\_\_

Titus 3:4-8 \_\_\_\_\_

### **Central Truths:**

- True worship means that we value God above all things.
- We cannot expect God to bless our worship if our hearts are not centered on Him.
- Outward worship includes: praising God, repenting of our sins, and acts of love for the good of others.

### **Purposes of the Church: Worship**

In this series, we have looked at the Mission Statement that our church has chosen to adopt (Love God, Serve Others, Equip Disciple-Makers), and the Biblical core values (Glorify God, Submit to the Authority of Scripture, Live as Christ Lived,

Serve as Christ Served, Love the Local Church, and Be the Church in our Community) that are non-negotiable and support the mission. When we talk about the purposes of the church, we are addressing our strategy, or how we are to go about living out the mission and values. A good strategy helps you examine how you are going to accomplish the mission and values of the church. We have a church gathered, we have a mission that we believe God has called us to accomplish, and we have values that we believe are Biblically essential. Now what do we do? How do we carry out the mission and values?

The first strategy, or purpose, that God gives us as a church is worship. **True worship means that we value God above all things.** Paul David Tripp notes, “Human beings by their very nature are worshipers. Worship is not something we do; it defines who we are. You cannot divide human beings into those who worship and those who don’t. Everybody worships; it’s just a matter of what, or whom, we serve.” Worship isn’t about the style of music we sing. It is about who we sing it to (See Ephesians 5:19-20).

Worship has two parts: inner worship and outer (or public) worship. In Matthew 15:8-9 Jesus quotes from Isaiah ““This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; <sup>9</sup>in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”” Jesus notes that worship is more than an outward expression. It begins in the heart. Any attempt at worship that does not have a focus on God amounts to nothing. It isn’t the method of worship, but the heart of the worshiper that God cares most about. **We cannot expect God to bless our worship if our hearts are not centered on Him.** What does a heart focused on God look like? What ways might the enemy use to distract our inward focus on Him?

The second part of worship is our outer (or public) worship. When we see God’s glory and experience His grace we want to express our appreciation for Him. **Outward worship includes: praising God, repenting of our sins, and acts of love for the good of others.** (See Hebrews 13:15-16). Does our inward focus lead to these outward expressions of worship? What areas of outward worship do we struggle with? What areas of outward worship do we need to focus more on and pray for as a small group? As a corporate body?

## **Examining the Text:**

### Reading the Biblical Text: John 4:16-26

<sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.” <sup>17</sup> The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; <sup>18</sup> for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.” <sup>19</sup> The woman said to him, “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. <sup>20</sup> Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.” <sup>21</sup> Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. <sup>22</sup> You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup> But 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. <sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” <sup>25</sup> The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.” <sup>26</sup> Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he.”

The conversation with the woman at the well in John 4 cuts to the heart of how we should approach worship.

### Worship begins with admission that we are sinners and God is perfect.

Look at VV. 16-18 <sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.” <sup>17</sup> The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; <sup>18</sup> for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true.”

Jesus is conversing with the woman at the well, and He focuses her attention on her sin. He points out the sin of immorality in this case, but his focus is not the sin but the fact that she is a sinner. Jesus points out that she has rebelled against God. When it comes to worship, we begin with the knowledge that all of us are sinners. We worship God because He has saved us from sin and offered us instead life through Jesus. (See Ephesians 2:1-9).

### Worship comes through faith in the Savior as our hope.

Look at VV. 19-24 <sup>19</sup> The woman said to him, “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. <sup>20</sup> Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem

is the place where people ought to worship.”<sup>21</sup> Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.<sup>22</sup> You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.<sup>23</sup> But 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.<sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

When the woman hears that Jesus knows her sin, she has two responses. 1) She recognizes that Jesus is not ordinary. She calls him a “prophet” in V. 19. The Samaritans did not recognize any prophets other than Moses, but they did believe that another prophet was to come. She is moving toward Jesus being the Messiah. She is unsure but hopeful. 2) She believes that salvation is something that you do. The woman talks about the controversy between the Jews and Samaritans over the place where proper worship was to occur. The Samaritans had built a temple for worship on Mt. Gerizim, while the Jews held that the only temple for worship was in Jerusalem. The woman at the well was focused on the actions of salvation instead of trusting that salvation is something God does for us. Just like the woman, we can become distracted by the actions of worship and miss the point of worship.

When it comes to our worship of God, He is concerned with our faith in Him. True worship occurs when we trust God and seek Him. Worship comes through “spirit and truth.” Jesus means that the Spirit reveals to us our need to worship Him as the true Messiah. When we worship God, it is because He has revealed Himself to us. We acknowledge that our hope is in Him alone. Worship is a bowing down before God and trusting in Him alone to lift us up. (See Luke 18:9-14).

#### Worship is giving glory to God.

Look at VV. 25-26<sup>25</sup> The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.”<sup>26</sup> Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am he.”

Jesus declares that He is the Christ. He is God’s answer to sin in the world. When Jesus makes this statement, He is issuing an invitation for the woman to believe in Him as the Savior. Jesus offers her an opportunity to believe and to give glory to God for His saving grace.

When we worship: 1) We are to focus on praising God for His gift of salvation (Ephesians 5:19); 2) We are to pray to Him prayers of thanksgiving and supplication (1 Timothy 2:1); 3) We are to receive and study the word of God together (1 Timothy 4:13).

### **Applying the Text:**

The following is a suggested list of ways to prepare for corporate worship.

- Take the opportunity to practice worship the rest of the week. Make it a habit to practice some form of family worship and engage in personal worship times throughout the week. These times will help prepare your heart to worship Him with others. When your focus is on God, you will enjoy worshipping Him with others.
- Make it your number one goal to know and love God. Preparing for corporate worship means preparing yourself to participate not spectate. When we prepare to participate in worship the focus is on God. When we come as spectators, the focus is on what the service can do for us. When we participate in worship as believers we show non-believers what worshipping God looks like. It becomes a witness to them of what it means to worship God.
- Don't be late. That sounds simple, but when we rush to arrive for worship we may fail to be prepared to focus on God. When we allow ourselves time to think on God, to get our minds and hearts oriented toward Him, we are more prepared to worship God. Do you ever find that we are half-way through the service before you ever get truly focused on Him?
- If you serve in some way on Sundays, it is possible to approach Sundays like you do the work week: making a list of all the things that you need to do. While preparation is important for service, it should never take the place of being excited in anticipation of what God is going to do.
- Come to church expecting to respond to God's leading and prompting in your life.
- Come to church expecting God to use you to build up and encourage others.